

Fine start for Feyenoord

AMSTERDAM, Aug 22: Feyenoord opened their Dutch league championship campaign with a 3-0 win at newcomers MVV Maastricht on Thursday. reports Reuter.

Three goals from dead-ball situations gave the Rotterdam club the perfect start of the season.

The opening effort came in the eighth minute when Giovanni van Brockhorst curled a free kick over the MVV well into the top left-hand corner.

The away team went 2-0 up in the 58th minute when Dane Mark Nygaard deflected a shot from Uruguayan defender Fernando Picun into his own net.

After 80 minutes Picun headed home at a corner to seal the victory which provided Feyenoord with a good warm up for next Wednesday's European Cup preliminary round second leg tie against Jazz Port of Finland.

Feyenoord won the first leg at home 6-2 and should enter the lucrative European Championships League without any problems.

Benfica's refusal

LISBON, Aug 22: Former European champions Benfica said on Thursday that they had rejected a 18.5-million dollar bid for Portuguese international striker and club captain Joao Vieira Pinto, reports Reuter.

The club refused to say who had made the offer but local press reports spoke of Spain's Deportivo La Coruna, English champions Manchester United or Glasgow Rangers of Scotland.

Benfica's director of football Antonio Figueiredo confirmed that an offer had been made but he said the amount was not sufficient to tempt the Lisbon side, twice winners of the European Cup, to give up their charismatic striker.

"It is not enough," he told a news conference.

Benfica have long said that Pinto is not for sale, club president Manuel Damasio even made his leaving Benfica conditional on the approval of a special meeting of shareholders.

However Figueiredo did not rule out the player being sold eventually if the price were right.

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Although Fakirerpool had the easiest opportunity of the match to take the lead when



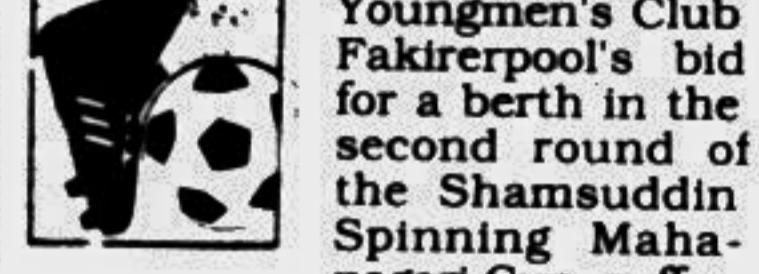
Action from yesterday's Shamsuddin Spinning Mahanagar Cup football match between Fakirerpool and Dhanmondi at the Mirpur Stadium.

— Star photo

B Boys shut Wanderers off

Dhanmondi hold Fakirerpool

Sports Reporter



Youngmen's Club Fakirerpool's bid for a berth in the second round of the Shamsuddin Spinning Mahanagar Cup sufficed yet another setback when Dhanmondi Club held them to a goalless draw in one of the two first round Group A matches at the Mirpur Stadium yesterday.

In an eye-soaring and dull encounter with the ball being kicked around aimlessly in the midfield region for most of the time, the Fakirerpool boys, who clinched the fourth place in the Premier league last year, failed to live up to their former selves and eventually left the ground with their second successive draw in the four-team Group A. They drew with Bangladesh Boys Club in their previous draw at the same venue this evening.

Earlier, Iko put Dhaka Wanderers ahead with a power-packed grounder from a Zakir cross in the 43rd minute.

It was the second defeat for Wanderers which virtually signalled their demise in the competition.

The tournament will take one-day's off to pave the way of holding the first round Asian Cup Winners' Cup encounter between Abahani Krira Chakra and Old Benedictines of Sri Lanka at the same venue this evening.

They earned a penalty in the 37th minute but forward Arifur Rahman Mamun promptly blew it off sending the ball straight over the cross piece much to the horror of his teammates.

Yesterday's draw left Fakirerpool on the verge of a possible drop-out as they were able to collect only two points so far from as many matches. On the other hand, Dhanmondi, who earlier beat Dhaka Wanderers Club 2-0 in their previous match, kept their second round hopes alive as they joined group leaders Bangladesh Boys Club at the top, raising the collection to four points from two matches. However, the group championship will be decided when the two leaders face each other in their final group match on August 28.

Earlier in the day's first match, a second half rally enabled Bangladesh Boys Club to register a 2-1 victory over Dhaka Wanderers Club.

Trailing the first half by one

goal, the Gopibagh boys displayed a brilliant comeback in the second half and scored two goals in eighteen minutes to register their first win in two outings.

Forward Lachchu headed home the equaliser off a corner in the 68th minute while Masud Rana tapped in the decisive goal cashing in on a deflection from a goal mouth melee in the dying minutes.

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Ex-Russian hockey official arrested

MOSCOW, Aug 22: Police have arrested a former Russian hockey official in connection with the murder of ice Hockey Federation president Valentin Sych in April, officials said Thursday, reports AP.

The apparent contract killing of the prominent executive shocked the Russian sports world.

Robert Cherenkov, president of the now-defunct Inter-national Ice Hockey League, has been arrested and charged in connection with the murder, said Irina Rezhikova, a spokeswoman for Russia's Prosecutor General.

She declined to provide more details, including the date of the arrest or the charges filed against him.

The Inter-national Ice Hockey League was formed to organise commercial hockey competition but disbanded a year ago.

Sych had opposed the establishment of the commercial league. The Ice Hockey Federation remains Russia's central hockey association, organising amateur competition and forming the country's national team.

Russia's ITAR-Tass news agency, citing unidentified sources in the prosecutor's office, said nine other suspects have also been arrested in the case, but investigators believe Cherenkov was the central figure.

Sych was gunned down outside his country home on April 22 as he and his wife were getting into their car.

Many businessmen and public officials have been killed since the collapse of the Soviet Union, but few contract murders have been solved.

Bortolami wins Bernocchi Cup

MILAN, Aug 22: Former World Cup winner Gianluca Bortolami won the 79th edition of the Bernocchi Cup cycle race at nearby Legnano on Thursday, reports AFP.

Bortolami, who is from Milan, came home 42 seconds clear of fellow Italians Stefano Zanini and Marco Lietti.

Thursday's victory follows a recent upturn for Bortolami, who was fifth at San Sebastian and third at Rochester. His career had been dogged by injuries and accidents in the wake of his World Cup success in 1994.

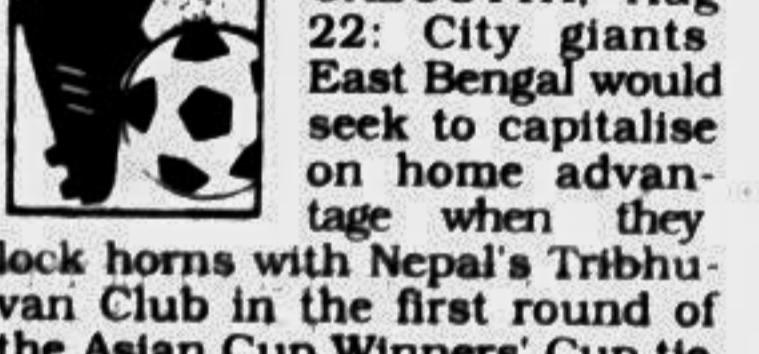
FIFA directive to Jamaica

KINGSTON, Jamaica, Aug 22: FIFA has directed Jamaican soccer officials to improve the pitch at the National Stadium at Kingston ahead of next month's games against Canada and Costa Rica. But Jamaican officials said Wednesday there's no time, reports AP.

The directive from soccer's governing body was "a polite reminder for us to get our act together," said Horace Reid, general secretary of the Jamaica Football Federation.

Reid said the local federation had attempted to upgrade the pitch, but it is unlikely that will happen in time for CONCACAF matches in September — the final round of eliminations to reach the tournament in France.

E Bengal bank on venue



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Mahat has been in charge of Tribhuvan Club for the past five months during which the club won the Khukuri Cup. The club, formed in 1990, won the national championship last year and have to players who are in the national team.

The star-studded East Bengal line-up start as favourites but can hardly afford to be complacent against their Nepalese opponents who were known for their fighting spirit.

The Nepal club, which flew in yesterday, got just a day for acclimatising to the conditions here.

The soggy ground condition, due to the monsoon rains, would not doubt favour the home team.

LEEDS, Aug 22: Former England defender Tony Dorigo is moving from Leeds United to Italian Serie B club Torino, now coached by Graeme Souness, reports AP.

The 31-year-old Australian-born left back, who played 15 times for England but lost his place on the Leeds lineup and is out of contract, agreed personal terms with the Italian club Tuesday and will sign subject to a fitness check.

Star striker Baichung Bhutia

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Abahani's Asian affair today

Sports Reporter

Federation Cup champions Abahani Krira Chakra take on Old Benedictines Sports Club of Sri Lanka in their first match of the two-leg first round of the 8th Asian Cup Winners' Cup at the Mirpur Stadium today.

The match is scheduled to begin at 6 pm. Bangladesh Betar will provide running commentary of the match.

The second match between the two sides will be held at the same venue tomorrow.

The 20-member Old Benedictines football team, which arrived in the city on Thursday, took its final preparation at the Mirpur Stadium yesterday. The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) nominated five officials also arrived in the city last night.

Ibrahim Ismail, the general secretary of Maldives Football Federation, will act as the match commissioner while four Indian referees — Michael Andrews, Kamaleeswar Shankar, Krishna Avatar Chouhan and Abdul Hakim — will don the black vests.

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