A successful pre-season

However the routine medical

tournament in Spain had Hodg-

son singing his praises, as a

exam revealed he had a de-

formed aortic valve and he

would need an operation simply to lead an average life, let alone that of a top athlete.

under the knife in a hospital in

Cleveland, Ohio. "I always knew I would be back," he said. He had

a four-and-a half hour opera-

tion to correct the defect and his

football career, and life, were

A strong optimistic streak in this shy 21-year-old however

helped him on his road back to

with all their fastidious screen-

ing of youngsters, should have

missed a defect which would

have shown up by a simple ego.

Amazingly, Kanu had survived years of playing high cal-

ibre football in the heat of

Nigeria without any adverse ef-

fects. Footballers have been

known to die in Nigeria of heart

attacks while playing so per-

haps his number might have

come up had he not left for Eu-

might bes. Kanu set out on his

determined bid to reclaim his

He watched Nigeria become

life in the football fast lane.

Whatever the ifs, buts, or

Some were surprised Ajax,

being put on hold.

full fitness.

In late 1996, Kanu was put

footballer as well as a person.

Team of the dreamers

PARIS, June 10 (AFP/ Internet): The greatest football team ever was named here on Tuesday -- but it will never take the

Selected by 250 journalists from across the world and an international panel, the Mastercard World Team of the Twentieth Century is every manager's dream.

While Pele was an obvious selection, several greats of football failed to make the final 11. including Sir Boby Charlton, Puskas and Gento.

"When you try to pick the best team of all there is always controversy because so many great players get left off, like my friend Sir Bobby Charlton, said Pele.

It came as little surprise that Brazil won the most places, four in all.

THE TEAM

Lev Yashin (Soviet Union), Carlos Alberto (Brazil), Franz Beckenbauer (West Germany). Bobby Moore (England), Nilton Santos (Brazil); Johan Cruyff (Netherlands), Alfredo Di Stefano (Argentina), Michel Platini (France); Pele (Brazil), Garrincha (Brazil) Diego Maradona (Argentina)

Tabloids tease Collymore

LONDON, Jun 10: Britain's tabloid newspapers today all splashed across their front pages a lurid story of how Eng-land star Stan Collymore assaulted his girlfriend. TV presenter Ulrika Jonsson, at a Paris bar, reports AFP.

Drinking alongside Scottish fans in the Auld Alliance pub, near the Bastille area of Paris, late Tuesday on the eve of the Scotland-Brazil match, the 27vear-old footballer allegedly grabbed his blonde girlfriend's hair, pushing her to the ground as he kicked her.

Several fans are said to have jumped in and pulled Collymore, who played during England's World Cup qualifying campaign but was left out of the final squad, off the 30-year-old Swedish born presenter and escorted him from the pub.

In a statement, his agent confirmed an "altercation" had taken place in the bar.

"It resulted from an argument he had during the day with Ulrika Jonsson. The argument culminated in a heated incident within the confines of the pub.

Collymore and Jonsson later returned together to England from Paris.

Tight security for Iranians

YSSINGEAUX, France, June 10: Iran's training camp was sealed off on Mondays as players prepared for their opening game with Yugoslavia on June 14, reports Reuters.

No access was allowed to within 100 metres of the entrance of the team's residence. Chateau de Montbarnier.

A team of 20 national police and five members of the crack anti-terrorist raid unit were stationed at the camp offering close security. Members of the paramilitary gendarmerie also patrolled the area.

Mayor of Yssingeaux, former government minister Jacques Barrot, told reporters his small town was the ideal location for ensuring the Iranians' preparation for their second finals passed without incident.

"This is a very practical venue because its size makes organisation and security easier, said Barrot. "Also as a former minister I am able to ensure the

security. The Chateau has been adjusted to meet the needs of the squad. As well as the installation of a gym, a room has been set aside for prayers, the bar has been closed and all alcohol has been removed, local officials said.

Barrot has gone to great lengths to ensure that the 7,000 population of the small town, near St Etienne in eastern France accept the Iranians into their community over the coming weeks.

Local authorities produced a glossy brochure explaining Iranian customs and culture and French-based Iranian artistes have held talks in the town.

One shop in the town centre is offering Iranian products such as pistachio nuts and caviar.

The mayor, who greeted the team and the Iranian ambassador to France after a closed training session, said his community had grown to accept the presence of the Iranians after initial concerns.

"At first they were nervous and didn't know what expect but they have opened up and are taking an interest in the Iranians and Persian culture," said Barrot.

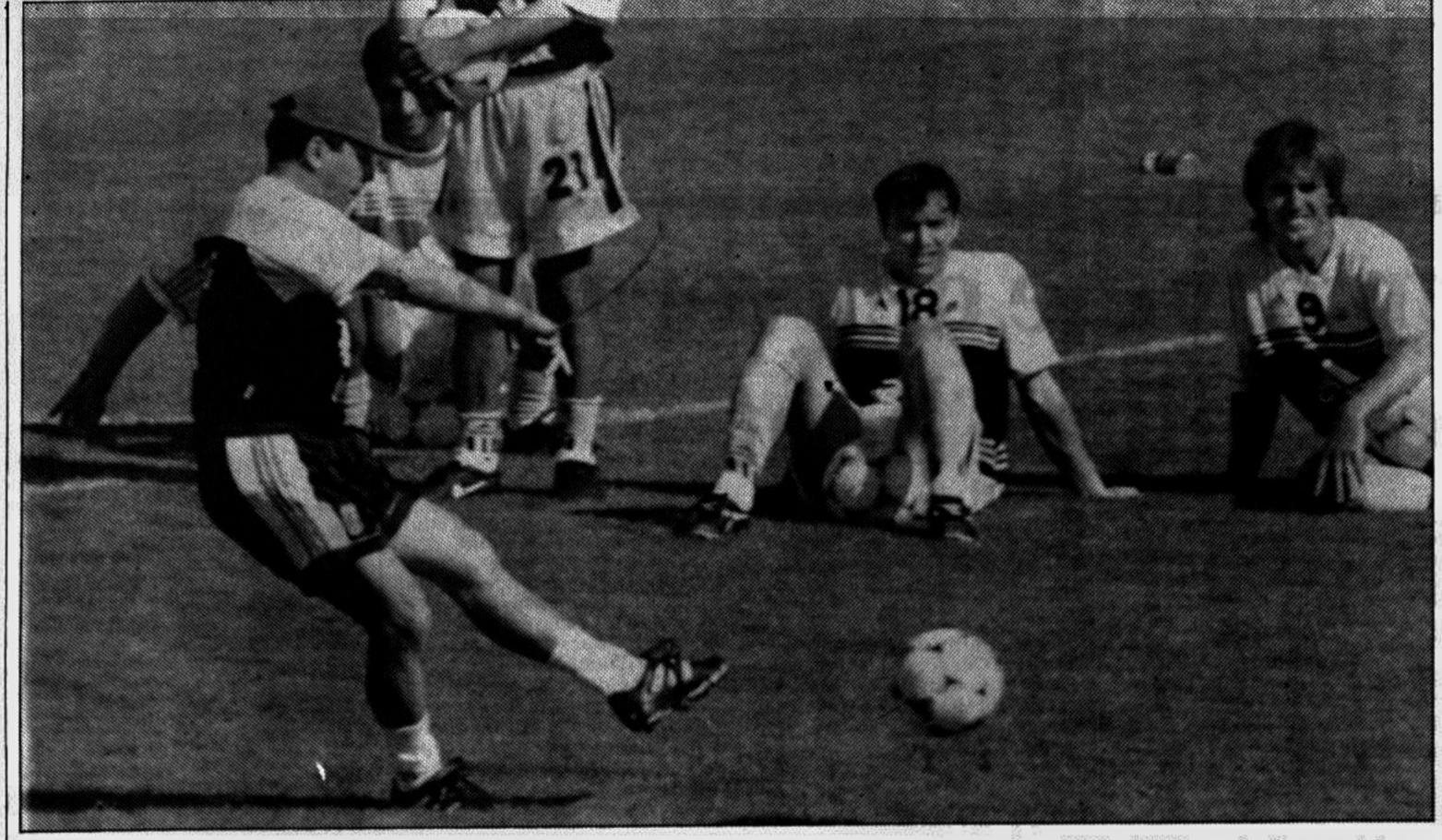
"He is very pure," Tanaka said apologetically. The tabloid press, which Security is expected to remain tight in the run-up to Iran's politically charged clash with the United States in Lyon on June 21, but Iranian players and officials are playing down the significance of the game.

Asked by reporters what the game meant to him, Iran coach Jalal Talebi replied "It's about three points, isn't it?"

Open TT

Sports Reporter The five-day long open table tennis tournament, organised by Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation, got underway at the

NSC wooden floor gymnasium yesterday. Sixteen men, six women and 30 boys are taking part in the meet. On the inaugural day, eighteen boys singles matches were decided.



LOOK FELLAS, THIS IS HOW YOU DO IT: Daniel Passarella (L), Argentina's coach and World Cup winning captain of 1978, kicks the ball during practice while his charges watch with admiration at their base in L'Etrat, France on - AFP photo June 9.

Chung cooks Korea's magic potion

PARIS, Jun 10 (AP): South Korea's recipe for success at the 1998 World Cup starts in the kitchen, and a chef from the homeland is overseeing the ingredients.

The cook is Chung Seungchan, flown in by their hotel to serve up the same dishes players are accustomed to eating back home.

"The players say they're happy to have Korean cooking 1,000 miles from home," said Park Sun-hu, who translates between Chung and the hotel's French chef in the kitchens.

"The French must have their baguette (bread) and fromage (cheese) every day. For Koreans it's essential to eat rice and kimchi" - a spicy vegetable

It is precisely those French cheeses that got the South Koreans into trouble when they came to France last April for matches against the Paris club St Denis and France's first division club Metz.

Suffering from a variety of digestive problems, the South Koreans lost to 2-1 to Metz before scraping by St. Denis 2-1. "They had a lot of problems with the food," recalls team

AIX-LES-BAINS, France,

Jun 10: It's easy to spot

Hidetoshi Nakata. He's the one

with the mean long passes, cool

and cocky demeanour and his

hair dyed a bright copper or-

The 21-year-old midfielder,

who has grown practically

overnight into Japan's biggest

cover-boy, draws screams from

the stands fit for a rock star ev-

ery time he touches the ball dur-

player on the Japanese World

its therapeutic hot springs, the

players are surrounded by a

players, with the exception of

Nakata, the 1997 Asian player-

of-the-year, now signed with J-

League's Bellmare Hiratsuka.

country on several youth teams

in 1996 — is able to pass them

by with a bare nod straight to

the bus that takes him back to

made himself available to the

media once, and only to a group

of Argentine reporters. When

this reporter tried to join the

group, Nakata turned with a

stern look and raised his palm.

Tanaka said Nakata only

speaks to foreign media, and

even that is extremely rare.

Team spokeswoman Yuki

In the past week, Nakata

With rumours stirring about

Nakata is also the only

Every day after practice in

ange, reports AP.

ing a game.

reporters.

tient and cordial.

interviews.

the hotel.

motioning, "NO."

vice-manager Chun Hanjin. "Many had diarrhoea, which weakened them."

"The problem was all the milk products," chef Chun explained. "They are too rich here and difficult for the players to digest. In Korea we only consume two per cent and skim milk products." If the way to a man's heart is

through his stomach, the South Koreans will need all the heart they can get in their bid to win their first match in five World Cup appearances. Doing his share, Chung pre-

pares a selection of two or three Korean dishes each day, including the traditional staple kimchi. Chung also makes bulgogi. a marinated beef and vegetable dish, and fried chicken. And plenty of rice. While millions of people come to France each year to

rants, the country's haute cuisine has failed to impress the South Korean squad. The players do, however, appreciate Italian food.

sample some of the world's

most famous Michelin restau-

"The hotel chet's spaghetti bolognese is very popular

Chung works for a hotel chain (Accor) back home. Despite the honor and excitement of cooking for the national team, life in the French hotel's kitchens isn't exactly a piece of cake.

among the players, for some

reason," said Park, who like

Communication is difficult and Chung does most of the cooking himself for the 23 players and the rest of the South Korean delegation. He does, however, receive help from the hotel's second chef, Richard Donio.

"Many things are different

in a French kitchen," said Park. "And there are many communication problems. But Monsieur Donio is a great help even if he understands nothing about Korean cooking." Chung and Park will follow

the team to Lyon and Marseille for its first-round matches against Mexico and the Nether-

"I'm very excited about cooking for the World Cup team," said Chung, speaking through Park, "I get to meet famous players and it's my first time in

caused by stress and exhaus-Nakata, who has scored a career six goals in international matches, also has a penchant

for one-word replies. He was asked by the Argentine reporters last week what he thought of Maradona, according to Tanaka. Nakata's reply: "Nothing."

In a statement released through the team. Nakata said: "It's naturally important to win the World Cup as a team, but I think it's most important to get my own condition at its best and reach my true potential." "As for my opponents, I can't

tell who's good or bad until I play them, so I'm not going to worry too much about them but concentrate on giving it all I've Besides reporters, Nakata

hates vegetables. But his love for Armani is well-known.

The star, whose used sneakers recently sold for 1.72 million yen (12,000 dollars) at a Tokyo charity auction, has started a fad of oval Armani glasses (which Nakata only wears off the pitch). These days, streets in Japan are filled with Nakata lookalikes.

"You may think Nakata is the main player on this team," coach Tekeshi Okada told reporters earlier this week. "But for us, the entire team is impor-

Tolouse

It s all for

football in

FRANCE, June 10 (AFP/ Internet): The Conventual Assembly of Jacobines of Toulouse is putting on an exhibition until the 17th August exclusively devoted to football and the passion it inspires.

The exhibition, entitled "Ballon passion, la Coupe du Monde et Tolouse" (Passion for football, TOULOUSE and the World Cup) presents an overview of the fifteen World Cups held to date, and the way in which political, economic and social motives have always flirted with a love of sport.

Newspapers, photos, paintings, advertisements and cartoons all show football and the World Cup in a different light.

A few rarities will be on show including the first USSR jersey, worn in the 1958 World Cup in Sweden, a set of Limoges china goal posts, and the award for the top goal-scorer of the 1958 World Cup won by the Frenchman, Just Fontaine.

Cambodian fighters take time-out

BANGKOK, June 10: Cambodian resistance forces will take time out from fighting to watch World Cup matches at their base in the north of the country on a new television set delivered for the tournament, commander Nhiek Bun Chhay said today,

All games can be seen at the O'Smach stronghold of troops loyal to ousted first Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh on Thai channels, he told the news agency, speaking from the base. Other resistance leaders

were in the nearby Thai city of Surin and would match the games there. Nhiek Bun Chhay said. He added that he would also

like to see the matches in the relative confront of a Surin hotel but 'We are very busy now in O'Smach.'

Asked which team he sup-ported in the World Cup, the former Phnom Penh general said: "May be France? I don't know who are the good teams. We don't hear so much about this here. "Which is the best team?

don't think it is England." There has been no fighting

recently around the border village of O'Smach, Nhiek Bun Chhay said, but sporadic clashes between resistance forces and Phnom Penh strongman Bu Sen's troops continue elsewhere in northern Cambodia.

Second premier Buns En ousted Ranariddh in bloody fighting in the Cambodian capital last July. Nhiek Bun Chhay has since

led the beleaguered resistance in the north and continues to oppose Hun Sen forces in the lead-up to scheduled July polls.

Abedzadeh

Cloud over

YSSINGEAUX, France, June 10: Ahmad Reza Abedzadeh, captain and goalkeeper of the Iranian team, will probably miss Iran's opening World Cup match with Yugoslavia because of a bad knee, the team's coach

said Wednesday, reports AP.
"There isn't much chance of Abedzadeh playing in the match with Yugoslavia," coach Jalal Talebi told The Associated Press. "There's only a 40 per cent chance that he'll be well enough to play," he said.

Abedzadeh, who is still recu-

perating from a knee operation late last year, practiced with the team under heavy rain and tight security Wednesday morn-

Iran's will adopt a defensive strategy for the game with Yugoslavia, whose star-studded team packs a formidable punch. But Iranian team sources said that back-up Nima Nakissa will likely stand guard at the goal for Sunday's game in St. Eti-

Sattar Midfielder Hamedani, also recuperating from a leg injury last month, pulled out of practice and limped back to the team's living quarters with an ice pack on his knee. Team sources said he too may not be well enough to play Sunday.

Meanwhile, star striker Ali Daei, who recently underwent surgery for a broken cheekbone while playing with Armenia Bielefeld, said he had recovered completely.

Daei said he had signed up for three years with Bayern Munich and would be leaving his present Bundesliga team after the World Cup.

Daei and its two other Bundesliga strikers, the diminutive Khodadad Aziz and Karim Bagheri, are the pillars of the

"We are placed in a very tough group, but no one is going to walk over us," said Azizi. "We're going to make sure that the offense is the best part of our team." After Yugoslavia, Iran meets

the United States and Germany.

Desailly signs for Chelsea

LONDON, June 10: Chelsea completed their second international signing in 24 hours here on Tuesday when French star Marcel Desailly agreed to join the 1998 Cup Winners' Cup champions from Serie A giants AC Milan for 4.6 million pounds (7 million dollars), reports AFP. Chelsea, who paid 2.2 mil-

lion pounds for Barcelona's Spanish international defender Albert Ferrer also on Tuesday. finalised the deal in Paris where Ghana-born Desailly. who has signed a four year contract, is preparing for the World The club managed by Gian-

luca Vialli, who have also signed Italian star Pierluigi Casiraghi for 5.4 million pounds from Lazio and Danish international striker Brian Laudrup on a free transfer under the Bosman rule from Glasgow Rangers, beat off interest from a number of other clubs to land Desailly, who can play in midfield or in central defence. The 29-year-old Desailly,

capped 41 times became the first player to win successive European Cup's at two different clubs with Olympique Marseille in 1993 and the following season with AC Milan, said, he was looking forward to the challenge of playing in the Premier League after five years at the San Siro.

"Luca explained to me how it's going to work and about his ambitions, Chelsea have won the Cup Winners' Cup and they are growing and I'm happy to be part of Chelsea as they continue "I'm sure Chelsea will be at

the top. I hope in a few years we will win the Champions' League and this for me is my ambition." Desailly, who will join fel-

low World Cup squad member Franck Leboeuf and compatriot Bernard Lamabourde admitted it had been a tough decision to leave the San Siro, but added the lure of playing in the Premier league with Chelsea proved irresistable. "It was a big decision to leave

Milan after playing for five years with them and winning many trophies like the Champions' League and the league title," he said.

Odyssey of an unnatural athlete

ELINCOURT SAINTE, MAR-GUERITE, France, June 10 (AFP): Nigerian Nwanko Kanu's path from Olympic champion to major heart surgery then back to World Cup duty has been a rollercoaster ride of triumph and tragedy.

Kanu's latest problem, a mi-nor stomach ailment, is hardly a catastrophe compared with his terrible period when he thought he may never walk let alone play in a World Cup. Inter Milan's Kanu, who

missed training on Monday and had light training the following day, said he would be taking it easy on the run-up to their World Cup opener against Spain in Nantes on Saturday. Kanu's rise to international

fame was helped by his role in Nigeria's under-17 World Championship win in Japan, Ajax scouts spotted him and his career had its first big break. He played a key role in Ajax's 1994-95 European

Champions League winning side before the Olympic challenge beckoned. And Nigeria with Kanu as captain, were clearly the best side of the tournament. In the semifinal, they man-

aged to beat Brazil which included Ronaldo, and then the other great South American nation Argentina, with Ariel Ortega, were the next victims. Naturally he had really

thrust himself into the spot-

the first qualifiers for this World Cup, a full year before the finals were due to start, with their beating of Kenya, and, in a moving tribute to him, he was applauded in the crowd and even joined his teammates lap

> of honour. Kanu is only a slight build with sinewy limbs and not be normal build one would associate with an international striker. But he has competed at the highest level with consummate skill and clearly can do without any more muscle on his frame.

"I think the current team is certainly no worse than the Olympic one," he said at Nigeria's base 80-km north of Paris on Tuesday morning. His comment looks opti-

mistic following their recent sequence of defeats — the Super Eagles went down 3-0 to Yugoslavia and then slumped to a 5-1 loss against a rampant Holland. Not only did the Nigerians

lose both matches - they looked terrible in the process: Fragile in defence and punchless in attack. But Kanu remained opti-

mistic as he has always been throughout his ordeals.. "We may have lost our last

three matches, but we must keep on going," he said. "We just have to get ourselves together again and I think we can do it."

do," said midfielder Motohiro

Yamaguchi, who sings tunes by

Japanese pop group Smap alone

in his hotel room to let it all go.

"The main point is to be brave

so we can carry out everything

with plenty of computer games

and music equipment to keep

the players happy. The team

chef has been preparing rice,

miso soup and other Japanese

Lopes listens to music and goes

on walks around this resort

town on his free time.

Brazil-born striker Wagner

The team always travels

we've worked on.

dishes.

Relaxing Japs style

AIX-LES-BAINS, France June 10: A mix of Hong Kong action films, computer games and music appears to be working nerve-calming wonders for the Japanese team, reports AP. The World Cup debutants ex-

* KANU

light and had created weighty-

bargaining power for himself.

Ajax offered him a five-year

contract but Inter Milan were

able to propose an even better

megastar and the then Inter Mi-

lan manager Roy Hodgson had

plans to build a team around

Suddenly he was a football

uded relaxed confidence, often laughing during practice Tuesday, the eve of the tournament's opener. They even appeared to be enjoying themselves. There isn't a hint of jitters or

intimidation, although their opener Sunday is against twotime World Cup winner Argentina. . So much for the longtime

reputation of Japanese athletes as sure failures under pressure. prone to performing well below their abilities in international competition. "We're not doing anything all that different," said defender

Yutaka Akita, the picture of serenity. "It's just that we happen to be aiming for the World The players say there's no point in trying to be something

they can't be. The key, they say. is to stay cool and beat the mental game so they can be at their very best. "If we've come this far,

there's not much more we can

Defender Akira Narahashi says he has no problems relaxing because he has brought along his own TV set and personal collection of Jackie Chan videos "This is about time the players may be feeling nervous, a bit frustrated," said coach Takeshi Okada, who has a reputation for being in tune with the hidden inner workings of his players. "Personally, I don't think there's a single World Cup coach who can say he's having fun," he told reporters with a wry smile. Understandably, the players are excited. "Oh, I'm going to be so moved when they play the anthem," said defender Eisuke Nakanishi Even the ever confident Akita, who says he is not at all worried about Argentina, ac-

knowledged he's thrilled Japan has finally arrived at soccer's greatest tournament. "The World Cup has been my dream ever since I was a kid. It's

an honour just to be standing here," he said.

Jt Latin bid for 2010 WC

gentina and Brazil are discussing a possible joint bid to stage the 2010 World Cup, Argentine Football Association president Julio Grondona was quoted as saying on Sunday, reports Reuters. "We have been discussing it

BUENOS AIRES, June 10: Ar-

with the Brazilian officials and with the South American confederation for some time and it is going well," Grondona told soccer paper El Grafico. "Brazil has won four World

Cups and Argentina has won two. We both move millions of people every weekend thanks to - AFP photo football," he said.



STRETCHING IN SHAPE: Filip de Wilde the Belgian custodian pulls of a saye during practice at their Cailloux-sur-Fontaine base in France on June 9.

dominates sports reporting in slightly injured, according to a Japan, is infamous for sensamid-morning police report. The tional reports, even twisting man in critical condition was quotes and fabricating news. the commander of a motorcycle

ports AP.

June 26 which police used tear gas to disperse drunken soccer fans The Olympic Day Run '98, and apparently also Parisian organised by Bangladesh youths who threw bottles and Olympic Association, will be tried to knock down a phalanx held on June 26 at all six diviof policemen, using a steel barsional headquarters, including rier as a battering ram. Two of those in custody were

Dhaka, reports UNB. The Run will start at 6:30

meeting of the Olympic Day Run

Committee held at the BOA of-

fice with committee president

and BOA vice-president Col

(retd) Faruk Khan MP in the

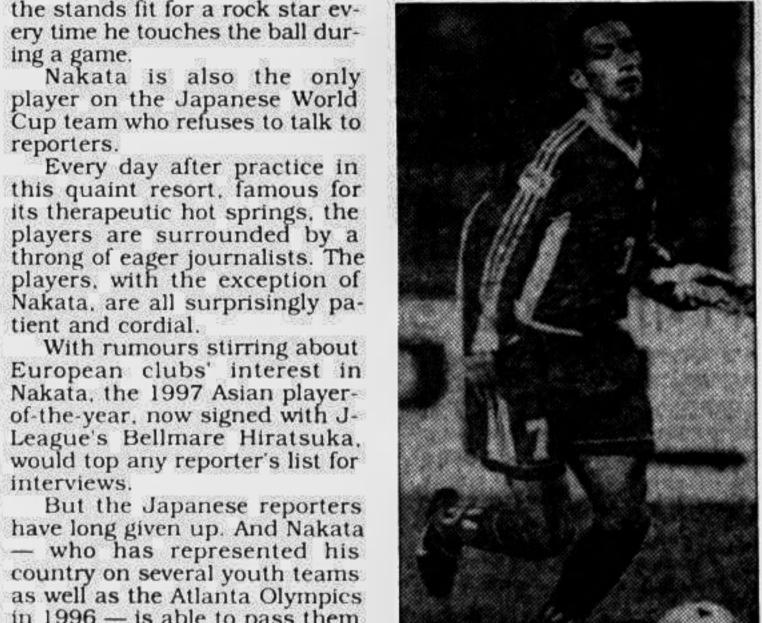
chair.

Olympic Day run

Scots, police said. An Algerian, a Liberian and a Congolese were The decision was taken at a also arrested. The nationalities

Nakata the material man In an unusual move in a society that so values harmony it frowns upon litigation, Nakata is suing the writer of an unauthorised biography, a hot-seller back home.

Nakata also has a vulnerable side. He was unable to take part in training with his team for a week last month because of an allergy-related skin rash



HIDETOSHI NAKATA

PARIS, June 10: Late-night

clashes between drunken soccer

fans. Parisian youths and riot

police left 34 policemen in-

jured, including one who was in

critical condition after being

hit in the head with a beer bot-

tle, police said Wednesday, re-

The others were only

About 15 people were ar-

rested in the unrest, during

of the others weren't immedi-

and early Wednesday on the

Champs-Elysees marred the

festive atmosphere of the

The incidents Tuesday night

ately known.

Furious celebrations

World Cup events. 60-foot-tall robots - made their way through they city to the Place de la Concorde, where tens of thousands watched a spectacle involving acrobats

suburbs actually began the disturbances.

it, I think," said Derek Christie, from Fife in Scotland. "Everybody was having a good time, and I don't think

they liked it." said his friend,

When the unrest between the

John Morrison, of Inverness.

witnesses said. In London, the Foreign Office said two Scots were in custody in Paris, but they said it was a separate incident from the troubles in the centre of Paris.

meticulously planned pre-They came as four "giants" —

and dancers in fanciful costumes. Scottish fans said Wednesday that it wasn't all the fault of the soccer fans. They said youths from Paris' troubled

"Some young kids started throwing things just for hell of

groups got out of hand, the police charged, they and other