

Sport

Asian U-19 soccer India reach final round

BANGALORE, Aug 26: A hat-trick from Nitin Pradhan helped India emerge winners in style with a 7-1 drubbing of lowly Bhutan to make sure of their trip to Thailand from the Group VI qualifying rounds of the 31st Asian youth under-19 football championship, reports PTI.

Spurs gain as takeover talk persists

LONDON, Aug 26 (Reuters/Internet): Shares in Tottenham Hotspur Plc rose five percent by late morning on Wednesday as bid hopes circulated despite Tuesday's denial from the soccer club that it was in takeover talks.

Newspaper reports said Chairman Alan Sugar might be looking to sell his 40 per cent stake, the purchase of which by a single buyer would trigger an offer for the whole company. Tottenham shares rose three pence to 64p by 1036 GMT.

Asian Games Usha's target 400 metres

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: Veteran track star P T Usha says the 400 metres would be her main event for the December Asian Games and her aim was to return timings far better than she had achieved during her peak in the 1980s.

"Looking back, I should have concentrated only on one or two events in my early days when I used to run in six events, in Bangkok, 400m will be my main event with 200m added to it, I am certainly out of the 100m," Usha, who was here for a function held in her honour, told PTI yesterday.

Usha, who reigned supreme in the Asian scene throughout the 1980s till taking a break after the 1990 Beijing Asian due to marriage and motherhood said her training timings now were in fact much better than those during her peak.

"My only problem in Fukuoka was I was yet to run enough meets to get my rhythm," the 33-year-old who had a creditable haul of gold, silver and two bronze medals at the 12th Asian track and field in Japan last month said.

Usha has set her sights on running below 51.0 seconds in the quarterfinal and around 22.60 seconds in 200 metres. To erase national marks of 51.61 sec and 23.27 sec respectively.

"If I achieve that medals will automatically come," she said.

"The Asian scene in the last decade has become very tough. When I was winning, the silver medalist used to finish far behind. But today there are number of equally capable runners and I have to run all-out in every heats."

On the last day at Fukuoka, Usha said, she ran three finals — 200m and both relays — for the first time in her nearly two-decade long international career.



French superstar Zinedine Zidane (L) of Juventus tries to evade a tackle from AC Milan skipper Paolo Maldini during their Berlusconi trophy encounter at Milan on August 25. Juventus won 2-1.

Chelsea look back at '71

MONACO, Aug 26 (Reuters/Internet): May 21, 1971 might not rank too highly in Real Madrid's glorious European history but for Chelsea it was the night they finally arrived.

The Spaniards had six European Cups to their credit while Chelsea turned up for that year's Cup Winners' Cup final boasting just one distant league title and the previous year's FA Cup.

The original meeting came two days earlier in the same Karaiskaki Stadium in Athens when Peter Osgood cancelled out Zoco's first half goal to make it 1-1 and force a replay.

Chelsea were a much-improved team for the second meeting and two goals in the space of six minutes by John Dempsey and Osgood had them deservedly 2-0 up at halftime.

Real pulled one back for the Spaniards 16 minutes from time but Chelsea held out to lift their first European trophy and spark wild celebrations amongst their nightclubbing stars.

Chelsea returned to London as conquering heroes. An open-top bus parade was suddenly becoming the norm for the team who won the previous season's FA Cup after another replay against Leeds.

The year after their European success they reached the League Cup final at Wembley,

losing to Stoke City, but instead of going on to become one of England's premier teams, they went backwards fast.

An expensive new stand almost bankrupted the club and three years later they were relegated.

Twenty undistinguished years followed as a series of managers came and went without coming close to restoring the brief glory of the early 1970s.

Finally, in the 90s, things improved. They reached the FA Cup final in 1994, losing to Manchester United, then won it in 1997.

Last season, with Gianluca Vialli now in charge, they won the League Cup and returned to Europe in style by lifting the Cup Winners' Cup for the second time.

After a huge summer spending spree Chelsea began the season with real hopes of doing something in the premier league and their fans are almost taking European competition for granted.

That is something that Real Madrid fans have been doing ever since they won the first five European Cup finals.

So much do their fans associate themselves with Europe's premier competition — which they won again in 1966 and last season — that participation in the UEFA or Cup Winners' Cup barely raises a ripple of interest.

Real did win back-to-back UEFA Cups in the 1980s but they were considered strictly consolation prizes and where that leaves the Super Cup is not hard to guess.

The competition was not around when Real ruled the European game, being introduced in 1972, a year too late for Chelsea's involvement.

Until this season it was a generally two-leg affair and in the early days threw up some eye-opening results.

In 1973 European champions Ajax Amsterdam lost the first leg to AC Milan 1-0 but won the second 6-0.

It obviously didn't please UEFA as the competition skipped a season.

In 1977 Liverpool thumped Hamburg 6-0 for a 7-1 aggregate but the goals dried up for 20 years until Juventus thrashed Paris St Germain 6-1 and 3-1 in 1996.

Last year Barcelona carried the flag for Spain, beating Borussia Dortmund 3-1 on aggregate, but the Catalan fans did not exactly go wild, the home leg being played in front of a half-empty Camp Nou stadium.

A big crowd is expected in Monaco, if only for the novelty value. For the clubs involved, that is the match's only value and in the light of current developments in the game the only Super competition being played next season is likely to be a slightly more heavyweight affair.

Spanish coaches bail out early

MADRID, Aug 26 (Reuters/Internet): Spain's managerial merry-go-round has started earlier than usual this year, with three coaches quitting their clubs before the start of the season and another one set to follow.

Real Betis, now looking for their third coach in as many weeks following the departure of Antonio Oliveira, have been the most active of Spain's first division clubs of late, but it was Real Madrid who got the ball rolling at the start of the northern summer.

Madrid, as befits their status as European Cup champions, led the way in July as Antonio Camacho discovered "a thousand reasons" to leave Madrid in only 22 days in charge.

Camacho, who was enjoying a second successful spell at Espanyol in Barcelona, had been

trumped as the man to lead Madrid back to the summit of European football, where everyone outside the club thought they were anyway.

Certainly Jupp Heynckes must have thought he had done enough to keep his job as he led Real Madrid to their first European Cup success in 32 years.

Victory over Juventus in the final left club president Lorenzo Sanz singularly unimpressed, however, and the German coach made way for Camacho.

Camacho's decision to bail out almost a whole year ahead of schedule — Madrid have changed their coach once a season without fail since Sanz took charge in 1995 — left the club with an unexpected vacancy and Guus Hiddink, who guided the Netherlands to the World Cup semifinals, stepped in to sign, somewhat optimistically, a two-year contract.

Meanwhile, Espanyol had reacted by taking on Marcelo Bielsa, who had just lifted the 'clausura' title in Argentina with Vélez Sarsfield.

Bielsa is still there at the moment, but has been offered a coaching job with the Argentine national squad and is not expected to lead Espanyol into the new season.

Which leaves Betis, whose president Manuel Ruiz de Lopera paid out a king's ransom to bring Brazilian star Denilson to the club only to find no-one there to coach him.

Luis Aragonés was the first to go at the start of August — less than a week before Denilson arrived — citing "personal reasons" for his decision.

His replacement, Antonio Oliveira, came with a sound coaching pedigree, having led the Portuguese national side in Euro 96 and Porto to a league and cup double last year.

Milan stoop to Inzaghi

Star Sport Monitor Italian international striker Filippo Inzaghi scored two typically opportunistic goals as Serie A champions Juventus came from behind to beat perennial rivals AC Milan 2-1 to clinch the Silvio Berlusconi trophy at the San Siro stadium in Milan on Tuesday.

Inzaghi, who came in as a second half substitute, just managed to deflect an Alessandro del Piero freekick over the Milan goal line in the 66th minute to equalise after top new signing German ace Oliver Bierhoff had given the local side a deserving first half lead in front of 75,000 fans. The sleek marksman then went on to break Milan's heart when he pounced on a Daniel Fonseca through and coolly placed the ball between the legs of the custodian with five minutes remaining.

Milan dominated the match and came close to scoring on a number of occasions. Liberian George Weah linked well with French Ibrahim Ba, Danish World Cupper Thomas Helveg and Bierhoff to make repeated inroads inside the unsettled Juve defence.

The constant pressure paid off in the 31st minute when Bierhoff headed in a Dimitrio Albertini corner.

The game was a traditional pre-season fixture. The Italian First Division (Serie A) kicks off on September 13.

Karlsruhe sack its coach

BONN, Aug 26 (Reuters/Internet): Karlsruhe SC on Wednesday sacked coach Joerg Berger after he was unable to arrest the decline which saw the German club relegated at the end of last season.

"This was the only decision possible in the light of our current situation," club president Roland Schmidt said.

The club said assistant coach Rainer Ulrich would take over the job for the moment.

Karlsruhe have lost four of their first five games in the second division and lie second from bottom with three points.

The club, which enjoyed several UEFA Cup runs, was relegated last season for the first time since 1985.

Berger, a much-travelled coach who had spells with Schalke 04 and Eintracht Frankfurt, was hired by Karlsruhe in March to replace the sacked Winfried Schaefer, now at VfB Stuttgart.

UEFA's thoughts on avoiding Super League

LONDON, Aug 26: UEFA, battling to avert the creation of a breakaway Super League, said on Tuesday it may merge two of Europe's three major competitions, reports Reuters.

A meeting of European soccer's governing body in Geneva rejected plans for a Super League, involving top teams such as Manchester United and Real Madrid, and said it may merge the UEFA Cup and Cup Winners' Cup.

UEFA spokesman Guido Tognoni said the meeting of top soccer officials from eight European countries agreed to study changing the format of the Champions League — Europe's top tournament — and possibly expanding it to 32 teams from 24 at present.

Tognoni told Reuters the officials rejected any attempt to form a Super League. "The essence of the meeting was that they mandated UEFA to reform the competitions," he said.

The decision was taken at the first meeting of the committee for professional football in UEFA, a group set up to meet the challenge posed by what the football body refers to as a "private project."

"The unanimous result was to reject the private project," he said, adding the committee agreed to mandate UEFA to reform European competitions. "This was the essence of the meeting."

"We expect to complete the redesign of European competition by the end of the year," said Tognoni. He said UEFA's executive committee was expected to approve the recommendations at a meeting in Monaco on Saturday.

The main options are the merging of the UEFA and Cup Winners' Cup and the reform of the Champions League. The clubs want it to be our job to generate more money for them. Basically, the clubs want more money," he said.

Europe's top clubs have been holding talks with a Milan-

based company which is leading efforts to set up a European Super League which would give the clubs a larger share of television rights and sponsorship revenue.

The company, Media Partners, held talks with representatives of several European clubs at a London lawyers' office on Monday to present its plans.

Tognoni said he expected top clubs to continue listening to the proposals of the "private project" but he rejected reports UEFA had not been adhering to European Union competition law.

He said UEFA would seek to have its reforms exempted from European Union's competition regulations. "We are in discussions with the EU on this," he said.

Officials from England, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Austria, France and Germany attended the meeting.

Committee chairman Antonio Matarrese of Italy will present the plan to UEFA's executive committee in Monaco.

UEFA Cup qualifiers

Favourites go through

LONDON, Aug 26: Juricka Vucko kicked the day for Hajduk Split as the Croats overpowered Malmo 2-1 in Sweden Tuesday to advance to the first round of the UEFA Cup with a 3-2 aggregate.

Split, held to a surprising 1-1 tie in the first leg of the second-round qualifier, took the lead in the 41st minute and doubled the advantage in the 55th minute when Vucko slammed in his second goal.

Malmo scored a consolation goal on fulltime.

"It was wonderful feeling to score twice. It has been rough going in the league play but now I may have recovered my form," Vucko said after the game.

Red Star of Belgrade came from behind to beat Russia's Rotor Volgograd 2-1 in the return match at Volgograd and advance on a 4-2 aggregate.

Red Star dominated in the first half but Rotor's goalkeeper Andrei Chichkin made several dramatic saves to keep the visitors scoreless.

The Yugoslavs maintained the ascendancy despite playing with one man down for almost 40 minutes after Jovan Gokovic was red-carded for an illegal tackle.

Rotor scored first, through striker Alexander Zernov in the 59th minute, but Red Star hit back with goals in the 70th and 80th minutes to seal the result.

Rapid Vienna beat Omonia 2-0 and relied on the away goal rule to advance to the UEFA Cup. Vienna lost 3-1 in the first leg of the qualifier in Cyprus and scraped through by keeping Omonia scoreless at home.

Rene Wagner, Rapid's sole scorer at Nikosia two weeks ago, scored the clincher in the 70th minute after swooping on a rebound off the post.

Anderlecht also qualified on away goals after a 2-0 win over Osijek of Zagreb. Anderlecht lost 3-1 in Zagreb in the first leg but held the Croats scoreless Tuesday to advance despite a 3-3 aggregate.

Anderlecht scored the decisive goal in 85th minute.

Inter Bratislava dominated former Czechoslovakia league rivals Slavia Prague 2-0 in their return match but still failed to qualify.

Inter scored two second-half goals but couldn't peg back the 4-0 advantage Slavia held after the first-leg match in Prague.

Two second-leg matches were played in Turkey, with Trabzonspor bowing out after a 2-1 loss to Poland's Wisla Krakow and Fenerbahce beating Sweden's IFK Goteborg 1-0 in Istanbul.

Wisla had a 5-1 advantage going into the match and stamped out any threat of losing by scoring the first goal through Nigerian midfielder Ibrahim Sunday in the 54th minute.

Wisla added another goal in the 64th minute before Trabzonspor midfielder Huseyin Cimsiv scored for the home side with a header in the 68th minute.

Fenerbahce advanced on the away-goal rule after a 2-2 aggregate against Goteborg.

In front of a fiercely partisan crowd it took Fenerbahce 63 minutes to overturn the 2-1 deficit against the Swedes. Elvir Balić wrong-footed the Goteborg defense in a solo effort to edge the visitors out.

Two Scottish teams were involved in qualifiers Tuesday.

Glasgow Rangers advanced with a 2-0 aggregate after a scoreless draw against PAOK Salonica in Greece, while Kilmarnock lost to Sigma Olomouc at home to exit the competition.

Rangers, who scored a 2-0 first-leg win at Ibrox two weeks ago, succeeded where English Premier League titlists Arsenal failed last year.

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Clemente makes major changes

MADRID, Aug 26 (Reuters/Internet): Spanish coach Javier Clemente on Wednesday dropped six World Cup players from his squad for the opening European Championship qualifier in Cyprus on September 5.

Clemente has responded to a wave of criticism for his tactics and team selection for France 98 — where Spain were eliminated at the group stage in one of the major surprises of the tournament — with a major overhaul of his squad.

Have to go are former Barcelona pair Albert Ferrer, the defender who moved to Chelsea in pre-season, and striker Juan Pizzi, now with River Plate. Also dropped are current Barca midfielder Alberto Celades, Real Madrid centre-back Iván Campo, Athletic Bilbao midfielder Julien Guerrero and Atletico Madrid keeper Francisco Molina.

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