

Sport

Atletico set free Vieri

MADRID, Aug 28: Atletico Madrid has told Christian Vieri he can join Lazio after agreeing a fee with the Roman club, reports Reuters.

In a statement release late on Thursday, Atletico said: "In light of Christian Vieri's wish to leave the club and return to Italy following an offer received from Lazio on Wednesday, Atletico Madrid has decided to transfer the player, subject to his negotiations with the club."

Vieri's transfer fee is believed to be around 30 million US dollars.

The decision by Atletico to sell their prized asset comes after a breakdown in the working relationship of the player and the club's new coach, Arrigo Sacchi.

The former AC Milan and Italian national team boss has reportedly been angered by Vieri's attitude in recent training sessions and seems now to have finally lost patience with the player.

Sacchi was quoted on Tuesday as saying: "You will never play for this club again while I'm here."

Arsenal victim of Dennis' phobia

LONDON, Aug 28 (Reuters/Internet) Dennis Bergkamp will not play in two of Arsenal's Champions League group games because of his fear of flying, manager Arsene Wenger confirmed on Friday.

The Dutch star will miss Arsenal's visits to Ukrainian champions Dynamo Kiev in November and their final group game against Panathinaikos of Greece in December.

Both journeys would involve a minimum 72-hour round trip by rail and road.

Arsenal have previously considered hypnotherapy to cure Bergkamp of his phobia but Wenger said on Friday the club had accepted their star striker will stay at home.

"Dennis will not play in either game," Wenger said. "We are not trying to persuade him to play and travelling by other methods is no good because he would be too knackered to play."

"I am not worried, though. We knew the situation before the draw and it gives other players like Christopher Wreh and Luis Boa Morte a chance."

But the Dutchman will play in all three of Arsenal's home matches and will make the trip to Lens in Northern France through not by plane.

Bergkamp was voted England's Footballer of the Year last season when he led Arsenal to the Premiership and FA Cup double.

But he didn't play in Arsenal's UEFA Cup tie in Salonika and the London team were eliminated on away goals.

Meanwhile, French World Cup winner Emmanuel Petit will miss his country's European Championship qualifier against Iceland on September 5.

Wenger revealed his midfielder player would instead be undergoing a minor operation for a sinus complaint, although Petit will not miss any club matches.

Petit skips qualifier

PARIS, Aug 28: Emmanuel Petit has pulled out of France's European Championship qualifier against Iceland at Reykjavik on Sept 5, reports AFP.

The Arsenal midfielder told the French Football Federation he would be having a sinus operation.

I'm here." Vieri insisted earlier this



CHRISTIAN VIERI week that he intended to stay at Atletico and work out his difference with Sacchi. But Vieri, who scored 24 goals in Spain last season followed by a five-goal haul in the

World Cup, has been forced to train with the second team over the past few days and it now appears Sacchi has been true to his word.

The deal worked out on Thursday actually represents a loss for Atletico on what they might have received for Vieri immediately after his exploits in France '98.

Lazio, one of several clubs to enquire about the Italian's availability, tabled an offer reportedly worth a staggering 39.47 million US dollars.

Vieri had been expected to resume his partnership with Brazilian Juninho this year but this latest problem — the 25-year-old Italian was last season dropped for one game and fined an undisclosed sum for insulting former coach Radomir Antic — has persuaded Atletico to sell.

Curiously, Vieri did not play in the recent 3-0 friendly victory over Lazio. Sacchi instead using Spanish international Kiko up front, and to good effect.

Atletico also have Uruguayan international Fernando Correa back at the club after a loan spell at Racing Santander but neither player is likely to be able to match the Italian's remarkable scoring rate of a goal a game and the Madrid side's chances of league and UEFA Cup success will surely be hit.

Europe's best felicitated

MONACO, Aug 28: Brazil's Ronaldo was awarded the trophies for best forward and most valuable player in the 1997-98 European season on Thursday night, reports Reuters.

Ronaldo, who helped Inter Milan win the UEFA Cup in May, was presented with both trophies at UEFA's gala dinner on the day the draw for this season's Champions' League was made.

Inter, runners-up to Juventus in the Serie A championship, were drawn to meet European Cup holders Real Madrid away in Group C on the opening day of the competition on September 16.

In the voting by the coaches of the 24 teams that reached the quarter-finals of Europe's three club competitions last season, Juventus' Marcello Lippi was named best trainer.

Peter Schemmel of Manchester United won the best goalkeeper award. Real Madrid's Fernando Hierro was named best defender and France's Zinedine Zidane of Juventus picked up the best midfielder award.

Carlsberg Euro 2000 sponsor

LONDON, Aug 28 (Reuters/Internet): Danish brewer Carlsberg gave a vote of confidence to European soccer's governing body in its fight against a breakaway Super League on Friday by announcing a big sponsorship of the Euro 2000 European games.

Carlsberg, sponsor of British club Liverpool and the England team in last month's World Cup, said it is extending its association with UEFA in the hope of repeating its success with Euro '96 whose games attracted a total 6.6 billion viewers worldwide on TV.

"We are renewing our European championship contract until the year 2000. We also signed a deal with UEFA on the UEFA Cup Winners' Cup, the UEFA Cup and the Super Cup which takes place today in Monte Carlo," Carlsberg International Sports Marketing Director Keld Strudahl told Reuters by telephone from Monaco.

Europe's top clubs have been talking to Milan-based Media Partners about plans to start a European Super League which would give the clubs a greater share of television rights and sponsorship revenue.

"It's going to be difficult," said Strudahl. "At the end of the day you don't forget your roots. UEFA is trying to keep all the clubs within their ranks and make it attractive. It's very critical if they go their own way without getting the national leagues behind it."

"I'm sure it's the toughest match and we would have preferred it to be the final."

"We began our European history against Real," said Faccetti, a member of the Inter side that beat the Spaniards in the 1964 final in Vienna, twice winners Inter retained the trophy the following year.

Real and Inter, who won the



Action from the European Cup Winners' Cup qualifying second leg match between KRC Genk and FK Apolonia at Genk, Belgium on August 27. — AFP photo

They can't wait for it to begin

MONACO, Aug 28: European Cup holders Real Madrid meet Inter Milan in a clash of giants on the opening day of the Champions' League next month after being drawn in the same group on Thursday, reports Reuters.

But Real's bitter Spanish rivals Barcelona were handed the toughest group when the draw was made in Monaco, coming out of the hat along with fellow former champions Bayern Munich and Manchester United as well as Denmark's Brondby.

Real will not be able to celebrate the record seventh title they won in Amsterdam in May at their Santiago Bernabeu stadium following a one-match ban for crowd trouble at the ground during their semifinal against Borussia Dortmund.

"On top of a tough opening game we lose home advantage (against Inter)," club president Lorenzo Sanz said.

"This is the biggest clash in European football today," said former Inter defender Giancarlo Faccetti, now a club official.

"I'm sure it's the toughest match and we would have preferred it to be the final."

"We began our European history against Real," said Faccetti, a member of the Inter side that beat the Spaniards in the 1964 final in Vienna, twice winners Inter retained the trophy the following year.

Real and Inter, who won the

UEFA Cup last season, are in Group C with Spartak Moscow and SK Sturm Graz who clash in Austria on day one, September 16.

Faccetti said: "Spartak are not among the top clubs in Europe but the Russians are always spirited rivals."

Barcelona director Amador Bernabeu said: "Manchester United and Bayern Munich can't be happy, it's a very strong group. Only one can go through to the quarter-finals when all three ought to be there."

Bernabeu said the draw had set up an exciting Champions' League in which Barcelona travel to meet Manchester United at Old Trafford in Group D on September 16 while Bayern visit Brondby.

"From the first matches good football and great spectacles are guaranteed," he said.

"Teams prepare mentally for the European matches in a different way from the (domestic) championship. There is more incentive," he said.

Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld said: "It's unbelievable. It's the hardest group we could have had... for us, it's very important to start with a win, Brondby."

English champions Arsenal could have faced yet another meeting with Manchester United as they came out of the hat initially in the same group but organising body UEFA keep teams from the same countries apart and put them in the next.

In Group E Arsenal, who have yet to win the European Cup, meet newcomers RC Lens away in their first match, pitting their French manager Arsene Wenger and key players Emmanuel Petit, Patrick Vieira and Nicolas Anelka against their compatriots.

"It will be France against France," Arsenal chairman Peter Hill-Wood said with a grin.

His opposite number Geviss Martel said Lens would find the going tough on the road, not only in London but also away to Greek champions Panathinaikos in Athens and Dynamo Kiev in Ukraine.

"But teams playing at Lens Felix Bollaert ground will also find a big atmosphere. We have the best crowd in France," he said.

He said it was a dream come true for Lens to find themselves among the European elite at the draw and they were anxious to begin the competition.

"The World Cup served as an appetiser," he said.

Other former European Cup winners who will meet in the Champions' League in two Dutch-Portuguese clashes are Ajax Amsterdam and Porto in Group C and PSV Eindhoven and Benfica in Group F.

Juventus, who have won one final and lost two in the past three years, are in Group B with Spain's third entrants Athletic Bilbao, whose French coach Luis Fernandez said: "We may be the smallest side but we have nothing to lose and everything to win."

Talbot for rivalry

BRISBANE, Aug 28: Australian swimming coach Don Talbot expects the traditional rivalry involving Australia, England and Canada to resurface at next month's Commonwealth Games, reports AP.

It was no contest in Victoria, Canada, when Australia won a record 25 gold, 17 silver and 11 bronze medals to swamp the rest of the Commonwealth four years ago.

England scored just six gold, four silver and eight bronze and Canada grabbed two gold, eight silver and nine bronze despite the advantage of a home crowd.

In Auckland in 1990, Australia also dominated the medal tally with 21 gold, 19 silver and 13 bronze.

But Talbot predicts a tougher battle at the Kuala Lumpur Games from September 11-21.

"It'll be very close swimming in KL," Talbot said Friday.

"I think it'll be a much more contested Commonwealth Games than it's been for many years which I'm really happy about. That's good for the sport and I think it's good for us."

"I don't want us to be winning

too easily. Our swimmers get careless... and I don't want them doing that, particularly going into 2000 for the Olympics."

While the Australian men's team was powerful at the Perth World Championships in January, claiming six golds to equal the United States, the women's squad has some major holes to plug.

Absent will be reigning Commonwealth 200-metre and 400-metre individual medley champion Elli Overton, who is unavailable, and retired backstroker Nicole Stevenson and distance swimmer Hayley Lewis.

Talbot is pleased with the return to form of dual Olympic 1,500-metre freestyle gold medalist Kieren Parkins, whose star has faded from the international spotlight since the Atlanta Olympics two years ago.

Perkins clocked 7 minutes, 42.85 seconds over 800 metres freestyle in a 25-metre pool recently — the second-fastest swim of the year.

"To predict a win for him I think is a little bit unreasonable but that swim was a pretty good swim and it indicates he's firing now, whereas for a little while he was in the wilderness," Talbot said.



Jo Vale Azevedo (C), president of Portuguese giants Benfica shakes hands with German champions Kaiserslautern official Robert Wedeshman (R) during the draw of the European Champions League at Monaco on August 27. The two teams were placed in the same group. — AFP photo

Jay Jay jives in Paris

PARIS, Aug 28 (Reuters): Paris St Germain may have broken the French transfer fee record for

Nigeria's Augustine "Jay-Jay" Okocha over the summer, but the 17 million US dollars star is showing no signs of wilting under the burden of expectation.

"The most important thing is that I prove to the club and to all the fans that I am worth every penny," he smiled at a recent PSG training session.

Okocha has got off to a good start, making an immediate impact for the Parisians by scoring a spectacular goal in his league debut against Girondins Bordeaux.

Three minutes after coming on as a substitute he hit what is already being talked of as a potential goal of the season, dribbling past two defenders and unleashing a ferocious shot.

"It was a goal that won the respect of his new trainer, Alan Giresse. "Okocha is a marvel to watch, he has excellent skills and that goal is clear evidence of what we hope he will do for the team this season," he said.

Okocha said: "It was a great way to start in the French league, but it was a pity that we lost that day."

"My performance has given me confidence that I am going to do well in the French league, though," he said.

The ambitious Nigerian had been anxious to leave Turkish football for the last year but the Fenerbahce board was late to let their star asset go.

"It was really difficult for them to allow me to go... they were uncertain of how they could get a replacement and I had just qualified to play as a Turkish citizen," Okocha said.

"I am a very ambitious player and I felt that if I am to get the recognition that I deserve, I needed to come to a well respected club like PSG, where I hope that I can win things," he said.

Okocha was rocked by Nigeria's World Cup elimination at the hands of Denmark and said he felt ashamed of himself for the defeat but that he and his colleagues had only themselves to blame.

"A lot of rumours were flying round that it was problems over money that caused the defeat but the truth of the matter is that we lost to a better prepared team, while we lacked focus and concentration."

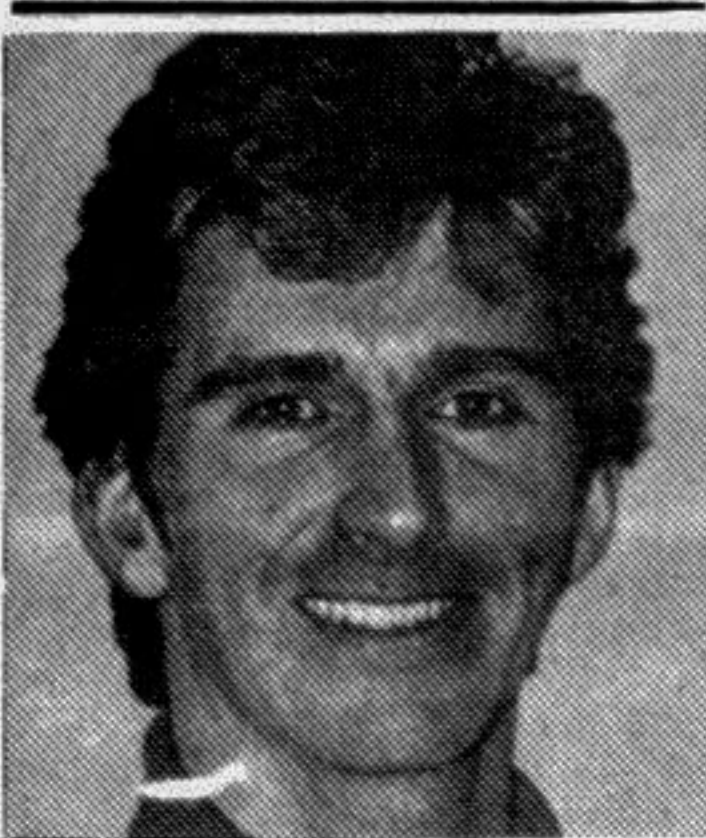
Okocha said that Nigeria's football administrators need to plan properly for future competitions if they are to avoid a repeat of the World Cup misadventure.

The Super Eagles play their first game of the 2000 African Nations' Cup qualifying series against Burkina Faso in October.

Boost sports WHIZZ KID COMPETITION FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN Competition-102 Tick the Correct Answers Post to The Daily Star Win attractive prizes Competition closes at 8 pm, Sept 11 '98, and draw shortly afterwards

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SPORTS TALK



Damon Hill (Former Formula One world champion)

"Things are shaping up well and we are already working on next year."

On his team, Jordan.

WHIZZ KID-101 Boost winner

Esha Agrani Balika Vidyalaya. Please bring your ID card and a passport size attested photograph while collecting the winner's prize from the Sport Desk of The Daily Star at 7:30 pm on September 2.)

WHIZZ KID 101 correct answers

- 1. What is the name of Brazil's new soccer coach? Ans: Luxemburgo 2. Who was the player-of-the-match in the fifth Test at Headingley? Ans: Butcher 3. How many Tests will Australia play in Pakistan? Ans: Three 4. Who is the No 1 on ATP rankings at the moment? Ans: Rios 5. Michelle Smith has been banned for? Ans: 4 yrs.

SIX NO TRUMPS

A K Sayeedul Huq

WEST RESISTED THE TEMPTATION OF IMMEDIATE CLUB RUFF (Hand #78)

Table with 4 columns: North, West, East, South. Cards listed for each position.

BIDDING (North-South were vulnerable)

Bidding table with columns: South (Akram), West (Mazumdar), North (Mizan), East (Sayeed). Bids listed for each position.

East opened a long Spade with 12 HCP. This was doubled by South, and when West came in with 2D, North passed. East rebid Spades while South showed his 5-card Club; West continued with his Diamond and finally East West reached a game contract in Diamond which was doubled by South for penalty.

THE PLAY

North led a small Club and the declarer took South's King with the Ace. Next he played the AK of Spades, throwing a Heart from hand, and ruffed a small Spade to set up the suit. Next he entered the dummy with the Ace of Heart and played a small Diamond which was taken by South with the Ace as it was no use in ducking the trick. South then made an error by playing back a Heart which was ruffed by the declarer who next played the King of Diamond to clear the trumps. Next a Club was ruffed in the dummy and on the good Spades the losing Clubs were slapped. The error by South was not to think of blocking the entry of the declarer into the dummy. South could do so by playing a Club on winning the Ace of Diamond and allowing the declarer to ruff a Club in the dummy one trick earlier. In that case, the declarer could not reach the dummy after clearing the trumps and ultimately there would have remained a Club loser.

French streak takes a break

BORDEAUX, France, Aug 28: France's victory streak at the World Cycling Championships has to end Friday. It has no rider in the women's individual pursuit.

However it has good chances in two other finals of the evening. Especially the women's individual sprint where Felicia Ballanger is seeking her fourth consecutive title, reports AP.

The French men's team pursuit is also in a good position to pull a surprise after posting the top time in the quarterfinals of the event Wednesday.

After three gold medals in three events over the first two days, it will have to stop in the women's individual pursuit, where the French didn't put any entries.

The French Federation judged that an aging Jeannie Longo — with more than a dozen world titles but approaching 40 — was not of world class shape despite the fact that she won the French title last month.

Also Marion Clignet, who holds the world record and won the 1996 world title and Olympic silver medal, has been ill and also out of shape.

So that leaves the battle between Germany's defending

champion Judith Arndt and Australia's Lucy Tyler-Sharman.

Tyler-Sharman led the women's individual pursuit qualifying on Thursday.

Tyler-Sharman is one of the members of the Australian team that is in conflict with Australian coach George Walsh and his methods. That made Tyler-Sharman and two others to leave the team's training camps to practice apart from the main group.

In the women's sprint event, Ballanger of France and Michelle Ferris of Australia continued on their way to another showdown.

Ballanger faces Jennie Reed of the United States in one semifinals and Ferris is against Tanya Dubnicoff of Canada in the other.

If Ballanger wins, it would be her seventh title since 1995. She has won the sprint and the 500-metre time trial the last three years.

France and Ukraine are the two top teams in the men's team pursuit.

France won the first three events of the championship.

Philippe Ermenault won the individual pursuit title on Wednesday beating teammate

Francis Moreau.

Arnaud Tournant set a sea level best in capturing the kilometre time trial and joined Florian Rousseau and Vincent Le Quellec for the Olympic sprint team title the next day.

In Friday's qualifying, Rousseau, seeking his third consecutive individual sprint title, had the best time of the 200 metres and took his first round easily.

Another Frenchman, Laurent Gane, had the second fastest 200 and joined Rousseau in the next round along with Tournant.

The track championships last until Sunday. The road championships — where France won three titles last year — will be in the Netherlands in October.

Schools hockey

The first semifinal of the 3rd schools hockey tournament will be held today at 4 pm at the BKS ground, reports UNB.

Meanwhile, in the day's first match yesterday Police Line High School defeated MDC Model Institute 2-1.

The second match between Kasba Hill High School and Police Line High School was ended in a goalless draw.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer. Includes crossword grid and clues for across and down words.