

Libregts finally signs contract

ABUJA, Oct 12 (Reuters/Internet): Dutchman Thijs Libregts finally signed a four-year contract on Monday to coach Nigeria's national soccer team.

From our own assessment he is the best candidate most suitable for this appointment and that is why he was appointed," said Nigeria Football Association chairman Abdulmuminu Aminu after the contract, which has been the subject of months of negotiation, was signed in the capital Abuja.

Under the terms of the contract, which will be reviewed after two years, Libregts will get a salary of \$30,000 per month plus a one-off signing fee of \$150,000 in addition to allowances for travel and housing.

Aminu said all the demands of Libregts had been met by the FA and expressed confidence in the ability of the former Dutch national coach to improve on Nigeria's current soccer standing.

As the sixth foreign coach to head Nigeria in six years, his immediate task is to raise a team to qualify for the Africa Nations' Cup scheduled to take place in Zimbabwe in 2000.

PSG coach in want of Ginola

PARIS, Oct 12 (Reuters/Internet): New Paris St Germain coach Arthur Jorge, who replaced Alain Giresse last week, said on Monday he would like to re-sign former PSG winger David Ginola, currently enjoying some outstanding form with Tottenham Hotspur in England.

We'll discuss a possible deal with the club officials. I know Ginola would like to return to PSG but, to tell you the truth, I haven't talked to him yet," he said. Jorge coached Ginola at PSG in 1994, the last time the Parisians won the French domestic crown.

Ginola then left for England, where he spent two years at Newcastle United before joining Spurs last season. The one outstanding player as Tottenham battled against relegation last season, and has maintained his form in the premier league this season although he is yet to score.

However, with Tottenham recently appointing the pragmatic George Graham as coach, there has been some speculation that Ginola could leave Spurs.

Graham though, already unpopular with certain sections of the Spurs fans because of his connections with their arch-rivals Arsenal, would probably not rush into off-loading Tottenham's most popular player immediately.

Jorge meanwhile, on his first day at the head of the troubled Parisian side, currently 12th in the French first division standings, said he would retain the staff, which had been named around Giresse at the start of the season.

But he added current Le Havre trainer Denis Troch, who would act as his assistant, could soon join him.

The whole Parisian team will leave the French capital on Tuesday for the nearby castle of Lesigny where Brazil stayed during last summer's World Cup.

A month of madness for the English & Germans



PARIS, Oct 12 (AFP): One month into the two-year Euro 2000 qualifying campaign and two of the pre-tournament favorites, England and Germany, are already being written off.

Both teams have followed up their disappointing World Cup performances with a disastrous start to the Euro competition. England, who lost their first match in Sweden 2-1, were booted off the pitch on Sunday when they were held to a 0-0 draw at Wembley by Bulgaria.

And Germany, the defending Euro champions, made the worst possible start to the tournament when they were humiliated by a 1-0 defeat in Turkey.

Little wonder that managers Glenn Hoddle and Erich Ribbeck are desperately hoping for a major change in fortune to restore credibility when their teams play again on Wednesday.

Last July, England's Hoddle was at pains to tell anyone willing to listen that his side's second-round World Cup exit was due to "bad luck" — albeit of a kind which has dogged England sides on a curiously regular basis since their 1966 World Cup triumph.

Certainly the defeat on penalties inflicted by Argentina at France 98 was cruel — but Hoddle's men have hardly been looking like potential world-beaters.

The latest setbacks have left the English fans' patience at breaking point and the dismal draw against Bulgaria has prompted a welter of vitriolic criticism.

Cluelles England's and 'We've Hodd enough' were two of the kinder headlines in the British press on Sunday following the Wembley flop.

One correspondent claimed that Hoddle's side, far from being capable of taking on the world's best, could not have beaten the Isle of Man.

England now face practically the next best thing — they take on the part-timers of Luxembourg.

But although the result of such a match would have been considered a foregone conclusion a few weeks ago, that is no longer the case.

Nevertheless Hoddle is hoping injured Arsenal stalwart Tony Adams will be fit and back in this side alongside David Beckham, who was suspended from the Bulgaria match.

But his midfield will still be without Liverpool players Paul Ince and Jamie Redknapp.

Both are suspended — a pointer to a growing indiscipline in the England camp. Ince is serving out a three-month ban for a red card in Sweden and the comments he made thereafter to the referee, and Redknapp picked up one caution too many on Sunday by fouling Milan Petkov.

'Jamie's out and that's a blow for us because I thought he did quite well,' said Hoddle. 'We have a few injury doubts and some knocks and bruises. Two points have slipped by but I believe we can still qualify.'

That may not be the case, however, given the confident starts made by both the Swedes and early group leaders Poland who have yet to lose a match.

Germany's Ribbeck can shrug off some of the blame for the loss against Turkey by pointing out that he has only just taken over at the helm following the dismissal of Berti Vogts. But he is clearly aware that his players must turn things around against Moldova in midweek.

Spain, still smarting from their opening round World Cup exit, are another side who have known happier times.

On Wednesday, they play Israel, another foregone conclusion before the tournament but that was before they lost to Cyprus 3-2 in their first qualifying match.

The new Spanish coach Jose Antonio Camacho went some way to restoring morale with a friendly win over Russia three weeks ago — but Wednesday will be a serious test.

As Hoddle, Ribbeck and Camacho ponder how to steady their buffeted ships, all seems sweetness and light again for world champions France and Italy.

The Italians head group one courtesy of Alessandro Del Piero's two goals against Switzerland which ended a five-month drought in front of goal.

Coach Dino Zoff almost dropped the Juventus striker, but Del Piero emerged from his nightmare World Cup by scoring two brilliant goals.

There have been a lot of difficult times recently, but I can promise you that I never got frightened or gave up. I've just kept doing what I had to do," said Del Piero.

Del Piero's goals were just the tonic his countrymen needed with Italian football currently in turmoil following damaging accusations about doping-test procedures.

Italy have a night off Wednesday while Switzerland and struggling Denmark, beaten by Wales on Saturday, slug it out.

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Jamaica just miss out

KINGSTON, Jamaica, Oct 12: Jamaica scored a bitter-sweet five-run victory over Barbados in the Red Stripe Bowl cricket match at Sabina Park Sunday, falling to advance to the semi-finals because of the superior run-rate of the Bajans, reports AP.

Barbados, the Leeward Islands and Jamaica all finished on six points, but Jamaica lost out on one of the semifinals from Zone Two after failing to bowl out Barbados for under 197 runs.

Chasing Jamaica's score of 209 for nine made in 50 overs, Barbados scored 204 for nine in 49 overs. Because they failed to complete their 50 overs before 1 pm, match officials subtracted one over from the Barbados innings.

Barbados were coasting at 105 for two in the 24th over with captain Philo Wallace in full flight when he was controversially given run out by umpire Roy Malcolm.

Wallace seemed to have made his ground attempting a second run, but Malcolm ruled that he fell just short. Wallace made 59 with typical aggression, clouting one six and eight fours off 73 deliveries.

A fourth wicket stand of 29 between the experienced Roland Holder and Courtney Browne steadied the Bajan innings but when Holder was fifth out, bowled by legspinner Bryan Murphy for 27, the Barbadian innings went into decline, setting the stage for an exciting finish.

However, aggressive batting from the Barbados lower order saw their team past the 197 target and a place in the semifinals where they will play either Guyana or Trinidad and Tobago.

Earlier, the Jamaican batting order again failed to deliver the goods after captain James Adams won the toss and decided to bat first. Only in-form Wavell Hinds, who made 47, looked comfortable against the Bajan attack and it took a late-order flourish from Nehemiah Perry (31) and Murphy who finished unbeaten on 36 to see them to a respectable total.

Chilavert, 33, who captained his country at the World Cup in France and plays for Velez Sarsfield in Argentina, told reporters in Tokyo that he was considering an offer to join the Merseyside giants.

According to Chilavert, Liverpool's first approach followed soon after the World Cup in July but was turned down by his club.

Chilavert is well-known for scoring goals from free kicks and penalties — he has scored over 30 for club and country during his career — and is also one of the world's top goalkeepers.

In Tokyo on Saturday, however, he was beaten three times by a Japanese striker who couldn't even win a place in his country's World Cup squad.

Atsushi Yanagisawa, a 21-year-old striker with the Kashima Antlers, scored all three goals as a Japanese XI beat a World XI 3-1 in the J-League's Jomo Ku exhibition match in front of 47,020 fans at the National Stadium in Tokyo.

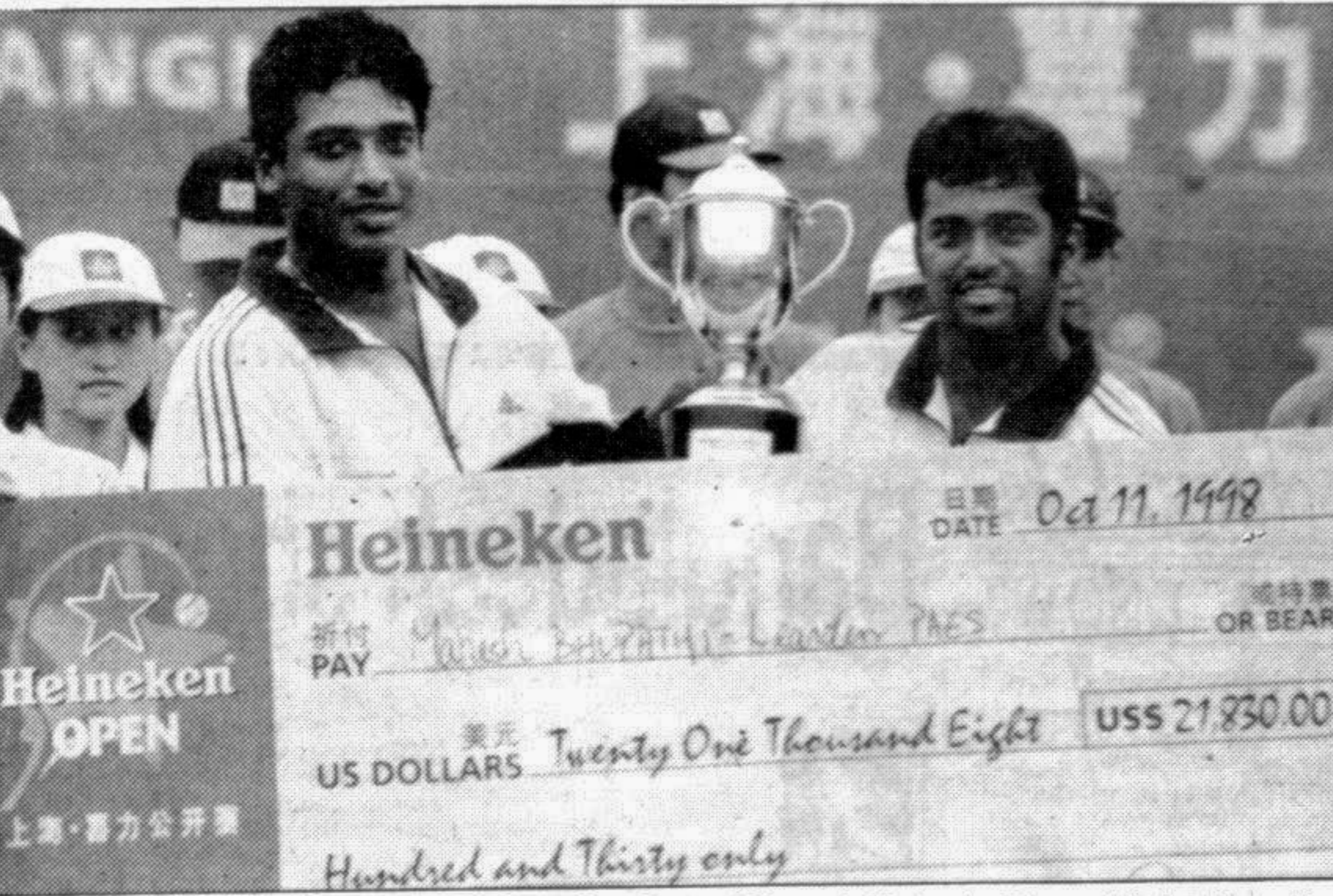
With the game goalless at half-time, Yanagisawa replaced World Cup striker Masashi Nakayama and scored in the 52nd, 79th and 83rd minutes.

Argentine forward Fernando Oliva, who plays for Shimizu S-Pulse in the J-League, had headed his team level in the 78th minute. After the game, S-Pulse's Argentine boss Oreste Ardiles, who managed the World XI, said: "Japan lacked a centre forward at the World Cup but today they found one in Yanagisawa. He will be very important for Japan in the future."

Mexican international Luis Hernandez scored twice as UNL beat Atletico Celaya 4-1, but the "Tigers" remained third in group four, five points behind leaders and defending champions Toluca who won 3-0 at Monterrey.

The 21-year-old striker signed a five-year contract to move from Montpellier, where he earned a reputation as one of the French league over the last three years.

Everton are 14th in the Premier league with two wins from eight matches but have not scored a goal in four home matches.



India's leading doubles pair of Leander Paes (R) and Mahesh Bhupathi holding the Heineken Open Trophy and winners cheque of 21,830 dollars after their final against Australians Todd Woodbridge and Mark Woodforde at Shanghai yesterday. The Indians won 6-4, 7-6. — AFP photo

Hoddle shown sympathy



UNDATED, Oct 12 (Reuters/AFP/Internet): England coach Glenn Hoddle, under fire to quit after some disappointing results, received support from three top figures in British soccer during the last two days — former national team assistant manager Lawrie McMenemy and top strikers Alan Shearer and Michael Owen.

Owen gave Hoddle a vote of confidence on Monday after the disappointing 0-0 draw with Bulgaria in Saturday's European championship qualifier.

"It's obvious that the crowd was not happy and were booing. It's obvious what some people think but I don't feel that personally. He's the right man for the job," Owen told a news conference.

"I think the players were partly to blame for the performance. The manager's put a team on the pitch and you don't see many people before a game complaining about the team selection."

"I can't see why virtually every bit of the blame is heaped on the manager when it's the players who have stepped out on the pitch," the teenager said.

Defender Gareth Southgate also came to Hoddle's defence, saying that England's poor form in their last two games was largely a matter of confidence.

"A lot of it is to do with confidence. If you're getting the results, players are free to express themselves. I don't think it is down to the coach, to be fair."

Captain Shearer on Sunday insisted the under-fire national coach still has the support backing of the players.

Shearer, whose much vaunted partnership with World Cup sensation Owen again failed to deliver, claimed that Hoddle was still the man to carry the nation's hopes.

The Newcastle striker urged for matters to be put into perspective and said: "Only two games ago people were saying that with a bit of luck we could have won the World Cup."

According to Shearer, Hoddle still has the full support of the squad.

Shearer said: "The players are still motivated by Glenn Hoddle, there's absolutely no doubt about that. The manager has got the players backing 100 per cent."

"He shouldn't have to ask that question of us — and I don't think he will. We all still believe in him."

McMenemy, who was assistant England manager under Graham Taylor as well as a successful club manager at Southampton in the 1970s and 1980s, added: "The pressure is now tremendous on the players. The result was not good for England."

"Now people expect them to thrash Luxembourg. There are no easy games, you go one game at a time when it is like that."

Hoddle, whose team lost their opening Group Five qualifier 2-1 to Sweden last month, has just a few days to get his team in the right frame of mind before the Luxembourg clash.

The papers made depressing reading for the squad on Sunday.

"Now Hoddle should lose his job," the people said in a back page editorial.

The news of the World said: "England were a disgrace. They were clueless, hopeless and gormless. It is hard to imagine how Hoddle can continue as coach after failing to inspire his side."

But Welsh coach Bobby Gould, buoyant after his team upset Denmark 2-1 in Copenhagen on Saturday, said the results of the British teams this weekend needed to be put into perspective.

"No one got beaten," said Gould who himself faced fierce criticism before Saturday's result. "I think people don't go into the results with enough depth."

Hoddle suffered a further setback when key defender Tony Adams, who missed Saturday's game because of a back injury, remained unavailable.

Alan Shearer

"But it's not just him we owe a performance to on Wednesday. We owe one to ourselves and the fans. We owe England a performance."

As the media campaign calling for Hoddle to resign gathered momentum McMenemy, the Northern Ireland manager said: "Glenn is strong-minded and single-minded."

"If he can get it together and get a result in the next match against Luxembourg on Wednesday, it will not alleviate everything but it will get the team on the way."

Saturday's stalemate cast a huge question mark over England's chances of qualifying for the World Cup.

Penarol fail to make it six



RIO DE JANEIRO, Oct 12 (Reuters/Internet): Penarol were denied a chance to win their sixth consecutive Uruguayan title when they lost 3-2 to River Plate. The title will now be settled between their great rivals Nacional and modest Rentistas.

There were spectacular games in Brazil, where Atletico Mineiro and Botafogo drew 5-5, and Bolivia where Real Potosi, a club that boasts one of the world's highest stadiums, beat Chaco Petrolero 6-5.

Penarol, who have won the Uruguayan championship for the last five years, saw their run come to an end at the weekend when they lost 3-2 to modest River Plate, namesake of the more famous Argentine club.

Too add insult to injury, former Penarol players Martin Rodriguez and Diego Aguirre scored two of the River goals.

Penarol are four points behind Rentistas in the Clausura, the second stage of the championship, with just one game remaining for each team. They needed to win the Clausura to claim a place in the final against arch-rivals Nacional, winners of the Apertura (first stage).

Rentistas beat Huracan Buceo 1-0 and opened up a two point lead over Nacional, who were held to a 0-0 against modest Liverpool.

If Rentistas win the Clausura next weekend, they will play off against Nacional for the title. If Nacional win the Clausura, they take the title automatically.

In any case, Uruguayan football, which has been struggling financially for years, will now be deprived of the possibility of a lucrative Penarol-Nacional clash in the final, a best of three play-off.

Penarol have won the title 45 times, against 35 Nacional and 16 for all the other teams combined.

In Brazil, Atletico Mineiro and Botafogo drew 5-5 in one of the most remarkable matches in Brazilian championship history.

Botafogo led 2-0 at halftime. Atletico hit-back with five goals in 30 minutes, four of them through former Benfica striker Valdir, after the break before Botafogo scored three in the last five minutes of an amazing match to earn a point.

It was the second time in the championship that Atletico, coached by Brazil's 1970 World Cup captain Carlos Alberto Torres, had let slip a three-goal advantage.

Santos, who had two players and coach Emerson Leao sent off in the first leg of the Copa Libertadores final last Wednesday, had defenders Sandro and Elber dismissed in their 3-1 defeat by Vasco da Gama.

Corinthians, who have taken one point out of 15, dropped to fourth after a 4-1 defeat away to Flamengo and now face a week without coach Vanderley Luxemburgo, who is in charge of the national team for Wednesday's friendly against Ecuador in Washington.

Palmeiras remained top thanks to a 1-0 win over international, courtesy of a free kick from Paraguayan full-back Francisco Arce. The top eight teams qualify for the quarter-finals.

In Argentina, Martin Palermo's 11th goal of the championship helped Boca Juniors extend their lead to six points in the Argentine Apertura championship, which the halfway mark at the weekend.

Unbeaten Boca, for whom Jose Basualdo and Guillermo Barros Schelotto also scored, won 3-0 away to Colon and have dropped only six points in ten games.

They are six points ahead of Racing Club, Gimnasia-La Plata and Lanus. River Plate won only their second game when they came from behind to beat Ferro Carril Oeste 4-1.

In Mexico, Cruz Azul extended their unbeaten run in the Mexican Invierno (Winter) championship to 11 games as they beat group rivals Guadalajara 2-1 thanks to an injury time goal from Argentine striker Mauro Camoranesi.

Cruz Azul, who extended their lead in group one to four points over Guadalajara, have dropped only six points in the tournament.

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The 21-year-old striker signed a five-year contract to move from Montpellier, where he earned a reputation as one of the French league over the last three years.

Everton are 14th in the Premier league with two wins from eight matches but have not scored a goal in four home matches.

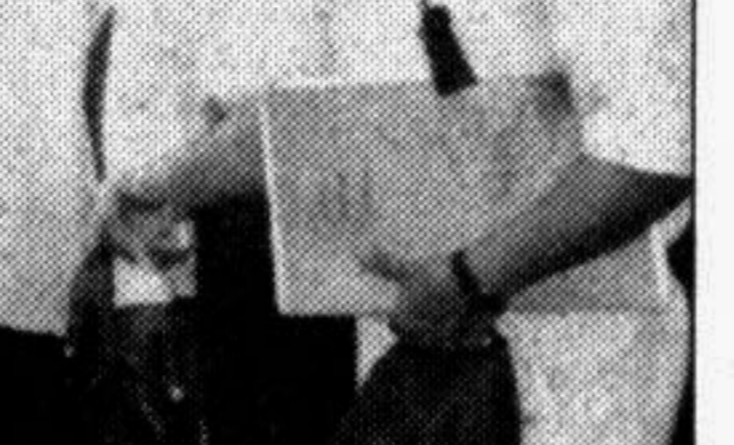
Everton buy Bakayoko

LIVERPOOL, England, Oct 12: Ibrahim Bakayoko became Everton manager Walter Smith's latest acquisition Monday when the Ivory Coast international signed a 4.5 million pound (£7.65 million dollars) transfer deal, reports AP.

The 21-year-old striker signed a five-year contract to move from Montpellier, where he earned a reputation as one of the French league over the last three years.

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SIX NO TRUMPS

A K Sayeedul Huq

COUNT, COUNT FOR GOOD DEFENCE (Hand # 118)

Table with 4 columns: North, South, West (D), East. Contains card counts for various suits.

Bidding table with columns for South, West, North, East and rows for 2 Hearts, 3 Clubs, 4 Spades.

North did not support partner's Heart immediately. His 3 Spades were raised by partner to game, thus establishing a 4-4 fit. This is a marginal hand but with a fit in partner's Heart suit and singleton Club North thought that there might be a game!

THE PLAY East leads the K of Clubs, West plays 9 and the declarer drops 10. The Ace of Clubs was continued — the declarer throws a small Heart, instead of ruffing the Club.

The third Club was ruffed by the declarer in the closed hand. The Ace and King of the trumps are played — West drops 9 and 10. East plays 3 and then 2 showing three cards in the trump suit. Next a small Heart is played toward the closed hand and when West plays low, the Queen is played from the closed hand which wins the trick. The 10 of Hearts is returned from the closed hand, East plays 4 and then 3 indicating doubleton. A small Heart is played from the dummy, West wins with the Jack.

At this stage, West knows that both the East and declarer do not have any more Heart. East has one Spade, two Diamonds and three Clubs. The dummy has two Spades, three Hearts and the Queen of Diamond. If West now leads the Ace of Hearts, it will be ruffed in the closed hand and the partner may or may not be able to over ruff. West could see the plan chalked out by the declarer. He wants to ruff the Heart in the closed hand, and then play the Ace of Diamonds and enter dummy by ruffing the second Diamond, take out the remaining trump with the East and cash the good Hearts to make four Spades. West therefore plays a small Diamond, instead of trying to give partner a Heart ruff. West did not think there was any risk of the dummy's winning the Queen of Diamonds because East must have the King for his bid of 2 Clubs. Now the declarer is unable to execute his plan. If he ruffs the Diamond and then ruffs the Heart he is unable to enter dummy to take out the remaining trump. The declarer could have executed this plan by playing the trumps one round only. Alternatively, the declarer can make the hand by ruffing the second Club provided he correctly guesses the position of the Ace and Jack of Hearts.

Tale of a tiny territory



ANDORRA, Oct 12 (Reuters/Internet): Andorran players are thrilled to meet world champions France on Wednesday at the Stade de France, an arena with more seats than their tiny principality has inhabitants.

"I can't wait to be in Paris and see the stadium from the pitch," said defender Richard Imbernon ahead of their European championship group four qualifier, on paper one of the most unbalanced clashes in the history of soccer.

Andorra, a small territory with a population of 66,000 at the foot of the Pyrenees between Spain and France, launched their own federation in 1994 and became affiliated to FIFA two years later.

They are taking part in their first big international tournament and are more than aware that their chances are dim.

Brazilian coach Manoel Miliur, who played for Vasco da Gama in his home country, does not have the best working conditions in this land of the tax-free.

"As far as money is concerned it is a change from favelas (shanty towns)," he told the news agency in an interview. "But if I were cynical I would say that the national sport here is opening and closing the cash box."

Had federation president Francesc Vila not been in the building trade, Andorra would have struggled to find a pitch. There is very little flat land in the area and where there is some, a duty free shop is built upon it.

The stadium is small but meets required standards. Andorra entertained Ukraine on the pitch last week and did well to limit defeat to 2-0.

There are about a thousand players affiliated to the federation but only 50 Andorrans. Among those only 32 play at a decent level," he said.

"In all I can only really count on about 18 players."

There are six professionals in the squad, playing in Spain or Portugal in the second division. Striker Emiliano Gonzalez-Arquez is a postman and team captain Jesus Lucendo-Heredia sells tobacco in the mountains and has been dubbed "the smuggler".

Wednesday's encounter with France will not be Andorra's first match against world champions. Last June, shortly before the World Cup finals, they hosted holders Brazil and lost 3-0.

"That day we lost but we also lost our inferiority complex," Imbernon said.

He said his team, who won a friendly against Estonia two years ago, would be ready to take their chances if they had any.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS 1 USO, 4 Workshops, 8 George Michael, 12 Firewood, 13 There'll be a time... 14 L