

Kirsten out with thigh strain

BOON, Oct 16 (Reuters/Internet): Germany striker Ulf Kirsten injured a thigh muscle in Wednesday's 3-1 win over Moldova in their European Championship qualifier and will miss Bayer Leverkusen's Bundesliga match away to promoted Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday.

Kirsten was substituted in the 74th minute of the game in Chisinau after scoring twice. He was to undergo medical checks on Thursday to determine how serious the injury is, a Leverkusen spokesman said.

Warne back in action

BRISBANE, Oct 16: Star leg-spinner Shane Warne has bowled a cricket ball for the first time since his shoulder surgery in May, 10 days before England arrives for the Ashes tour, reports AP.

Warne, who last week rolled his arm over to bowl a tennis ball, sent down a few deliveries at Victorian state training, coach John Scholes said Friday.

Warne remains on target to meet England, although Scholes rates him only a 50-50 chance to play in Victoria's opening Sheffield Shield match against Tasmania starting Wednesday.

The five-Test series starts in Brisbane on Nov 20 but the squad arrived to acclimatize next week.

Warne watched his Victorian team play Tasmania in a practice match Thursday.

"He rolled his arm over after the match a few times and he was quite happy about it," Scholes said. "He rolled a few over and did have a bit of a turn," he said.

Scholes said he would be closely monitoring Warne's progress in the lead up to the start of the MCG game.

"He's a 50-50 chance, it's a day to day thing at the moment, it depends how he's going over the next few days," Scholes said.

Warne, who has a record number of wickets by a spinner, had surgery to repair torn cartilage and ligaments in his bowling shoulder after returning from Australia's tour of India and Sharjah.

Initially it was feared he could be out of the game for up to two years.

Kournikova still uncomfortable on court

NEW YORK, Oct 16: It has been nearly four months since Anna Kournikova injured her right thumb, and she still doesn't feel right on the court, reports AP.

"I need to have some more match experience and get a lot of matches in a row to try to get back to where I was before the injury happened," Kournikova said during a conference call Wednesday to announce she was the ninth player to qualify for next month's 16-player Chase Championships at Madison Square Garden.

The 17-year-old Russian strained ligaments in her thumb when she tumbled on a slippery grass court at Eastbourne, England, during the quarterfinals against Steffi Graf. Kournikova managed to beat Graf, but had to pull out of the semifinals of the Wimbledon tennep.

"After it happened my hand was blue and green," said Kournikova, who was sidelined for the next two months missing Wimbledon.

Kournikova returned before the US Open but in the six tournaments since, she has not advanced past the quarterfinals.



VERY LITTLE WENT RIGHT FOR THEM: Pakistani cricketers celebrating a rare wicket during Day Two of the second Test against Australia at Peshawar yesterday. — AFP photo

ECB breaks up with BBC TV

LONDON, Oct 16 (Reuters/Internet): English cricket Test matches will switch to commercial television for the first time next year, breaking a 60-year-old TV link with public broadcaster the BBC.

The England and Wales Cricket Board said on Thursday it had clinched a deal worth 103 million pounds (175.5 million dollars) with Channel Four and BSkyB allowing the commercial broadcasters to cover all major cricket matches in Britain for the next four years.

Free-to-air Channel Four will cover live all domestic Test matches each season bar one. The Test not shown on Channel Four will be broadcast on subscription TV channel Sky Sports, part of Rupert Murdoch's News Corp empire.

Channel Four will also invest 13 million pounds to market and promote cricket to viewers.

It is another blow to the BBC which has seen its share of the sporting action eroded by commercial rivals in recent years.

Despite its reputation as a quintessentially English sport, cricket's domestic audiences have tailed off in recent years due to the lacklustre performances of England's national team and a growing perception among the young that five-day tests were dull compared with sports like soccer.

Channel Four, state owned but funded by advertising and sponsorship revenue, said it planned to rejuvenate the summer game by updating cricket coverage.

While respecting the traditions of the sport, our goal is to help cricket reconnect with a younger and diverse multicultural audience," Channel Four Chairman Michael Jackson said in a statement.

The agreement came after the British Government decided earlier this year to remove England cricket Test matches from

its list of protected sports which had to be made available to free-to-air television.

This protected status had helped to guarantee that Test matches were shown on the BBC, where they have become an institution since the 1930s.

The government's decision drew an angry response from many fans, who feared they would have to pay to watch future matches on subscription TV.

But the England and Wales Cricket Board backed the switch, arguing that the move would raise added revenues and increase viewership by selling TV rights to the highest bidder.

Under the commercial TV deal, Channel Four has secured live rights to 21 home Test matches between 1999 and 2002.

Meanwhile, Sky Sports -- which already covers England's international tours -- will have exclusive rights to cover one domestic Test match each year, as well as all home one-day internationals.

Milosevic aims to sink Real

MADRID, Oct 16 (Reuters/Internet): Real Zaragoza striker Savo Milosevic is convinced he can help his club approach to Saturday's clash with Real Madrid can see his side consolidate their position at the top of the Spanish league -- and hand their opponents a damaging third successive defeat.

Victory over the European champions would put Zaragoza at least three points clear at the top and pile the pressure on Madrid coach Gius Hiddink ahead of a vital Champions' League clash with Austrian side Sturm Graz in midweek.

Milosevic, who has been outstanding since his pre-season move from Aston Villa, believes a win is within their grasp if they look to counter Madrid's renowned attacking play with some fire of their own.

"We're coming up against one of the best sides in Europe at the moment and this is the most important game for me since I arrived in Spain," he said.

"But we've demonstrated that we're a good team too and we have no reason to fear anyone."

"We shouldn't change our style of play because if we try to play behind the ball we'll lose for certain. If we play our own game we can win."

Zaragoza's success this season has been based on the vision of Milosevic and his partnership with the Brazilian Jamelli.

Between them they have notched four goals this term and with Marcos Vales adding a brace from midfield, Zaragoza can be confident of causing problems for a Madrid defence that has been struggling of late.

A strong start to the season, which saw them win their first three games, has been undermined by defeats by Real Betis in the league and Spartak Moscow in Europe.

That Russian lapse has left the European champions desperate for victory on Wednesday and Hiddink admitted on Friday he is concerned about the downturn in fortunes.

"While we were winning at the start of the season everyone was euphoric," said Hiddink. "Now, it seems like we've forgotten how to play football. Both are exaggerations."

"Of course I'm worried -- but I'm also sure we can work this out now."

Hiddink's hopes of making a return to winning ways have been hit by injuries to right-back Christian Panucci and midfielder anchor Fernando Redondo.

Neither are expected to recover in time for Saturday, meaning a possible start for out-of-form Christian Karem-

beu on the right side of the defence and a first appearance of the season for young midfielder Guti.

The team should be boosted, though, by the return of Davor Suker, who was on target for Croatia in Wednesday's European Championship qualifier against Macedonia.

While Madrid have seen a good start to the season slip away, their arch-rivals Barcelona have found some good form of late to climb up to third place in the table, three points behind Zaragoza and just a point back from Madrid.

The Catalans host lowly Salamanca on Saturday and, despite continued injuries to key defenders, the excellent form of Dutch striker Patrick Kluijver should see them avenge last season's shock defeat at the Nou Camp.

Spain's third Champions' League representatives, Athletic Bilbao, face a far trickier looking home clash with Valencia, who will have their first-choice strike partnership on show for the first time this season.

Adrian Ilie returns after a thigh muscle problem to partner Claudio Lopez, the Argentine who missed the first four games of the season through suspension.

Another intriguing Saturday clash pairs Real Betis, whose 1-0 win over Real Madrid two weeks ago was their first of the season, and Celta Vigo, who are still unbeaten. Betis will look to Brazilian winger Denilson to build on his much improved display against Madrid as they bid to move up from a woeful 19th place in the league.

SIX NO TRUMPS

A K Sayeedul Huq

SOUTH MAKES A COMPETITIVE BID BUT EAST MAKES A CRUCIAL UNDERLEAD
(Hand # 121)

North (D)	South
♠ S: KJ 98	♠ S: 10542
♥ H: AQ5	♥ H: J8
♦ D: J43	♦ D: Q985
♣ C: Q92	♣ C: J103

Bidding: Neither side was vulnerable.

South	West	North	East
Pass	Pass	1 Diamond*	1 No Trump
Pass	3 Hearts	2 Spades	Pass
3 Spades	Pass	Pass	Pass

* Artificial opening

With minimum HCP and a distributive hand North opened artificially one Diamond. East with 11 HCP overcalled one No Trump. South could not come into the picture. West passed one No Trump but North called 2 Spades. When both East and South passed West came up with his 4 card Hearts. North was about to call 3 No Trumps but passed for partner to bid if at all possible. Three Hearts suited East so he passed. At this stage, South called 3 Spades as they were non-vulnerable and he held doubleton Hearts. With 4 cards of Spades this was an appropriate bid.

THE PLAY

East opened 10 of Hearts, dummy covered with Jack, West King and the declarer won the trick with the Ace. The Queen of Hearts was cashed and the third Heart was ruffed in the dummy. A small Spade was returned and when West played low, the declarer put in the 8 and East won the trick with the Ace. At this point, East made a crucial play. He underled the Diamond in the hope that the partner held the doubleton Diamond King. As he did, on winning the trick with the King, West returned the 6 of Diamond which was won by East with the Ace and then gave partner a Diamond ruff. Ultimately, the defence collected two more tricks in Clubs for down one. A routine trump return would have enabled the declarer to make the contract. Unless East made the move, it might have been difficult for West to lead the King for a third-round ruff.

Hard times for Sheringham

LONDON, Oct 16 (Reuters/Internet): When Manchester United play Wimbledon tomorrow, Teddy Sheringham will be forced to watch the game unfold from the bench. Sidelined with a knee injury, the former Tottenham and Millwall striker is going through the sort of frustrating spell which all players seem to suffer at some point in their career.

Two years ago he was a hero. His strike partnership with Alan Shearer was the driving force behind England's Euro '96 campaign which ended with a semi-final defeat against Germany. That was followed last summer by a 3.5 million pound move from Spurs to Manchester United.

But since then Sheringham has gone off the boil. The Old Trafford crowd, and one senses United manager Alex Ferguson, are yet to be convinced, he had disappointed World Cup and England coach Glenn Hoddle has dropped the 32-year-old from his starting line-up in favour of young Liverpool goalpoacher Michael Owen.

"It's been a very frustrating time," he admits. "I'm not playing regularly in the first team at Manchester United and I had a disappointing World Cup."

But that's the drama of football. That's why you have to remain level-headed as a footballer.

"I still have faith in my ability and I want to change that around and get back in the England team."

His dip in form was aggravated by a pre-World Cup fall-out with coach Hoddle. With two weeks to go before England kicked off their France '98 campaign Sheringham was photographed in a Portuguese nightclub in a compromising position with a young blonde, a cigarette and a bottle of lager.

The press labelled him irresponsible and Hoddle was forced to criticise a key member of his squad just days before their most important international tournament for eight years.

Sheringham, who openly admits to a dislike for the press, felt he had been harshly treated and was quick to hit back. A couple of months on, however, and his mood has definitely changed.

"From Glenn's point of view there was nothing else he could have done," he says. "I saw it differently to him at the time but I definitely respect his views now."

"I saw myself that it was two weeks until the start of the World Cup and footballers don't get long to relax nowadays. Yeah I had a couple of beers, I wasn't going lairy as I knew I had a big game coming up. But when the story's printed that I'm out until 6am getting drunk it looks terrible -- I admit that. But that wasn't the case. I was having a couple of beers and on holiday playing some golf. But I can totally understand the reaction of the public."

It was exactly the same before Euro '96 when we were in Hong Kong. All of a sudden, Teddy Sheringham's an alcoholic because of people seeing two photos.

"Hopefully that's all forgotten about. Glenn hasn't taken it to extremes and I'm not out of the squad as such. If it happened again along the same sort of lines I'm sure that would be it -- but it won't."

One wonders whether he will get another chance.



TEDDY SHERINGHAM

CBF upsets Ronaldo

RIO DE JANEIRO, Oct 16: Brazilian world footballer-of-the-year Ronaldo on Thursday blasted his country's federation for what he perceived as a slur on him by questioning his fitness, reports AFP.

Inter Milan striker Ronaldo told O Globo daily he was angry at indications the federation were considering recalling him to the Brazil squad in the run-up to the team's next friendly to allow team doctors to examine him.

"Does someone think I am malingering?" Ronaldo asked. "Nobody in the federation's technical commission asked the club or myself for information. They have my phone number, they just have to call me up," said Ronaldo, who has not played for his country since his instantly forgettable World Cup final showing.

According to federation sources, the Brazilian authorities did contact Inter for information on Ronaldo's current level of fitness, including the result of medical tests he took recently in Los Angeles.

The player has barely played this season for Inter and reportedly suffered convulsions immediately prior to the World Cup final defeat by France.

He hoped originally to return this weekend against Lazio but is still suffering tendon trouble in his knees.

New Brazilian coach Wanderley Luxemburgo hopes to get Ronaldo over for a friendly next month against Russia -- if only to get team doctors to check on his state of health.

But Ronaldo said he didn't think too much of that plan.

"At the end of the day I am not playing at the moment, and I want the best for the national side and Inter. Of course, I want to play for Brazil but for that I have to be knocking in the goals for Inter," he pointed out.

The star is back in light training but is not yet back lifting weights.

"We've devised a four-week plan treatment in the first, bodybuilding in the second, physical reconditioning in the third and then training with the ball in the fourth."

"When I feel ready I will announce my return," Ronaldo promised.

Bayern discipline Effenberg

MUNICH, Oct 16 (Reuters/Internet): Bayern Munich said on Thursday they had fined controversial midfielder Stefan Effenberg heavily after he was caught driving over the drink-driving limit.

"We have talked about it in the club and we can't and will not tolerate his behaviour," said Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld. "We can't accept that he was still out at half past three in the morning. We have sanctioned the player."

Effenberg was found to have 1.07 grams of alcohol per litre of blood -- more than twice the legal limit of 0.5 grams/litre -- during a routine police check outside Munich early on Wednesday. He had his driving licence removed.

Under German law, the 30-year-old faces a 500-mark fine and could be banned from driving for up to four weeks.

Crvena's plea

BELGRADE, Oct 16 (Reuters/Internet): Crvena Zvezda Belgrade are to plead with UEFA to play a European match in Belgrade despite the soccer governing body's order it should be played at a neutral venue because of political tension over Kosovo.

The board met this evening (Thursday) and did not reach a final decision, but we still think all the arguments are on our side and we will talk to the demanding management of Giovanni Trapattoni.

Lazio meanwhile will look for revenge over Inter, who beat them 3-0 in last season's UEFA Cup final in Paris, both clubs have been tipped for the title, but both will probably be without their star centre-forwards.

Lazio's new signing Christian Vieri, at 30 million dollars the most expensive Italian footballer in history, will be out for at least another three weeks with a knee ligament injury.

Inter will probably rest Ronaldo, and possibly also Roberto Baggio, to make sure they fully recover from tendon trouble in time for next Wednesday's European Champions' League tie here against Spartak Moscow.

Monaco's WC strikers injured

MONACO, Oct 16 (Reuters/Internet): Monaco will be without both their French World Cup forwards David Trezeguet and Thierry Henry for their league match at home to Montpellier on Saturday and their UEFA Cup trip to Austria on Tuesday.

Coach Jean Tigana, annoyed with his troops over their 2-1 defeat at Rennes in their last league game two weeks ago, was also unhappy over injuries picked up by Trezeguet and Henry while on European Championship duty with the French national squad.

Adding to his displeasure is the absence of Bosnia defender Mohamed Konjic who has not yet returned after captaining his country in their European qualifier in Lithuania on Wednesday and has dropped him from the squad for Saturday's match.

"Konjic has not returned and new injuries to players called up for international matches are hitting us," Tigana said after Monaco's final practice before facing Montpellier at the Stade Louis II.

"I fear this could continue with the prospect of a Confederations Cup and I ask myself if we can stay the distance," said Tigana, whose chief goal is to regain the league title his side won in 1997.

France are due to play in the controversial eight-nation

Confederations Cup in Mexico in January when clubs could be deprived of their French internationals for at least two rounds of the championship.

Monaco are fifth, five points behind leaders Girondins Bordeaux, who were playing at home against Nantes on Friday.

Barcelona set to bring Brazil to Nou Camp

BARCELONA, Spain, Oct 16 (Reuters/Internet): Barcelona are lining up a clash with the Brazilian national side in April next year as the centrepiece of their centenary celebrations.

The Catalan club, founded in 1899 by the Swiss Hans Gamper, kick off the festivities a little early with the visit of Atletico Madrid for a Spanish league fixture in November this year.

And club president Josep Lluís Nunez said on Thursday they were close to finalising a deal to bring Brazil to the Nou Camp on April 28 next year.

"This is our big project," Nunez added. "I would feel very bad if for whatever reason this game isn't played."

A game between Brazil and Barcelona would offer the prospect of seeing Ronaldo play against his former club side, which now includes three Brazilians.

Semifinalists in European competition the last two seasons, Monaco travel to Austria to play AK Graz in the first leg of their UEFA Cup second round tie on Tuesday.

However, France goalkeeper Fabien Barthez, who was injured and missed both the defeat at Rennes and France's Euro doubleheader against Russia and Andorra in the last week, has recovered and will face Montpellier.

Monaco are well aware of the attacking potential of Montpellier, the most prolific side in the first division with 20 goals in eight games.

Barthez said he was angry about Monaco's successive away defeats at Paris St Germain and Rennes.

"It's crazy the number of points we lose because we're not concentrated enough and only begin to react when we're behind," he said.

"We need players with enough character and fight to impose our game on our rivals as we did three years ago with guys like (Emmanuel) Petit and (Patrick) Blondeau."

Petit and Blondeau were transferred to English premier league sides Arsenal and Sheffield Wednesday respectively after Monaco's championship success in 1997.

Blondeau is now with French title favourites Olympique Marseille, in second place and away to Strasbourg on Friday.



GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE! Lleyton Hewitt, the teenage Australian tennis star, sharing a meal with two orangutans at a zoo in Singapore on October 15. Hewitt is participating in the Singapore Open tournament. — Internet photo

Big match off after Vasco's refusal

RIO DE JANEIRO, Oct 16 (Reuters/Internet): A Brazilian championship match between leaders Palmeiras and champions Vasco da Gama was postponed an hour before kickoff on Thursday after Vasco claimed a court had banned them from playing.

Vasco vice-president Eurico Miranda said a labour court had granted an injunction to the Brazilian Footballers' Union, who claimed that the team could not play two competitive games within 66 hours.

The Rio de Janeiro club had played a South American Copa Mercosur game at home to Universidad Catolica de Chile on Wednesday night and were due to face Palmeiras in Sao Paulo at 1600 local time on Thursday.

But the Rio team did not travel to Sao Paulo for the game. The Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) had said on Wednesday that the game would not be called off and threatened to award a walkover victory to Palmeiras.

F.C.M. officials said they had received a fax from the CBF shortly before kickoff telling them that the game had been postponed.

"Vasco has been banned from taking the field," said Miranda. Asked if he was worried about the consequences of defying the CBF, he replied: "I'm more worried about disobeying a court order and being arrested."

The match had been re-arranged from its original date in August at the request of Vasco, because they were involved in the South American Libertadores Cup final.

Vasco had already managed to persuade the CBF to move their Saturday game against Internacional to Sunday on the grounds of an over-crowded fixture list.

Palmeiras themselves have

a packed schedule. They were at home to Universidad de Chile in the Mercosur Cup on Tuesday and are away to Botafogo in Rio de Janeiro on Saturday.

South American clubs face chronic fixture congestion and the problems appears to be growing with new competitions sprouting up every year.

Coincidentally, a match between the same clubs three years ago was called off in similar circumstances. On that occasion, the stadium was opened and Palmeiras players took the field where they waited in vain for their opponents.

Rummenigge's new idea

MUNICH, Oct 16 (Reuters/Internet): Soccer matches should be played in three periods instead of two halves to make them more attractive for television, Bayern Munich vice-president Karl-Heinz Rummenigge suggested on Friday.

"That's something we should try," said Rummenigge. "We must think of ways to allow the television channels to get their money back and that would be one," he added, referring to the fact that three periods would allow broadcasters to show more commercial breaks.

Rummenigge also pressed for the introduction of pay-per-view television in Germany.

"It is a necessity," he said. "Germany is the only market where it does not exist."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	DOWN
1 Shape shifter?	1 Butler
4 Launch site	15 One way to get an Oscar
7 Chuck-wagon offering	20 A foot wide?
8 Glass-making powder	21 Inventor Howe
10 Eastern polenta: var.	22 Kathy of C&W
11 Muppet drummer	23 Margarine
13 Auntie Mame's nephew	24 Gave rise to
16 Powerful stick	25 Future syrup
17 Nudists' no-no	26 Nicholson role
18 Wanted poster abbr.	28 Please, in Potsdam
19 Census statistics	29 Greek gods' blood
20 Improvable place	30 "Playboy of the Western World" playwright
21 Alex Trebek, e.g.	31 Autocrat
23 Pretentious sort	32 Fellows
25 Venetian blind part	34 Everything else
26 Scoff	35 Ancient Japanese

Solution time: 22 mins.

CRYPTOQUIP

W F P R Y F N W F Y H S N M G I
K P I X , W I N H H G L Y X G N
I G N S U L P X M E P M M E Y
R G S U Y F K N S Y

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I FOUND THAT AN UGLY ACROSS CAN TRULY BE DESCRIBED AS A STAGE FRIGHT.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: N equals U
The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.