

Dinamo scandal

BUCHAREST, Nov 25 (Reuters/Internet): The former head of Dinamo Bucharest, on trial for fraud, has told investigators he gave bonuses to national team players and coaches for 1994 World Cup qualifying matches.

Trial documents shown to the news agency on Wednesday which revealed that Vasile Iulianu gave the Romanian Soccer Federation (FRF) a portion of the proceeds from the 460,000 dollars transfer of Tibor Selymes to Belgian club Cercle Brugge in 1991.

"I gave the FRF 100,000 dollars from the total sum Dinamo received for Tibor Selymes' move," Iulianu told the court. Iulianu, a police colonel, has been on trial for the past two years for embezzling more than 2.3 million dollars during his tenure as Dinamo president from 1991 to 1993.

He was detained last week for failing to attend hearings, and has since been charged with the more serious offence of financial fraud and denied bail. Mircea Sandu, FRF president, said in a television interview this week that Iulianu had offered the bonuses to players and coaches in 1992. But he denied the money was connected with Selymes' transfer.

Iulianu gave bonuses to national team players and coaches for their 5-1 win against Wales in Bucharest. He also gave money in advance for a match against Belgium in Brussels, which Romania lost 1-0. Sandu says the FRF did not receive 100,000 dollars from Selymes' transfer, either from Dinamo or Iulianu.

It was not clear from either Iulianu's testimony or Sandu's explanation why the sums were paid by a club president.

But Sandu defended Iulianu, saying: "It is a shame that he was arrested. He surely constitutes no public danger in Romania. Many other people did things far worse."

Iulianu admitted this week paying bribes to secure victories for his club and providing money to interior Ministry officials and senior police officers in the early post-communist period to help finance their activities abroad.

Spanish stock floats but could flounder

MADRID, Nov 25 (Reuters/Internet): Stock market flotation is seen as a golden opportunity by a clutch of Spanish soccer clubs, but British clubs' experience on the market suggests that aim could prove as hard to achieve as Spain's recent World Cup ambitions.

Despite Spain's ignominious first round exit from this year's World Cup, its first division is rated among the top three or four leagues in the world, and some of its smaller members have big ideas.

Valadolid is one of several medium-sized clubs seeking to raise capital by a stock market flotation, inspired by Manchester United and some 20 other listed British clubs.

"Listing on the bourse is normal and standard and common in any other kinds of business and for football clubs in other countries," said Valladolid spokesman Mariano Mancebo Rojo.

"We've taken all the necessary steps, and gone through all the audits that the stock market commission demands... and what we want is to list as soon as possible," he said.

The problem for Valladolid and clubs like Atletico Madrid and Espanyol, which have said they are considering flotation, is a legal wrangle over whether they are allowed under current law to list on the market.

"Even under this law I think there are legal forms that could allow a football club to quote without breaking the law," Mancebo Rojo told Reuters.

"We've presented our dossier to the commission, but for the moment they've not given us the green light."

The relevant authorities disagree with Valladolid. Spain's sports council, the Consejo Superior de Deportes, is currently negotiating with the stock market commission and the economy ministry over how to change the laws on limited sporting companies to make them more like other limited companies.

The necessary legal changes need the approval of the cabinet and parliament, said Consejo spokesman Luis Lucio. "But I think by next year it should be possible for clubs to float."

But analysts question whether Spanish clubs are ready for flotation anyway, in terms of business transparency. And unlike in Britain, it is not the top Spanish clubs that want to float. Real Madrid and Barcelona, the only two with the business clout to rival other European giants like Manchester United, Liverpool and AC Milan, have said they nurture no stock market ambitions.

And on the London market only the biggest clubs have proved attractive to investors.

"What we've found in the UK and Italy, and I guess Spain too, is initial enthusiasm, but I think ultimately it'll be followed very quickly by disillusionment," said Paul Wedge, soccer specialist at London stockbrokers Collins Stewart.

"If you're looking at conventional measures in terms of bottom line profit, I can't think of any clubs at the moment."

**Sugar's strategy**  
LONDON, Nov 25 (Reuters/Internet): Chairman Alan Sugar said on Wednesday he would take a more "hands on" role in the day to day running of English premier league team Tottenham Hotspur.

The move came as Tottenham announced that chief executive Claude Littner was stepping down to a non-executive role. Sugar controls some 40 per cent of Tottenham shares.



Players of French sides Marseille and Monaco get into a brawl during their UEFA Cup third round first leg encounter on November 24. The match finished 2-2. —Internet photo

Tensions spill over in Europe

LONDON, Nov 24 (Reuters/Internet): Five players were sent off — four of them in all-French and all-Spanish ties — as tension erupted in the UEFA Cup on Tuesday for the second time this month.

Three weeks ago 10 players were sent off and one second round match was abandoned — although this time at least, all the matches were completed.

The first major European clash between two French clubs Monaco and Olympique Marseille but both teams finished with 10 men after Marseille's Florian Maurice was sent off after 63 minutes and Frank Dumas of Monaco followed him six minutes later.

Robert Pires had put Marseille ahead after 10 minutes before David Trezeguet, who like Pires was a member of France's World Cup-winning squad, equalised with a 17th minute penalty.

Titi Camara restored Marseille's lead with a 39th minute goal before Ludovic Giuly completed the scoring nine minutes into the second half.

There was another hard-fought "derby" in Spain where Atletico Madrid ended with nine men in their 2-1 defeat at

Real Sociedad. Atletico had Stefano Torrisi and Carlos Aguilera sent off midway through the second half by English referee Graham Poll, who also booked eight players in the opening period.

Atletico's Roberto Fresnedoso completed a miserable night for the visitors by putting through his own net for Sociedad's winner five minutes from time.

Brazilian striker Juninho had given Atletico the perfect start with a third-minute strike, but the home side equalised with a Darko Kovacevic header on the stroke of half-time.

Olympique Lyon of France finished with 10 men but a goal more than Club Brugge in their 1-0 win thanks to Jacek Bak's goal on the stroke of half-time.

A minute earlier Lyon had been reduced to 10 men when Swiss striker Marco Grassi was sent off for slapping Yugoslav defender Milan Lesnjak in retaliation after a tackle.

The biggest winners on the night were Bologna who crushed Real Betis 4-1 while the biggest goal-haul came in Zurich.

Grasshoppers, who reached the third round after Fiorentina were disqualified following crowd trouble in their abandoned second round match

three weeks ago, shared six goals with Bordeaux in a 3-3 draw.

Bordeaux threw away a two-goal lead and were trailing 3-2 with only 17 minutes to go before France's top scorer Sylvain Wilford scored his second goal of the game to force the draw.

The narrowest win was by Roma who were made to fight all the way for their victory by their 1-0 win came from a last-minute penalty by Francesco Totti.

In Glasgow, Rangers saved themselves from a home defeat with an equaliser from Rod Wallace in the 68th minute after Abel Balbo had given Parma a 51st minute lead at Ibrox.

But four-time European champions Liverpool went down to a 3-1 defeat after some woeful defending against an impressive Celtic Vigo side looking to complete an English double after knocking out Aston Villa in the previous round.

Liverpool, who had taken the lead through Michael Owen after 35 minutes, were still in with a chance until deep into injury time when Vladislav Gudelj took advantage of some comical defending to sweep home the third and make Vigo odds-on favourites to reach the quarter-finals in two weeks time.



Liverpool's livewire Michael Owen (R) volleys past a Celta Vigo defender during their UEFA Cup third round first leg fixture at Vigo on November 24. —AP/UNB photo

Things could not have been better for Batistuta

FLORENCE, Italy, Nov 25: Gabriel Batistuta, who spent the World Cup threatening to quit Fiorentina, has returned to become a conquering hero, reports AFP.

Worshipped by the fans, adored by club president Italo Cecchi Gori and held up as an example to everyone by team coach Giovanni Trapattoni, Batistuta has not put a foot wrong since his return.

Eleven goals in 10 matches have left Fiorentina top of the Serie A, three points ahead of AS Roma, Juventus, and AC Milan, while Batistuta is the undisputed top scorer in Italian football.

It's all a far cry from last summer when the Argentinian ace made it clear he wouldn't be rushing back to a bunch of no-hopers like Fiorentina.

The Florence club have only won the Italian league twice (1956 and 1969), and even with Batistuta their only triumph has been the 1996 Italian Cup, seen by many as the body-prize of Italian soccer.

Batistuta, who arrived here from Boca Juniors in 1991, has always had a volatile relationship with the club. Two summers ago, he swore he would not be coming back after a contract row with its movie tycoon president.

He eventually returned, but was soon making noises about moving on.

"Fiorentina are a great team, but the club certainly isn't," he lamented. "In Argentina, everyone knows Manchester United, but the only ones who have heard of Fiorentina are people who follow me."

The months went by and in March of this year it seemed certain that "Batigol" had

played his last season in a purple shirt.

His agent Settimio Aloisio announced from Buenos Aires that "Gabriel wants to leave and nobody, not even Trapattoni, will make him change his mind."

There was interest from the likes of Manchester United in the English Premiership and Real Madrid in Spain, Aloisio

said, while Serie A rivals Parma were also later linked with the 29-year-old.

However, the agent was proved wrong and Batistuta was persuaded in August to stay on. Trapattoni's promise to build a great team, along with a new contract worth 15 million dol-



BATISTUTA

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lars over the next five years, did the trick.

And neither side can have many regrets.

Another goal in Sunday's 3-1 thrashing of Inter Milan kept Fiorentina at the top, a position they have occupied for most of the season apart from a brief sojourn by Juventus.

Critics might claim that Fiorentina's rise has less to do with them and more to do with their rivals' unexpected problems after the World Cup.

Alessandro Del Piero and Zinedine Zidane have been off-form at Juventus, Ronaldo and Roberto Baggio have suffered injury at Inter, while Christian Vieri has only played one league game for Lazio.

But the man who scored the winner against Japan, converted a penalty against England and knocked three past Jamaica is quick with a reminder.

"I've heard people saying that the championships has been distorted by the World Cup; but I was there too," he said. "Perhaps it doesn't seem like a normal championship just because Fiorentina are top."

"Does that mean that people want another team to take our place, just to make things normal again?"  
"The truth is that people think that sooner or later, Fiorentina are going to crack. But this should only make us even more motivated, even more determined to show that we mean business."  
Part of their success is down to Batistuta's winning partnership with the notoriously difficult Edmundo, nicknamed "Animal" in Brazil.  
"You don't have to be friends with everyone in order to win things," Batistuta said. "And I don't want to be.

Rios may pull out

HANOVER, Germany, Nov 25: Marcelo Rios could pull out of the year ending ATP World Championship with a back injury, reports Reuters.

The Chilean world number two is fighting with Pete Sampras for the year-end number one spot — whoever fares better here in Hanover will finish top.

But after his straight sets defeat at the hands of world number nine Briton Tim Henman in his opening match, Rios said, "My back really hurts and I'm in a bad position right now."

"It's going to be really tough to keep on playing. It's been a problem for a month or so and this tournament does not come at the right time."

"Of course I want to play... I have an opportunity to finish the year at number one and I want to take it. I'll have to see how I feel when I wake up in the morning."

Henman though, said the fact that Rios was under pressure could have made him exaggerate the seriousness of his injury.

"It's one of those situations when things don't go your way... and that sometimes makes you feel that your injury is worse than it actually is," he said.

Another player in the star studded field, world number four Andre Agassi, is also struggling with injury.

The third seeded American strained his back while practising with Spaniard Alex Cornea on Monday.

Beijing to bid for 2008 Games

BEIJING, Nov 25: The city of Beijing said Wednesday that it will bid to host the 2008 Summer Olympics, reports AP.

Briton Henman recorded an impressive 7-5, 6-1 over Chilean Rios who needs a better result than Sampras in the year-end event to finish 1998 in front.

Sampras had earlier made a flying start in his bid for a place in history by crushing Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov 6-2, 6-4 in the opening match of the 3.5 million US dollars tournament.

Kafelnikov dropped serve straight away in the second set before briefly giving the impression he could fight his way back into the match by breaking Sampras to level at 3-3.

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to end the year as world number one for a record sixth consecutive time by upsetting world number two Marcelo Rios at the ATP Tour World Championship on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

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Tim Henman of Great Britain executes a forehand during his ATP World Championship match against world No 2 Marcelo Rios of Chile at Hanover, Germany on November 24. Henman won 7-5, 6-1. —AFP photo

Sampras steps forward

HANOVER, Germany, Nov 25: Tim Henman did Pete Sampras a favour in the American's quest to end the year as world number one for a record sixth consecutive time by upsetting world number two Marcelo Rios at the ATP Tour World Championship on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

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Ferguson may end self-exile

NEWCASTLE, Nov 25 (Reuters/Internet): Striker Duane Ferguson, who has ended his self-imposed international retirement and play for Scotland again after moving from Everton to Newcastle United.

Ferguson, who has avoided the media for four years, appeared at a news conference with Newcastle manager Ruud Gullit after completing his 8.0 million pound (13.23 million dollars) transfer.

Gullit revealed he had tried and failed to sign Ferguson while he was manager of Chelsea and said he was satisfied the Newcastle directors were trying their best to reinforce a struggling team.

"The board reacted to my plea and understood the importance of getting new players in... I, as a coach, am delighted to have Duane here," said the Dutchman.

Officially, competition to host the 2008 Games hasn't even begun. The International Olympic Committee will open the bidding process next year, and the selection of the host city will take place in 2001.

Other cities that have already announced they will bid include Canada, Japan, Turkey, Spain and Argentina.

Ladies' boxing in England

LONDON, Nov 25: Britain stages its first professional women's boxing match today and one of the fighters feels she has won even before she takes to the ring, reports Reuters.

Despite being WBF world welterweight champion, the bout will be British boxer Jane Couch's first professional fight in her own country.

Win or lose, it is a moment she intends to savour.

"It is important to me and my family that I do fight in this country and it is important also to educate people about it," Couch, 30, said after weighing in on Tuesday.

She won her professional licence only a few months ago — the first British woman to do so — after a long struggle with the British Boxing Board of Control.

Up until now all her professional fights have taken place abroad, usually in the United States, women's boxing is much more accepted in continental Europe and America than it has so far been in Britain.

"I have trained hard for 16 weeks now and I am ready to fight," the 30-year-old added.

Today evening she dons her gloves to take German teenager Semon Lukic at Caesar's nightclub in a drab suburb of south London that is a far cry from its famous Las Vegas namesake.

Couch, clearly at home with media attention, bounced into the weigh-in in a show of shadow-boxing, bantering with reporters and posing for photographers.

Her 18-year-old opponent from Frankfurt, whose willowy frame and dark good looks make her seem more like a catwalk model than a boxer, told reporters it was her father who had encouraged her to take up the sport.

Both players held serve until Rios hit a backhand wide to lose the first set.

The Wimbledon semifinalist broke the flamboyant Chilean to go 3-1 up in the second set and stayed on top of his opponent, who made a series of unforced errors until hitting a backhand return long on Henman's second match point.

"I played really well," said a proud Henman. "I feel fresh. If you can't get motivated for this, then you're probably in the wrong job," added the Briton, currently ninth in the ATP Tour rankings.

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for the match, squandering two more match points before seeing Kafelnikov net a forehand to bow out.

"This is an important week for me," said Sampras. "I needed to get off to a good start and I did. I played pretty well. Hopefully, I can maintain that level in my next matches."

Sampras goes on to meet Spain's Carlos Moya, who beat the American in his opening match here last year and went onto reach the semifinals.

The French Open champion, who had not won an indoor match all season, showed more composure when it mattered most to beat Slovakia's Karol Kucera 6-7, 7-5, 6-3.

Moya lost the first set in a tiebreak and the second set was heading towards another one when Kucera hit a forehand into the net, handing the set to the Spaniard.

Both players had dropped serve in the decisive set when Moya made the telling break to go 5-3 up. He then wrapped it up with a forehand on his first match point.

"It was tight," said Moya. "It's exactly the kind of win I needed to boost my confidence. I know I can play well indoors but I have to be a bit more aggressive."

Leading 5-4, Sampras served

Premier v'ball

Defending champions Bangladesh Rifles beat newcomers Azad SC 3-0 in the opening match of the National Bank Premier Volleyball league at the volleyball ground yesterday, reports APB.

Six selected teams from REB and 57 Pali Biddut Samities participated in the annual competition began from November 22.

Inter-service basketball

Bangladesh Navy beat Bangladesh Air Force 59-54 in the third match of the inter-service basketball championship at the Kurmitla basketball court yesterday, reports BSS.

REB football