

Kilmarnock close in on Rangers

Glasgow, Dec 21: Kilmarnock closed to within three points of leaders Rangers in the Scottish Premier League on Sunday with a 2-0 victory over Dundee United, reports Reuters.

Paul Wright headed in an Ian Durrant cross to put them 1-0 up after half an hour and Durrant completed the win with a penalty three minutes from time.

Kilmarnock now have 34 points to the 37 of Rangers, who beat Hearts 3-2 on Saturday.

Celtic are third on 30 after thumping bottom club Dunfermline 5-0 on Saturday. Dundee United remain in trouble in second-last place.

Lie out for a month

VALENCIA, Spain, Dec 21 (Reuters/Internet): Valencia's Romanian international striker Adrian Ilie will be out of action for at least four weeks with an ankle injury, club officials said on Monday.

Ilie, nicknamed 'The Cobra', limped off after 18 minutes of his team's 2-1 defeat at Espanyol on Sunday with a sprained ankle and a minor tibia fracture after a tackle by the Espanyol defender Mauricio Pochettino.

Club doctors said that although there was no serious ligament damage, the injury was bad enough for the ankle to be immobilised for the next 10 to 12 days.

2 West Ham booters charged

ROMFORD, England, Dec 21: West Ham stars Neil Ruddock and Trevor Sinclair will appear in court on Tuesday after being arrested for allegedly damaging a woman's car after the club's Christmas Party on Saturday night, reports AP.

"It would appear they have let themselves down," Hammers manager Harry Redknapp said on Monday. "They were out on their Christmas party. I just told them to enjoy themselves and to make sure they behave."

"It appears a couple of them have got themselves into a bit of trouble by getting arrested. If it is right that they have misbehaved then you can be sure we will read them the riot act."

Ruddock, a centre-back who has played once for England, has been charged with violent behaviour and is alleged to have thrown a bottle at a car belonging to 19-year-old beauty therapist Linda Knowles outside a night club at Romford, east of London.

'Zidane tops Reuters' personality poll'

LONDON, Dec 21 (Reuters/Internet): Zinedine Zidane, scorer of two goals in France's World Cup final win over Brazil, is the winner of the Reuters' 1998 Sports Personality poll.

Zidane was one of the most important stars in the most important event of 1998," said Ori Lewis, sports editor of the *Jerusalem Post* in Israel.

CLEAR WINNER

Zidane, who came last in the 1997 poll, was the clear winner with 128 points out of a maximum of 305. Almost neck-and-neck, trailing some way behind Zidane, were Austrian Alpine skier Hermann Maier with 76 points and American sprinter Marion Jones who took third

gained only six points in the poll.

Runner-up "Hermiinator" Maier won Olympic gold medals in the super-G and giant slalom after an extraordinary comeback from a spectacular crash in the downhill at the Nagano Olympics in February.

"Nagano saw the most incredible comeback in skiing history since the days of Pirmen Zurbriggen," said Jaros Andreas of *Sportmagazin* in Vienna. Zurbriggen, one of the greatest Alpine skiers of all time, won two gold medals just weeks after surgery in 1985.

WOMEN IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Jones was undefeated in 38 events during the 1998 season until she was beaten in the long jump in September.

"Marion has made the greatest impact on athletics since Carl Lewis," said Godfrey Robert of the *Straits Times* in Singapore. "A drugs-free athlete, she was truly a sensation for 1998."

Jones was the fastest woman in the world over both 100 and 200 metres this season. She led the American women's team to victory in the World Cup with the third fastest time in history over 200 metres.

"Her amazing performances have put women on top again," said Gert Roets, sports editor of *Supersport* in South Africa.

Close behind Jones was Ethiopian distance runner Haile Gebrselassie who clinched fourth place in the poll with 72 points. Gebrselassie broke the 10,000 metres world record in June and beat the

TOP 10

Zinedine Zidane
Hermann Maier
Marion Jones
Haile Gebrselassie
Michael Jordan
Mika Hakkinen
Pete Sampras
Mark O'Meara
Marco Pantini

5,000 record less than two weeks later.

"In the space of two weeks Gebrselassie's achievement was just remarkable," said one sports journalist.

US basketball player Michael Jordan took fifth spot for the second successive year with 66 points, ahead of Finnish Formula One world champion Mika Hakkinen and tennis world number one Pete Sampras who each scored 61 points.

Hakkinen staged a remarkable comeback from a crash at the 1995 Australian Grand Prix which almost killed him.

Jordan led the Chicago Bulls to their sixth NBA title in eight

years. His tally of 45 points in the final game against the Utah Jazz marked one of his best performances.

"He proved himself the best basketballer one more season in the toughest league in the world," said Marco Keller of Sportinformation in Zurich.

Americans bagged more points in the poll's top 10 with baseball player Mark McGwire sharing sixth place with 51 points.

At the age of 41, O'Meara won the US Masters, British Open and World Matchplay titles.

"O'Meara finally won after years of trying and coming close — and did it twice — a rare feat on the tour," said one sports journalist.

ROK's wish fulfilled

McGwire scored a sensational 70 home runs for St Louis Cardinals, smashing the previous record of 61 set by Roger Maris in 1961.

His battle with Sammy Sosa

for the record was one of the sporting highlights of the year. Sosa gained six points in the Reuters poll.

"McGwire soundly beat one of the longest-standing records in sports and did it in style, both on and off the field," said Roger Crutchley, sports editor of the *Bangkok Post*.

Italian cyclist Marco Pantani, who won a drugs-tainted Tour de France in impressive style, completed the top 10 with 50 points.

Danish athlete Wilson Kipketer won the 1997 poll.

Soccercide

ROME, Dec 21: An amateur footballer collapsed and died on the pitch near Pistoia in Italy on Sunday immediately after scoring a penalty, reports *Xinhua*.

Gabriele Faticoni, a 27-year-old plumber, was playing in a local league match between Capsotrade and Torbeckchia,

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