

Sport



French playmaker Zinedine Zidane, seen with the European footballer-of-the-year trophy, is flanked by his friends from Marseille after receiving the award in Paris on December 21. — AFP photo

Ronaldo hails ZZ

RIO DE JANEIRO, Dec 22 (Reuters/Internet): Brazil's Ronaldo admitted on Monday that Frenchman Zinedine Zidane deserves to win FIFA's Player-of-the-Year of the Award.

"For everything he has done this year, Zidane deserves the recognition of FIFA," he told the Estado news agency after arriving in Brazil for a one-week break.

Ronaldo has won the award for the past two years but failed to live up to expectations at the World Cup finals and since then has been plagued by knee tendon problems.

Zidane, Ronaldo and Croatia's Davor Suker are on the short-list for the award but even Brazilian commentators say it will be a travesty if Ronaldo wins this time around.

During this week in Brazil Ronaldo is expected to have his troublesome knee treated by his private physiotherapist.

Ribbeck names squad for U.S. tour

MUNICH, Dec 22 (Reuters/Internet): German national team coach Erich Ribbeck on Monday announced a provisional 26-man squad for a tour of friendlies in the United States in February.

The team includes two newcomers to the national team, striker Michael Preetz of Hertha BSC Berlin and Eintracht Frankfurt midfielder Bernd Schneider, and two youngsters from champions Kaiserslautern, Michael Ballack and Marco Reich.

A key omission is Bayern Munich midfielder Mario Basler who was criticised by Ribbeck for playing cards the night before a friendly against the Netherlands, during which he gave a poor performance.

Ribbeck said Basler was not left out for playing cards, but he would not give his reason for omitting him.

Christian Ziege and Oliver Bierhoff of AC Milan and Joerg Heinrich of AC Florence will miss the U.S. trip as it coincides with the restart of the Italian season after the winter break.

Germany plays two matches in Florida: on February 6 against United States in the Alltel stadium in Jacksonville and against Colombia in the Orange Bowl Stadium in Miami on February 9.

Ribbeck will name a smaller squad of 20 players before the trip takes place.

The provisional squad is:

Goalkeepers: Oliver Kahn (Bayern Munich), Stefan Klos (Borussia Dortmund), Jens Lehmann (AC Milan)

Defenders: Markus Babbel, Lothar Matthaeus (both Bayern Munich), Jens Nowotny (Bayern Leverkusen), Marko Rehmer (Hansa Rostock), Christian Winters (Paris St. Germain)

Midfield: Michael Ballack (FC Kaiserslautern), Stefan Beinlich (Bayern Leverkusen), Dietmar Hamann (Newcastle United), Jens Jeremies (Bayern Munich), Andreas Moeller (Borussia Dortmund), Christian Nerlinger (Borussia Dortmund), Carsten Ramelow (Bayern Leverkusen), Marco Reich (FC Kaiserslautern), Lars Ricken (Borussia Dortmund), Bernd Schneider (Eintracht Frankfurt), Thomas Strunz (Bayern Munich)

Forwards: Marco Bode (Werder Bremen), Carsten Jancker (Bayern Munich), Ulf Kirsten (Bayern Leverkusen), Olaf Marschall (FC Kaiserslautern), Oliver Neuville (Hansa Rostock), Michael Preetz (Hertha BSC Berlin), Alexander Zickler (Bayern München)

Southampton sign Kachlou

SOUTHAMPTON, England, Dec 22: Moroccan international striker Hassan Kachlou, who scored in the 3-1 victory that lifted Southampton off the foot of the Premier League on Saturday, has signed a 2 1/2 years contract by the club, reports AP.

Hired from French runners-up Metz on a three-month deal, Kachlou has impressed Saints manager Dave Jones who has now signed the 27-year-old forward until June 2001.

Zidane on top in Europe



PARIS, Dec 22 (Reuters/Internet): French World Cup-winning playmaker Zinedine Zidane

was named the 1998 European footballer-of-the-year on Monday.

Juventus' Zidane collected 244 points in the annual poll organised since 1956 by France Football magazine.

Real Madrid's Davor Suker of Croatia, top scorer in the World Cup finals, was runner-up with 68 points and Inter Milan's Brazilian striker Ronaldo, last year's winner, was third with 66.

Liverpool's 19-year-old England forward Michael Owen was fourth with 51 ahead of Barcelona's Brazilian midfielder Rivaldo (45) and Fiorentina's Argentine striker Gabriel Batistuta (43).

The 26-year-old talented midfielder, who scored with two headers in the 3-0 final victory over Brazil, was the fourth Frenchman to win the award after Real Madrid's Raymond Kopa in 1958. Juventus' Michel

Platini from 1983 to 1985 and Marseille's Jean-Pierre Papin in 1991.

"I am proud and happy to succeed many football greats in receiving this honour," said Zidane in a ceremony screened live at the studios of television station France 2 on Monday evening.

I owe this honour to the teams of France and Juventus. Without them, I would not have been able to achieve so much. With seven French players in the first 20, it shows that the whole French team had a great World Cup."

From his performance in the World Cup, Zidane helped Juventus retain the Italian championship and reach a third successive European Cup final in May.

This award, until 1994 only open to European players, was widened to include any player of any nationality playing in a European league from the 1995 edition won by AC Milan's Liberian international George Weah.

Zidane, who earned a UEFA

Cup runners-up medal for Bordeaux in 1996, grew up in the Marseille suburbs after his family came to France from Algeria in the 1960s.

A quiet, pensive character off the pitch, in contrast to his high-profile status while playing football, he has a different type of star quality to former World Cup heroes.

Known as "Yaz" to those close to him, he has never forgotten his roots and still has many friends in Marseille.

He believes it is his close family and friends who have helped him keep his feet on the ground despite his incredible footballing success and he dedicated this award to them.

Top 10 (player, nationality, club, points)

Zinedine Zidane (France) Juventus	244
Davor Suker (Croatia) Real Madrid	68
Ronaldo (Brazil) Inter Milan	51
Michael Owen (England) Liverpool	51
Rivaldo (Brazil) Barcelona	45
Gabriel Batistuta (Argentina) Fiorentina	43
Lilian Thuram (France) Parma	36
Dennis Bergkamp (Netherlands) Arsenal	28
Edgar Davids (Netherlands) Juventus	28
Marcel Desailly (France) Chelsea	19

19

PREVIOUS WINNERS

Winners of the European footballer-of-the-year award, the Ballon d'Or, organised by France Football magazine:

Player	Club
1956 Stanley Matthews	Blackpool
1957 Alfredo di Stefano	Real Madrid
1958 Raymond Kopa	Real Madrid
1959 Di Stefano	Real Madrid
1960 Luis Suarez	Barcelona
1961 Enrique Omar	Sivori Juventus
1962 Josze Masopust	Dukla Prague
1963 Lev Yashin	Dynamo Moscow
1964 Denis Law	Manchester United
1965 Eusebio	Benfica
1966 Bobby Charlton	Manchester United
1967 Florian Albert	Ferencvaros
1968 George Best	Manchester United
1969 Gianni Rivera	AC Milan
1970 Gerd Mueller	Bayern Munich
1971 Johan Cruyff	Ajax Amsterdam
1972 Franz Beckenbauer	Bayern Munich
1973 Cruyff	Barcelona
1974 Cruyff	Barcelona
1975 Oleg Blokhin	Dynamo Kiev
1976 Beckenbauer	Bayern
1977 Allan Simonsen	Barcelona
1978 Kevin Keegan	SV Hamburg
1979 Keegan	Hamburg
1980 Karlheinz Rummenigge	Bayern Munich
1981 Rummennigge	Bayern
1982 Paolo Rossi	Juventus
1983 Michel Platini	Juventus
1984 Platini	Juventus
1985 Igor Belanov	Dynamo Kiev
1986 Ruud Gullit	AC Milan
1987 Marco van Basten	AC Milan
1988 Van Basten	AC Milan
1989 Lothar Matthaeus	Inter Milan
1990 Jean-Pierre Papin	Olympique Marseille
1991 Van Basten	AC Milan
1992 Roberto Baggio	Juventus
1993 Hristo Stoichkov	Barcelona
1994 George Weah	AC Milan
1995 Matthias Sammer	Borussia Dortmund
1996 Ronaldo	Inter Milan



Ace striker Gabriel Batistuta displays the Argentine soccer team's new jersey during a ceremony in Buenos Aires on December 21. — AP/UNB photo

'Barney Army' go more barney!

MELBOURNE, Dec 22: Members of the Barney Army, the raucous fans who follow the English cricket team around the world, have lost documentary film footage after a theft at their Melbourne hostel, reports AP.

The footage and camera equipment worth an estimated 1,550 dollars were in a knapsack stolen from a backpackers hotel in Melbourne's south.

Paul Burnham, 34, of Twickenham, London, said Tuesday the video cassettes contained footage of test matches and the army's party at the old jail in Adelaide, held to raise funds for charity.

"We want it to make a movie, documentary type thing," he said.

"We are asking if anyone has got it, if it can be left somewhere because it is no use to them but we can't go back and play the tests again."

Burnham, who works for a company which bets on sporting events, said fellow army member Andrew Evans had taken time off his job as an engineer and was living on his savings while they worked on the documentary.

He said about 50 members of the "army" had made the backpackers hotel their headquarters during their stay in Melbourne for the December 26 Test, the fourth in the Ashes series.

Whitney to lead Bradman XI

SYDNEY, Dec 22: Former Australian Test player Mike Whitney will captain the Bradman XI team in a one-day cricket match against England on New Year's Day, reports Reuters.

Whitney heads a team that also includes former Test player Greg Matthews, prolific Sheffield Shield run-scorer Jamie Siddons and Western Australia's Michael Hussey.

The match will be played in Bowral, South of Sydney.

Team:

Michael Hussey, Rodney Davison, Matthew Phelps, Jamie Siddons, Graham Cunningham, Shawn Bradstreet, Scott Thompson, Greg Matthews, Phil Emery, Brett Lee, Wayne Holdsworth.

The match will be played in Bowral, South of Sydney.

Ben yet to live up to expectations

HOBBART, Tasmania, Dec 22 (AFP): Ben Hollioake started the current Ashes tour of Australia as England's next Ian Botham.

But it now looks as if he will finish his maiden senior tour still as long way short of coming anywhere near Botham.

The Surrey all-rounder has been hailed as one of England's greatest prospects ever since he burst onto the international scene with a brilliant 63 off 48 balls against Australia at Lord's during the 1997 one-day series.

Germany, the reigning European champions, accepted FIFA's invitation after the French Football Federation withdrew from summer competition, hosted by Mexico, because the July 24 to August 4 dates conflicted with UEFA club competitions and the start of the French national league.

The national leagues from several countries, including France, had openly challenged FIFA rules, saying they would refuse to release players from participating countries for national duty.

In an effort to secure the participation of the World Champions, FIFA changed the tournament dates January to mid-summer but the French Football Federation continued to refuse to take part.

Germany will take France's place in Group B, playing with Brazil, the United States and New Zealand.

Group A in Mexico City, will feature the hosts, Bolivia, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Perpere appointed new PSG president

PARIS, Dec 22 (Reuters/Internet): Laurent Perpere was appointed as the new Paris St Germain president, owner French pay television station Canal Plus announced on Tuesday.

"We understand that he has injury problems and he's the one player who is playing catch-up, but when he has an opportunity he really has to cash in."

But Lloyd stressed Hollioake's laid-back manner should not be wrongly perceived as an indication that his disappointing tour and his eagerness to succeed has not affected him.

"There are no visible signs of frustration with a bat flung or glove thrown or kicking at something. He is one who sits and reflects and goes quiet and then comes out of it — but he needs to kick on," said Lloyd.

Aston Villa ride on Charlton defender

LONDON, Dec 22: An own goal by Charlton defender Richard Rufus barely three minutes into the match sent Aston Villa back to the top of the Premier League Monday after a 1-0 win at struggling Charlton, reports AP.

There seemed no danger when Dion Dublin crossed the ball into the Charlton area and Rufus, with plenty of room and time to clear, watched in horror as the ball bounced awkwardly off his thigh and rolled past startled goalkeeper Sasa Ilic for what proved to be the only goal of the game.

It meant Villa, who lost the leadership to Chelsea on goal difference on Saturday, regained a three-point lead with all the teams level on 18 games. Villa has 36 points, Chelsea 33 and third place Manchester United 31.

Charlton, who have slipped to fourth from last after a promising start, had chances to level. Andy Hunt heading just too high before half time and Shaun Newton shooting just past the ball in the second half.

Aussies don't care about Olympics

SYDNEY, Dec 22: The number of Australians interested in watching the opening and closing ceremonies of the Sydney Olympics on television has dropped markedly in recent months, according to a survey released today, reports AFP.

Interest in viewing the opening ceremony had dropped to 43 per cent while only 36 per cent want to watch the closing ceremony.

Associated Press' ten best

LONDON, Dec 22 (AP): France's stunning victory over Brazil in the World Cup final was the runaway winner as the top international sports story of 1998 in an worldwide poll of Associated Press subscribers.

France also produced the No. 2 story of the year, but this one provoked more shame than celebration: the doping scandal which decimated the Tour de France cycling race.

More than 100 media outlets from around the world submitted ballots, selecting their top 10 stories. Points were awarded on a sliding scale, ranging from 10 for a first-place vote to 1 for 10th place.

The poll was conducted before the scandal over allegations of bribery in the election of Olympic host cities — a story which would have certainly finished high in the balloting.

But there was no surprise in the top story