

English refs to go high tech

LONDON, Jan 7: English Premiership referees and their assistants are set to get an extra item of kit next season — a three-way communications system enabling them to keep in touch, reports AFP.

Premier League's referees' officer Philip Don announced Wednesday that FIFA had given permission for the three match officials to talk via headsets in a scheme inspired by a similar experiment in rugby union.

"It is an idea we have been discussing with the FA since September and we have noted that rugby union has had these communications between the officials for a couple of years," explained Don.

There is no suggestion that the comments between the officials will be transmitted on television like in other sports. FIFA does not allow this anyway."

News that the officials would be fitted up with microphones came after a spate of controversial decisions which prompted claims that linesmen had missed some incidents or failed to inform referees.

But Don said the new technology was not being introduced as a knee-jerk reaction to recent problems.

"It just shows we fare into backward when it comes to technology if it can be used to assist the referee and the other officials," he said.

Don believes the microphone links will help linesmen warn referees of incidents that may happen behind their backs without having to flag furiously as happens at present.

Marseille sign Ivorian Guel

MARSEILLE, France, Jan 7 (Reuters/Internet): Olympique Marseille have signed Ivory Coast international Tchiresoua Guel from African champions ASEC Abidjan, the French league leaders said on Thursday.

The 23-year-old midfielder, who has won 35 caps for his country and was voted his country's player of the 1997-98 season, is Marseille's second winter recruit after Brazilian defender Edson.

Guel, who will mainly be in competition with Robert Pires and Jocelyn Gourvennec for the Marseille playmaker role, could start on the bench in Sunday's League Cup first round match against RC Lens.

The league championship resumes on January 16 after a break of four weeks.

Marseille face successive away matches against third-placed Rennes and second-placed Girondins Bordeaux.

Brazil blank Bolivia

TANDIL, Argentina, Jan 7: Goals by Eriberto, Lincoln, Fabio Aurelio and Edu gave Brazil a 4-0 victory over Bolivia on Wednesday, in a first-round match of the South American U20 soccer championship, reports AP.

Playing with their typical style of passes from side to side and swift forward rushes, the Brazilians easily defeated Bolivia, who only tried not to lose by a wider margin.

Earlier Wednesday, Uruguay defeated Colombia 1-0 with a first-half goal by Javier Chavent.

Brazil and Uruguay head Group B with three points each. Colombia, Uruguay and Paraguay, who play their first match on Friday against the Bolivians, have no points.

In Group A, defending champions Argentina and Chile have 3 points. Ecuador, Venezuela and Peru, none.

The top three of each group will play a round robin final round for four berths in the world youth championship scheduled for April in Nigeria.



BAGGIOS! Inter Milan's Roberto Baggio being closely marked by his namesake Dino Baggio of Parma during their Wednesday's Serie A tussle at Parma. —AP/UNB photo

Inter rue Baggio's miss



ROME, Jan 7: Uruguay's Daniel Fonseca salvaged a 1-1 draw for Juventus at AC Milan on Wednesday after his teammate and compatriot Paolo Montero was sent off for second consecutive match, reports Reuters.

Fonseca ran on to a ball from Antonio Conte after 84 minutes, turned inside defender Roberto Ayala and slotted a right foot shot under keeper Sebastiano Rossi.

His 74th Serie A goal cancelled out Demetrio Albertini's 27th minute spot kick and saved Juventus from their fourth defeat in their last six league outings.

Albertini had hammered home his penalty after Juve's Igor Tudor misjudged a sliding tackle in the box on George Weah.

The big Croatian defender appeared to have made amends for his foul four minutes after the interval when he headed home a freekick from Zinedine Zidane.

But the referee disallowed what appeared to be a perfectly

valid goal, possibly for shirt-tugging on Oliver Bierhoff as the freekick was taken.

The decision fired up Juve who controlled the match from then until the 60th minute when Montero was dismissed for deliberate handball — his second bookable offence.

The Uruguayan was playing his first match since he was sent off against Fiorentina last month.

Parity was restored six minutes later when Milan's George Weah saw red for a late challenge on Alessandro Birindelli and with both sides reduced to 10 men it was Juventus who had the better of the losing exchanges.

Zidane came close with a low long range shot and Fonseca almost sneaked a winner in injury time.

Juve's point lifted them to seventh, still 10 points behind leaders Fiorentina, while Milan remain fourth.

Roberto Baggio missed a second half penalty as Inter Milan stumbled to a 1-0 defeat at Parma earlier in the day.

Baggio, who scored 11 penalties out of 11 in the league last

season, stepped up to take the 72nd minute spot kick after Ronaldo had been brought down by Italy defender Fabio Cannavaro.

The former Italy captain, famed for his penalty miss at the end of the 1994 World Cup final against Brazil, hit his shot low and hard but wide of Gianluigi Buffon's right hand post.

"I did it to please the public," joked a relaxed Baggio after the match. "Seriously though, I just hit it as I would any other penalty but unfortunately it was too far wide."

Parma had taken the lead through Baggio's Italy teammate Diego Fuser, who curled a sweetly struck freekick inside Gianluca Pagliuca's near post after 51 minutes.

Their eighth Serie A victory of the season kept them within three points of Fiorentina who beat David Platt's Sampdoria 1-0 thanks to a 27th minute strike by Manuel Pui Costa.

Christian Vieri scored his first goal for Lazio in his first Serie A appearance after a four-month injury lay-off.

Hingis gets the better of Davenport

PERTH, Jan 7: Martina Hingis sent a warning to world No. 1 Lindsay Davenport that she's ready to regain her top ranking with a 6-3, 5-7, 6-2 victory in their clash at the Hopman Cup on Thursday, reports AP.

Although Jan-Michael Gambill then put the United States back on level terms with a 6-4, 6-4 win over Ivo Heuberger, Switzerland took the doubles 6-3, 6-3 to leave the Americans with no chance of reaching the final.

It was the Swiss player's second-straight win over Davenport since conceding top spot to the US Open champion in October.

Jelena Dokic scored her second upset win in two days, following up her win over Arantxa Sanchez Vicario with a 6-1, 6-3 defeat of Sandrine Testud.

But it was obvious from the first ball when Testud double-faulted that she was unwell. She generated little power in her shots, and after dropping the first set she called for the trainer. Although she continued, Testud barely moved for the ball and offered little resistance to her 15-year-old opponent.

Mark Philippoussis then outplayed Guillermo Raoux 6-1, 6-2 to give Australia a 2-0 lead. Although the hosts dropped the doubles, they advanced when South Africa could only manage a 2-1 win against Zimbabwe.

South Africa, who with France and Australia also had a chance to reach the final, needed to win 3-0.

Amanda Coetzer defeated Cara Black 6-3, 6-4, and Wayne Ferreira recovered from 1-4 in the first set to beat Wayne Black 7-5, 7-6 (7-4). But Ferreira suffered a groin strain during the singles and South Africa was forced to default the doubles.

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Switzerland's Martina Hingis and mixed doubles partner and compatriot Ivo Heuberger share a light moment during their Hopman Cup encounter against USA in Perth yesterday. The Swiss duo won 6-3, 6-3. —AFP photo

BBC, BSkyB face legal action



LONDON, Jan 7: Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB broadcaster, the English Premier League and the BBC face court action next week over complaints that the broadcast of Premiership soccer here runs as a cartel, raising prices and blighting choice for fans, reports AFP.

The court will investigate television contracts covering two separate periods: the 1992/93 to 1996/97 seasons, and the 1997/98 to 2000/2001 seasons.

BSkyB Satellite broadcaster has agreed to pay the Premiership 670 million pounds (938 million Euros or 1.1 billion dollars) for live rights to 60 of 380 matches played each season between 1997 and 2001. The BBC has agreed to pay 73 million pounds (102.2 million Euros or 120 million dollars) for extended highlights.

Individual clubs are forbidden to sell coverage rights to other channels.

The OFT said in a statement that "the lack of other broadcasters threatens to harm competition and the development of broadcasting generally."

As digital television comes of age here, numerous media groups have expressed an interest in taking control of individual clubs in the hope of winning control of broadcast rights.

Most notable is BSkyB's bid for Manchester United, which has been referred to Britain's highest competition authority the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

The BBC will rule whether or not Murdoch can take control of the 'red devils' by March.

Carlin Media Group also held talks with Premiership champions and FA Cup holders Arsenal over a possible takeover bid but ditched its plans late last year.

And Newcastle United have been approached by NTL cable company which said that any bid would hang on the outcome of BSkyB's planned takeover of Manchester.

The OFT argues that "the fans of particular clubs have less chance to see their own clubs perform" under the current agreements, that provide for just 15 per cent of Premiership games to be shown on television here.

There is also less chance for new and exciting forms of broadcasting to develop, such as new regionally or locally focused programmes or channels" the OFT said in a statement.

An OFT spokesman Mark Kram said that the regulators would be happy to make an out of court settlement but that lawyers had not yet presented any compromise solution.

"Our door is always open but there have been no proposals made as yet."

Henman in qtrs

DOHA, Jan 7: Top seed Tim Henman advanced to the quarterfinals of the 1 million dollars Qatar Open on Wednesday by beating Morocco's Younes El Aynaoui despite losing the first set, reports AP.

The Briton was not only too strong, but also too consistent, for the 26-year-old Moroccan and clinched the match 4-6, 6-3, 6-0.

Fourth-seed Goran Ivanisevic also advanced after brushing aside Christophe Van Garsse of Belgium 6-3, 6-0 in 43 minutes.



Juventus' French playmaker Zinedine Zidane (C) and AC Milan's Italy international Demetrio Albertini battle for possession during their Serie A clash at Milan on Wednesday. —AFP photo

The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Friday 8th January
All programmes are in local time. The Daily Star will not be responsible for any change in the programme.

Nights 2:30 Christy 3:30 L.A.
4:30 Santa Barbara 5:30
The Oprah Winfrey Show

CHANNEL [V]

7:00 Turn On T [V] 8:30

Rewind VI

Sophiya 9:30

Zabardast Hits 12:00 House

Arrest 12:30 Zabardast Hits

2:30 First Day First Show

3:00 Videocast Flashback 3:30

Tun On T [V] 7:30 First Day

First Show 8:00 House Arrest

8:30 The Indian Top 10:30

First Day First Show 10:00

Tun On T [V] 10:30 The Ticket

11:00 Turn On T [V] 10:00

Bacard Blast 11:30 Turn On T [V]

12:00 Banned at Bedtime 1:30

Turn On T [V] 3:30 Turn on

5:00 Pepsi Chinese Top 20

STAR PLUS

6:30 Ninjaad 7:30 Good

Morning India 9:15 Dress

Circle 9:30 Dangler 10:30

Santa Barbara 11:30 The Bold

& The Beautiful 12:00 Awaaaz

12:30 Hum Tum Gaate Chale

1:00 Taha 1:30 Movies 9:8

2:00 Apradh 2:30 Imtihan

3:00 Swabhiman 3:30 Tea

Time Cinema 6:30 Small

Wonder 7:00 So Let's Yahoo

7:15 Dress Circle 7:30 Star

News (Hindi) 8:00 Meri

Pasand 8:30 Maal Hail To

Taal Hail 9:00 Ajeeb Dastaan

9:30 Star News 10:00 Masters

card Family Fortunes 10:30

Amul India Show 11:00 Aaj

Ki Baat 12:00 Sabot 12:30

The Bold & The Beautiful 1:00

Newhart 1:30 Baywatch