

Suker reminded of the reality

ZAGREB, Feb 9 (Reuters/Internet): Croatia coach Miroslav Blazevic has warned Davor Suker, top marksman at last year's World Cup finals, to beware of becoming one of soccer's fallen heroes.

Suker has been unable to command a regular starting place in more than two seasons with Real Madrid and Blazevic said on Tuesday, "Davor is in a delicate position now... he has to find new motivation to prove himself all over again."

"Even stronger characters were lulled into sleep by big and prolonged celebrations and later disappeared from the scene," Blazevic was quoted as saying in Split where Croatia, the beaten World Cup semi-finalists, play Denmark in a friendly on Wednesday.

"Remember for instance Italian (Paolo) Rossi, who disappeared after the World Cup in Spain (in 1982), not to mention (Mario) Kempes, who won the World Cup (in Argentina in 1978) but later could not win a regular place at Valencia."

Blazevic will be looking to Suker to provide much of the firepower against Denmark.

He scored with a superb lob in Croatia's 3-0 win over the Danes during the 1996 European championship.

Wednesday's friendly will be an important test for Croatia's championship qualifier for Euro 2000 against Yugoslavia in March -- the first encounter between the two sides since they emerged from the bloody collapse of the former Yugoslavia federation in 1991.

Zimbabwe rejected as hosts for 2000 Nations' Cup

ABIDJAN, Feb 9 (Reuters/Internet): Zimbabwe was told on Monday it would not be allowed to stage the 2000 African Nations' Cup finals because it had not met certain required targets.

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) secretary general Mustapha Fakhmy told a news conference that other national federations had until March 10 to apply to host the continent's biggest sporting event.

"We have decided to reject the application of Zimbabwe because it was not satisfactory," Fakhmy said, listing problems with the timing and funding of work on stadiums and with facilities for television coverage of the event.

Fakhmy, speaking after the CAF's executive committee met in Abidjan, said a decision on the venue for the finals would be taken in Guinea's capital Conakry on March 14.

Nigeria, hosts of the World Youth Cup in April, and Morocco, who have bid to stage the 2006 World Cup, are likely contenders given the short time scale.

Fakhmy said the Zimbabwean authorities had not shown sufficient commitment to the funding of the renovation of three stadiums.

He said an inspection team had found no work had been started on a fourth stadium in Mutare which was earmarked for demolition and rebuilding.

"The committee expressed regret that Sepp Blatter, president of world soccer's governing body FIFA, had floated the idea of a World Cup every two years before formally informing national associations."

Fakhmy said CAF had to achieve a general consensus before taking a stand on the issue.

Sources close to CAF said the federation would take a decision on which African bid to host the 2006 World Cup it should support after April 1 when bidding countries must confirm their commitment to hosting the event.

Egypt, Ghana, Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa have all lodged bids.

Sarajevo's intention

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Feb 9: Ravaged by war and bearing little resemblance to the city that staged the 1984 Olympics, Sarajevo wants to hold the Winter Games in 2010, reports AP.

The Bosnian Olympic Committee announced its intentions Monday, the 15th anniversary of the 1984 Olympics. All the facilities built for those Games were destroyed by shells and gunfire that rained on the city during the war from 1992 until the end of 1995.

A recording of the worlds of International Olympic Committee president Juan Antonio Samaranch at the 1984 closing ceremony, "See you again, dear Sarajevo," was broadcast Monday.

What followed was a statement from Bogic Bogicevic, the head of the Bosnian Olympic Committee: "The candidacy for the Olympic Games 2010 will be officially announced."

Bogicevic later said that Sarajevo's candidacy would be officially submitted to the IOC at the end of March.

The site of the 2006 Winter Olympics will be determined in June and the 2010 Games in 2003.

"I'm for it," said Sadik Hadzizadikovic, 64. "All of these ruins would be repaired. It could again be a tourist's paradise," he added.

Now, the only foreign visitors to Bosnia are those who come to help rebuild the country. And they are the ones who visit the former Olympic sites on both sides of the boundary that divided Sarajevo under the 1995 peace agreement.

The partitioning of Bosnia into the Bosnian Serb republic and the Muslim-Croat federation left many Sarajevo skiers deprived of their favourite mountain Jahorina, now under Bosnian Serb control.



The French national squad warming up for a training session at Harrow Borough Stadium in London on February 8 ahead of their February 9 friendly international against England at Wembley.

Berger for 'foreignism'



LIVERPOOL, Feb 9 (Reuters): Liverpool midfielder Patrik Berger has hit back at claims that the foreign influence is harming the English Premier League.

On the contrary, he says, it is improving coaching and playing standards and bringing a breath of fresh air to the English game.

And Berger believes the tactical awareness of foreign coaches and the preparation techniques they have brought to their clubs will help English sides banish their poor European form.

The Czech international admits to being "surprised" by the lack of tactical team talks given by former Liverpool manager Roy Evans and he has welcomed the way new coach Gerard Houllier has altered the approach at Anfield.

"He has changed a lot," Berger says. "He brought some things here from Europe. He has different training ideas, more tactics and a lot more discipline."

"All this is normal in Germany, France, Italy and Spain but now he's bringing these things here."

He added: "England is one of the best leagues in the world but that is maybe the problem why the English teams are usually out of the UEFA Cup or Cup Winners' Cup quite early. It is because they don't study what other teams can do."

Berger points to the way Gianluca Vialli at Chelsea and Arsene Wenger at Arsenal have changed the traditional way of thinking in English football and seen their teams turn into title winners and contenders as a consequence.

"I think the coach's influence at these places has been a major help for English football," he says.

Houllier's presence at Anfield has certainly been of great assistance to Berger.

The 25-year-old was set to leave the club in the summer after a tumultuous year under Evans.

After starting his Liverpool career with a flurry of goals, which enhance a reputation built on a runners-up medal in Euro '96, his form tailed off and the writing looked on the wall when he was allowed to miss key club games so he could fly home.

By then Berger will be 26 and looking forward to another four years at Anfield before moving on to another challenge and finally returning home to play out his career.

He says: "If you go abroad you can make very good money and afterwards have a good life."

"A lot of players from the Czech Republic do it because if you play for team like Liverpool, Lazio and Atletico Madrid you can play in the European games that give you good experience."

Sparta Prague and Slavia Praha are the two best teams in the Czech Republic and they to out in the first round. That means you have less experience and it can make it harder to play well for the national team.

"We have a squad of 18 players and I think 11 of them play abroad so it is very common."

Berger is hoping the different playing culture his international teammates bring to the Czech team will allow him to emulate his best moment in football -- scoring in the Euro '96 final even though the Czech Republic lost 2-1 to Germany.

"It was a good time because we were in a tough group and thought we were going home after three games."

"But getting the silver medal and scoring was a great moment for me and I hope we can do even better next time."

Now he is spearheading the Czech drive for Euro 2000, although a pulled hamstring meant he was not considered for this week's friendly against Belgium.

He hopes he has done well enough this season to win back his place for the two crucial qualifiers in March against Lithuania and Scotland.

"They are two hard games and if we beat them both we have a very good chance of qualifying. We have won all three of our qualifying games so we are confident of reaching the finals in 2000."

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Stokes saw the fall of historic 20 wickets

NEW DELHI, Feb 9 (Reuters/Internet): The 10-wicket Test feat of Anil Kumble and Jim Laker, separated by 43 years, were seen in person by English cricket fan

Richard Stokes. Stokes, now based in Germany, was 10 when his father took him to Old Trafford to see Laker's famous match in 1956 when he bowled out Australia, taking 10 wickets in the second innings.

Remarkably, Stokes, in India on a business trip, was in the ground in New Delhi on Sunday when Kumble dismissed Pakistan to become only the second player to take all 10 wickets in a Test innings.

Stokes, 53, said of Old Trafford in 1956: "I cannot recollect all the incidents but I certainly have a vague remembrance of that day."

"It was cold, maybe wet, and there were lots of people in the ground."

He told the Indian Express after Sunday's sensational day: "When it happened I looked around my stands to spot a Britisher. 'I saw none and thought maybe I would be the only one to have seen both (feats).'"

Stokes said he was 10 when he saw Laker's feat in 1956.

Charlton earn full points

LONDON, Feb 9: Charlton Athletic beat London rivals Wimbledon 2-0 in a Premier League clash at The Valley on Monday to record their first victory since October, reports Reuters.

Charlton's dismal run had seen them fail to win in their last 15 games but they were worthy winners of Monday's match played in light snow.

Swede Martin Pringle, on loan from Benfica, ran 50 metres and through three tackles to put them ahead after 37 metres and the game was settled by a bizarre own goal by Dean Blackwell in the 69th.

The defender had allowed a harmless pass to run through to goalkeeper Neil Sullivan but the two men collided and as Blackwell stumbled backwards he backheaded the loose ball into the net.

The victory enabled Charlton to climb one place to 18th, above Southampton on goal difference. Wimbledon remain eighth.

Early start to Premiership next season

LONDON, Feb 9: (Reuters/Internet): The English premier league will start a week earlier next season in an effort to ease fixture congestion.

But the move by club chairmen on Thursday was swiftly attacked by players' union chairman Gordon Taylor.

He said: "I am extremely concerned about the fact that beginning a week earlier is taking us nearer to a 52-week season for the best players in the country."

The chairman repeated the clubs' commitment to all domestic competitions, including the League Cup, and said that next season would begin on August 7.

Taylor, chairman of the Professional Footballers' Association, expressed concern over whether the change would make any difference to the demands placed on leading English players.

"This move may ease fixture congestion a little, but it doesn't address the problem of too many games -- it leaves room for even more."

"FIFA need to look very seriously at imposing a worldwide block-off period where there are no games anywhere in the world. If they are concerned for the good of the game, they must attend to the fitness and well-being of the top players."

"They should also consider putting a limit on the number of games -- for club and country combined -- that players can play. Fifty to 55 is a realistic maximum that any one player should be expected to play."

Kumble's killer cocktail



NEW DELHI, Feb 9 (Reuters/Internet): Indian leg-spinner Anil Kumble said he brewed a cocktail of pace, spin and bounce to earn his remarkable 10-wicket haul against Pakistan.

He and England off-spinner Jim Laker are the only players in Test history to have taken 10 wickets in an innings.

Kumble achieved the feat in New Delhi on Sunday. Laker's 10-wicket haul came at Old Trafford, Manchester, in 1956.

"All I had to do was pitch the ball in the right areas, mix up my pace and spin and trap the batsman," Kumble told the Hindustan Times on Tuesday.

Kumble's wicket-by-wicket account:

Shahid Afridi: At that point it was important for us to get the breakthrough. The Pakistani openers were cruising and had already put on more than 100 runs. I pushed one through flatter and Afridi got a big nick for Nayan (Mongia) to do the rest.

Yuz Ahmed: He has always been known to be a candidate for a leg before verdict. I wanted to pitch the ball right up to him and hit him on his toes. I delivered it quicker too.

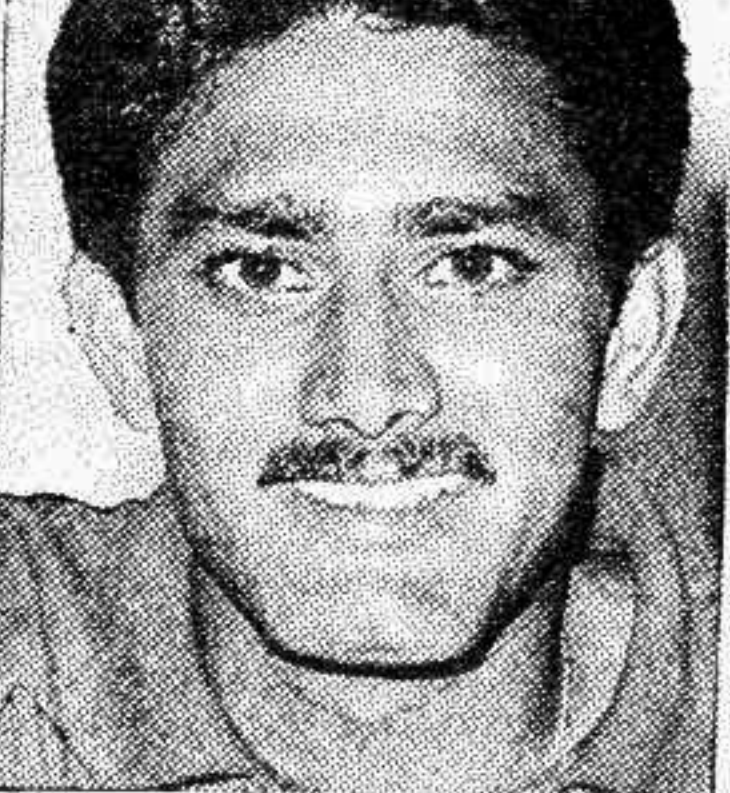
Inzamam-ul-Haq: It was not a wicket-taking ball at all but he got an inside edge to it and dragged it on to the stumps. It was a big wicket because he

could have been a sticky customer.

Yousuf Youhana: I was aiming to get him to play half-cock. The ball was low and in line with the stumps and it seemed like he was not looking to play it, his bat was tucked so far behind his body.

Moin Khan: I tried to push him back with some short balls but he handled those well. Then I bowled a slow leg break and the pitch did the rest, getting the ball to bounce a bit. Saurav (Ganguly) took a good catch at slip.

Saeed Anwar: I had been bowling around the stumps to him through the innings and I missed a caught-and-bowled chance as I timed my jump too



early. Then I switched to bowling over the stumps since I could get more body into it. I bowled a leg break and he gloved it to forward short leg.

Salim Malik: I bowled a short, fastish delivery, a flipper that bounced more than even I thought it would, and he tried to pull me. Pulling or cutting was never going to be easy on this wicket of variable bounce and he was bowled, beaten by the one that skidded. The wicket was a real bonus.

Mushtaq Ahmed: I bowled a slow leg break to him in the same manner that I bowled to Moin Khan. He edged a simple catch to Rahul (Dravid) at gully.

Saqin Mushtaq: I was not aiming to do anything but bowl straight on the pad. It was the end of the over and I was blank. I did not think of anything else but picked up my cap and sweater and walked to my place at fine leg. But knowing (Javagal) Srinath, I knew he would not strive too hard to claim the 10th and would leave it to me.

Wasim Akram: I bowled a leg break to him, expecting him to leave it and get a top-edge to square leg or be bowled. It just happened that he turned it to (V.V.S.) Laxman and at forward short leg. It would have been embarrassing not to have claimed the wicket in that over and expect Srinath to send down another over without trying to take a wicket.

Racism still taints British sport

LONDON, Feb 9 (Reuters/Internet): Racism still taints British sport on and off the pitch despite official optimism that the problem is declining.

British Sports Minister Tony Banks told Reuters racism on the pitch, in the stands and in the boardroom had dramatically diminished in the past year.

But he conceded that some British sports bodies were still stuck in the 19th century and said public funding would be withdrawn from any organisation letting up in the fight.

"We have a right to expect governing bodies to produce policy consistent with modern sport in the 21st century, not amateur sport rooted in the 19th century," Banks said in an interview.

Soccer has progressed a long way since banana skins were tossed at black players and commentators said they were unlikely to have the temperament for soccer.

These days black players are well established in the game, but few hold management, coaching or senior administration positions.

Rudd Gullit, Newcastle's boss, is the only black manager in the premier league and Uriah Rennie is the only black referee on the premiership list. And not one member of an ethnic minority sits on the FA Council, the ultimate policy-making

forum for English soccer.

Nor is there a single Asian soccer player in the premier league despite the fact that the Asian community makes up 3.5 per cent of the population and has one of the highest levels of participation at grass root levels, according to Piara Powar, national coordinator for "Kick It Out," the anti-racism in soccer campaign.

A similar disparity exists in the stands where blacks and Asians make up just one per cent of the crowd at premier league games, but more than seven per cent of the population as a whole.

"Asian parents have seen the hostility in the stadiums and are reluctant to encourage their children to go to, or play, the game," Powar said.

The FA started a crackdown on racism last year when it decided to hand out red cards to any player guilty of racist taunts.

So far no player has been sent off for this reason but, Powar said, this did not mean bigoted name-calling no longer existed on the pitch.

"The referees are not aware that racist abuse comes in the form of words like 'black bastard' or 'paki'," Powar said. "Many refs don't feel comfortable using the red card for such an offence."

Racist chanting in the stands is now a criminal of-

fence and rowdy fans were arrested this year in Norwich City and Millwall.

Crickets too has its problems, according to a Roehampton Institute report published late last year. It found that English cricket, while not explicitly racist, discriminated against black and Asian players.

The research was conducted to investigate the reasons why most black and Asian cricket clubs were not affiliated with the Essex Cricket Association (ECA).

The split between affiliated and non-affiliated clubs reflects the existence of two distinct cricket cultures, the report found.

In Sunday cricket, black and Asian players rarely play matches against predominantly white teams.

"There exists a marked reluctance by white clubs to play black and Asian clubs," said Ian McDonald, author of the Roehampton report.

One Asian respondent to the poll said his accent and the distinctly Asian name of his club made booking fixtures difficult.

"As soon as the fixture secretary (of a white club) knows it's an Asian side they will find an excuse saying, 'We are too strong, or we haven't got a date free' even though I find out later on that they have dates," the respondent said.

McDonald said 10 per cent of county cricketers were black or Asian.

"No black or Asian players that have come through the parks go on to first class play," McDonald said. "We've got a form of apartheid at recreational levels in cricket."

While the English Cricket Board last November issued a statement recognising the problem, McDonald said the governing body could not stamp out racism unless they sponsored an anti-racism summit.

"At least it's now on paper after years of denial and ignoring the problem," McDonald said. "But they don't understand the problem yet. They haven't done any research, they haven't even talked to us."

The Rugby Football League (RFL) has taken more active steps to combat racism.

Last summer, the RFL launched a major anti-racism campaign with a 10,000 pound (\$16,000) grant from the English Sports Council.

"(Racism) is a small but significant problem within rugby," said Jonathan Long, a reader in Leisure Studies at Leeds Metropolitan University and author of a 1995 study on racism in rugby.

Long said rugby league suffered similar problems to football when it came to racial prejudice.

There is a fair sprinkling of people from African-Caribbean backgrounds but a marked absence of people from Asian backgrounds," he said.

Ancelotti fills Lippi's shoes



ROME, Feb 8 (Reuters/Internet): Juventus appointed Carlo Ancelotti as coach with immediate effect on Monday following Marcello Lippi's dramatic resignation on Sunday night.

The Italian champions announced their decision after an emergency board meeting in Turin. They described the situation created by Lippi's departure as "delicate".

"Juventus have invited Carlo Ancelotti, whose contract had already been formalised for the next two seasons, to take over as team coach immediately," they said in a statement.

Ancelotti, who had been due to take over from Lippi at the end of this season, confirmed he would accept the appointment.

He was out of contract and, when Lippi stepped down after Juventus' abject 4-2 home defeat by Parma on Sunday, was the obvious man to take over.

The former Roma and AC Milan midfielder inherits a Juventus side embroiled in their worst season for 37 years.

They are ninth in the championship, 15 points off the pace. They are out of the Italian Cup and Ancelotti has less than a month to sort them out before they tackle

Greek side Olympiakos Piraeus in the quarter-finals of the European Cup.

Juventus have scored only 22 goals in their 20 league matches and with Alessandro Del Piero still injured, have conspicuously failed to find a solution to their goal drought.

France's Thierry Henry and Argentine Juan Esnaider arrived last month to bolster their attack but neither has had time to settle in and start scoring goals.

The last time Juventus sat so low in the league table at this stage of the season was in 1962, when they were ninth at the halfway stage in the title race.

That year they slumped to 12th by the end of the season -- their worst league finish.

Ancelotti, 39, made his name as a player at AS Roma in

the 1980s and was an integral part of the team who won their last Italian championship in 1983 and reached the European Cup final the following year.

He then moved to AC Milan where he linked up with the man who would become his coaching mentor -- Arrigo Sacchi.

When Sacchi left Milan to coach the Italy side, Ancelotti followed him and was his right hand man in the early 1990s.

From there, he moved into coaching in his own right, guiding Reggiana from Serie B to Serie A in the 1995-96 season before moving into the big time with Parma.

He took the small town side into the European Champions' League two years ago but was dismissed at the end of last season after the club failed to win a trophy.

Like Sacchi, he believes in strict 4-4-2 formations and tends to build teams based on work rate and co-operation rather than flair and gifted playmakers.

His appointment has been criticised by many Juventus fans but he has appealed for a period of grace.

"Let the fans judge me on my results," he said last month when he was formally appointed.

Top twenty

MONACO, Feb 9 (Reuters/Internet): Leading rankings (with points) issued by the ATP Tour on Monday:

1. Sampras	3,744
2. Corretja	3,530
3. Kafelnikov	3,350
4. Rafter	3,264
5. Moya	3,178
6. Costa	2,969
7. Agassi	2,845
8. Henman	2,608
9. Krajicek	2,537
10. Rusedski	2,469
11. Kucera	2,261
12. Martin	2,152
13. Enqvist	2,104
14. Philippoussis	1,898
15. Ivanisevic	1,895
16. Johansson	1,817
17. Pioline	1,761
18. Mantilla	1,758
19. Siemerink	1,619

Argentine soccer strike on cards

BUENOS AIRES, Feb 9: Argentina's First Division soccer players decided late Monday they would strike for an undetermined time unless a suspension of lower division games was lifted, leaving upcoming tournaments in jeopardy, reports Reuters.

The Argentine soccer players' union is protesting a ruling by Judge Victor Perrotta, who in December ordered the suspension of all divisions except the principal tournament because of violence in stadiums.

Hooliganism is a significant problem at Argentine matches and is particularly rampant at lower division games where there are fewer police.

The majority of Argentine soccer clubs feature raucous fans who carry enormous team flags to the stadiums, root loudly for their squad and insult the opposition.

The suspension of lower division games had been appealed by the Argentine Football Association (AFA), which encompasses all clubs. Earlier Monday Perrotta estimated lower division play could resume in the coming week depending on an appeals court decision.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	1 Singer Davis	4 Census datum	7 Brilliant	12 Teapot	13 '60s incendiary device?	14 Sheepish?	15 French noble	16 Roughly 6 trillion miles	18 Perform	19 J.R.'s mom	20 Omicron	22 Pioneered	27 Bear area	28 Beast of burden	29 Reveal	31 Cord	34 Prancer's yokemate	35 Classified information?	37 Melody	38 Probability	39 Flushed	41 Pound of																			
DOWN	2 45 Ointment	3 A long, long time	5 Bar order	6 However	8 Farewell	9 Little	10 Magnon	11 55 Old Olds	12 56 Canids	13 57 Cable TV channel	14 58 Abby's sis	15 59 DOWN	16 1 Gold-finger?	17 2 Frenzied	18 3 Desert	19 25 Put to	20 4 Compe-	21 25 Works	22 5 Intergates	23 6 Two	24 7 Cast a ballot	25 8 Wall climber	26 9 Compete	27 10 Time - Bottle?	28 11 Aachen article	29 17 Stash	30 21 Unisex wear	31 23 Steeple	32 24 Bagel	33 25 Topping	34 25 Put to	35 26 Sorority topic	36 28 Vast quantity	37 30 IV squared	38 31 Seesaw	39 32 Bankroll	40 33 Third party abbr.	41 36 Colorless	42 37 Now or never?	43 40 Put into office	44