

Aneika, Arsenal to part company

LONDON, June 22: Arsenal chairman Peter Hill-Wood admitted on Tuesday that unhappy French international striker Nicolas Anelka would be leaving the club, whom he helped win the Double in 1998, reports AFP.

Hill-Wood, an Old Etonian whose family have had links with the club for decades, also slammed the 20-year-old's behaviour in signing a four-year contract and then through his brothers trying to negotiate a lucrative move abroad.

Thusfar, though, reported rival multi-million pound bids from Real Madrid and Lazio have so far fallen apart.

"We are not happy about it. The player, however, has said he does not want to play for Arsenal and that puts us in an impossible situation," Hill-Wood told the Sun newspaper.

"It is not a particularly good advert for English football when a player can sign a contract and then announce he is off."

Hill-Wood confirmed no transfer bid has yet been successful for Anelka but conceded nonetheless that the player's Highbury career is as good as over.

"One thing's for sure, Anelka will go. But to whom?" he asked rhetorically.

Since arriving at Arsenal for a knockdown 500,000 pounds from Paris St Germain two years ago Anelka has flourished on the field, collecting last year's PFA Young-Player-of-the-Year Award, but has constantly complained of being unhappy living in England.

Despite starring in Arsenal's 'Double' winning season he was left out of Alain Jacquet's eventually victorious World Cup squad -- he blamed his two Dutch teammates at Arsenal Dennis Bergkamp and Marc Overmars for that omission, saying they refused to pass to him.

Two-decade man Bergomi leaves

MILAN, June 22 (Reuters/Internet): Inter Milan have released captain and Italian defender Giuseppe Bergomi after 22 years at the club.

"You all know that at Inter it's over for me after so many years," 36-year-old Bergomi said.

"I have spent more than half my life here. Inter has given me a lot -- prestige, fame, money -- I recognise this and I thank everyone," he said.

"I don't yet have any clear ideas for my future. If I had had more time I would have got myself organised, but I was only told two weeks ago. But I do still see myself on the pitch and not behind a desk."

He is taking time off to consider "various offers".

Japanese hero returns

UNDATED, June 22 (Mail/Internet): The player who scored the most important goal in Japanese soccer history has been recalled to the national squad for this month's Copa America in Paraguay.

Masayuki Okano, whose "golden goal" in sudden-death extra time against Iran in November 1997 booked Japan's first trip to the World Cup finals, was one of four players added to the Copa squad at late notice.

The other three were Masahiro Ando, a right-sided wing-back from Shimizu S-Pulse, and Jubilo Iwata teammates Hideki Suzuki, a combative central defender, and Takashi Fukunishi, a defensive midfield player.

The four to drop out were World Cup defender Etsuke Nakaniishi and striker Tatsuhiko Kubo, both injured, and Olympic team members Shinji Ono and Atsushi Yanagisawa, both of whom are needed for Sydney 2000 qualifying games in October.

Okano, a speedy 26-year-old right-winger for Urawa Red Diamonds, has scored three times in 26 internationals but has not played for Japan since the World Cup in France.

He was on the bench for Japan's first game under French coach Philippe Troussier - a 1-0 victory against Egypt last October -- but never got on, and was not considered for friendlies against Brazil, Belgium and Peru this year because he was training with Ajax Amsterdam.

Japan's players left Tokyo on Monday night to prepare for the biennial South American championship, where, as guests, they will play Peru, Paraguay and Bolivia in the first round.

Morace rewrites Italian history

ROME, June 22: Carolina Morace is joining what up until now had been exclusively a men's club: Coaching Italian pro soccer, reports AFP.

The former star striker for the Italian women's team signed a two-year contract Monday with Viterbese of the Third Division. Morace, 35, will be the first female coach of a men's club in Italy at any professional level.

"In the end soccer is always the same, no matter who's playing," said Morace.

She scored 105 goals in 151 games for Italy, one of only three women in history to score more than 100 times in international play. Morace retired in 1997.

"Sure, my choice is important and courageous, but what counts is the brain, not the gender," said Viterbese owner Luciano Gauci. "Carolina has been in soccer for a lifetime, she knows it very well."



THE PHENOMENON GEARING UP: Superstar Ronaldinho doing a zigzag with the ball during a practice session at Iguazu near the border with Paraguay. Four times world champions Brazil is training for the Copa America championship which begins on June 29

—AFP photo

Suker in love with England



UNDATED, June 22 (Mail/Internet): There is only one regret as Davor Suker bastes slowly in the sun on the Croatian coast this week: he won't be going to Wimbledon.

Suker, winner of the Golden Boot as top scorer at last summer's World Cup, has been a frequent visitor to London this summer as he looks for a club to play the blue-chip salary he feels he deserves.

Suker was back in town again last week, with his stunning Spanish actress girlfriend, Ana Obregon, talking to possible employers, shopping at Harrods and generally revelling in all things English.

This week he will be on holiday at Brac, on the Croatian coast, with his international team-mates, Everton's former West Ham defender Slaven Bilic and Derby's transfer-listed Igor Stimac, who owns a nightclub in the area.

Suker and Ana will undoubtedly catch a few rays, swim a little and perhaps talk about the future with his good friend and host for the week, Spanish singing star Julio Iglesias.

There is no doubt about Suker's favoured destination for next season, as underlined by his third visit to London in recent weeks.

Between meetings with interested parties, Suker managed to take in Royal Ascot and a night out at the London Palladium - and he loved every minute of it.

I love the English culture, he says enthusiastically through his interpreter. I would have loved to have gone to Wimbledon but maybe next year, when I am with my English club.

I have played and visited many countries but nothing like England. Going to Royal Ascot last week was like travelling back through time - like nothing I have experienced.

Next year I go again, this time with one of those big hats.

On the face of it, though, you would have thought a player of Suker's undoubted ability and reputation would have been snapped up in England, but it hasn't happened.

Suker's CV is vastly impres-

sive. The Golden Boot winner following his six goals in the World Cup, third in the FIFA World Footballer of the Year poll and an astonishing 40 goals in 45 matches for Croatia -- all in a glittering record at the top level. So why no definite takers so far from the Premier League - this football land of milk and honey?

One reason is undoubtedly money. Suker's services do not come cheap, with some estimates rising to 40,000 pounds a week for the Croatian superstar.

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Edilson made scapegoat



RIO DE JANEIRO, June 22 (Reuters/Internet): Corinthians striker Edilson was thrown out of Brazil's Copa America squad on Monday for sparking a brawl in the Paulista Championship Final against Palmeiras.

The match was abandoned after Edilson infuriated Palmeiras by juggling the ball in the 76th minute and then

rolling it down his back as his side enjoyed a three-goal aggregate lead.

Three Palmeiras players steamed into him with wild kicks and punches, a pitched battle ensued, the game was called off and Corinthians were crowned champions on Sunday.

The trio who attacked him - Junior, Zinho and Paulo Nunes - were almost entirely exempted from criticism in Monday's papers as was Palmeiras defender

Cleber, sent off in the 21st minute for an appalling tackle.

Edilson was left wondering about Brazilian soccer's notion of fair play after what he described as a 'little joke' became almost a national scandal.

The player did not break any rules, his only crime was to indulge in the sort of cheeky skill which has won Brazilian soccer admirers around the world and which local television commentators applaud when performed by the national team against foreign sides.

He now finds himself accused of unsportsmanlike conduct in a country where diving to win penalties is regarded as a valid tactic, as is the use of tripping and shirt-pulling.

Brazilian domestic matches are commonly punctuated by 60 to 70 fouls because any move which even remotely threatens a goal is invariably ended with a sneaky foul, rarely punished by the referee.

Palmeiras coach Luis Felipe Scolari openly admits that he encourages players to commit fouls and adds that other coaches do likewise.

Folha de Sao Paulo newspaper columnist Jose Geraldo Couto was one of the few to sympathise with Edilson on Monday. "If Edilson had elbowed someone or kicked their ankle, he may not have been so widely condemned," he wrote.

It's absurd to consider a piece of keep-up' to be more serious than kicking someone in the knee.'

Some commentators were sickened when Corinthians players, with fighting still going on around them, pulled out a banner proclaiming 'Jesus, the victory is yours'.

The players throw themselves like gladiators at the ankles and shins of opponents, then attribute their victory to Jesus, to God, to the Lord, wrote Fernando Calazans in O Globo. "Their hypocrisy is tiring."

An AFP file picture Italian footballer Carolina Morace. Morace recently signed a contract as the first female professional soccer team trainer of the team Viterbese of the Italian 'C Division'. Morace is a former striker in the Italian women's national soccer team.



Sport

Copa America Brazil team revised

RIO DE JANEIRO, June 22: Brazilian coach Wanderley Luxemburgo called up Gremio striker Ronaldinho Monday to replace midfielder Edilson in the Copa America squad after the latter was thrown off the team, reports AFP.

Ronaldinho should not be confused with the other player of the same name, who plays for Italian giants Inter Milan and is also in the squad. The 19-year-old Gremio player is known as Ronaldinho to avoid confusion -- both players have similarly protruding teeth.

Luxemburgo had deplored Edilson's behaviour during the Sao Paulo Championship deciding match between Corinthians and Palmeiras -- the player provoked fighting on and off the pitch.

"Edilson's attitude is unacceptable and I can not justify his selection," Luxemburgo said. "He must pay the price for his attitude."

"This type of behaviour doesn't just provoke one's opponent but also the spectators and it is hard to control things once they get out of hand."

Luxemburgo, who lost Palmeiras' midfielder Cesar Sampiao and Vasco da Gama's Juninho from his squad on Sunday through injury, will announce Edilson's replacement later on Monday.

Marcos Paulo and Alex were called up to replace the two injured players.

FINAL SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Carlos Germano, Dida.

Defenders: Cafu, Evanilson, Serginho, Roberto Carlos, Joao Carlos, Antonio Carlos, Cesar, Odvan.

Midfielders: Vampeta, Ze Roberto, Emerson, Flavio Conceicao, Rivaldo, Leonardo, Marcos Paulo, Alex.

Forwards: Amoroso, Christian, Ronaldinho.

Vieri has a check-up

MILAN, June 22: Christian Vieri, the world's most expensive footballer, underwent the mandatory medical check-up here on Tuesday, the final step in his 50 million US dollar move from Lazio to Inter Milan in Italy, reports AFP.

The 25-year-old forward, who spent 10 of his formative years in Sydney before returning to fame and fortune in Europe, confirmed his intention to stay in Milan for the five years of his contract.

Milan is a big and beautiful city and I'm changing once again, but this time I intend to stay because I want to settle and to win something with Inter," said Vieri.

Inter bosses have pushed back the date for the official presentation of their new star.

After his medical Vieri will join his friend Filippo Inzaghi of Italian Serie A side Juventus for holidays.

Vieri's record transfer fee sparked controversy with the Vatican's daily newspaper saying in was "an offence against poor people" and that no one was worth that much money.

"I have pride in what I do and I want always to be the best. My heart is set on England but if not, I will go somewhere else in the country, if it is right."

I played here in Euro 96 and I have wanted to come back ever since. The stadiums, the fans, the passion - it is a personal thing to me, it is spectacular.

"I want to show England what I can do and, on my time off, I want to go to places like Ascot and this time, have a small bet."

"Oh yes, and I want just to ride about in black cabs all day. They are so different to anywhere else in the world. Now we know why Davor Suker wants 40,000 pounds a week."

Suker is adamant that is not so. "I spend three years at Real Madrid," says Suker, "and I have only one problem in that time. It is the only problem I have had in my whole playing career of 14 years."

Suker spent much of his time in Spain either out of the Real Madrid team or on the substitutes' bench. To be fair to him, though, he sustained a knee injury following the World Cup, which kept him out for some time.

Suker's problem came to a head when John Toshack arrived at the Bernabeu, particu-

COPA AMERICA

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