

## Out Nakayama, in Yoshihara

TOKYO, June 29: Kota Yoshihara, the only player from the J-League Second Division in the Japanese Olympic squad, will join the top national team for Copa America, the Japan Football Association said Monday, reports AFP.

The 21-year-old Consadole Sapporo forward will replace Japan's only World Cup goal scorer Masashi Nakayama, who suffered a broken bone just below his right eye in a practice match in Argentina Friday.

Yoshihara was picked up after his excellent performance in the first leg of the Asian Group Six preliminary tournament in Hong Kong, where he scored seven goals in four games. He added one more in Tokyo Saturday.

"It's a big chance for me. It's been a dream for me since I was an elementary school boy to represent Japan in the top team," said Yoshihara, top goal scorer in the Second Division with 10 goals.

"Everything depends on (how much) I will learn from Copa America. I really want to learn as much as possible," added Yoshihara, who was to leave here Wednesday morning.

## Atletico release Juninho

MADRID, June 29: Atletico Madrid have put Brazilian attacking midfielder Juninho up for sale, Spanish television and radio reported yesterday, reports Reuters.

Juninho signed for the Spanish First Division club two years ago but has struggled to find the form that persuaded Atletico to pay 12.5 million pounds (19.78 million dollars) to Middlesbrough for his services.

Atletico would be prepared to listen to offers of around 2,500 million pesetas (15.62 million dollars), the reports said.

After an injury-blighted first year Juninho found himself relegated to the substitutes' bench under Italian coach Arigo Sacchi during the early part of this season.

Both Middlesbrough and Aston Villa came in with determined bids to take him back to the Premier League at the end of 1998 but Sacchi convinced him to stay and fight for his place.

The return of Radomir Antic — who originally signed him from Middlesbrough — in place of Sacchi has seen him back in the starting line-up but Atletico's fortunes saw little improvement.

The Brazilian now seems set to make way as part of another rebuilding programme, under new coach Claudio Ranieri.

## Hoddle's no to Forest

NOTTINGHAM, England, June 29: Former England coach Glenn Hoddle has Monday rejected an offer to return to management with First Division Nottingham Forest, reports AFP.

Hoddle, sacked as England coach after ill-judged remarks about the disabled, was given the opportunity to take over at Forest, who hope to bounce back immediately from relegation from the Premiership.

But the former Swindon and Chelsea boss has instead opted to enjoy an extended break from the game while he considers his future.

Hoddle's agent Dennis Roach said: "The Forest people have been absolutely fantastic and I think if it was a bit further down the line, it would be a job Glenn would have to look at."

"It's no reflection on Forest, who have been extremely patient and who offered him a tremendous contract."

"But at the moment he feels that with the problems he's had with the sacking — and he's been through a traumatic time — that it's too soon for him to come back into the game."

"Maybe if it was five months down the line Glenn would take it but I don't think he's had long enough."

The news means Forest are still desperately searching for a replacement for Ron Atkinson as they prepare for the new First Division campaign.

## Del Piero extends Juventus deal

TURIN, June 29: Italian international Alessandro Del Piero has signed an extension to his contract with deposed Serie A champions Juventus, the club announced Tuesday, reports AFP.

Del Piero's new deal ties him to the Bianconeri until June 2005.

Signed from Padova at the age of 17, Del Piero has been the darling of the Juve fans since his arrival but was earlier this year linked with a big money move to Atletico Madrid or Lazio as negotiations on a new contract stalled.

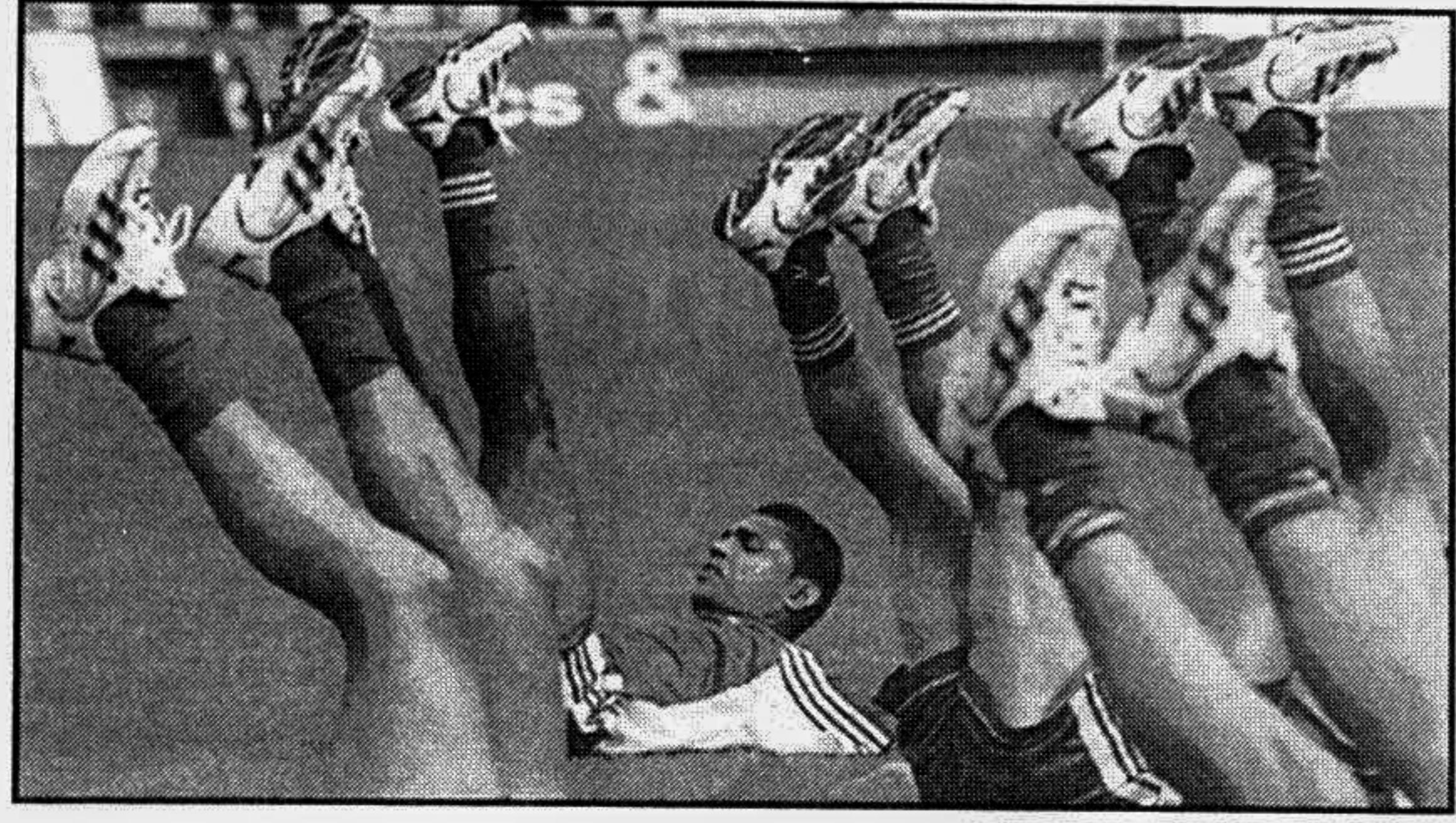
## Dugarry a doper

PARIS, June 29: French World Cup striker Christophe Dugarry faces a six month ban after failing a drugs test. Le Parisien daily newspaper reported on Tuesday, reports AFP.

The Marseille player, who was suspended following the brawl after the UEFA Cup semi-final with Bologna, allegedly tested positive for steroids.

The former Bordeaux and AC Milan player is expected to be questioned by football officials when he returns from holiday.

The date and venue of the test was not immediately revealed.



SONNY GETS A FEEL OF LYON: Brazilian striker Sonny Anderson stretching with his new teammates of French First Division side Olympic Lyon on June 28. —AFP photo

## Point of no return

SAN JOSE, California, June 29: Beginning Wednesday, maters take a far more serious turn in the 1999 Women's World Cup, reports Reuters.

In the quarterfinal round, defending champions Norway meet Sweden while a cohesive Chinese soccer squad faces Russia here at Spartan Stadium.

The remaining quarterfinals are played Thursday at Jack Kent Cooke Stadium in Rajon, Maryland, where the highly favoured United States meets Germany, followed by the enticing Brazil-Nigeria fixture.

Each team playing Wednesday employs a similar style of play, preferring to keep the ball on the ground and attack through midfield. Norway and China are both deadly on set pieces and China's speed is unmatched in the tournament.

Sweden and Russia, not as highly touted as their opponents, still pose a challenge.

"Norway's very organised and plays a physical style of soccer," said Sweden coach Marika Domanski Lyfors. "They have some individual talent as well, so this is a very tough team to beat."

The Norwegians, known for showing well in crucial matches, have also had a nose for goal, scoring 13 goals in their first three matches while only conceding two.

They are led by Ann Kristin Aarones who three goals, but Norway will field a cohesive unit that presents a confident

and composed style of play.

Injuries, however, have plagued the side that features a handful of young players with the veterans who defeated Germany in the finals in Sweden four years ago.

Players recently sidelined

include veteran defender Linda Medalen who left Norway's final first-round match against Japan with a broken nose and will miss the remainder of the tournament.

"It's my wish to go to the final," said Sun. "I hope to continue to score. Every forward wants to be the best goal scorer."

Sun is most dangerous when she combines with midfielder Zhao Lirong an ever-present threat on the left flank. China

goalkeeper Gao Hong is also one of the tops in the world and able to control her area with poise and confidence.

"We are fully aware that the Chinese are the favourites," said Russia midfielder Irina Grigorieva. "But we'll fight them to the end."

said Svensson. Silver medal winners at the 1996 Olympic Games, China, led by high-scoring Sun Wen (five goals), has quietly progressed through the tournament with a quick, efficient style of play that has caused defensive nightmares for opponents.

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## German skipper out of action

LANDOVER, Maryland, June 29: Midfielder Martina Voss, the captain of Germany's national team, will miss the rest of the Women's World Cup because of a torn leg muscle, reports AP.

Voss, 31, missed the first two games of the first round because of the leg injury, and played less than half of Germany's 3-3 tie with Brazil in the third game.

Aarones is nursing a sore knee.

"Injury-wise, Aarones should not be any problem," said Norway coach Per-Mathias Homgo.

Defensively, Bente Nordby is one of the tournament's top goalkeepers while Hegi Ruise directs the midfield.

"I can't wait for the quarterfinals," said Homgo. "It should be fun to play Sweden and we're very optimistic."

Sweden, a third-place finisher at the inaugural tournament in 1991, has failed to finish higher than fifth in any international competition since that time.

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## Heroes of Bengal—1999

Waliur Rahman

As the world was witnessing the conquests of Wasim Akram, wreaking havoc on the greens of England, Scotland, Wales, waging cricket on his enemies and collecting one dramatic victory after another: the new entrant Bangladesh were naturally perturbed.

The world had taken defeat for granted. Let it not be humiliating, they and their countrymen prayed. The press were condescending enough: majority of the comments were patronising, some showed amused tolerance, a few even bordered on the sneering disdain dismissing it as something to be tolerated. Bangladesh Captain creditably, maintained a dignified modesty, while his Pakistani counterpart did not consider it necessary to grant even an interview on such a trivial affair; he just waved the journalists away impatiently. He had other important matters at hand! No time to waste, his schedule was full!

On the 31st of May Dhaka sky was clear. People from all walks of life had cancelled other programmes from their agenda; they converged in front of their TV sets.

They were not overly optimistic nor they did expect miracles. All they wanted to see was whether their home team could make it up to 150 or so; some brave and hopelessly optimistic souls even ventured prediction of 175. When I half jocularly told my family, "mark my words, we will reach up to 200" they sneered back. And who could blame them? - the team coach had himself washed his hands off: from the outset, his comments were not exactly conducive to encouraging our boys. But all of us sat glued to the set, any way.

Forty-five minutes later. What is the score? What is the score? The refrain echoed; the waiter was sent to the guardroom to find out. He came back and announced, cool, but visibly shaken "169 all out!" He informed us in a stunned sort of voice. There was a pin-drop silence. Almost immaculately, Barrister Najmul Huda flipped off his mobile and dialed with impatient fingers. "Yes. 169 All-out", he announced in triumph. Barrister Amril Islam and his wife Lila joined the table. And after that it was hysteria. Americans, Bangladeshis, all equally ecstatic.

"Pinch me, am I sleeping?" — was it Sigma Huda's voice?

"Somebody is surely playing a practical joke! That was my wife!

Without waiting for ceremonies, the host and his gracious wife Kim decided it was a fitting occasion for celebration; all of us present, some drinking juice, others the fizzy bubble, stood in standing ovation to our boy.

Our return journey home that night was another occasion, never to be forgotten! It was past mid-night but Dhaka was wide-awake, the roads were an air of festivity. On several stops, our car was drenched in coloured water by strangers frenzied with delight. Our own euphoria, matched theirs as we opened our car windows, and stretched out our hands to our fellow citizens. We felt once again, a nation proud to be Bangladeshi. And we celebrated our victory in our own special fashion: what a day, and what a night!

Yesterday, I read somewhere that a madrassah teacher and his two colleagues mercilessly beat up 12 of their hapless students for celebrating their national team's victory over Pakistan! "Poor blokes" — I thought to myself, highly amused. "You are suffering from those days of nostalgia! Wake up, and look at the future! It reminded me of our old Barua cook who had never forgiven Gandhi for driving the British out! Nobody appreciates good mulligatawny soup nowadays! He used to complain: 'the sahibs know how to eat'!

On the 31st night, in the Habib Villa there was an air of stifled excitement. Over polite conversations, a certain excitement was rippling over the atmosphere, it was almost tangible. At last somebody ventured to ask — what is the score? State minister Faizul Huq almost immediately dialed his mobile. Pakistan lost 5 wickets

and 100 runs. What! More boundaries! More runs! What! Yes, we could play. we were able! Suddenly, magically our players too began to look golden in front of our eyes, I did not know anything more. The rest of the play became a haze. 50 overs gone, and the score was 223, with one wicket still to go! The impossible had been achieved. Of course, the 'superstar' would undoubtedly equal and surpass it in 10-20 overs! Who had not seen them play Australia? With the Inzamams and that strength and stamina, and those 'special wrists', reserved only for the 'chosen' people, they could make it in 20 to 25 overs. And against our bowling! But didn't they say Bangladeshi bowlers were good? May be perhaps ... but against Pakistan Ho, ho!

I nudged my wife. We were having a dinner at the American ambassador's residence. Look, we made 223, we have nothing to regret, it is more than respectable. Hurry up or we will be late!

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