

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 (19.7 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 Arrigo 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 saw 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.

Hodde's no to Forest

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

Hodde, sacked as England coach in February 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.

Hodde'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 sackings — and he's been through 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 deposited 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.

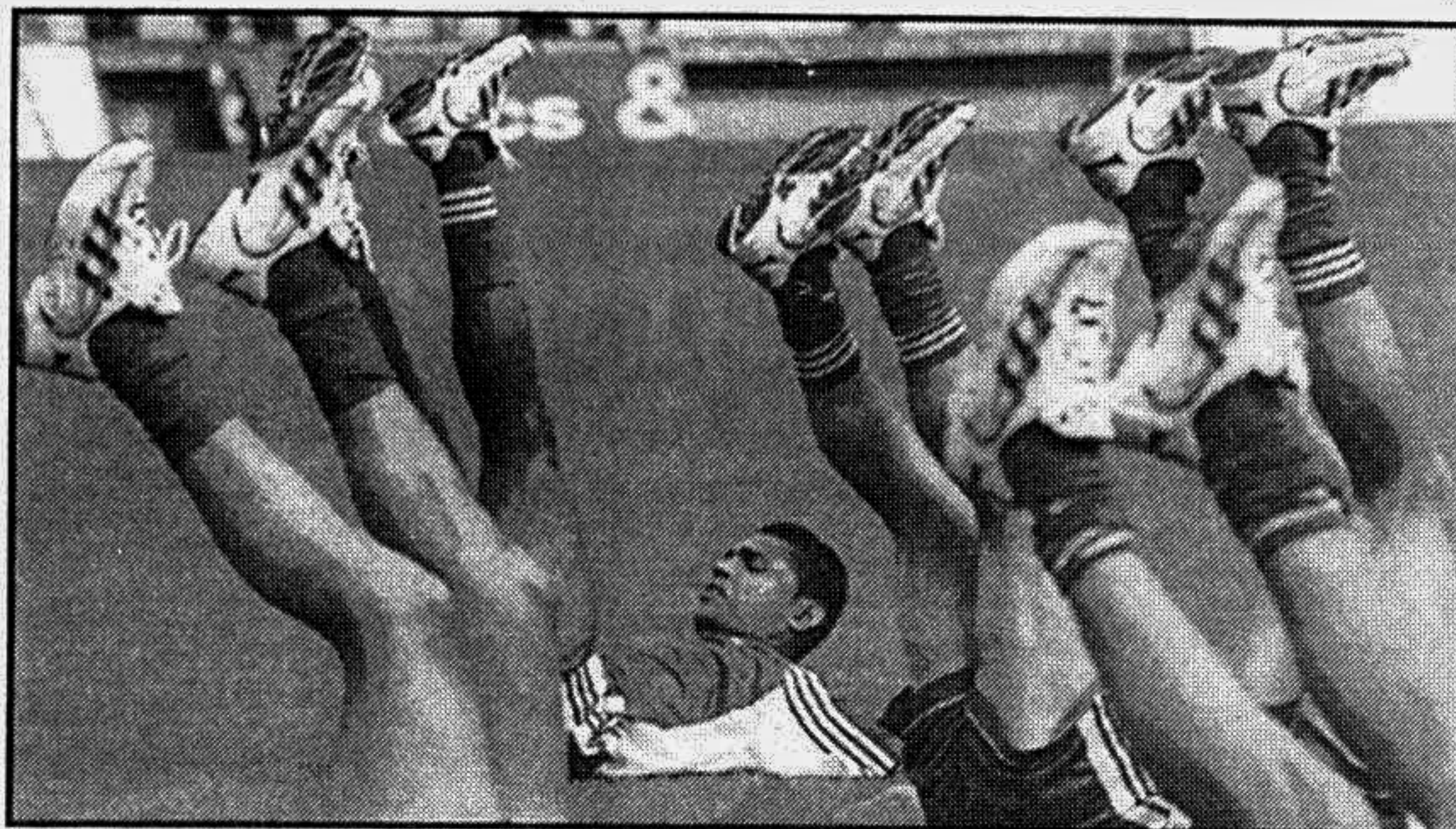
Dugarry a doper

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, matters 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."

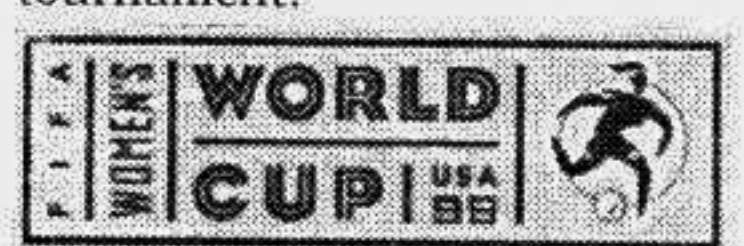
The Norwegians, known for showing well in crucial matches, have also had a nose for goal, scoring 13 goals in their first three matches while only conceding two.

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.



Aarones is nursing a sore knee.

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

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

"I can't wait for the quarter-finals," said Hongo. "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.

Victoria Svensson and Hannah Ljunberg lead Sweden's attack with two goals each.

"If we get one chance against Norway, we'll have to make it,"

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.

"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."

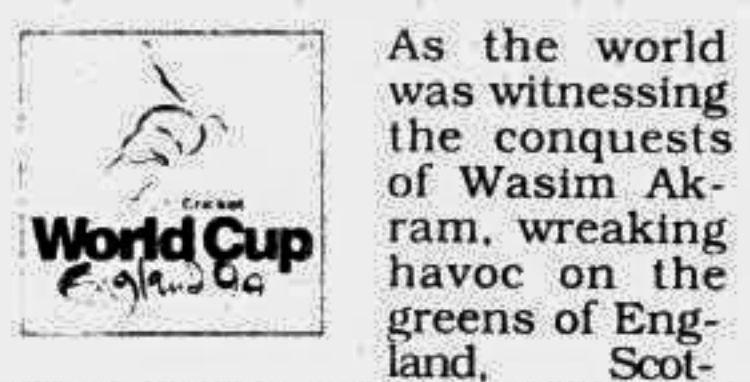
German skipper out of action

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.

Heroes of Bengal—1999

Waliur Rahman



As the world was witnessing the conquest 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 scheduled 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.

Why the delay? It was already 3:30; it soon became 3:45! Was it the rains? Was it nerves? No, wait, the players were visible. A relief of sorts. At least we could see our team on the grounds, the team which had become more interesting to all after our victory over the Scots. A well-deserved victory by a team whom even the coach had given up in somewhat misplaced frustration. But a team nevertheless very dear to all of us, our very own cricket team! Had we not been subjected to the glories of Pakistani cricketers "forced dazzle" on us from the past so many decades? Had we not been induced to believe that they were the 'super stars' moulded from another sort of clay altogether, those celestial beings were incredibly superior, much above the Bengalee mortals. For decades our eyes were trained to watch those big, those wickets which could create such magic with a ball, those tall 'godly creatures' were only to be admired! Thus we had witnessed the Hanifs, Sayeed Ahmeds, the Fazal Mahmoods; and lastly Imran Khan who bagged not only the World Cup, but also the Goldsmith hearse to boot! What had Nannu, Shujon and Opea bagged? But keep-

ing 1971 experience in mind, we nursed our little glimmer of hope, well-hidden albeit in the back of our minds. We have had the advantage of seeing how the mighty can fall, once before. It was not impossible! We hoped on.

The first over was over! Thank God — no wicket. Then the second! Even some runs! They had not been routed in the first over, even in the second!

Those of us who had held our breath, now began to loosen somewhat. Slowly, inch by inch, runs were accumulating! Was it possible? We were not all out and 10 overs were gone! Ten overs, and not a single wicket! At least we were better than Scotland! No, we had defeated Scotland — we were doing better than Australia. South Africa. Even better than the Pakistanis in some of the other games. But then all those glorious 'god' men had played against superior stars! Wait and see disaster may still come! 15 overs — they still stood their ground! Wait a minute — we could play too, it was not impossible. Cricket was not a monopoly of the 'martial race'; even rice and fish eating 'weaklings' could play the game! Let's watch — fall we undoubtedly would but at what stage? How many runs could we make! Please God, make it 150 or 175!

Surprises! Surprise upon surprise — boundary! Not possible. What! More boundaries. My God — we actually made 150! Please God — 175! But wickets are falling! Oh there goes another! Now — wait a minute, boundary! What a game! The 175 rubicon crossed! I whispered a silent "thank you — God", 200 please God.

Some breathless overs crossed. 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 excel 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.

Oh 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

for 50 runs, he shouted in disbelief. Incredible, Pakistanis, only fifty runs? And 5 wickets down. Come on, surely you are joking! "It is true," announced the minister for local government, Zillur Rahman. The unusual glint in his eyes, on the habitually calm demeanor, betrayed him hopelessly! "I saw the score before leaving my house it was 45 for 5," he added.

After that all polite conversation was thrown to the winds! Americans talked of base ball and its similarity with cricket; we talked of our possible chance of victory — may be... perhaps — why not? Not possible. The atmosphere in Habib Villa was exciting that night, and memorable for us all.

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 Naimul Huda flipped out his mobile and dialed with impatient fingers. "Yes", "169-All-out", he announced in triumph. Barrister Amirul Islam and his wife Lila joined the table. And after that it was hysterical. 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 boys.

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 own car windows, and stretched out our hands to our fellow citizens. We felt once again, a nation proud to be Bangladeshis. 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 be known 'the sahibs know how to eat!'"

Yes, the Aussies got the Cup. Bravo to them, sure! But no joy, no euphoria, can quite match ours that night! No way!

Brazilian line-up

FOZ DE IGUAZU, Brazil, June 29 (AFP): Brazil coach Wanderley Luxemburgo named his team late Monday night for the defending champions' first match in the Copa America with Venezuela in the Paraguayan city of Ciudad del Este Wednesday.

TEAM

Dida, Cafu, Odvan, Antonio Carlos, Roberto Carlos, Emerson, Vampeta, Rivaldo, Alex, Amoroso, Ronaldo.

Bolivia squad for Copa

ASUNCION, June 29 (AFP): Bolivian squad for the 39th Copa America starting in Paraguay Tuesday night:

Goalkeepers: Jose Carlos Fernandez, Sergio Galarza. **Defenders:** Renny Rivera, Marco Antonio Sandy, Miguel Angel Rimba, Gustavo Quinteros, Juan Manuel Pena, Ivan Castillo, Oscar Sanchez, Adrian Lozano.

Midfielders: Vladimir Soria, Luis Hector Cristaldo, Fernando Ochoazpur, Luis Liendo, Ruben Tufino, Erwin Sanchez, Raul Justiniano, Marcos Etcheverry. **Strikers:** Limberg Gutierrez, Jaime Moreno, Milton Coimbra, Victor Hugo Antelo.

United will take time

MANCHESTER, June 29: European club champions Manchester United have indicated Tuesday they will shelve a decision whether to participate in the English FA Cup next season until Wednesday, reports AFP.

The English Football Association (FA), with an eye on England's bid to stage the 2006 World Cup, has offered the Treble winners an unprecedented dispensation not to compete in the world's oldest knockout competition to help them participate in FIFA's inaugural World Club Championship in Brazil next January.

But the FA Cup's sponsors AXA have indicated they would want talks with the FA should the biggest club in English football decide not to participate.

Members of the United board met Monday night to discuss the FA's proposal that the FA Cup holders relinquish hopes of defending the competition.

It was intended for United to make a statement Tuesday, but the picture has become clouded with AXA suggesting that the non-appearance of Sir Alex Ferguson's side in next season's competition will affect them too.

United chairman Martin Edwards said Tuesday: "We had a meeting of some of the board last night and it was not a full board meeting. Dialogue is going on all the time, but I don't know when we will be able to make a statement."

Edwards claims United are in a "no-win situation" and that is why the club are not rushing into a decision.

He realises that they will be criticised whatever they decide to do. They will come under fire if they ditch the FA Cup, but they will also be attacked if they jeopardise England's World Cup bid by snubbing FIFA.

Meanwhile, FA Cup sponsors AXA claim they will want talks with the FA if United opt out of defending the trophy they won last month at Wembley.

Hamann slams Newcastle

NEWCASTLE, England, June 29: English Premiership side Newcastle United's German international midfielder Dietmar Hamann has Monday accused the club of breaking their word over his possible move to Arsenal, reports AFP.

The 25-year-old German claims he had a verbal agreement that he could leave if a bid of more than 6 million pounds (10 million dollars) was received, but United have insisted he is not for sale.

Hamann said: "I was told that if anyone bid 6 million pounds for me then I could go. Arsenal have now bid 7 million pounds, so why will Newcastle not let me go? Surely this is not the way to run a business."

Newcastle were not commenting on the matter Monday.



A combination of pictures showing Brazil custodian Dida (L) making a save and Ronaldo indicating some adjustment during a practice session at Foz de Iguaçu on June 28. —AFP photo

Uruguay need a lift

ASUNCION, June 29: If FIFA were to commission a trophy for the fallen giants of world football Uruguay would win it by a country mile, reports AFP.

Fans of European under-achievers Germany or England may think they have been short-changed in recent years but their worries pale into insignificance when compared to the plight of the "Celeste" (Sky Blues).

Uruguay have failed to qualify for the last two World Cups. In the latest FIFA world rankings they are listed as 74th — behind countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, Northern Ireland, Honduras, Gabon and Mali.

But they boast a glorious past.

Uruguay won the inaugural World Cup on home soil in 1930 — they had been Olympic champions in 1924 and 1928 — and were crowned world champions again in the lion's den of Rio de Janeiro's legendary Maracana Stadium in 1950 against host nations Brazil.

That against-the-odds success was in front of a still world record crowd for a stadium-based sporting event of 199,584 (the real figure is believed to be much higher).

They also have won a joint record 14 Copa America titles — a figure matched only by Argentina.

Finally the country's football chiefs have taken drastic action to reverse the slide.

In May the Uruguayan Football Association (AUF) appointed Daniel Passarella — captain of Argentina's 1978 World Cup winning side and their coach in the 1998 tournament in France — to revive the fortunes of the country on the other side of the River Plate.

Passarella's main task is to ensure Uruguay qualify for the 2002 World Cup in Japan and South Korea.

The new coach has already taken the helm. But he has opted to watch the Copa America from the stands as he tries to assess the talent he has at his disposal before embarking on the World Cup qualifying campaign.

Passarella has already said the Copa will be a testing ground for the team.

It is Uruguay's highly successful youth coach Victor Pua who will be on the touchline during the Copa and who selected the squad with Passarella taking a hands-off approach until the end of the tournament.

But it could be that Passarella's own brand of coaching could be the impetus needed to turn around the fortunes of a country that has been under-achieving for decades.

But that will have to wait until after the Copa America and Pua's production line of young talent has given a helping hand to the wily Argentine.

Uruguay have already shown signs of raising their game and got rave reviews for their pre-Copa 3-2 friendly away victory over host nation Paraguay.

Striker Federico Magallanes was the star of that performance. Goalkeeper Alvaro Nunez and another striker Marcelo Zalayeta are other top prospects.

The surprise omission from the squad, meanwhile, is midfielder Nicolas Olivera, who plays for newly promoted Spanish First Division side Sevilla.

Seven members of the 1997 under-20 World Cup final team have graduated to the senior squad for the Copa America.

With a tough group — they are alongside Argentina, Colombia and Ecuador — it is a baptism of fire for many of the recent graduates.

If Pua can help them adjust to the big time then a record 15th Copa America title could be theirs.

And Passarella will then have the base on which to build a team that is worthy of its illustrious predecessors.

'Nasty' wants to run the game



LONDON, June 29 (Reuters/Internet): Ili Nastase, once the bad boy of tennis, now wants to run the game and boost its image.

To that end, the ever-popular Romanian once known as "Nasty" is one of seven candidates running for president of the International Tennis Federation in an election to be held next week in the Netherlands.

Nastase wants former stars like Boris Becker and Stefan Edberg to sit on a new players' council and he is also keen on establishing an ITF International Tennis Centre to help promote the game around the world.

But he doesn't think players can be forced to be more entertaining on court — the way he was in his heyday.

"You can't tell them how to behave on court. It has to come from inside them. Besides, today they play to make money, not to entertain people," he said.

Nastase, now 52, is already president of his country's tennis federation — though he failed in an election to become mayor of Bucharest three years ago.

"I don't know if I'll win or not. I don't expect to," he said during the rain that curtailed Wimbledon's programme on Tuesday. If he fails to win, he

would still hope to work on an ITF council or commission: to help the game.

"I don't want power or money. I just want to be involved in the game that gave me so much."

The Players' Council that Nastase envisages does not exist at present — the men's and women's game each have their own organisations.

"I look at golf, where the players run their game. I would have people like Becker and Edberg on it and women like (Martina) Navratilova and (Chris) Evert," he said.

They could make the connection between the ITF and the players. Nowadays I think most players don't know what the ITF is or what it does."

Nastase, the beaten Wimbledon finalist in 1972 and 1976 and world number one in 1973, believes he is the first ex-player, certainly the first former number one, to be a candidate for the game's top office.

"It's the first time there has been a democratic election. Previously it has been by appointment," he said. Australian Brian Tobin is resigning as president after eight years and the election will be held at the ITF annual general meeting.

Nastase feels more must be done to promote the game internationally, adding that a lot of poorer countries who cannot afford to pay for television cover of big events should be given it anyway "just to promote the game."

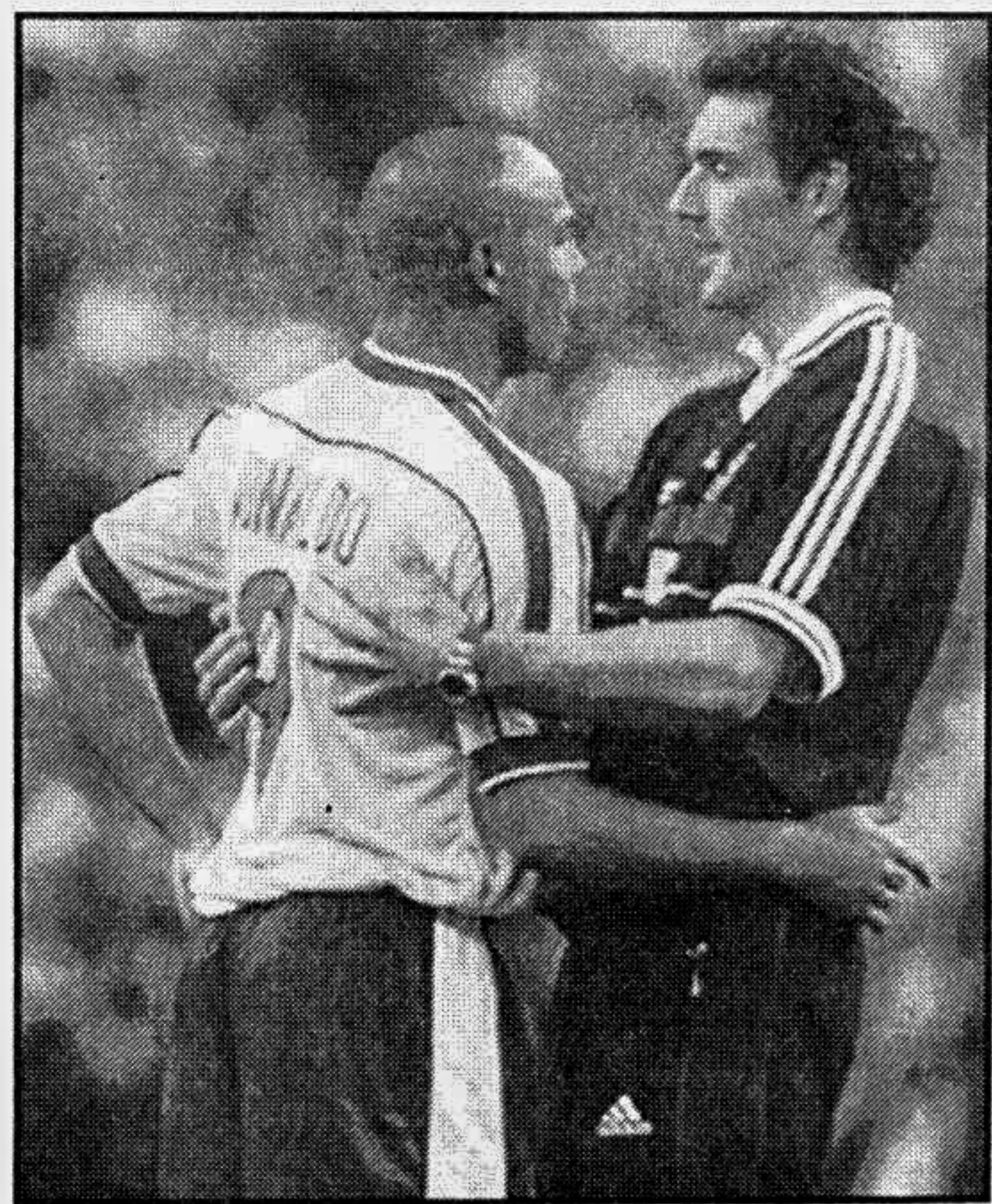
And players such as world number one Pete Sampras should be sent to poorer nations for the same reason.

"Too many players, he said, "play just to earn money and they don't give anything back to the game. They don't realise how much tennis has given them. Other people work for their money."

Nastase admitted he was the same way when he was playing. "I didn't realise until I retired how good tennis had been to me," he said.

"Once you retire, you realise who you are, what you had, what is important."

This is his second taste of life in Serie A, as he spent the 1991/92 season with Naples before moving back to France and Nimes Olympique.



An AFP file photo of French international defender Laurent Blanc (R) consoling Brazilian superstar Ronaldo after the 1998 World Cup final.

Blanc joins Inter Milan

MARSEILLE, France, June 29: Marseille captain and France's world cup winner Laurent Blanc has on Monday signed a contract to move to Inter Milan, reports AFP.

The 33-year-old Blanc's switch to the Italian Serie A side — believed to be for two years at a cost of between 3.2 and 4 million dollars — was confirmed here by Marseille director Marcel Dier.

Dier had earlier this month dismissed speculation about the emblematic defender's departure from the French First Division outfit, saying: "Laurent Blanc is certain to be at Marseille next season."

Dier was at the time reacting to rumours that Marseille's star defender was on the brink of signing for English Premiership side Liverpool.

Blanc, severing a contract which still has two years to run, joins Inter for an unspecified fee and time.

The Frenchman, who arrived at Marseille in June 1997 from Barcelona, has 81 caps to his name.

This is his second taste of life in Serie A, as he spent the 1991/92 season with Naples before moving back to France and Nimes Olympique.