

Satisfaction all around

RIO DE JANEIRO, July 19: Brazilians celebrated their Copa America victory with a quiet contentment befitting a country confident of its team's victory before the game even started, reports AP.

Empty streets filled gradually after the game Sunday, while there were few honking horns and fireworks to commemorate the 3-0 victory over Uruguay.

"Brazil won like I knew they would. It was the best game of all," said Denise Rangel Santana, who watched the game with friends at an Italian restaurant in Copacabana.

Rivaldo, Ronaldo and Dida were all applauded for their efforts, especially Rivaldo whose two goals made him the leading scorer of the tournament until Ronaldo caught up with a goal of his own.

"This was Rivaldo's cup," said Ademilson Firmino de Mattos, who said he was disappointed Ronaldo missed two opportunities for what seemed like easy goals.

Stoichkov after ministerial job?

SOFIA, July 19: Hristo Stoichkov, the greatest player in Bulgarian football history, has his eyes on a serious political career, the weekly news magazine 24 Chassa reported Monday, says AFP.

Stoichkov, already deputy mayor of his home town of Plovdiv, is a candidate for the post of Minister of Sport, the magazine reported.

Stoichkov earlier this year retired as a player, quitting Japanese J-League club Kashima Reysol to bring an end to his long and storied career.

The 33-year-old striker was the joint top scorer at the 1994 USA World Cup finals when Bulgaria reached the semi-finals. The same year Raging Bull, as he is nicknamed, was voted European Footballer-of-the-Year.

Stoichkov is already Bulgaria's international sports ambassador and has accompanied president Peter Stoyanov on a recent trip to Spain.

Only soccer on Mihajlovic's mind

MILAN, July 19: Lazio's Yugoslav defender Sinisa Mihajlovic, who led sporting protests in Italy over the NATO air-raids against his homeland, is ready to re-discover the joys of football, reports AFP.

Mihajlovic was a spokesman for the many Yugoslav sportsmen in Italy during the war over Kosovo, criticising the bombing, lobbying politicians and appearing on TV wearing "Peace, No War" T-shirts.

Now the bombing is over, the football star who added his support to Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic wants only to concentrate on enjoying his career.

"The joy of playing soccer is something that I'm only going to get back this season," he said. "Last spring, it was a just a job. I didn't even get angry when we conceded a goal."

"The first week of the war finished with Lazio v AC Milan, and at the time, the only thing people wanted to know was what did (Dejan) Stankovic and I have on our minds while we were playing."

"Once that match was over and done with, the war became something normal. It's incredible how people can get used to anything."

Mihajlovic clearly sees his job of defending the national cause as being over, but is wary of making a sweeping judgement on Milosevic's future.

The defender, who still has family in Belgrade, said: "During the war, I took advantage of my popularity to defend my people, and therefore to defend the Milosevic regime. But he added: 'My job finished there and then.'"

"Now is the time for reconstruction and therefore for politics. But I am not a politician. I cannot set myself against our president," he claimed. "It's clear that Yugoslavia needs western help to be re-born and that this help will not arrive so long as Milosevic stays in power."

"He might draw the consequences of that for himself, or people might force him to do so, or people might decide they want him to stay," he told the Gazzetta dello Sport on Monday.

"These are not questions to be resolved by individuals on their own, but by a popular movement. All Yugoslavia together must decide its own future."

Coventry clinch Hadji signing

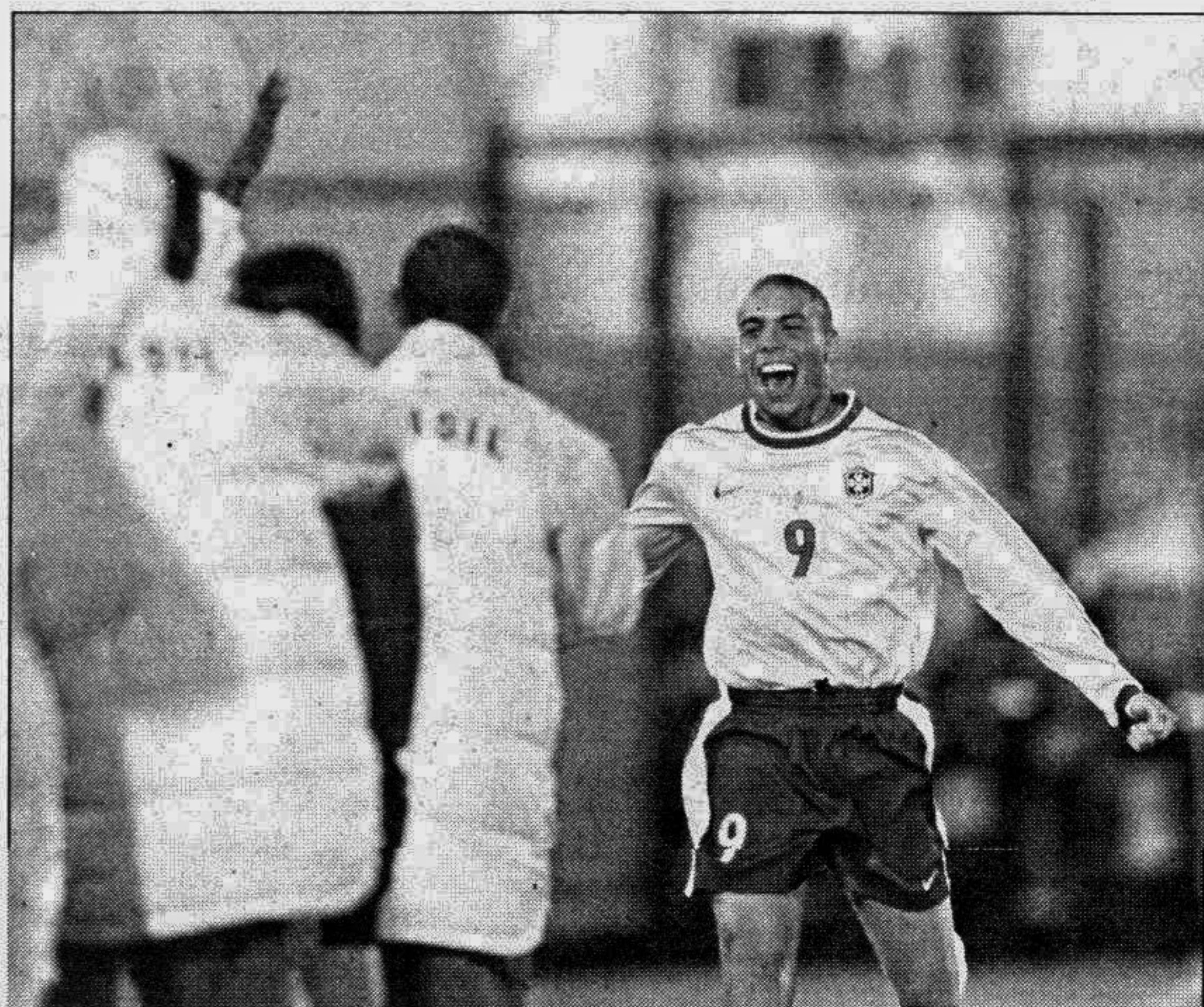
COVENTRY, England, July 19 (Reuters/Internet): English premier league Coventry City broke their transfer record on Monday to sign Moroccan World Cup midfielder Mustapha Hadji from Deportivo La Coruna for 6.23 million dollars.

The 27-year-old African player-of-the-year underwent a medical at Highfield Road after agreeing to the move over the weekend.

The deal is a coup for Coventry after French club Olympique Marseille made a strong move for the player at the end of last week.

Coventry chairman Bryan Richardson said: "We are delighted Mustapha has agreed to join us. He is an excellent addition to our squad and will excite the whole of the premier league."

"He had a very long chat with (manager) Gordon Strachan purely about football and I think that's what sealed it."



EL PHENOM IN EUPHORIA: Superstar Ronaldo rushing towards team officials and substitutes after scoring the third goal against Uruguay. — AFP photo

Ronaldo's redemption



ASUNCION, July 19 (AFP): When a fire ravaged much of her Windsor Castle residence after a year of much-publicised marital problems for her children Queen Elizabeth once famously remarked she was having an "annus horribilis".

Brazil striker Ronaldo would have been forgiven for describing his traumatic 12 months since last year's World Cup Final in a similar way.

But the Inter Milan star's role in his side's Copa America triumph here Sunday suggests that the good times are about to roll again for the forward whose face must have been the market in the world before last year's World Cup in France.

Brazil, while never being completely convincing, certainly seemed to be poised to live up to their billing as they woke up on Sunday July 12 1998 - the day of their World Cup Final clash with host nation and underdogs France.

But Ronaldo scored the winning goal in the quarter-final against bitter enemies Ar-

gentina to finally silence the critics. Ronaldo lost his world player of the year title to France's Zinedine Zidane and was even voted the second worst player in Brazil by a magazine poll in that country.

And just to complete a miserable 12 months it emerged just before the Copa that his long-term relationship with girlfriend Susana Werner was over.

New Brazil coach Wanderley Luxemburgo was the one man to continue to show his belief in Ronaldo and finally he scored his first goal in the yellow shirt since the World Cup in a warm-up match against Latvia.

Asked if he saw Sunday's 3-0 final win over Uruguay as a victory for Brazil or himself, Ronaldo replied: "Both at the same time."

"After a year of suffering, indecision, uncertainty and treatment, this is a very important moment and I'm very happy," he said. "I thank God, I thank my team-mates, I thank (coach) Luxemburgo, for the confidence in me."

But Brazil's demanding fans still jeered the striker during the Copa America group games with Venezuela, Mexico and Chile.

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gentina to finally silence the critics.

And it was his goal that made it 3-0 to Brazil in the final with Uruguay, effectively killing the game.

It also made the gap-toothed striker - together with team-mate Rivaldo - the top scorers in the tournament.

"It has been a very difficult year and to be able to run and not feel any pain has been wonderful, this has been one of the most important moments of my career," said Ronaldo.

Only when Ronaldo and his team-mates lift the World Cup will the French debacle be totally forgotten.

It is difficult to imagine the former PSV Eindhoven and Barcelona man being hyped again to the same extent as he was before France 98 - he even was pictured imitating Rio de Janeiro's famous statue of Christ the Redeemer in one campaign.

While he may not have done enough to claim the crown of world's best player, something which he was recognised as before last year's World Cup in, he proved that he is nearly back to his devastating best. One year and six days after his disastrous World Cup Final Ronaldo has finally signalled to the world that he has turned the page.

Rivaldo riding high



ASUNCION, July 19 (Reuters/Internet): While Ronaldo claimed a double triumph on Sunday, saying he had won both the Copa America and his year-long fight to regain fitness, team-mate Rivaldo, who finished alongside Ronaldo as the competition's joint top-scorer with five goals, was equally elated after suffering bitter criticism earlier in the competition.

Rivaldo's battle was to convince the Brazilian critics that he is as good for the national team as he is for his Spanish club Barcelona.

Bitterly criticised for his performance one week ago in the 2-1 quarter-final win over Argentina, Rivaldo replied with the second goal in the 2-0 semi-

final win over Mexico and then two goals against Uruguay on Sunday.

"I don't think I have anything to prove to anyone," he said. "I know there was a lot of criticism but I just concentrated on playing my game. In five games I played, I scored five goals and for me this is important."

Rivaldo's confidence had grown so much by the second half on Sunday that he even tried a shot with his right foot, which he almost never uses, and came close to completing his hat-trick.

He was singled out for praise by his coach, who has kept faith with a player he coached during a spell with Sao Paulo club Palmeiras. "Rivaldo showed today that he can play this function in the Brazil team, distributing the ball and making the team play," said Luxemburgo.

Brazil's next engagement is the Confederations Cup in Mexico, which begins in one week's time. Brazil will be resting some top players, including Ronaldo and Rivaldo.

Randell says he's innocent

HOBART, July 19: Australia's most experienced cricket umpire, Steve Randell, today pleaded not guilty in the Tasmanian Supreme Court to 32 charges of indecent assault dating back to 1982, reports Reuters.

Randell's trial was not expected to start for two weeks, allowing time for legal argument on how much of the trial should be conducted in open court and for a jury to be sworn in.

Australian Associated Press reported from the court that most of the pre-trial evidence would be heard by video-link, with witnesses speaking from Sydney, Brisbane and towns around Australia.

Randell, 44, who has officiated in an Australian record 36 Test matches, has stood down from umpiring duties and been suspended from his job as a school teacher in Hobart until the matter is finalised.

Yorkshire lose but retain lead

LONDON, July 19 (Reuters/Internet): Yorkshire Phoenix lost for the second day running on Sunday but still retained their lead in the 45-overs National League division one.

Defeat by Warwickshire Bears in the last over on Saturday was followed by a more emphatic loss to Gloucestershire Gladiators, by 128 runs.

Gloucestershire made 261, the former England wicket-keeper Jack Russell leading the way with an unbeaten 91.

Yorkshire were in trouble from the start. They lost half the side for 52 and were dismissed for 133.

They remain on 24 points, four ahead of Worcestershire, who now have two matches in hand.

Hampshire Hawks moved off the bottom at the expense of Essex Eagles after beating them by 139 runs at Southend. Hampshire's Jason Loney made 106 not out in a total of 259 for five.

Essex were never in contention. With England captain Nasser Hussain opening the innings, they managed no more than 120 all out in under 24 overs.

Both teams are still in serious danger of relegation, with the bottom three going down. Sussex Sharks are well placed to win promotion after setting two records in a high-scoring match against Middlesex Crusaders.

Their total of 297 for five and Chris Adams's 163 were both the highest in division two matches. Middlesex finished only nine runs short, scoring 288 for six.

The Karachi-born opener Owais Shah, with 134, and Australian Justin Langer with 51 put on 160 before a wicket fell.

Sussex lead the division by two points from Somerset Sabres, who maintained their 100 per cent record against Surrey Lions.

Somerset scored 227 for eight. Piran Holloway making 101 not out, to overhaul Surrey's 225 for nine.

In the other match played on Sunday, Nottinghamshire Outlaws beat Glamorgan Dragons by 26 runs.

England in tense draw with India

LONDON, July 19 (Internet report): India went from looking certain winners on the women's Test against England at Shenley to hanging on for a draw.

They were 223 for eight after being set 252 to win off a minimum of 83 overs.

Openers Anju Jain and Chander Aheer ran England ragged as they piled on 132 in quick time.

It needed a brilliant run-out from Kathryn Leng to break the stand and England forced their way back into the match so effectively that the tail had to shut up shop to avoid defeat.

England bowlers Sarah Collyer and left-arm spinner Clare Connor turned the game for England.

Collyer, a right-arm seamer, sent down 23 overs in taking one for 36 and the vastly-improved Connor bowled 30 overs, 15 of which were maidens in taking two for 56.

Charlton on world club tourney

ASUNCION, July 19 (Reuters/Internet): Manchester United's invitation to take part in next year's inaugural world club championship is a unique opportunity that the club would be foolish to miss, United legend Bobby Charlton said on Sunday.

Charlton, who won the European Cup with United in 1968, said he was sad the club would not defend the FA Cup next year, which it has pulled out of to take part in the FIFA organised event in Brazil, but said the decision was justified.

To be asked to compete in the first world club championship is a great opportunity to go forward and take part in a new competition," he told the news agency.

"It (the championship) should have been done a long time ago."

"We (United) think this is progress. If we hadn't competed, it would have been a slap in the face for FIFA and the whole world... Manchester United is the most high profile club in the world."

Charlton compared the controversial trip to Brazil with the decision 40 years ago to defy the Football Association and take part in the early editions of the European Cup.

Kudos for rookie Read



LONDON, July 19 (Internet report): New England wicketkeeper Chris Read has been given the seal of approval by Test legend Bob Taylor.

England's youngest wicketkeeper has made a big impression with Taylor who was almost 10 years older than Read when he made the first of 57 Test appearances behind the wickets.

Read, 20, bagged eight victims in the first Test victory over New Zealand at Edgbaston, and six in the second innings was a record for an England keeper on his debut.

Now he can start preparing mentally for the Lord's Test starting on Thursday, as this may just be the start of a lengthy international career for the Nottinghamshire youngster.

There is, though, a long way to go to come close to matching his mentor Alan Knott, who has been involved in his coaching since the age of 13.

Taylor, who made his Test debut against the Kiwis in 1971 in Christchurch, said, "He looked very good. He's only 20 and it was a big ordeal for him. When they first start off, I don't judge wicketkeepers standing back, and he did fine standing

up to Phil Tufnell.

"He's neat and tidy, moves his feet well and looks to have a good pair of hands. It looks as if he's got a good future to me."

"Perhaps he could be around for a long time like Alan Knott, but only time will tell."

"I applaud the selectors for bringing him in. I think when he relaxes and becomes a bit more confident - that plays a big part and I'm sure he's got confidence in his own ability - he will come on."

"People tell me he's a lad with his feet on the ground, that he's level headed and has got a good temperament."

"I hadn't seen him before Edgbaston. I talked to Clive Rice and Alan Ormrod, the coach at Notts before Rice, and I talk to umpires a lot. They are the best judges of players because they see them in all different conditions and different situations and they spoke very highly of Read."

"I was very impressed. He's young but remember South Africa gave young Mark Boucher his chance 18 months ago and he's had the England series, the West Indies series and now the World Cup and that's all good experience."

Read's hold on the position could well depend on the balance of the England side, an un-

solved problem since Ian Botham's retirement.

Taylor readily admits that he would not have played as many times had Botham not been such an all-round force for so long in the international arena.

If England need at some stage to revert to playing five frontline bowlers, Alec Stewart may just reclaim the gloves, a situation which has frustrated Jack Russell more than most in recent years.

Taylor added, "When Ian was batting six or seven they could afford to play me as a pure wicketkeeper. Jack Russell couldn't retain his place with a Test batting average of 29.5. Knott's was 32.5 and mine was nearly 17."

"I'm sure that I wouldn't have played half the Tests if Botham hadn't been around. I probably wouldn't get in the side these days because you have got to be able to bat. But you've got to give Read a chance to show himself as a batsman."

England look set to retain deposed captain Stewart at Lord's, but there is scope and time to give number one strike bowler Darren Gough the opportunity to improve his match fitness rather than thrust him back into Test cricket after one championship match since straining a calf in June.

Kent stymie Kiwis



LONDON, July 19 (Internet report): Kent's last wicket pair, captain Matthew Fleming and Darren Scott, helped stave off defeat and keep New Zealand waiting for their first ever win in nine meetings between the two sides, spanning 72 years.

Needing 390 to avoid an innings defeat, Fleming (21 not out) scored the runs that wiped out the deficit as Kent finished on 417 for nine declared - a lead of 27.

He and Scott, who remained unbeaten on nought, stood firm and both skippers shook hands on a draw with time running out to gain a definite result.

Kent were pleased to have made such a good fist of things and were especially heartened by the form of Ed Smith, Andrew Symonds and 19-year-old Matthew Banes who celebrated his first-class debut with a maiden first-class 50.

Smith, 22 on Monday, hit 111, his fifth first-class hundred, and his highest for the county, passing the 102 he made against Hampshire at Portsmouth two years ago.

It took him more than five hours and 264 balls, before falling to Chris Cairns shortly after lunch, to earn the New Zealand all-rounder match figures of 10 for 116.

However he, Geoff Allott and Dion Nash were all used spar-

ingly and it was left to left-arm spinner Daniel Vettori (three for 116) and Nathan Astle (three for 53) to share the wickets with Cairns.

Vettori's figures were ample reward for bowling more than 50 overs and he began Kent's demolition by removing Mark Salham for 43 with the total at 358.

Symonds' 102 was a quick-fire affair, scored off only 145 balls and including 20 fours, signalling a return to form for the Australian after three innings. It was his second century for the county and he and Ealham added 133 for the fifth wicket.

Banes, like Smith a product of Tunbridge School, put his third ball duck in the first innings behind him and looked increasingly assured in adding 91 for the third wicket with Smith before going 10 minutes before lunch for 53, taken low down at slip by Astle.

Kent looked assured of salvaging a draw for most of the day but a clatter of wickets late on ensured a nervy end to this Vodafone challenge tour game.

However, they hung on to earn a cheque for £2,750 from the sponsors as the tourists preserved their unbeaten record against the county sides on the tour.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard on the final day of the four-day match between Kent and New Zealand on Sunday:

KENT: First innings 201 (E Smith 72; C Cairns 7-46)
NEW ZEALAND: First innings 591 (M Horne 172; N Astle 121; R Twose 73; D Nash 66 not out)

KENT: Second innings (overnight 145-2)
E Smith c Twose b Cairns 111
R Key lbw b Cairns 27
D Fulton c Horne b Vettori 15
M Banes c Astle b Cairns 53
A Symonds lbw b Vettori 102
M Elham c Astle v Vettori 43
J Golding lbw b Astle 3
M Fleming not out 21
S Willis c Parore b Vettori 10
M McCague c Twose b Astle 4
D Scott not out 0
Extras: (b-8, lb-14, nb-6) 28
Total: (for nine wickets) 417

Bowler O M R W

Allott 12.5 3 52 0

Cairns 25 4 70 3

Vettori 54 16 116 3

Nash 14 2 53 0

Astle 33 14 83 3

McMillan 15 5 39 0

Twose 4 1 12 0

Result: Match drawn

Lippi being philosophical



MILAN, July 19: Inter Milan coach Marcello Lippi hopes the misery of watching other teams playing in Europe will spur his men to become Italian champions next year, reports AFP.

A disastrous 1998-99 season ended with Inter's failure to earn a place in the forthcoming UEFA Cup, let alone the Champions League.

Having snubbed the Intertoto tournament as being too early a start to the season, midweek football for Lippi's men will mean feet up in front of the television. And, hopefully, getting indignant about not playing.

Asked for the key to Inter's season, Lippi said: "Anger. We have to build up the right kind of anger, the positive kind that takes you to the top."

"We haven't got European cup competition and we didn't want the Intertoto, precisely because the club and I wanted to turn what is a handicap, an enormous weight on the players, into an advantage."

"Watching the others play on a Wednesday night, my men ought to get fired up to reach that level too - and to reach those objectives as well."

Lippi is convinced that sharing a common goal is the key to forming a real team spirit - the kind of spirit which he believes separates the teams who do win league titles from those who don't.

The coach, who guided Juventus to three championships in four years, said: "A footballer becomes a great player not by

what he earns but by what he wins. My players shouldn't feel that they're stars because they have a huge contract, but because they are crucial to the success of the team."

Lippi then pointed to the club's transfer moves, which have brought the likes of ex-Juventus players Christian Vieri,

team, you're never going to win the league... there are seven clubs in with a chance and the winner will be the ones who go for it every single day of the week with the same spirit of sacrifice and determination."

"The shouting before the match and the pats on the back aren't enough."

Lippi's squad were due to come together for the first time on Monday, meeting up at their training base at Appiano Gentile near Lake Como, before heading to Sarre in the Aosta Valley, a region currently also hosting Lippi's former club, Juventus, and Parma.

The squad will also include five men destined to leave Inter. Young playmaker Andrea Pirlu will be loaned out, while four defenders: Taribo West, Francesco Colonnese, Fabio Galante and Martin Rivas, are all transfer-listed and awaiting new clubs.

Fire claims one at London derby

LONDON, July 19 (Reuters/Internet): Fire broke out at Chelsea Football Club's London ground and a charred body was found at the scene, police said on Monday.

Firemen and police forensic scientists were called to the Stamford Bridge ground of the English premier league team after fire broke out on Sunday night in the west stand, which is currently under construction.

A charred body was discovered but it was so badly burned that it was impossible even to identify what sex it was.



COPA AMERICA'S BEST: The outstanding Rivaldo, who was declared player-of-the-tournament, on rampage against Uruguay in the Copa America final at Asuncion on July 18. — AFP photo