



MEET THE NEW MAGPIES: Manager Ruud Gullit (C) poses with Newcastle United's new signings (L-R) Elena Serra, Marcelino, Alain Goma, Franck Dumas and Kirerion Dyer at St. James Park on July 19. — AFP photo

## Venables interested

LONDON, July 20: Former England manager Terry Venables said Tuesday that he is interested in taking over the Welsh national team, saying there is "a possibility" he will take the job, reports AFP.

The Football Association of Wales want Venables to succeed Bobby Gould and Venables, who is currently at a coaching clinic in America, told The Sun: "Becoming Wales manager is a possibility and there has been talk about it."

Venables tops the FAW's list of possible successors to Gould, who walked out on the job last month after the Euro 2000 qualifying defeat against Italy.

Other candidates, should Venables turn the FAW down, include Roy Hodgson, Mike Walker and Howard Kendall.

Venables would turn the post into a part-time job as he pursues his other business interests and a career on radio.

Wales play Belarus in Minsk at the beginning of September and the FAW hope to have the new manager installed before that match.

## Van Gaal irks press

BARCELONA, July 20: Barcelona coach Louis van Gaal, a controversial figure despite his team's championship success last season, has sparked another row with Spanish journalists, reports AFP.

Dutchman Van Gaal, who has come under fire for playing what many locals believe to be too many of his countrymen, allegedly kept journalists waiting in a car park for six hours on Monday before allowing them access to the Nou Camp stadium.

A total of 87 angry journalists signed a petition directed against Barcelona and Van Gaal, complaining they had been barred from Barca's first official pre-season training session.

Journalists and radio and television reporters signed the petition, alleging they had been subjected to "hostile treatment". All but one journalist from a Madrid newspaper boycotted a subsequent Barcelona press conference to present new signing Dani.

According to press reports, van Gaal has ordered all training sessions this season should be held behind closed doors, with the press only being admitted at the end of each session.

Van Gaal has had ongoing difficulties with the local press despite guiding Barca to two straight Spanish league titles.

## De La Pena loaned to Marseille

MARSEILLE, France, July 20: Lazio's Spanish midfielder Ivan De La Pena said he had decided to play for Olympique Marseille next season on a loan-deal, reports AFP.

De La Pena had also been in contact with English Premiership clubs Newcastle and Arsenal but they could not meet his wage demands.

## Carlos to lengthen Real contract

MADRID, July 20 (AFP): Brazilian defender Roberto Carlos is set to extend his contract with Real Madrid till 2002, Spanish daily newspaper As has reported.

The Brazilian, whose contract was to expire in June 2000, is expected to sign the new deal on his return to Spain at the beginning of August. He will earn an annual salary of 350 million pesetas (about 2.1 million dollars).

## Del Piero finds the net

SAINT VINCENT, Italy, July 20: Italy striker Alessandro Del Piero scored on his comeback for Juventus on Monday after being sidelined for eight months with a knee injury, reports Reuters.

Del Piero hit the second goal as a makeshift Juventus, training in the Italian Alps before the start of the Serie A season, beat a local team 2-0.

The nimble striker had not played since he tore ligaments in his left knee during a league match on November 8.

# African football scene

JOHANNESBURG, July 20: Perennial underachievers Zimbabwe suffered a double blow at the weekend when they were eliminated from the Castle Cup and surrendered top spot in an African Nations Cup qualifying group, reports AFP.

Outsiders Swaziland won a dramatic Southern Africa championship tie 4-3 on penalties following a 1-1 draw to reach the semi-finals for the first time in three appearances.

Senegal ran riot a few hours later in Dakar to overwhelm Eritrea 6-2 and replace Zimbabwe at the top of a three-team mini-league, whose winners will complete the line-up for the 2000 Nations Cup in Ghana and Nigeria.

Wild celebrations in the kingdom of Swaziland included the Home Affairs Minister dancing in the dressing room and the victorious squad visiting King Mswati at his palace. Ranked 139 in the world, the Swazis were given little chance of topping a Zimbabwean team unbeaten in six matches under senior Dutch coach Clemens Westerhof.

When defender Kaitano Tembo headed Zimbabwe in front from a 60th-minute corner, Swaziland appeared doomed as their unimaginative attack had rarely troubled goalkeeper Muzondwa Muzadza.

But as a cup tie virtually devoid of constructive football drew to a close, a controversial penalty award by the Mozambican referee threw a lifeline to Swaziland.

Television replays showed the shirt of Swazi substitute Bongiswa Nhlabatsi being pulled by Dumisani Mphofu outside the penalty area before he fell inside the box.

Ice-cool Bongani Mdluli survived lengthy Zimbabwe protests to convert the spot kick and Swaziland scored from four shoot-out attempts while Tembo and Maxwell Dube failed for Zimbabwe.

Senegal overtook Zimbabwe on goal difference by rediscovering their scoring touch to humiliate Eritrea with Salif Keita and Omar Traore grabbing two goals each.

It was a remarkable turnaround by the West Africans who had managed only four goals in their previous four matches and never scored six since making their Nations Cup debut 32 years ago.

Eritrean resistance lasted just 120 seconds before Pape Sene headed in a corner. Belgian-based star Keita then took control to score and create the third for Traore.

## Italian goalie for Chelsea

LONDON, July 20: English Premiership side Chelsea have signed goalkeeper Carlo Cudicini on a year's loan from Italian third division club Castel Di Sangro, reports AFP.

Cudicini, 25, whose previous clubs include AC Milan and Lazio, has been capped by the Italian national side at various youth levels and as an Under-21.

"I'm very happy to be here and hope that this year is good for Chelsea and our loyal fans," he told Chelsea ClubCall.

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# No going back for Jordan

LONG GROVE, Illinois, July 20 (Reuters/Internet): Michael Jordan said Thursday he is 100 per cent sure he will not return to basketball.

When Jordan announced his second retirement on January 23, he said he was "99.9 per cent sure" his decision was final.

That appeared to leave open the possibility that the NBA superstar of superstars might return. But Jordan now appears to have closed that window.

"It's a hundred per cent. It's a hundred per cent. Jordan told reporters following his round of golf at the pro-am at the Ameritech Senior Open, which begins Friday.

"I knew that I would enjoy what I wanted to do once I retired. A lot of you guys anticipated that I would be not happy in retirement for long. I'm at peace with the world. I get up and do whatever. I like doing that."

Jordan explained that his decision to add the remaining tenth of a per cent was prompted by repeated media questions about whether he considered returning.

"That's the only way you guys will leave me alone," he said. "I might as well tell you I don't anticipate going back."

Since his retirement, Jordan has remained a very public figure. He considered buying a share of the Charlotte Hornets and last month released a new men's cologne under the Jordan Brand, his apparel company under the Nike banner.

He also appeared at a handful of NBA games during the 1999 season and admitted he felt a desire to compete again. But he said he has found a perfect cure.

"I got a little itch during the playoffs so I just went and played more golf," Jordan said. "As long as I'm busy, I don't think about it. But when I stop and think about it, I do get a little itchy. But I haven't really played, maybe only three times over the course of the last year."

Jordan said he has kept in touch with only two former Chicago Bulls teammates and has not spoken to his old coach Phil Jackson, who recently was hired by the Los Angeles Lakers, sparking rumours that he would return there.

## Vidmar back home

MELBOURNE, Australia, July 20: Australian international midfielder Aurelio Vidmar is expected to sign with national league club Adelaide City this week, the club said Tuesday, reports AFP.

Vidmar flew into Adelaide after Australia's games against Manchester United keen to return home after a soccer odyssey that took him to clubs in Switzerland, Belgium, Spain and Japan.

The 32-year-old forward played last season in Japan with Sanfrecce Hiroshima under former Soccer Australia coach Eddie Thomson and beside fellow Soccer Australia players Tony Popovic and Hayden Foxe.

He is now out of contract, but Adelaide City vice-president Charlie Capogreco said Tuesday details of a release had to be negotiated.

Vidmar's brother, Tony, plays for Glasgow Rangers.



MICHAEL JORDAN

the way I like it, because that means I'm not too close to things."

Jordan talked more about his growing interest in golf, which may be his next professional endeavour. Following his first retirement in 1993, Jordan tried baseball, batting just .202 in one season at Class AA Birmingham.

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Could the 10-time scoring champion and six-time NBA champion be competing with the likes of Tiger Woods and David Duval in the near future?

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On Thursday, Jordan played in a foursome that included Ameritech CEO Dick Notebaert and Senior PGA Tour star Raymond Floyd. He had no official score, but his only birdie came at the par-4 eighth and his approach shots at 11 and 18 found the water.

"Michael's game is getting better," Floyd said.

Jordan's affiliation with Nike could help him make the move to pro golf. The PGA Tour's lower level is the Nike Tour, which interests Jordan.

The difference between me and Raymond in terms of golf is that I don't know the fundamentals of golf," Jordan said. "When you're in competition, you have to have something to fall back on. My athleticism cannot help me in those situations."

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## Shearer to stay till 2004

NEWCASTLE, England, July 20: England captain Alan Shearer has signed an extension to his contract Monday to keep him at English Premiership side Newcastle United until 2004, reports AFP.

Shearer, 28, joined Newcastle for a then world record fee of 15 million pounds (23 million dollars) from Blackburn Rovers in 1996. He finished the last Premiership season with 21 goals.

With Blackburn he had won the English Premiership. He started his professional career with Southampton.

His new contract, announced by the club this afternoon, brings an end to speculation that he would be sold to an Italian club.

Shearer said: "Talks have been going on for a while and the deal is right for both parties."

"Everyone knows what I feel for this football club. I never wanted to leave. I love it here, I love the area and I love the people."

"I want this football club to be successful and I want to be part of that."

## Arsenal want Henry

MILAN, July 20: Arsenal have tabled a 10 million pound bid for Juventus' French forward Thierry Henry, the Italian press reported Tuesday, reports AFP.

Henry had recently been linked with Highbury as a new weight in the reported 30 million pound bid by Juventus to bring Arsenal's French ace Nicolas Anelka to Turin.

Although that deal looks to have fallen through, with the player insisting he will only play for Lazio - and threatening legal action if he doesn't get his way - the Gunners' French coach Arsene Wenger is still keen to have Henry, France's top scorer at the World Cup.

The deal also financially suits Juventus, who are expected to give an answer this week. The Italian club would be selling a player who hasn't really fitted in - for 50 per cent more than they paid Monaco just six months ago.

Southampton snap up Almeida

SOUTHAMPTON, England, July 20: Southampton manager Dave Jones continued his rebuilding for the English Premiership season by Tuesday signing young Portuguese defender Marco Almeida from Sporting Lisbon on a one-year loan deal, reports AFP.

Jones made his move to sign Almeida, 18, on the recommendation of European scout Terry Cooper and the centre-back will complete a move to The Dell on a free transfer if he impresses this season.

Almeida is the second Portuguese teenager Jones has signed from Sporting Lisbon this month, after completing a deal for right-back Bruno Leal - the brother of Arsenal's Luis Boa Morte - two weeks ago.

Jones said: "We have had very good reports on Almeida. He is coming to us for a year and is seen very much as a player for the future."

America outplay Dominican Rep

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico, July 20: Gary Payton made 11 layups and scored 25 points, the most by any American in the Olympic qualifying tournament, as the United States defeated the Dominican Republic 107-71 Monday night, reports AP.

Payton played just 21 minutes and shot 11-for-13 with five steals and four assists. He missed his only two jumpers, but it hardly mattered as the United States outscored the Dominicans 59-35 when Payton was on the court.

This was the first game of the second round for the Americans, who concentrated on stopping Felipe Lopez, the Dominicans' only NBA player.

The strategy worked, too, as Lopez was held to 15 points on 5-for-16 shooting. The Americans trapped Lopez whenever he tried to bring the ball upcourt and intimidated him down low, forcing him to miss two dunks and two layups.

The Dominicans expected to have Mark Jackson of the Indiana Pacers join them for the second round, but FIBA, the international basketball federation, refused to allow him to be added to the roster. Jackson's grandmother is Dominican.

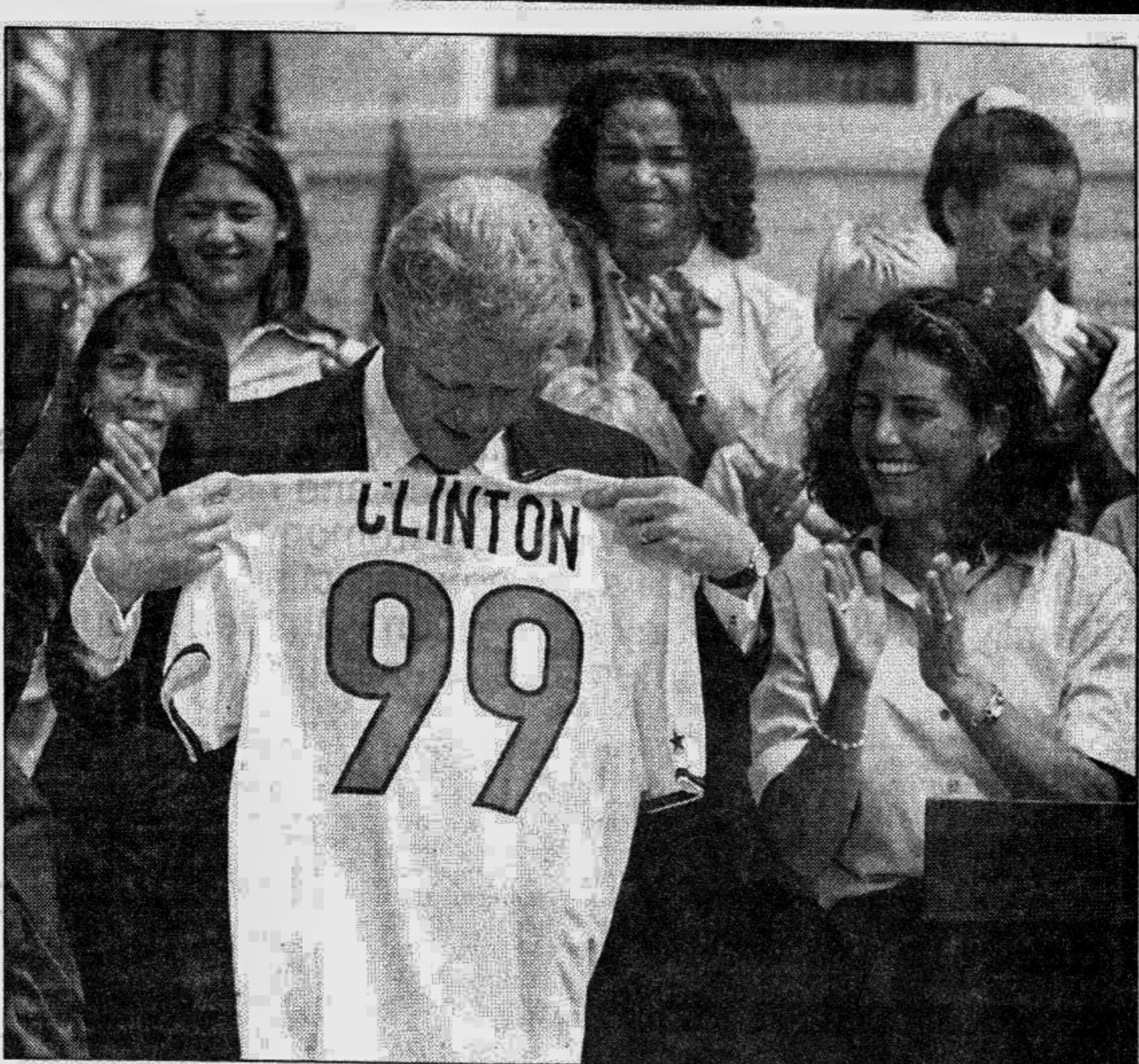
In other games, Puerto Rico (5-0) stayed undefeated by defeating Uruguay 91-64. Canada beat Brazil 95-75 behind 21 points and nine assists from Steve Nash, and Argentina topped Venezuela 95-71.

Argentina beat Venezuela 95-71 in the opening of the second round. For Argentina, NBA drafted Emanuel Ginobili scored 20 points, Juan Espil 18 and Leonardo Gutierrez 15. Alejandro Quiroz led the Venezuelan team with 17 points, while Victor Diaz and Richard Lugo each scored 13.

NBA guard Steve Nash, who did not start the game, ended up the top scorer with 21 points, while Rowan Barrett had 16 and Sherman Hamilton 13, to help Canada beat Brazil 95-75. Sergio Francha lead scorers for Brazil with 22 points, while Arístides Josuel Dos Santos had 20.

Eddie Casiano had 18 points to help Puerto Rico beat Uruguay 93-64 and win their fifth game in a row. Other Puerto Rican top scorers included Jerome Minicy with 16 and Jose Ortiz with 15.

Uruguay's top scorer was Nicolas Mazzarino with 21 points and Oscar Moglia 16.



US President Bill Clinton being presented his very own jersey by the Women's World Cup winning national squad at the White House on July 19. — AFP photo

# Clinton honours champions

WASHINGTON, July 20: President Bill Clinton paid tribute to the Women's World Cup soccer champions Monday and praised the US team for leading the way for female athletes all over the world, reports AFP.

"Thanks to these women, America's passion for women's soccer and women's sports in general is growing, and we owe them a lot for that," Clinton said at a Rose Garden ceremony.

The Women's World Cup champions here at the White House brought America to its feet, had us screaming our lungs out with pride and joy," he said.

He joked that the team "also didn't spare us the suspense" on July 10, when the United States defeated China 5-4 on penalties after 30 minutes into overtime.

Clinton, a diehard sports fan, had joined the sold-out crowd of more than 90,000 at the Rose Bowl and noted he "sat so far on the edge of my seat I actually almost fell out of the sky box."

"A lot of us who aren't so young anymore were trying to search the whole cluttered attic of our memories to try to think if there was ever a time when there had been a more exciting climax to an athlete event that has meant as much to so many. I'm not sure that in my lifetime there has been," he said.

The president also congratulated the other competing teams saying: "how profoundly impressed I was by their opposition," and added: "I am very grateful that our women are leading the way."

The team presented Clinton with a soccer jersey and gave his wife, Hillary, a crystal figurine of a female soccer player.

Both the Clintons noted that the day was a bittersweet one for Americans as they mourned the apparent loss of John F. Kennedy Jr., his wife and sister-in-law, who were presumed dead after their plane went down off the Massachusetts coast.

"It is at times like this that we really stop and recognize that as big and diverse as our country is, we can come together as a national family. We can come together in sorrow or in joy if it reflects the values that we honor most. This is one of those moments," Clinton said.

Earlier, soccer team members arriving at the White House told reporters they had thought their celebration might have been postponed because of the Kennedy tragedy and were glad to be able to meet with the president on the bittersweet occasion.

"If we can bring a glimmer of hope or a smile on someone's face, that would be great for us," said co-captain Carla Overbeck.

penalties last week before a roaring home crowd that included President Bill Clinton after the two sides battled to a scoreless draw.

The All China Sports Federation, China's sports governing body, estimated that up to 100 million Chinese watched the match even though it kicked off in the early hours of the morning here.

Meanwhile, the China Sports Daily reported Monday that the professional Women's Super League would need an additional four to five million yuan (480,000 to 600,000 dollars) to cover their expenses this season.

League officials were actively trying to raise funds following the success of the national team, it said.

The three-year-old league has traditionally received funding from clothing to their games and the Li Ning Sporting Company, but have been forced to look elsewhere for additional funds this year, the report said.

The fund will be used to improve the living and training conditions of the Chinese women's football team and expand domestic and international co-operation and exchanges in women's football.

It will also issue regulations on the use of the football fund and establish a management committee composed of large donors, renowned public figures, experts and scholars, as well as outstanding athletes, coaches and judges.

A donations hotline has already been opened.

Women's football has gone through several periods of difficulty since it was developed in China more than a decade ago, according to Ma Yuan'an, coach of the national women's football team which finished runners-up in the FIFA Women's World Cup in Los Angeles earlier this month.

He added that a lack of financial support had become a major factor hindering the development of the sport in China and hoped the new fund would help promote the game.

The US won the World Cup final against China 5-4 on

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# Boost for Sino ladies

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