

Sport



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 Kieron 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 man 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's next season on a loan deal, reports AFP.

De La Pena had also been in contact with English Premier club 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 African 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 toppling a Zimbabwean team unbeaten in six matches under senior Dutch coach Clemens Westerhof.

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 Club Call.

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

But as a cup tie virtually devoid of constructive football drew to a close, a controversial penalty award by the Mozambicans.

Ice-cool Bongani Mdululi survived lengthy Zimbabwe protests to convert the spot kick and Swaziland scored from four shootout 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.

Elusive 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.

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 right now," Jordan told reporters following his round of golf at the pro-am at the Ameritech Senior Open, which begins Friday.

"I know 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 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 spoken to his old coach Phil Jackson, who recently was hired by the Los Angeles Lakers, sparking rumours that he would return there.

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.

"I'm in the process of learning what those fundamentals are for tournament golf and when tournament situations come, within a four-hour period, if I lose my concentration I'll have something to fall back on to get me back on top."

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?

"Anything's possible, except me playing basketball again," Jordan said. "But anything else is possible."

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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 Socceroo coach Eddie Thomson and beside fellow Socceros 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.

Action from the Brazil-Canada match of the pre-Olympic basketball tournament of the Americas at San Juan, Puerto Rico on July 19. Canada won 95-75. — AFP photo

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 in from 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 make-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 would also financially suit 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 percent 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.

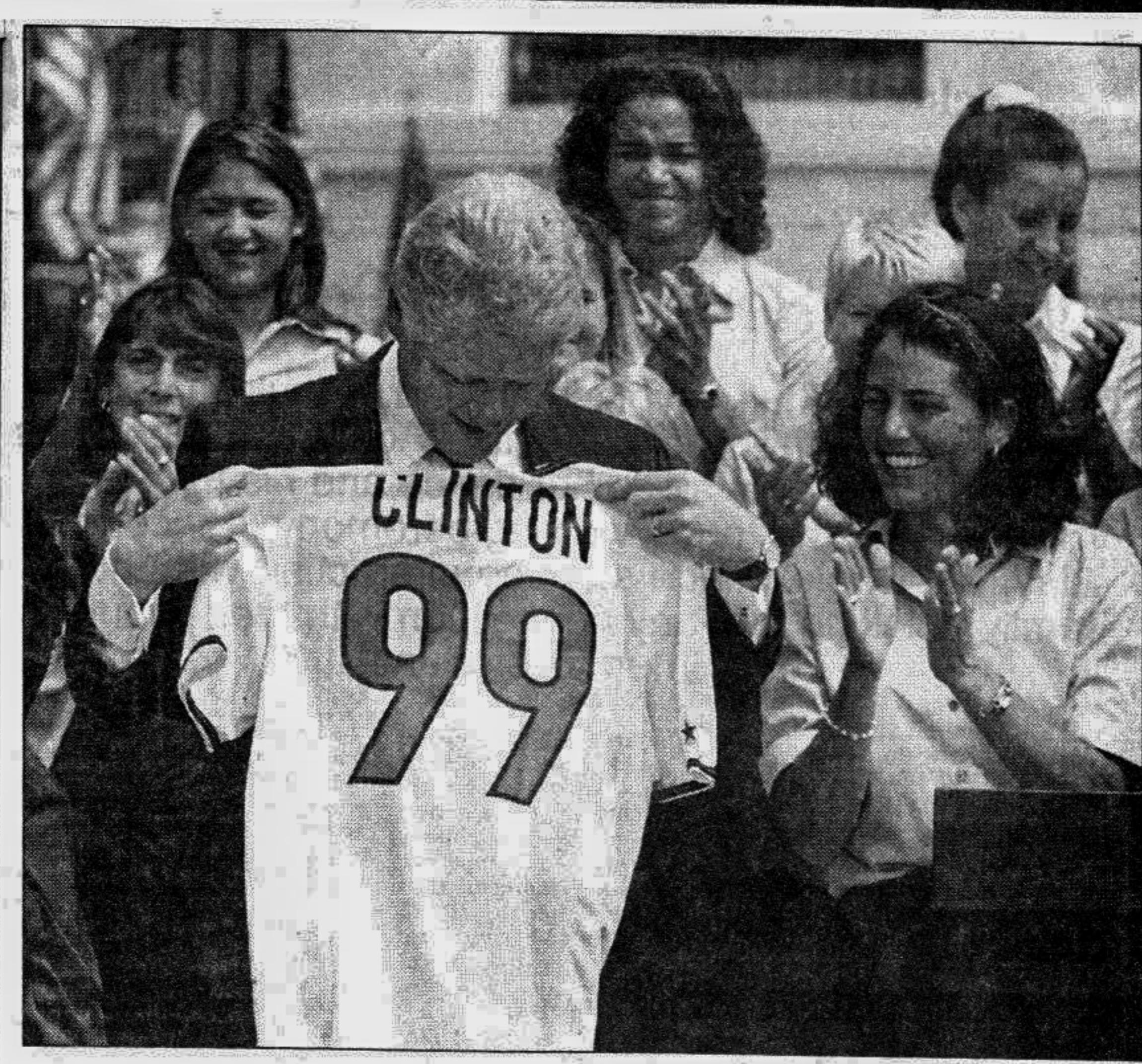
Payton played just 21 minutes and shot 11-for-13 with five steals and four assists. He missed his only two jumpers, but it hardly mattered as the United States outscored the Dominicans 59-35 when Payton was on the court.

This was the first game of the second round for the Americans, who concentrated on stopping Felipe Lopez, the Dominican's 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.

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 Americans won the World Cup final against China 5-4 on



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.

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Boost for Sino ladies



BEIJING, July 20: China's state-run women's organization has set up a special fund to support the development of women's football in China, reports AFP.

The "China Woman Football Development Fund", established by the All-China Women's Federation, received 10 million yuan (1.2 million dollars) on Monday from the Pro Sports Share Holding Co. Ltd., the first enterprise to donate to the fund.

The fund will be used to improve the living and training conditions of the Chinese women's football team and expand domestic and international cooperation 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