

## Japan-Iran friendly in September

TOKYO, July 27: Japan and Iran will battle it out in Yokohama on September 8 in their first friendly match since their cliff-hanging World Cup qualifier two years ago, the Japanese football association said Monday, reports AFP.

Japan's national coach Philippe Troussier will announce his squad in late August but Italian-based midfielders Hidetoshi Nakata and Hiroshi Nanami are unlikely to join them, the association said.

Japan won their first ever trip to the World Cup finals by beating Iran 3-2 in November 1997 with reserve forward Masayuki Okano scoring the winner in extra time.

Iran went on to beat Oceania group winner Australia for another berth in France '98.

Ali Daei, arguably Asia's best striker, who plays for Germany's Hertha Berlin, is scheduled to appear in the friendly at the Yokohama International Stadium, the venue of the final in the 2002 Japan/Korea World Cup finals.

## Owen faces an uphill struggle

LIVERPOOL, July 27 (Internet report): Although Michael Owen is still upbeat about his chances of making the first Liverpool fixture of the Premiership season, at Hillsborough, it is unlikely that Gerard Houllier will risk him with so little match practice.

The youngster is set to resume full training in a week or so, but the nature of the injury combined with nearly four months on the physio's bench, mean that time is against him.

Owen has visited German specialist Hafis Muller-Wohlfahrt at the weekend, and was pleased with the results, saying: "I am hoping to be fit for the start of the season, but I know there is a difference between fitness and match fitness."

"The treatment I had in Germany was massage and exercise-based and not dissimilar to the way I've been treated by Liverpool medical staff over the previous weeks. The German specialist has given me a personalised exercise schedule to ensure all my leg muscles are developed in a balanced way both now and in the future."

"I will be guided by Liverpool's medical and training staff. They will know when it is right for me to start playing again," he concluded.

## Juventus deny Anelka move

MILAN, July 27: Italian giants Juventus denied reports on Tuesday that they were about to sign Arsenal's Nicolas Anelka and then loan the French striker out to Serie A rivals Lazio, reports AFP.

Italian reports claimed that a deal was struck on Monday evening between Lazio's owner Sergio Cragnotti and Juventus director general Luciano Moggi.

Juventus would meet Arsenal's demands of 20 million pounds (32 million dollars) with 13.5 million pounds in cash plus the transfer to Highbury of Juventus' French winger Thierry Henry, much admired by Gunners' coach Arsene Wenger. Juventus would then loan him to Lazio for two years.

But the Turin club took the rare step of issuing a written denial later in the day. "Following the reports in all the national newspapers about the French player's move to Italy," the club said, Juventus "denies having bought Nicolas Anelka from Arsenal".

The French ace has threatened legal action if his much-publicised desire to join Lazio was not met and has always insisted that he will not join Juventus.

## Soccercide!

KINGSTON, Jamaica, July 27 (Reuters/Internet): The son of the president of the Jamaica Football Federation and a friend were shot dead in Kingston in the latest high-profile crime in a Caribbean nation reeling from a mounting toll of murders this year, police said on Monday.

Tajh Burrell, 19, the son of Horace Burrell, president of Jamaican soccer's governing body, was gunned down along with Jason Byles, 22, in the parking lot of a pizza shop in a Kingston business district on Sunday, a police statement said.

Police said they had not established a motive for the killings. The two men were shot when they and a female companion were assaulted as they left their car.

Byles died on the spot and Burrell died in a hospital. The woman was unhurt.

Since the beginning of 1999 there have been more than 500 murders in Jamaica. In June alone, a crime wave that prompted the government to send troops into the streets and impose dusk-to-dawn curfews in some of the worst-hit areas of Kingston.

Burrell's death was the second shooting attack this month with connections to the Jamaican soccer team, the pride of the country during 1998's World Cup in France.

Gunman shot Heather Little White, a team nutritionist, at the home of a friend in a Kingston suburb on July 5. She was left paralysed.

Known as the "Reggae Boyz," the team was the first from the English-speaking Caribbean to qualify for the World Cup finals.

The team's success was good news in a nation of 2.6 million reeling from a rising crime rate.

## For USA, Brazil are the best



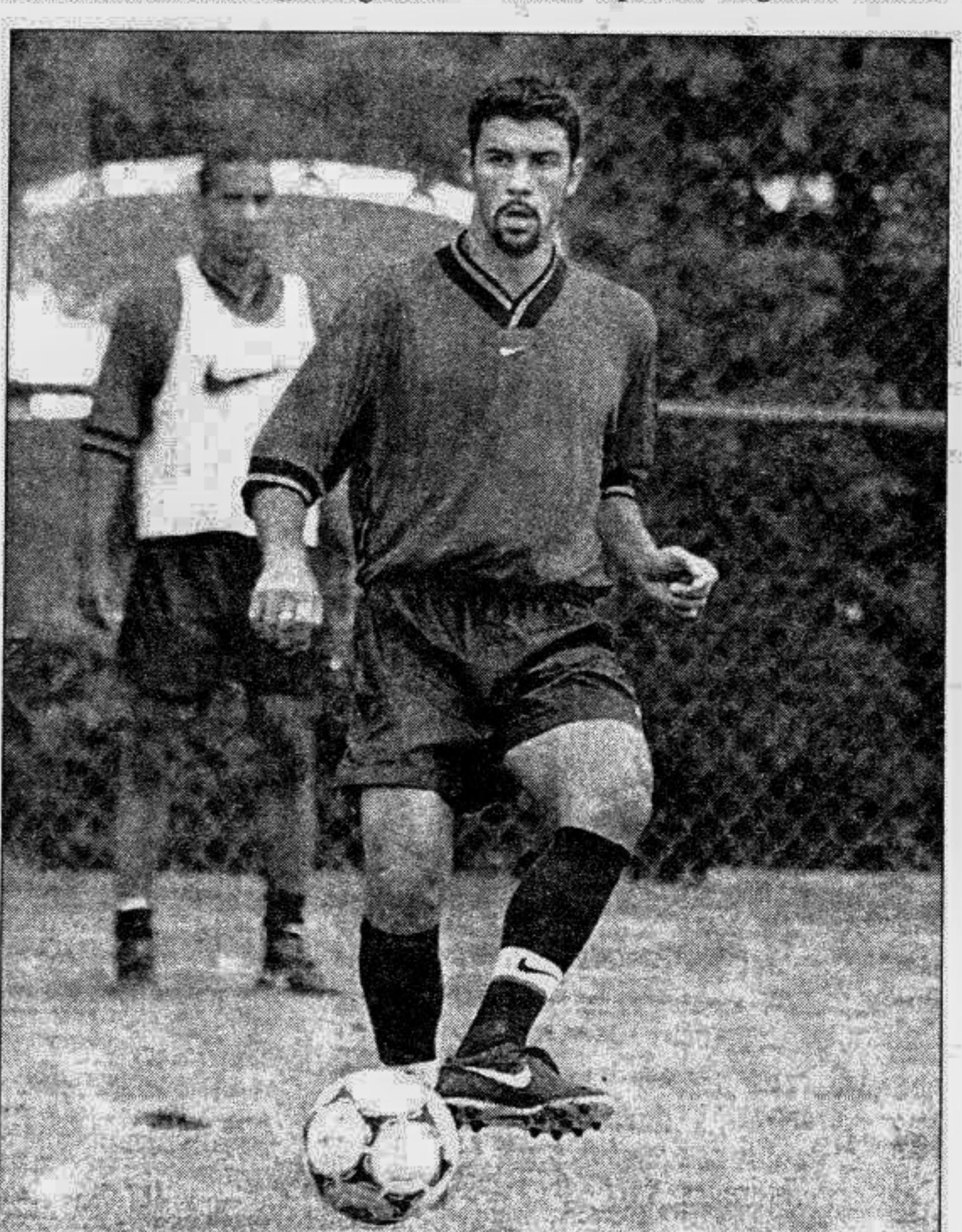
MEXICO 1999

GUADALAJARA, Mexico, July 27 (AP): Members of the US soccer team aren't getting their

hops up for a repeat of their startling victory last year against Brazil, who they called the best team in the world.

The United States beat Brazil 1-0 last year in the Gold Cup in Florida, shocking soccer fans around the world. Kasey Keller, who is still on the US team, gave what Brazilian forward Rivaldo called the best goalkeeping performance he had ever seen.

"It just happened to be one of those special nights," Keller



American striker Jovan Korovski (R) practises while teammate Ernie Stewart watches at their base in Guadalajara, Mexico on July 26.

—AFP photo

## Sport

### German media outraged

BERLIN, July 27 (Reuters/Internet): German newspapers reacted with shock and fear on Monday at the national team's 4-0 weekend loss to Brazil even though some analysts tried to put a positive spin on the team's worst defeat in 45 years.

"Herr Ribbeck, we can't be pushed around like that!" wrote Bild, the country's largest selling daily after the Confederations Cup defeat in Mexico.

"We've reached a new nadir. Erich Ribbeck hasn't done a thing in the 10 months since he replaced Berti Vogts to get the team on track."

Ribbeck has four wins, two draws and four defeats in his 10-month tenure.

"Is our reputation ruined?" asked Berlin's BZ daily, which called Ribbeck the "least successful trainer in German history."

The paper said the team should be "ashamed of itself" for the loss to Brazil.

"We thought losing 3-0 in the 1998 World Cup to Croatia was the bottom," BZ wrote. "And then the 3-0 defeat to the United States was even more embarrassing. And now the shameful 4-0 defeat to Brazil."

The only surprise was that Flavio Conceicao will remain a starter instead of Alex, who subbed in the second half of the game against Germany and scored two goals.

Brazilian coach Wanderley Luxemburgo said the team had performed well against Germany and he didn't see any need to change the lineup.

The Brazilians said they were mindful of their history with the Americans.

"That adversary has always been difficult for our country," defender Serginho said. "By tradition, the US team has always been complicated for us."

He also said the Brazilians weren't worrying about the players who begged off of the team, including stars Ronald Rivaldo, Roberto Carlos and Cafu.

"We're a family here," he said. "Independent of which players came or didn't come, the level stays the same."

## Ribbeck not taking NZ lightly



MEXICO 1999

GUADALAJARA, Mexico, July 27: Coming off an embarrassing 4-0 loss to Brazil, German coach Erich Ribbeck said the setback was the result of a lack of preparation for his players.

Ribbeck said Monday that the timing of the Confederations Cup put his team at a disadvantage because other teams had more time to prepare. He said many German players had obligations to their clubs in Germany.

Ribbeck didn't mention that Brazil travelled to Mexico only one day after winning the Americas Cup in Paraguay.

"I'm not bothered by the Confederations Cup, but rather because we showed up in an unequal position since this tournament started just before the German season," Ribbeck said.

Many of Germany's big stars asked to be left off the team because of the German league pre-season.

Ribbeck said the loss to

Brazil wasn't weighing too heavily on the players.

"The players have been able to forget about the defeat," Ribbeck said. "The defeat is stronger in the minds of the directors and the trainers than in those of the players."

Forward Michael Preetz agreed. "We didn't come prepared. That's the cause of the problem," he said. "Because of that, I'm not too upset about the defeat."

Germany's next game is Wednesday against New Zealand, the weakest team in



ERICH RIBBECK

the Guadalajara half of the tournament.

"We'll change our strategy. We'll play with two forwards," Ribbeck said about the New Zealand game.

He refused to give further details on the lineup, saying: "I don't want to tip off the rivals."

Star defender Lothar Matthaeus and midfielder Jorg Heidenreich missed practice Monday because of slight injuries suffered game against Brazil. But assistant coach Ulrich Stielike said both would be fine in time for the next game.

Matthaeus injured a ligament in his right knee, while Heidenreich is having trouble with his Achilles' tendon, Stielike said.

New Zealand, who lost 2-1 to the United States on Saturday, worked on physical conditioning Monday, and played a scrimmage among teammates.

New Zealand is an accessible team for us, but our big prob-

lem is the physical shape of the players," Stielike said.

"The players can't be at 100 per cent with only two weeks of practice," he said. "No team can."

Meanwhile, a US Major League Soccer spokesman said Monday that Matthaeus' acquisition from Bayern Munich is "imminent" but probably won't occur until Germany complete play in the Confederations Cup.

"We certainly expect him to sign in near future," MLS vice-president of communications Dan Courtemanche said. "Right now he wants to concentrate on his participation in the Confederations Cup."

"He wants to play here. We clearly want him to play here, but it probably won't happen until everything is cleared up at the Confederations Cup."

Matthaeus has said he expects to be assigned to the New York-New Jersey MetroStars, which has the worst record in MLS.

Div I soccer Victoria on top

Victoria SC took sole lead in the Keya First Division football league beating newcomers Muslim Institute 3-0 at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday, reports UNB.

With this, Victoria maintained their unbeaten run in the league to secure 16 points from eight matches with four wins and four draws while Muslim Institute remained at 10 points, also playing same number of matches.

Hasan scored two goals in the 2nd and 32nd minutes while Hanif netted the other in the 80th minute for Victoria.

In another fixture, a hat-trick by Sohel enabled Prantik KC overpowered Dhaka Wanderers' Club 3-2 in a keenly contested game at the same venue.

Sohel struck in the 52nd, 68th and 72nd minutes to complete the triple. Shaheen and Eco scored for Wanderers in the 88th and 89th minutes respectively.

With the day's outcome, Prantik so far earned 10 points while Wanderers bagged eight from eight matches.

## Lampard West Ham's until 2005

LONDON, July 27: England Under-21 international Frank Lampard on Monday ended weeks of negotiations by signing a new deal with West Ham which will keep him at the English Premiership side until 2005.

"I am delighted," the defender said. "I am just delighted to get it done and end all speculation. Now I can get on with playing for West Ham and being successful."

There was never a question of leaving the club. It was just getting it right."

Lampard on Saturday scored the goal that saw the London club beat Finnish side FC Jokerit 2-1 on aggregate in the third round of the Intertoto Cup, the feeder competition for the UEFA Cup.

Police said they had not established a motive for the killings. The two men were shot when they and a female companion were assaulted as they left their car.

Byles died on the spot and Burrell died in a hospital. The woman was unhurt.

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—AFP photo



An Army helicopter flies over the Sydney Olympic Stadium yesterday during a security rehearsal for the 2000 Games.

—AFP photo

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"The fans now want to know:

How far can German soccer

sink?"

The Berliner Kurier called it

a "debacle".

But Franz Beckenbauer

wrote in Bild that he was confi-

dent the team would rebound