

Ziege completes Boro switch

MIDDLESBROUGH, England, July 31: English Premiership club Middlesbrough have completed the 4 million pound (6 million dollar) signing of AC Milan's German World Cup star Christian Ziege, they said Saturday, reports AFP.

The 27-year-old German international has signed a five-year contract that will make him one of the highest-paid defenders in the Premiership.

Manager Bryan Robson clinched the Ziege deal a day after Liverpool midfield player Paul Ince agreed a three-year move to the Riverside Stadium.

Robson said: "Ziege is one of the best wing-backs in the world and is very adaptable. We can play him on the right or the left. As an experienced player, he will strengthen our squad."

Ziege should make his debut for Middlesbrough against newly-promoted Bradford City at the Riverside Stadium next Saturday.

Flowers' denial

LEICESTER, England, July 31: Former England goalkeeper Tim Flowers on Friday denied he had deserted Blackburn, who were relegated to the First Division last season, by grabbing the Premiership lifeline offered to him by Leicester City, reports AFP.

Flowers moved to Filbert Street for an initial 1.1 million pounds (1.7 million dollars), rising to 1.5 million, as manager Martin O'Neill swooped for a replacement for Spain-bound Kasey Keller.

The 32-year-old, who has signed a four-year contract, was part of the Blackburn side which qualified for Europe three times in five years, with the 1995 title success the high point of his spell at Ewood Park.

But after quitting Rovers for a new career with Leicester, Flowers insisted his conscience was clear.

That wasn't on my agenda at all," explained the keeper, who cost Blackburn 2.4 million pounds when he joined them in November 1993.

"I played a lot of reserve games for Southampton when I was younger and I didn't want to do that again. I'd had eight or nine years' unbroken service at first team level and it's not easy to swallow when you suddenly find yourself on the bench."

Flowers, who has won 11 England caps, but lost his place at Blackburn to John Filan last season added: "Roy Hodgson was manager when I got a shoulder injury in November."

"When I got fit, Brian Kidd had taken over and he had different ideas to Roy. I was obviously surplus and thought I didn't agree with it. I could accept it."

"John Filan played ever so well and I'm not here to snipe at Blackburn or anyone else; I leave Blackburn with no bitterness at all and I've left on very good terms with everyone there."

Blackburn immediately paid Sheffield United 675,000 pounds for Ireland keeper Alan Kelly to replace Flowers.

2006 Asiad Indonesia takes bid seriously

JAKARTA, July 31: Indonesia's lobbying team for the 2006 Asian Games hosts sees Malaysia and Hong Kong, China as tough rivals in the bidding in October 2000, the Jakarta Post reported today, says Xinhua.

The team's vice-chairman Enny Hardjanto said that Malaysia had recently hosted the 1998 Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur while Hong Kong, China was better known as a commercial city.

"We have to be serious in preparing ourselves to bid to be the Asiad host. We must make the bidding package professionally and it must contain a full explanation of Indonesia's preparations, from the facilities to other sectors," she said.

Except Malaysia, Hong Kong, China and Indonesia, Qatar, Syria, Uzbekistan, India are also bidding to host the 2006 Asiad.

The National Sports Council (KONI) vice-chairman and the Olympics Council of Asia (OCA) member Mohammad Bob Hasan said Indonesia would have to face a tough battle to win the bid.

"In the 1998 Asiad, Thailand only had Kaohsiung in Chinese Taipei as a rival. But now we are facing six contenders," he said.

KONI plans to campaign for the bidding during the 20th Southeast Asian (SEA) Games in Brunei Darussalam from August 7 to 15. It had planned to campaign at a cocktail party but the decision was changed to a breakfast meeting on August 6.

"About 100 representatives of the Olympics Council of Asia members, the 10 participating countries' contingents and sports federations are expected to attend the breakfast," said spokesman Ahmed Solichin.

During the breakfast, Enny will deliver a 10-minute speech on Indonesia's preparations for the Games and display a videotape showing the country's scenery and sports facilities and plans for staging the event.

Indonesia has a 2.5 billion rupiah (365,000 US dollars) budget for the bidding proposal to the OCA in October next year.

"If we are appointed as the host, we must provide around 2 billion dollars to stage the event. The money, mostly, will come from TV rights and official sponsors," Enny added.



Brazilian Marcos Paulo exults after scoring against New Zealand in their Confederations Cup clash on July 30.

Sport

Arantxa sets wedding date

BARCELONA, July 31: Three-time French Open winner Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario and her sports-journalist fiancee Joan Vehils are planning to get married next summer in Barcelona, the couple announced Thursday, reports AFP.

Sanchez-Vicario, 28, and Vehils, 34, began dating five years ago after meeting during an interview. Vehils now takes care of Sanchez-Vicario's press arrangements.

"I don't want this important decision in my life to affect my sports career," said Sanchez-Vicario.

De Brujin sets new swim mark

ISTANBUL, Greece, July 31: Holland's Inge de Brujin looked unstoppable Saturday as she set a championship best time in her 50-meter freestyle heat, the fourth time she has broken a record so far at the 24th European Swimming Championships, reports AP.

Fellow countryman Pieter Van Den Hoogenband for the second time faced Russian Alexander Popov in the 50-meter freestyle semifinal and prepared to anchor in the 800 relay final.

De Brujin swam the distance in 25.15 to easily advance to the semifinal, a time that bettered the previous 25.30. She set the European record of 24.88 last month.

She has so far broken the European records in the 100-meter freestyle and butterfly. She also had a championship record in a 50-meter butterfly heat earlier this week but scratched the final to concentrate on the 100.

France's Franck Esposito was to go for his second gold in the 100-meter butterfly, facing Ukrainian rival Denis Sylatiev, the world champion in the 200, and James Hickman of Britain. Esposito just edged Sylatiev to take the 200 fly on Thursday.

In the 200-metre backstroke, Croatia's Gordan Kozul faced Germany's Ralf Braun and Italy's Emanuele Merisi, while in the women's event European champion and record holder Agnes Kovacs of Hungary was to swim against Romania's Beatrice Caslaru and Alicea Peczek of Poland.

Camelia Potec of Romania, currently ranked top in Europe, faced Germany's Silvia Szalai and Kerstin Kielgass, who were both part of the winning 800 relay team.

In women's 10-metre platform diving, Ukraine's Elena Zhupina took the gold with 338.28 points, Spain's Dolores Saez De Ibara the silver with 329.22, and Russia's Svetlana Timoshina was third with 307.53.

In the men's 800 relay final, Hoogenband hoped to anchor his team to a win and his fifth gold medal at the championships. He still has a semifinal in the 50-meter freestyle and a possible slot on the 400 medley team Sunday, the last event in the 11-day Euros being held in this city separating two continents.

If he takes all the events, he would break a six-medal record held by Germany's Michael Gross from the 1985 Euros in Sofia, Bulgaria.

But to do that Hoogenband has to again defeat Popov in Sunday's final of the 50-meter freestyle, and it doesn't look like the decade-long king of European swimming will let go of two titles so easily. Hoogenband has so far forced Popov to accept his first two Euro silvers since 1991.

Both men were swimming in the same semifinal later Saturday, but Popov had only competed in two events so far compared to five for the Dutchman.

World record holder Maurice Greene easily won the 100 metres in 9.87 seconds from Obadele Thompson of Barbados who finished in 9.96 with Jon Drummond of the US third in 10.04.

Other highlights included a strong showing from South African Hestrile Storbeck-Cloete, who won the women's high jump with a 1.97 metre leap, beating Russia's Elena Guljajeva-Rodina who cleared 1.92.

"Sure I'm pleased but after jumping 2.0 metres in Paris the other week, I had hoped for the same here tonight. Seville will be a very open competition. The winning height will definitely be 2.00 metres and I don't think the other medals will go for much lower heights either," she said.

Jones said her main rival,

Sotomayor rules supreme

WINNIPEG, Manitoba, July 31: Javier Sotomayor became the first person to win the same athletics event at four straight Pan Am Games Friday night, winning the high jump to lead a big night for Cuba, reports AFP.

had problems with my back. My next goal is the World Championships in Spain."

Anier Garcia led Yoel Hernandez for a 1-2 Cuban finish in the men's 110 hurdles with a time of 13.17 and while Aliuska

lied in the day in everything from racquetball to shooting to cycling to rowing to able tennis to water polo pushed their total to 61, more than a third of all the golds awarded through nine days of competition.

Canada also scored with a handful of victories, one of which appreciated by the locals more than any of the others.

Winnipeg native, Tanya Dubnicoff, who carried the flag and was overwhelmed at the opening ceremony by the roar of the Canadian team received when it entered the stadium, won her second gold in cycling, winning the women's 1,000-meter sprint.

"I went out there this week and did what I had to do," Dubnicoff said. "And if the result was winning two gold medals, then that's what I did."

Canada claimed the gold in women's water polo, beating the Americans 8-6, but the United States got the victory in the pool that counted for more, beating the Cubans in the men's final 11-7 to earn a place in the Sydney Olympics.

Canada's titles kept in third place in the gold chase with 27, and Argentina likewise remained solidly in fourth place, thanks largely to its rowing team.

Ulf Lienhard and Sebastian Mazza returned to Lake Minnedosa for one last hurrah Friday, winning one of two rowing golds for the South American nation, which dominated the sport by winning half of the 14 races contested.

The second most successful nation in Pan Am's rowing history with 31 golds, Argentina won as many events as the host nation, Canada, and the United States combined.

Lienhard and Mazza, who won the men's lightweight double sculls on Wednesday, got back in the boat with Ariel Zeller and Mario Cejas to win the lightweight quadruple sculls.

Their time of 5 minutes, 59.04 seconds was more than a second ahead of the Cuban boat.

The Argentine women also did their part. Patricia Conte and Elina Urbano, who won the women's lightweight double sculls, likewise joined with Marisa Peguri and lightweight singles sculls champ Maria Julia Gariolai to win the women's lightweight quad sculls on Friday.

The victories gave Argentina eight medals of all colours in rowing, just behind United States and Canada, which finished with 11 and 10 respectively.

The big prize of the rowing competition, however, went to the United States, which captured the men's eights in 5:33.50, 2.99 seconds ahead of the Argentine entry.

MEDALS TABLE

Country	G	S	BT
United States	62	59	38 159
Cuba	32	27	28 87
Canada	28	29	38 95
Argentina	17	11	6 34
Brazil	8	13	21 42
Mexico	8	9	14 31
Colombia	3	10	10 23
Venezuela	3	7	7 17
Jamaica	3	1	4 8
Bahamas	2	0	1 3
Dominican Republic	1	1	0 2
Chile	1	0	6 7
Guatemala	1	0	1 2
Surinam	1	0	0 1
Netherlands Antilles	1	0	0 1
Peru	0	2	6 8
Uruguay	0	1	3 4
Barbados	0	1	1 2
Cayman Islands	0	1	0 1
Puerto Rico	0	0	4 4
Ecuador	0	0	2 2



Cuba's champion high jumper Javier Sotomayor acknowledges to the crowd after receiving his gold medal at the Pan Am Games on July 30.

— AFP photo

Lopez took the women's 100 title in 12.72 seconds.

The Cuban women's 1,600-metre relay team added a little extra joy for their nation, passing the Americans on the final lap and winning in 3 minutes, 26.70 seconds.

Yoelbi Quesada finished off Cuba's golden night, winning the triple jump with a hop, skip and jump of 17.19 meters (56-4 3-4).

"This is tremendous," Cuban delegation spokesman Jose Luis Salmeron said. "We usually earn eight or nine gold medals and now we improved that mark and for the third straight time won the athletics."

"We did it with spectacular marks and in spite of not having as many top athletes as in the past."

The athletics victories hiked Cuba's gold total to 32, but still left it far behind the Americans, whose performances ear-

ned a silver and a bronze.

— AFP photo

Scene from the women's volleyball semifinal between Cuba and the United States at the Pan Am Games on July 30.

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