

World TT meet begin today

PARIS, Aug 1: The 1999 World Table Tennis Championships, postponed because of the Kosovo crisis, finally start in Eindhoven, Holland on Monday with a new look-format just a year before the Sydney Olympics, reports AFP.

China, who earned all four Olympic gold in Atlanta and 13 of the 14 possible gold in the 1995 and 1997 World Championships combined, can reasonably be expected to sweep all five individual gold on offer this time.

The three doubles events and the women's singles should go to China with only the men's singles really holding a threat from the rest of the world's nations.

This Championships is doubly significant because the top 20 singles players on the world list published just after the World Championships will be automatically eligible for the Olympics, but only two from the same country.

The new world number one Vladimir Samsonov of Belarus, a world singles silver medalist in the English city of Manchester two years ago, Sweden's current world champion Jan-Ove Waldner, and Croatia's Zoran Primorac, who won the Brazilian Open in late June, form the biggest European threat to China for the men's singles gold.

Nothing has been patched up yet!

SYDNEY, Aug 1: Pete Sampras says he and Pat Rafter have patched up their differences, but the Australian repeated in a column today that the American did not show opponents sufficient respect, reports AFP.

"I stand by what I said about him not giving his opponents sufficient respect, because there are times when he loses and gives no credit to his fellow player," he wrote in the Sunday Telegraph here.

This is an issue that irks me, but I don't hate the guy. Nor did I want to hurt him. My comments about Sampras have been blown out of proportion."

In a telephone media conference last week from his Bermuda base ahead of his North American campaign for a third US Open crown, Rafter said Sampras had an attitude problem.

Sampras said in Los Angeles Saturday, the day he reclaimed the world number one ranking from the Australian, that the issue was over.

"I spoke to Pat the other day, we smoothed things over a little bit," said Sampras.

"He's not really that type of guy, probably some people in the media twisted things around. I respect Pat as a player and as a person."

Rafter said his comments were not personal and related purely "to the way we go about our business as competitors."

"We're all out there busting our backsides every week and if I can find an edge to beat Pete, then I'll use it."

He repeated that there have been times when I've been disappointed with what Pete has said to say, but added that he's probably annoyed with some of the things I do and say."

World chess meet starts

LAS VEGAS, Aug 1 (AP): Players were in a fighting mood in the opening rounds of the World Chess Championship.

When the final contest was completed Saturday, after nearly seven hours of play, only 11 of the 36 scheduled games had ended in a draw.

Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, president of the sponsoring Federation Internationale des Echecs, made the ceremonial first move for Matthias Wahls before a standing-room-only crowd at Caesars Palace hotel-casino. That started 100 players on their quest for a share of the 3 million dollars prize fund and the right to succeed Anatoly Karpov as the world chess champion.

Most of the world's top players are competing, with three notable exceptions. Karpov and former FIDE champion Garry Kasparov — who claims to be world champion — refused to play because of disputes with the federation. Viswanathan Anand of India was unable to attend because of other commitments.

Costa-Vicente showdown

KITZBUHEL, Austria, Aug 1: Spaniard Albert Costa upset top seed Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia 7-6, 6-2 to reach the final of the 535,000-dollar Generali Open here on Saturday, reports AFP.

Clay-court specialist Costa, the number five seed, will meet compatriot Fernando Vicente, the 13th seed, on Sunday.

Vicente, who won his first ATP title earlier this season, earlier beat local favourite Stefan Koubek 6-4, 6-4 in the first semifinal.

Sunday's finalists have played four times, Costa winning three of those encounters.

Croatia Open

Norman, Tarango in final

UMAG, Croatia, Aug 1: Eighth-Seeded Magnus Norman and Jeff Tarango battled their way Saturday into the final of the Croatia Open tennis tournament, reports AP.

Norman advanced by beating an exhausted Ivan Ljubicic of Croatia 6-0, 6-2, while Tarango stopped Albert Portas of Spain 7-6 (10-8), 6-0.



Richard Jezierski (R) of Troyes making a flying tackle on Paris Saint Germain's Mikael Madar during their French First Division encounter on July 31 at the Parc des Princes. PSG won 1-0. — AFP photo

Lyon start on the wrong foot

PARIS, Aug 1: Olympique Lyon, who have spent 41.5 million dollars building a side for the Champions' League, suffered an upset 2-1 home defeat by Montpellier in their opening match of the French season on Saturday, reports Reuters.

Lyon will now want to field record signing Sonny Anderson, who has just recovered from injury, as soon as possible after an unexpected defeat sparked by former France striker Patrice Loko's 25th-minute opening goal.

Technically we were in form and we played a good away match," said Loko, whose side have five InterCity Cup games under their belts.

Substitute Cedric Barbosa added Montpellier's second in the 73rd, against the run of play as Lyon improved after the interval.

France winger Tony Vairelles, signed from 1998 champions RC Lens, pulled one back with a volley 11 minutes

from time for Lyon, who come into the European Cup in the third preliminary round in 10 days time.

"It's always hard to start a season with a defeat, but it's not the end of the world and I hope we can learn from it," Vairelles said.

Olympique Marseille, pipped to the title by Girondins Bordeaux in May, top the opening day standings after a 3-0 home win over Sedan, back in the top flight after 25 years.

Bordeaux beat Bastia 3-2 at home on Friday.

Former Everton striker Ibrahim Bakayoko, man of the match at the Velodrome, put Marseille in front in the 26th minute from Fabrizio Ravanelli's headed pass.

France's Christophe Dugarry — playing while his doping case is under appeal — chipped a fine second goal seven minutes later.

Sedan goalkeeper Nicolas Sachy saved a Peter Luccin penalty in the 76th minute before Marseille substitute Djamel Belmadi struck a brilliant third goal in injury time.

"We had an average match and were a bit nervous but we succeeded in scoring at the right moments against a Sedan side with nothing to lose," coach Roland Courbis said.

Paris St-Germain hit the woodwork three times before overcoming 10-man Troyes 1-0 after the promoted team's captain Frederic Arpinon became the first player sent off in the first division this season.

Arpinon was shown the red card for violent play in the 54th minute and six minutes later Laurent Robert scored the only goal with a free kick, which took a deflection off Troyes' Argentine defender Luciano Zavanago.

France World Cup striker Stephane Guivarch, top scorer in the first division in 1997 and 1998, marked his return to AJ Auxerre after a disappointing season in Britain with the opening goal in a 2-1 home win over Nancy.

Swiss Alexandre Comisetti, signed from Grasshopper, volleyed Auxerre's second from a line low cross by Guivarch.

PSG look for samba boost

PARIS, Aug 1: Under-achieving Paris St Germain are hoping a pair of Brazilians can transform them from French league flops to title challengers, reports AFP.

The big-spending Paris club kicked off their season with a 1-0 win over promoted Troyes at the Parc des Princes on Saturday night — but it was a win that demonstrated to coach Philippe Bergeroo just how much work he has to do to revive the faded glamour club.

The 1996 European Cup Winners' Cup champions eventually finishing a flatteringly ninth — and will not have the distraction of European competition this season for the first time in eight years.

Bergeroo hopes that the arrival of striker Christian from Internacional of Porto Alegre and defender Cesar from Portuguese will add a samba beat to PSG's pedestrian performances of the last 12 months.

On the evidence of Saturday night, the Brazilian pair face a tough initiation to European football.

PSG's biggest frailty of last season — an inability to score goals — was ever more evident, while central defender Eric Rabesandratana was suspect

against pace and veteran goalkeeper Bernard Lama was shaky at a time when his starting spot is coveted by the younger Dominique Casagrande.

Lama, clearly unsettled, spoke on Saturday of "activities behind my back."

PSG's only goal against a punchless Troyes came when a 30-metre free-kick from new signing Laurent Robert was deflected past goalkeeper Tony Heurtebis. Three times, the profligate Parisians hit the woodwork and they squandered several other glorious opportunities.

Mickael Madar, the former Everton striker who doesn't strike nearly enough, was the major offender — stabbing wide of an open goal in the first half and then chipping onto the woodwork with the goal at his mercy.

Madar also appears to have alarming lack of understanding of the offside rule for a player of his experience.

His partnership up front with Bruno Rodriguez never gelled on Saturday — shades of players like Patrice Loko and Florian Maurice, who struggled to score goals for PSG but blossomed after leaving.

Despite the departure in the close season of four starters:

Alain Goma, Christian Worns, Marco Simone and Adailton, Bergeroo has plenty of material on which to work.

In addition to the two Brazilians — neither of whom played on Saturday — he has signed clever and experienced playmaker Ali Bernabia from Bordeaux, the dangerous Robert from Montpellier and Nigerian defender Godwin Okpara from Strasbourg.

With Okpara's compatriot Jay Jay Okocha — on his day one of the best midfielders in the world — looking as if he has recovered his enthusiasm, there is plenty of creativity in the squad.

"Our squad is better balanced in every area this season," said Bergeroo. "Already, we have established a team spirit that was absent last season."

The key factor now is whether Christian and Cesar, currently playing for Brazil in the Confederations Cup in Mexico — will fit into the squad.

Another Brazilian, Rai, was a huge success with PSG earlier this decade.

If the new pair make the impact Bergeroo hopes for when they arrive mid-month, then PSG might be able to celebrate their 30th year by mounting a real challenge for the championship they last won back in 1994.



Bologna Nicola Ventola (R) beats Chelsea's Marcel Desailly in the air in their friendly match at Stamford Bridge on July 31. — AFP photo

Mega bid for Beckham dismissed!

LONDON, Aug 1: Manchester United have turned down "an audacious bid" by Italian Serie A side Fiorentina for England international David Beckham.

The British Sunday Mirror said Fiorentina offered a world record fee of 56.7 million dollars in their effort to recruit Beckham.

Fiorentina coach Giovanni Trapattoni was quoted in the paper as saying he had been urged to approach United by his Argentine striker Gabriel Batistuta.

Said Trapattoni: "We did try an audacious bid to bring Beckham to Italy but United had no interest in selling him."

Batistuta was quoted as saying: "I told the club to get Beckham, whatever the cost."

"With him in the side I would score at least 10 more goals a season because he is the best crosser of the ball in the world. He is the midfield player I rate above all others."

Policemen hurt in Belgrade violence

BELGRADE, Aug 1: Seven-teen people, including four policemen, were injured in crowd violence during and after a football match in Cakak, central Serbia, on Saturday, medical sources said Sunday.

One of the policemen was seriously injured.

Eight supporters of Red Star Belgrade were Sunday given prison terms after appearing in court on charges relating to incidents during the match between Red Star and local team Borac.

Seven were given one-month jail terms and another a 40-day term, officials said.

Spanish press anticipate Anelka deal

Owen has to wait

LONDON, Aug 1: Injured England striker Michael Owen will miss the start of the Premier League season next week, his club Liverpool confirmed on Saturday, reports Reuters.

"Michael is training hard and running well but the season has come too early for him," said manager Gerard Houllier, who forecast mid-August was a more likely start date.

"He will not be involved next Saturday and realistically it will be at least another couple of weeks before he is."

Owen has not played since early April when he suffered a torn hamstring and tendon damage in a goalless league draw at Leeds. The teenager has also missed England's last two Euro 2000 championship qualifiers against Sweden and Bulgaria.

SA fall to Namibia again

WINDHOEK, Aug 1: Namibia eliminated South Africa from the Castle Cup Southern Africa championship for the second successive year with a 4-1 penalty shootout victory after a 1-1 draw here on Saturday, reports AFP.

South Africa were superior in the opening half of the quarter-final at the Independence Stadium and went ahead after 32 minutes through a powerful header by Pollen Ndlanga off a corner.

Another corner produced the equaliser four minutes into the second half when Simon Utoni headed into the path of Johannes Hindjou, who pushed the ball over the line from close range.

Namibia were inspired by the goal, won much more possession and when South Africa did break through they found goalkeeper and man-of-the-match Ronnie Kanalelo in superb form.

The player, who cannot command a regular first-team place with South African champions Sundowns, defied Ndlanga twice within three minutes midway through the second half.

Kanalelo maintained his inspirational form in the shootout, stopping shots from captain Thabo Mngomeni and Matthew Booth, while Namibia converted four consecutive kicks to send their fans into a frenzy.

FAM, AFC differ

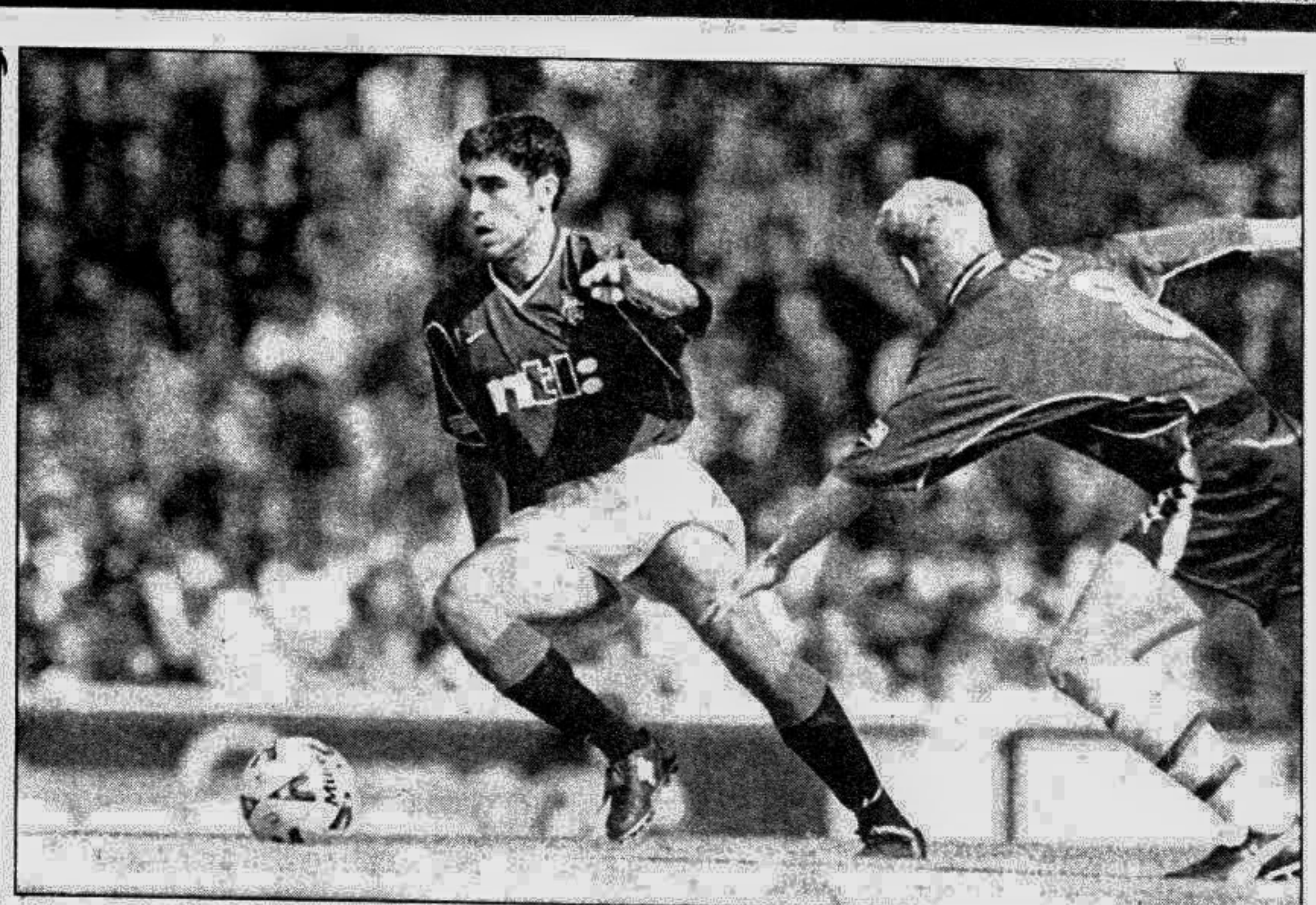
KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 1: The Football Association of Malaysia disagreed with the Asian Football Confederation's proposal to boycott the qualifying rounds of the 2002 World Cup, an association official said Sunday, reports AP.

Deputy president Tengku Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah said the Malaysian soccer group has asked AFC president Sultan Ahmad Shah to find a friendly solution to the problem.

AFC members walked out of a meeting with FIFA, the soccer world's governing body, in Los Angeles on July 9 to protest Asian teams only receiving four berths in the final rounds of the 2002 World Cup, to be held jointly in Japan and South Korea.

The AFC also intends to boycott the 2002 World Cup qualifying rounds if their demand for five places for the Asian teams is not met.

"Of course we will fight for five places for Asian teams but we will ask AFC president to resolve the problem personally with FIFA president Sepp Blatter," Tengku Abdullah told reporters.



Glasgow Rangers Claudio Reyna (L) goes on a run in the Scottish Premier League game against Kilmarnock at Ibrox on July 31. — AFP photo

Reyna rallies for Rangers

GLASGOW, Aug 1: Rangers manager Dick Advocaat was unimpressed as his side started their quest for an 11th Scottish title in 12 years with a 2-1 win over Kilmarnock at Ibrox on Saturday, reports AFP.

United States international Claudio Reyna rifled in a 68th-minute winner for the champions but Advocaat was furious after poor defending by Craig Moore, who was later substituted, had allowed Kilmarnock back into the game.

Reyna scored with an angled drive after being set up by Jorg Albertz three minutes after Kilmarnock's Ally Mitchell had been left unmarked to score from eight metres.

Rod Wallace grabbed a superb opening goal for Rangers six minutes before the break when he controlled a long pass and volleyed it into the net on the turn.

Advocaat was far from happy, however. "It was a very nervous game from our side today," he said. "I felt that the Craig Moore substitution had to be made when it was made."

When asked what the solution was to Moore's defensive shortcomings, he added: "That I took him off. Everybody gets some respect but it depends how long it takes."

"Otherwise we have to make a decision about the team. I know what I have to do, but I don't know yet whether to do it," the Dutchman added, hinting at a possible recall for out-of-favour Colin Hendry.

"It wasn't only the defence I'm not happy with. I thought Claudio did very well but he was the only one in my opinion who did, as all the others were not in

their best form."

In other action Hearts provided the best performance of the day when they demolished UEFA Cup contenders St Johnstone 4-1 at McDiarmid Park.

Gary McSwegan drilled the Edinburgh side ahead after 30 minutes and Austrian mid-fielder Thomas Floegel made it two midway through the second half.

An own goal by Darren Dods made it 3-0 after 78 minutes and Colin Cameron scored a fourth two minutes later before John McQuillan's 83rd-minute consolation for St Johnstone.

"The whole team played well and I would have settled for winning 4-1 before the game," Hearts boss Jim Jefferies said.

"But we won't get too carried away because we won the first league game last season against Rangers."

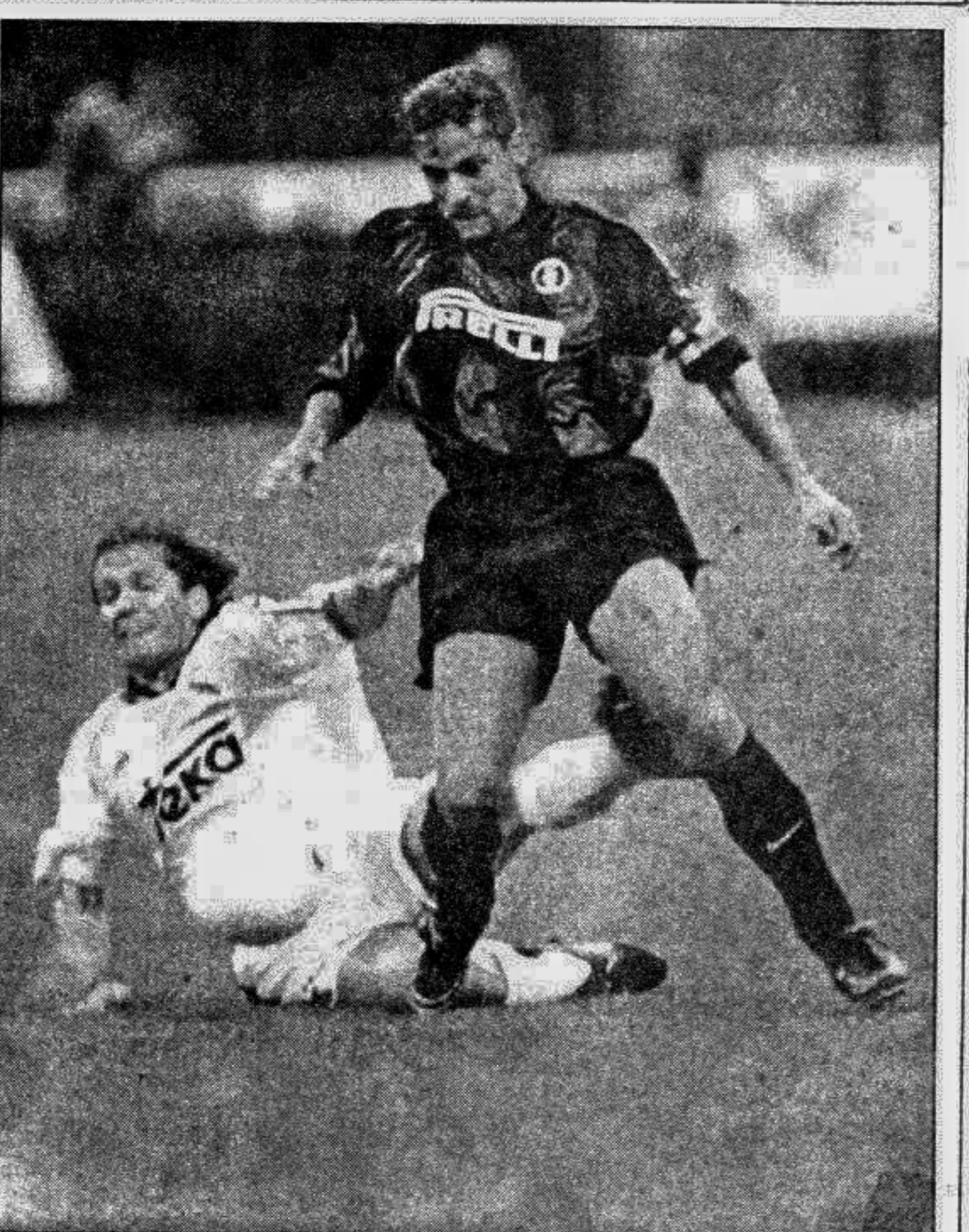
New low in attendance

GLASGOW, Aug 1: Scottish crisis club Clydebank's financial situation was not helped on Saturday when only 29 people paid at the turnstiles to watch their 2-1 Scottish League Cup first round defeat by East Stirling, reports AFP.

The crowd figure of just 69 people — which included spies from other clubs plus guests with complimentary tickets — created a new record low attendance for Scottish football.

On Friday Clydebank were served with a provisional liquidation order over a 13,000 pound (£1,000 dollar) bill which has not been paid. Saturday's game generated just 300 pounds.

Manager Ian McCall said: "It was unreal today."



Inter Milan's Roberto Baggio (R) gets away from Real Madrid's Salgado during their pre-season friendly at the San Siro in Milan on July 31. Inter lost 3-2. — AFP photo

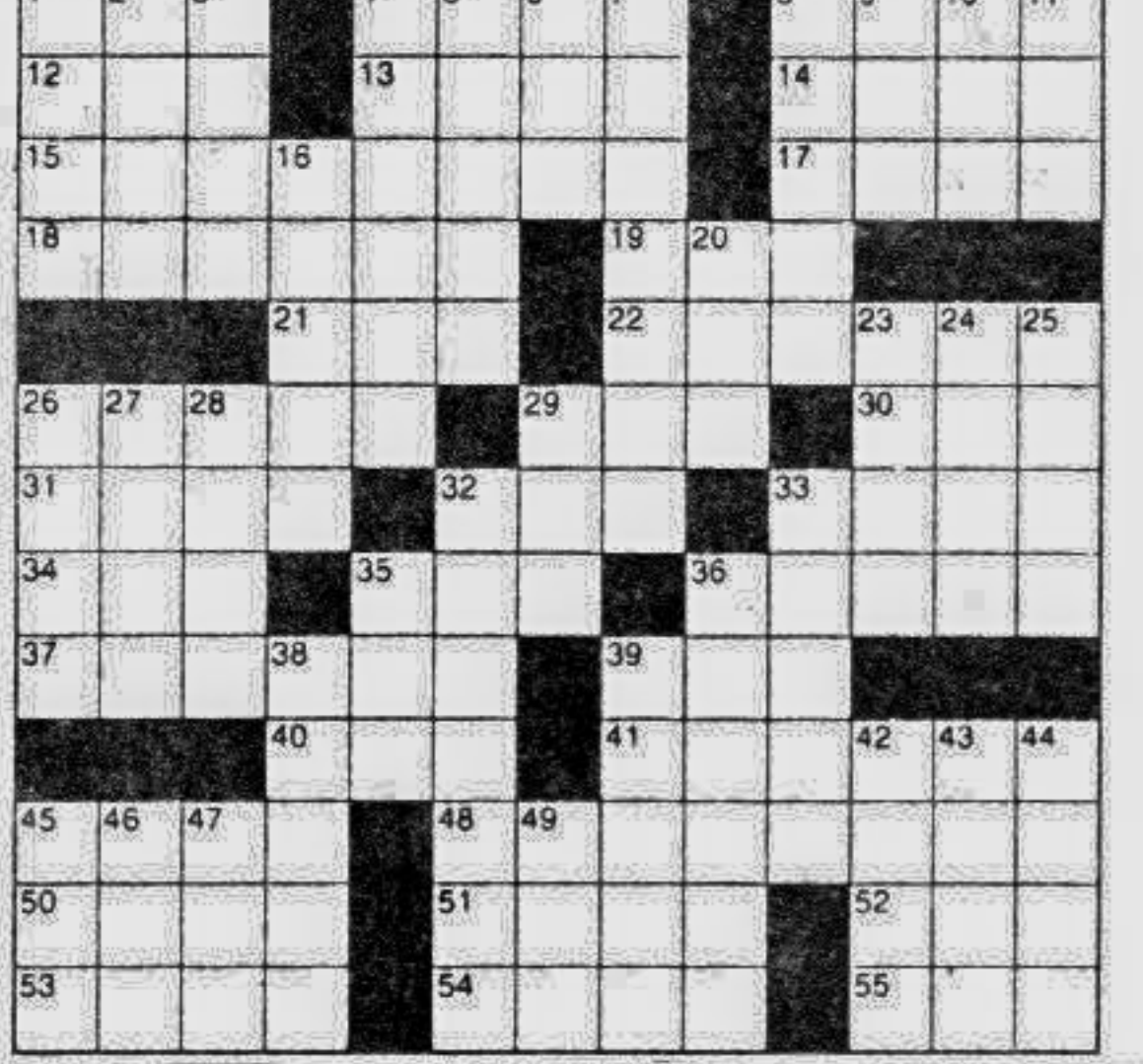
Inter substitute Andrea Pirlo linked into the penalty area and fired a powerful shot past Real keeper Bodo Illgner and seemed to have given Inter a draw.

But in injury time a low shot from Real substitute Guti was pushed out by Ferron and Morientes pounced.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Old, as a wd.
4 Drudge
8 Cause
12 Shape-shifter?
13 Stage
14 Pre-diploma hurdle
15 Noted theoretical physicist
17 Charity
18 Mountain music
19 Card-table call
21 Teensy
22 Parlor pieces
26 Saunter
29 Common query among kids
30 Female deer
31 Lab assistant?
32 Has permission
33 Fork feature
34 New Deal agcy.
35 Peace, to Publius

DOWN
1 Act robotic
2 Vivacity
3 Chopin's companion
4 Diversified
5 Way beyond
6 Mid-afternoon, on the clock
7 Protracted
8 Unisex wear
9 Rose of rock
10 TVA structure
11 Type squares
16 Ed
20 Wall climber
23 Entertainer
24 Trucking measures
25 Observes
26 Static weasel
27 Storybook baddie
28 Daytime TV entry
29 Grow
32 Protested, perhaps
33 Ordinal
35 A piece
36 Calls
38 Chorle
39 Spectrum producer
42 Line of fashion
43 One may go out with a sailor
44 Reception problem
45 Kill accessory
46 Candle count
47 Diddle and Derek
49 Ivy Leaguer



CRYPTOQUIP

F W T G G W I E R O N M I N I P

E O A I K N A M I W A F X C J L

A X L X C E P H W V N

Y C V X I O J O Y P K W Y W P O N

Yesterday's Cryptogram: THIS PLACARD DISPLAYED IN WINDOW OF FISH MARKET; WHOLLY MACKEREL!

Today's Cryptogram clue: I equals F

The Cryptogram is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.