

Lokomotiv deny selling stars

MOSCOW, Aug 3: Lokomotiv Moscow head coach Yuri Symonin has denied rumours in Russian media that the Premier Division side plans to sell its best players, reports Reuters.

"We're not selling our team with the European season just around the corner," Symonin told Reuters today.

"Of course, you can never guarantee anything these days but, to my knowledge, none of our best players are for sale."

Lokomotiv, who reached the semifinals of the Cup Winners' Cup in each of the last two seasons, begin their European campaign next week in the UEFA Cup qualifying round.

Reports in Russian press said that Lokomotiv, in dire need of cash at the moment, tried to unload several of their top players to a number of European clubs.

They named goalkeeper Ruslan Nigmatullin, Russian international midfielder Alexei Smertin and Georgian striker Zaza Dzhanelashvili as the ones likely to leave.

Lokomotiv, currently second in the premier division and trailing Spartak Moscow by 13 points, recently sold Belarus defender Sergei Gurenko to Italy's AS Roma for \$4 million.

"We have a verbal agreement with Lazio that Nigmatullin will stay with us at least until the end of this year," Symonin said.

"The same applies to the others as well."

Nevertheless, last week Symonin signed veteran keeper Yuri Okrosidze from first division side Rubin Kazan as a back-up just in case Nigmatullin does leave.

Hewitt hopeful

ADELAIDE, Australia, Aug 3: Rising Australian tennis star Lleyton Hewitt will undergo a scan on his injured left ankle here Wednesday but is confident of playing again within three weeks, reports AFP.

Hewitt, 18, turned the ankle while playing Andre Agassi in the semifinals of the Los Angeles Open on Saturday and flew home to Adelaide to recuperate Monday.

There were fears he would miss the US Open, which starts at the end of this month in New York, and Davis Cup semifinal against Russia in Brisbane in late September.

But Hewitt's mother, Cheryl, and manager John McCurdy said Tuesday he was confident of playing in the Hong Kong ATP tournament in the lead-up week to the US Open.

Cheryl, Hewitt said X-rays had cleared him of any bone damage, but he would have a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan Wednesday to determine the extent of ligament damage.

"It is very swollen and very black and blue and he is going to have some doctors look at it tomorrow (Wednesday)," she said.

"He might be looking at getting a wildcard to Long Island or Boston, he wasn't originally going to play those, he was going to take a week off before the US Open."

Pearce going to West Ham

LONDON, Aug 3: Former England defender Stuart Pearce on Monday agreed to sign for West Ham on a free transfer from English Premiership rivals Newcastle, reports AFP.

The move is subject to Pearce passing a medical.

The tough-tackling full-back was taken to St James' Park, also on a free transfer, by former Magpies boss Kenny Dalglish at the start of the 1997-98 season.

The 37-year-old started his career with non-league Wealdstone, who sold him to Coventry City before he played 12 seasons at Nottingham Forest.

Comaneci has a dream

BUCHAREST, Aug 3: Nadia Comaneci said today she hoped her native Romania might soon boast a gymnastics academy like the one she runs with her husband in the United States.

"A gymnastics academy in Romania is a great project which would involve lot of funds, but it would be possible with foreign investment," the former Olympic triple gold medalist told Reuters.

"For the moment, there's nothing concrete," added the 38-year-old who married former US gymnast Bart Conner in Bucharest three years ago.

She said she wanted the future academy to be named after her.

This academy should be open not only to gymnasts from Romania, but to young talents from around the world," she added.

Comaneci is leading 13 girl gymnasts from her Oklahoma Academy on a two-week training session in Romania which will include a visit to her hometown of Onesti.

She plans to visit the town's gymnastics school, which was named after her, and where she trained as a schoolgirl for her historic performance at the 1976 Montreal Games.

Comaneci won three gold medals, a silver and a bronze as a 14-year-old at the Games.

Comaneci, who scored the first "perfect 10" in world gymnastics, fled to the US shortly before the 1989 fall and execution of Romania's dictator Nicolae Ceausescu.

She became honorary president of the Romanian Gymnastics Federation in 1996.

The previous year she donated 100,000 dollars for the development of local gymnastics.

Golden Boot for Gunners



LONDON, Aug 3: Davor Suker will fill the void created at Arsenal by the departure of Nicolas Anelka.

The Croatian international striker will join the English Premiership side from Real Madrid in a 5 million dollar deal while French international Anelka goes in the opposite direction, reports AFP.

Suker, 31, will move to Highbury from Real Madrid after falling out with Bernabeu coach John Toshack.

The Croatian striker was winner of the 'Golden Boot' award after becoming top scorer at the 1998 World Cup with six goals.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger confirmed that Suker has taken a pay cut to move to Highbury after exercising an escape clause in his contract.

"It is very unusual, but that is what is refreshing for Arsenal," said Wenger.

"During the World Cup he was outstanding. Everything about him was for the team."

Wenger did not even attempt to sign the Croatian after the World Cup, saying: "I felt he would not be on the transfer market."

Suker has signed a four-year contract at Highbury but still needs to receive a work permit and that may not arrive in time for Saturday's opening English Premiership fixture against Leicester City.

Suker has a formidable track record as a goal-scorer. He scored three in the Euro '96 finals for Croatia in England and in France, spearheaded his country's surprise march to third place in the tournament.

He is Croatia's record goalscorer with 41 goals in 49 appearances but has had a mixed career with Real since joining them after Euro '96.

He helped them win the Spanish League a year later and was part of the squad which lifted the European Cup in 1998 although he only appeared in the starting 11 on sporadic occasions.

Earlier this year he fell out with Toshack and was banned from training with the first team squad.

"It was imperative that we strengthened the strike-force at Arsenal before the start of the season and Davor is a special talent who will help boost our campaign," Wenger said.

"He is a quality striker with experience in the Champions' League and will undoubtedly be a great asset for us."

happy about Real Madrid's original approach for Anelka, his transfer to Spain ended up working in the Gunners' favour in order to secure the services of Thierry Henry.

Arsenal's desire to link up again with Arsene Wenger under whom he played at Monaco.

Henry's signature follows that of Croatian World Cup star Davor Suker 24 hours earlier and means that Arsenal now have the four top-class strikers that Wenger insisted would be needed to challenge Manchester United for European and domestic honours.

Wenger now has a delicate juggling act to perform. With Dennis Bergkamp waiting in the wings and Nigerian striker Kanu performing superbly up front, the Arsenal boss has to decide which two of his potent strike force to leave out for Saturday's opening game against Leicester.

Henry Arsenal's record catch

LONDON, Aug 3: Internet Report: French World Cup star Thierry Henry became Arsenal's record signing on Tuesday when the Gunners paid 10.5 million pounds for the Juventus striker, according to the Turin club.

Arsenal's bid for Henry was the most open secret of the week following the controversial sale of Nicolas Anelka to Real Madrid. The player was due to arrive in London later in the day after the Gunners agreed a fee with Juventus.

Henry, still only 22, was France's top scorer with three goals at last year's World Cup finals and had only been a Juventus player since January after moving to Italy from Monaco.

According to press reports, the deal with Juventus was conditional on Anelka not being sold to a rival Serie A club. "We will not help a team that helps our rivals," a Juve spokesman said.

Although Arsenal were un-

happy about Real Madrid's original approach for Anelka, his transfer to Spain ended up working in the Gunners' favour in order to secure the services of Thierry Henry.

Arsenal's desire to link up again with Arsene Wenger under whom he played at Monaco.

Henry's signature follows that of Croatian World Cup star Davor Suker 24 hours earlier and means that Arsenal now have the four top-class strikers that Wenger insisted would be needed to challenge Manchester United for European and domestic honours.

Wenger now has a delicate juggling act to perform. With Dennis Bergkamp waiting in the wings and Nigerian striker Kanu performing superbly up front, the Arsenal boss has to decide which two of his potent strike force to leave out for Saturday's opening game against Leicester.

happy about Real Madrid's original approach for Anelka, his transfer to Spain ended up working in the Gunners' favour in order to secure the services of Thierry Henry.

Arsenal's desire to link up again with Arsene Wenger under whom he played at Monaco.

Henry's signature follows that of Croatian World Cup star Davor Suker 24 hours earlier and means that Arsenal now have the four top-class strikers that Wenger insisted would be needed to challenge Manchester United for European and domestic honours.

Wenger now has a delicate juggling act to perform. With Dennis Bergkamp waiting in the wings and Nigerian striker Kanu performing superbly up front, the Arsenal boss has to decide which two of his potent strike force to leave out for Saturday's opening game against Leicester.

happy about Real Madrid's original approach for Anelka, his transfer to Spain ended up working in the Gunners' favour in order to secure the services of Thierry Henry.

Arsenal's desire to link up again with Arsene Wenger under whom he played at Monaco.

LONDON, Aug 3: Manchester United captain Roy Keane was set to take his first step back from injury on Tuesday in a fund-raising friendly in Omagh, Northern Ireland, reports AFP.

The Republic of Ireland captain has been out since lipping off during the FA Cup Final win over Newcastle in May and has been having treatment on an ankle injury since.

Keane is part of a strong United squad for a game which will raise funds for families of Omagh bomb victims.

Negotiations continue, meanwhile, between Keane and the club in a bid to reach agreement on an extension to his contract.

Hrbaty humbles Di Pasquale

AMSTERDAM, Aug 3: Frenchman Arnaud Di Pasquale caused the first upset of the 475,000-dollar Dutch Open here on Monday when he sent top-seeded Dominik Hrbaty of Slovakia spinning out of the first round, reports AFP.

Hrbaty was unable to find the form which saw him reach the semifinals of Roland Garros and bowed out in straight sets in the very first match of the event.

Di Pasquale led 5-1 in the second set only for Hrbaty to save three match points and break the Frenchman. In the ninth game, however, Di Pasquale served out for the match, winning 6-2, 6-3.

Two other seeded players, third-seeded Brazilian Fernando Meligeni and second-seeded Mariano Zabaleta of Argentina, both advanced.

Meligeni, also a French Open semi-finalist this year, defeated Spain's Alberto Berasategui 6-3, 7-6, while Zabaleta downed Dutch qualifier Raemon Sluiter 6-3, 4-6, 7-6.

Swedish veteran Magnus Gustafsson saved a match point before defeating the Czech Republic's Bohdan Ulihrach 2-6, 7-5, 6-1.

Wenger now has a delicate juggling act to perform. With Dennis Bergkamp waiting in the wings and Nigerian striker Kanu performing superbly up front, the Arsenal boss has to decide which two of his potent strike force to leave out for Saturday's opening game against Leicester.

happy about Real Madrid's original approach for Anelka, his transfer to Spain ended up working in the Gunners' favour in order to secure the services of Thierry Henry.

Arsenal's desire to link up again with Arsene Wenger under whom he played at Monaco.

Henry's signature follows that of Croatian World Cup star Davor Suker 24 hours earlier and means that Arsenal now have the four top-class strikers that Wenger insisted would be needed to challenge Manchester United for European and domestic honours.

Wenger now has a delicate juggling act to perform. With Dennis Bergkamp waiting in the wings and Nigerian striker Kanu performing superbly up front, the Arsenal boss has to decide which two of his potent strike force to leave out for Saturday's opening game against Leicester.

happy about Real Madrid's original approach for Anelka, his transfer to Spain ended up working in the Gunners' favour in order to secure the services of Thierry Henry.

Arsenal's desire to link up again with Arsene Wenger under whom he played at Monaco.

Henry's signature follows that of Croatian World Cup star Davor Suker 24 hours earlier and means that Arsenal now have the four top-class strikers that Wenger insisted would be needed to challenge Manchester United for European and domestic honours.

Wenger now has a delicate juggling act to perform. With Dennis Bergkamp waiting in the wings and Nigerian striker Kanu performing superbly up front, the Arsenal boss has to decide which two of his potent strike force to leave out for Saturday's opening game against Leicester.

happy about Real Madrid's original approach for Anelka, his transfer to Spain ended up working in the Gunners' favour in order to secure the services of Thierry Henry.

Arsenal's desire to link up again with Arsene Wenger under whom he played at Monaco.

Henry's signature follows that of Croatian World Cup star Davor Suker 24 hours earlier and means that Arsenal now have the four top-class strikers that Wenger insisted would be needed to challenge Manchester United for European and domestic honours.

Wenger now has a delicate juggling act to perform. With Dennis Bergkamp waiting in the wings and Nigerian striker Kanu performing superbly up front, the Arsenal boss has to decide which two of his potent strike force to leave out for Saturday's opening game against Leicester.

happy about Real Madrid's original approach for Anelka, his transfer to Spain ended up working in the Gunners' favour in order to secure the services of Thierry Henry.

Arsenal's desire to link up again with Arsene Wenger under whom he played at Monaco.

Henry's signature follows that of Croatian World Cup star Davor Suker 24 hours earlier and means that Arsenal now have the four top-class strikers that Wenger insisted would be needed to challenge Manchester United for European and domestic honours.

Wenger now has a delicate juggling act to perform. With Dennis Bergkamp waiting in the wings and Nigerian striker Kanu performing superbly up front, the Arsenal boss has to decide which two of his potent strike force to leave out for Saturday's opening game against Leicester.

happy about Real Madrid's original approach for Anelka, his transfer to Spain ended up working in the Gunners' favour in order to secure the services of Thierry Henry.

Arsenal's desire to link up again with Arsene Wenger under whom he played at Monaco.

Henry's signature follows that of Croatian World Cup star Davor Suker 24 hours earlier and means that Arsenal now have the four top-class strikers that Wenger insisted would be needed to challenge Manchester United for European and domestic honours.

Wenger now has a delicate juggling act to perform. With Dennis Bergkamp waiting in the wings and Nigerian striker Kanu performing superbly up front, the Arsenal boss has to decide which two of his potent strike force to leave out for Saturday's opening game against Leicester.

LONDON, Aug 3: Manchester United captain Roy Keane was set to take his first step back from injury on Tuesday in a fund-raising friendly in Omagh, Northern Ireland, reports AFP.

The Republic of Ireland captain has been out since lipping off during the FA Cup Final win over Newcastle in May and has been having treatment on an ankle injury since.

Keane is part of a strong United squad for a game which will raise funds for families of Omagh bomb victims.

Negotiations continue, meanwhile, between Keane and the club in a bid to reach agreement on an extension to his contract.

Hrbaty humbles Di Pasquale

AMSTERDAM, Aug 3: Frenchman Arnaud Di Pasquale caused the first upset of the 475,000-dollar Dutch Open here on Monday when he sent top-seeded Dominik Hrbaty of Slovakia spinning out of the first round, reports AFP.

Hrbaty was unable to find the form which saw him reach the semifinals of Roland Garros and bowed out in straight sets in the very first match of the event.

Di Pasquale led 5-1 in the second set only for Hrbaty to save three match points and break the Frenchman. In the ninth game, however, Di Pasquale served out for the match, winning 6-2, 6-3.

Two other seeded players, third-seeded Brazilian Fernando Meligeni and second-seeded Mariano Zabaleta of Argentina, both advanced.

Meligeni, also a French Open semi-finalist this year, defeated Spain's Alberto Berasategui 6-3, 7-6, while Zabaleta downed Dutch qualifier Raemon Sluiter 6-3, 4-6, 7-6.

Swedish veteran Magnus Gustafsson saved a match point before defeating the Czech Republic's Bohdan Ulihrach 2-6, 7-5, 6-1.

Wenger now has a delicate juggling act to perform. With Dennis Bergkamp waiting in the wings and Nigerian striker Kanu performing superbly up front, the Arsenal boss has to decide which two of his potent strike force to leave out for Saturday's opening game against Leicester.

happy about Real Madrid's original approach for Anelka, his transfer to Spain ended up working in the Gunners' favour in order to secure the services of Thierry Henry.

Arsenal's desire to link up again with Arsene Wenger under whom he played at Monaco.

Henry's signature follows that of Croatian World Cup star Davor Suker 24 hours earlier and means that Arsenal now have the four top-class strikers that Wenger insisted would be needed to challenge Manchester United for European and domestic honours.

Wenger now has a delicate juggling act to perform. With Dennis Bergkamp waiting in the wings and Nigerian striker Kanu performing superbly up front, the Arsenal boss has to decide which two of his potent strike force to leave out for Saturday's opening game against Leicester.

happy about Real Madrid's original approach for Anelka, his transfer to Spain ended up working in the Gunners' favour in order to secure the services of Thierry Henry.

Arsenal's desire to link up again with Arsene Wenger under whom he played at Monaco.

Henry's signature follows that of Croatian World Cup star Davor Suker 24 hours earlier and means that Arsenal now have the four top-class strikers that Wenger insisted would be needed to challenge Manchester United for European and domestic honours.

Wenger now has a delicate juggling act to perform. With Dennis Bergkamp waiting in the wings and Nigerian striker Kanu performing superbly up front, the Arsenal boss has to decide which two of his potent strike force to leave out for Saturday's opening game against Leicester.

happy about Real Madrid's original approach for Anelka, his transfer to Spain ended up working in the Gunners' favour in order to secure the services of Thierry Henry.

Arsenal's desire to link up again with Arsene Wenger under whom he played at Monaco.

Henry's signature follows that of Croatian World Cup star Davor Suker 24 hours earlier and means that Arsenal now have the four top-class strikers that Wenger insisted would be needed to challenge Manchester United for European and domestic honours.

Wenger now has a delicate juggling act to perform. With Dennis Bergkamp waiting in the wings and Nigerian striker Kanu performing superbly up front, the Arsenal boss has to decide which two of his potent strike force to leave out for Saturday's opening game against Leicester.

happy about Real Madrid's original approach for Anelka, his transfer to Spain ended up working in the Gunners' favour in order to secure the services of Thierry Henry.

Arsenal's desire to link up again with Arsene Wenger under whom he played at Monaco.

Henry's signature follows that of Croatian World Cup star Davor Suker 24 hours earlier and means that Arsenal now have the four top-class strikers that Wenger insisted would be needed to challenge Manchester United for European and domestic honours.

Wenger now has a delicate juggling act to perform. With Dennis Bergkamp waiting in the wings and Nigerian striker Kanu performing superbly up front, the Arsenal boss has to decide which two of his potent strike force to leave out for Saturday's opening game against Leicester.

happy about Real Madrid's original approach for Anelka, his transfer to Spain ended up working in the Gunners' favour in order to secure the services of Thierry Henry.

Arsenal's desire to link up again with Arsene Wenger under whom he played at Monaco.

Henry's signature follows that of Croatian World Cup star Davor Suker 24 hours earlier and means that Arsenal now have the four top-class strikers that Wenger insisted would be needed to challenge Manchester United for European and domestic honours.

Wenger now has a delicate juggling act to perform. With Dennis Bergkamp waiting in the wings and Nigerian striker Kanu performing superbly up front, the Arsenal boss has to decide which two of his potent strike force to leave out for Saturday's opening game against Leicester.

Rangers probe assault claim

GLASGOW, Aug 3: Scottish champions Rangers have promised a full investigation into reports that a journalist was assaulted outside their Ibrox stadium on Monday, reports AFP.

Chris Gilmour, a football correspondent for the Scottish Sun newspaper, went to the club with the intention of speaking to winger Andrei Kanchelskis over the 40,000 pound (60,000 dollar) "bribe" claim made by Sir Alex Ferguson, the Russian international's former manager at Manchester United.

However, when Gilmour approached Kanchelskis, he was stopped by a member of the Rock Steady security team, which is employed to patrol Ibrox.

Gilmour claimed he was pushed in the chest by the security guard, grabbed in a headlock and was almost wrestled to the ground.

He then said the security guard swore at him repeatedly before a supervisor was called to restore order.

Kanchelskis escaped the melee without comment but Rangers said they would launch an inquiry.

"If the journalist is claiming assault, then we cannot comment on the specifics of the incident," said a spokeswoman for the club on Tuesday.

"We have an initial report and we will be discussing the general circumstances in more detail with the company as a matter of urgency."

Little becomes West Brom manager

WEST BROMWICH, England, Aug 3: Former Aston Villa manager Brian Little was named as the new manager of English first division club West Bromwich Albion on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Little, previously boss at Wolverhampton Wanderers, Leicester City, Aston Villa and Stoke City, had succeeded Dennis Smith, who was fired by the club last month.

Little quit Stoke earlier this summer and becomes the eighth Albion manager in the last decade.

West Brom chairman Tony Hale said: "Little has built up a remarkable track record of success at a number of clubs and we're delighted to be taking him on board."

Babayaro let off the hook

LONDON, Aug 3: Nigerian football international Ekechukwu Babayaro, who plays for English Premiership club Chelsea, was cleared on Monday of indecently assaulting a woman, reports AFP.

A judge directed the jury to find the 20-year-old, who came to the London club from Anderlecht two years ago, not guilty, saying the prosecution case was "riddled with contradictions."

Two co-defendants were also cleared.

Wales consider Venables' demands

CARDIFF, Aug 3: The Football Association of Wales (FAW) was set to make an announcement regarding the new Welsh national team coach late on Tuesday, reports AFP.

FAW councillors met at a Cardiff hotel to decide on a replacement for Bobby Gould, who quit in June.

Former England boss Terry Venables, who is believed to be asking for a 200,000-pound-a-year deal, was contacted late on Monday night by FAW officials for final talks and was reported to be waiting by the phone for the council meeting decision.

But it was believed Chester boss Kevin Ratcliffe was also involved in late night talks while Southampton's Mark Hughes was also contacted.

The FAW council must decide whether they are prepared to accept Venables' pay demands or decide on a cheaper option.

Yesaulenko dismisses Fergie's tale

MOSCOW, Aug 3: Spartak Moscow deputy president Grigory Yesaulenko rejected Sir Alex Ferguson's bribery claims, branding the Scot's story as an advertising ploy to boost sales of his memoirs, reports AFP.

"I am puzzled by the strange statements of Mr. Ferguson," Yesaulenko told the Russian daily Sport Express on Tuesday.

"We discussed Kanchelskis' future when we met that time, but it was nothing like the story which was described in his memoirs," he added.

"I think this is an attempt to attract more attention to his memoirs," Yesaulenko said.

Spartak's deputy president also said he did not have time to mount a legal challenge to Ferguson's claim, saying he was too busy running the club and wanted to avoid involvement in the "disgusting" allegations.

Russia's former international Andrei Kanchelskis said he was shocked by Ferguson's claim, adding he considered the allegation the fruit of Ferguson's vivid imagination.

"I never received any money for my transfer to Everton - this is complete gibberish. If you ask any of the serious football agents they would say this is absolutely impossible," said Kanchelskis.



LAMBS TO THE SLAUGHTER? Members of the under five Egyptian national football team Hussam Hassan (L) and Mohammed Emara look dejected on arrival at the Cairo Airport on August 2 following their ill-fated Confederations' Cup campaign in Mexico. —AFP photo

Egypt's soccer boss' resign

CAIRO, Aug 3: Egypt's national soccer chiefs resigned en masse on Monday after President Hosni Mubarak warned that heads would roll over the national team's humiliating defeat at the hands of Arab rivals Saudi Arabia, reports AFP.

"After five hours of stormy debate, the Egyptian Football Federation's managing council handed in its collective resignation to Prime Minister Kamal al-Ganzuri," the government daily Al-Gumhuriya reported in its Tuesday edition.

The sports committee of the Egyptian parliament is to meet in emergency session Thursday to discuss the humiliating defeat at the hands of Arab rivals Saudi Arabia, MPs told the Egyptian news agency MENA.

The whole of the national team's coaching staff also tendered their resignation," the paper said.

Mubarak had asked the prime minister for an "urgent report" into Thursday's shock 5-1 defeat in the FIFA Confederations Cup in Mexico City following widespread public outrage.

The president told