

Peru soccer coach quits

LIMA, Aug 17: Peru may turn to a foreigner to coach the national soccer team after Juan Carlos Oblitas quit at the weekend, local media reported, says Reuters.

Peru's football federation said Oblitas, coach since 1996, resigned after criticism from fans and media because of the side's recent disappointing performances.

Three coaches who have worked with local clubs in Peru in recent years — Argentine Osvaldo Piazza, Uruguayan Sergio Markarian and Colombia's Edgar Ospina — are front runners to replace Oblitas, according to media reports.

Peru failed to qualify for the 1998 World Cup finals and last month were knocked out of the continent's top tournament, the Copa America, in the quarter-finals.

USA invites

Iran

WASHINGTON, Aug 17: The Iranian national football team has been invited to play a friendly international against the United States in Los Angeles next January 16, reports AFP.

The match has a 75 percent likelihood of going ahead, United States Soccer Federation spokesman Bryan Cheneau said, while emphasising details still have to be finalised.

Iran beat the United States 2-1 during last year's World Cup finals in France.

Despite strained diplomatic relations between the two countries, that match was played in Lyon without any problems.

Fergie is as bad as Hoddle!

LONDON, Aug 17: A top British football agent believes that Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson has risked comparisons with former England coach Glenn Hoddle by writing a 'réveil' autobiography, reports AFP.

Mel Stein, the adviser to Paul Gascoigne, believes Ferguson's much-travelled book puts him on a par with Glenn Hoddle, who revealed how Gascoigne reacted after he was dropped from the 1998 World Cup squad.

Stein was angered by comments made by Ferguson in his book about the 1988 transfer of the England international from Newcastle to Tottenham.

Ferguson has accused Tottenham of pipping him to the midfielders' signature by making inducements to his parents. The Old Trafford boss also criticised Stein himself.

"It is disappointing when managers do this," Stein said.

"There are certain confidences in life. I was disappointed with the Glenn Hoddle book and I am disappointed with this. It is Paul getting the flak for just being Paul."

"There are substantial inaccuracies in the book. I am not going to elaborate because you will have to wait for the Gazza biography for what those inaccuracies are."

"I have read the passage. There are lots of things that are wrong. We will have to put the record straight."

Gascoigne is set to release his own version of events next year with the publication of his own autobiography.

Police question

St Etienne fans

ST ETIENNE, France, Aug 17: Up to a dozen fans of newly-promoted French first division side St Etienne were being questioned by police here on Monday following clashes during Sunday's 3-3 draw against Marseille, police said, reports AFP.

Several St Etienne supporters were held overnight by police for violence including throwing stones and beer cans and for vandalising cars which had Marseille number plates.

Police also used tear gas to disperse young supporters who had gathered outside two coaches on their way home from the match.

Spartak fans

go wild

MOSCOW, Aug 17: Moscow police fired teargas to disperse unruly fans who clashed after CSKA Moscow suffered a shock 4-0 league defeat by local rivals Spartak, Russian press reports said Tuesday, reports AFP.

More than two hundred CSKA supporters attacked a train carrying Spartak fans returning home. Both sides fought with bottles, belts and baseball bats for almost half-an-hour before police arrived.

Police armed with riot gear tried to clear the train, but failed as both sets of supporters turned on them after Sunday's match.

Police arrested 12 fans before the train left the station, but the fighting continued as three vans were crashed and several dozen people injured.

Matches between the two clubs are a constant headache for the local police, requiring tight security measures to keep the rival fans apart.

Moscow police said they had despatched an extra 3,000 officers in anticipation of trouble and detained more than 150 people for minor acts of hooliganism and drinking.

It was the second time in less than a week that Spartak fans had been involved in crowd disturbances.

Last week, police detained 140 local fans for petty offences after the Champions' League third preliminary round match between Spartak Moscow and Partizan Belgrade, which the hosts won 2-0.

Sinclair strikes Hammer blow



LONDON, Aug 17: Striker Trevor Sinclair scored an equaliser for West Ham with just seconds remaining on Monday night to salvage the Londoners a 2-2 English Premiership draw with high-flying Aston Villa at Villa Park.

Villa led 2-1 and looked set to regain the Premiership lead with a third straight win before Sinclair rounded off a fine, flowing move with an excellent shot.

Villa were left to rue a wasted opportunity but still joined Manchester United and Arsenal on seven points at the top.

Striker Dion Dublin scored a goal early in each half as Villa established command.

Dublin opened the scoring

within five minutes and then put Villa back in front six minutes after halftime.

Villa, with their confidence high following their victories over Newcastle and Everton in the first week of the season, started brightly.

Julian Joachim, a scorer in each of his side's two wins, crossed from the left and Dublin did well to push the ball beyond Rio Ferdinand.

The angle was tight but the former Coventry striker was still able to drill his low shot past goalkeeper Shaka Hislop and the covering Stuart Pearce and inside the near post.

Villa Park was

almost

immediately stunned into near silence when West Ham grabbed an equaliser within 90sec when Gareth Southgate, England's fall guy in the Euro 96 penalty shoot-out, defeated to Germany, put through his own net.

Alan Thompson's clearance from near the byline fell at Marc-Vivien Foe's feet but there looked to be no danger as the Cameroonian international let fly from 25 metres out.

Goalkeeper David James

looked to have the shot covered but Villa captain Southgate jabbed his boot at the ball to divert it beyond his keeper and inside the near post.

It was a typical Premiership match, all hustle and bustle and very little control.

After 20 minutes Dutchman George Boateng warned Hislop's palms with a rasping 25-metre drive and Hammers' defender



Aston Villa's Dion Dublin (R) is chased by West Ham's Rio Ferdinand during their Premier League on August 16. The match finished 2-2. — AFP photo

West Ham finished strongly, though, and Sinclair sealed the draw with his opportunism.

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