

### 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 performance.

Three coaches who have worked with local clubs in Peru in recent years — Argentine Oswaldo 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 was 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 per cent likelihood of going ahead, United States Soccer Federation spokesman Bryan Cheneault 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 'reveal-all' autobiography, reports AFP.

Mel Stein, the adviser to Paul Gascoigne, believes Ferguson's much trailed 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 midfielder's 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 vandalised 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' 2-2 English Premiership draw with high-flying Aston Villa at Villa Park, reports AFP.

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 defeat to Germany, put through his own net.

Aian Thompson's clearance from near the byline fell at Marc-Vivien Foe's feet but there looked to be no danger as the Cameroon 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 warmed Hislop's palms with a rasping 25-metre drive and Hammers' defender

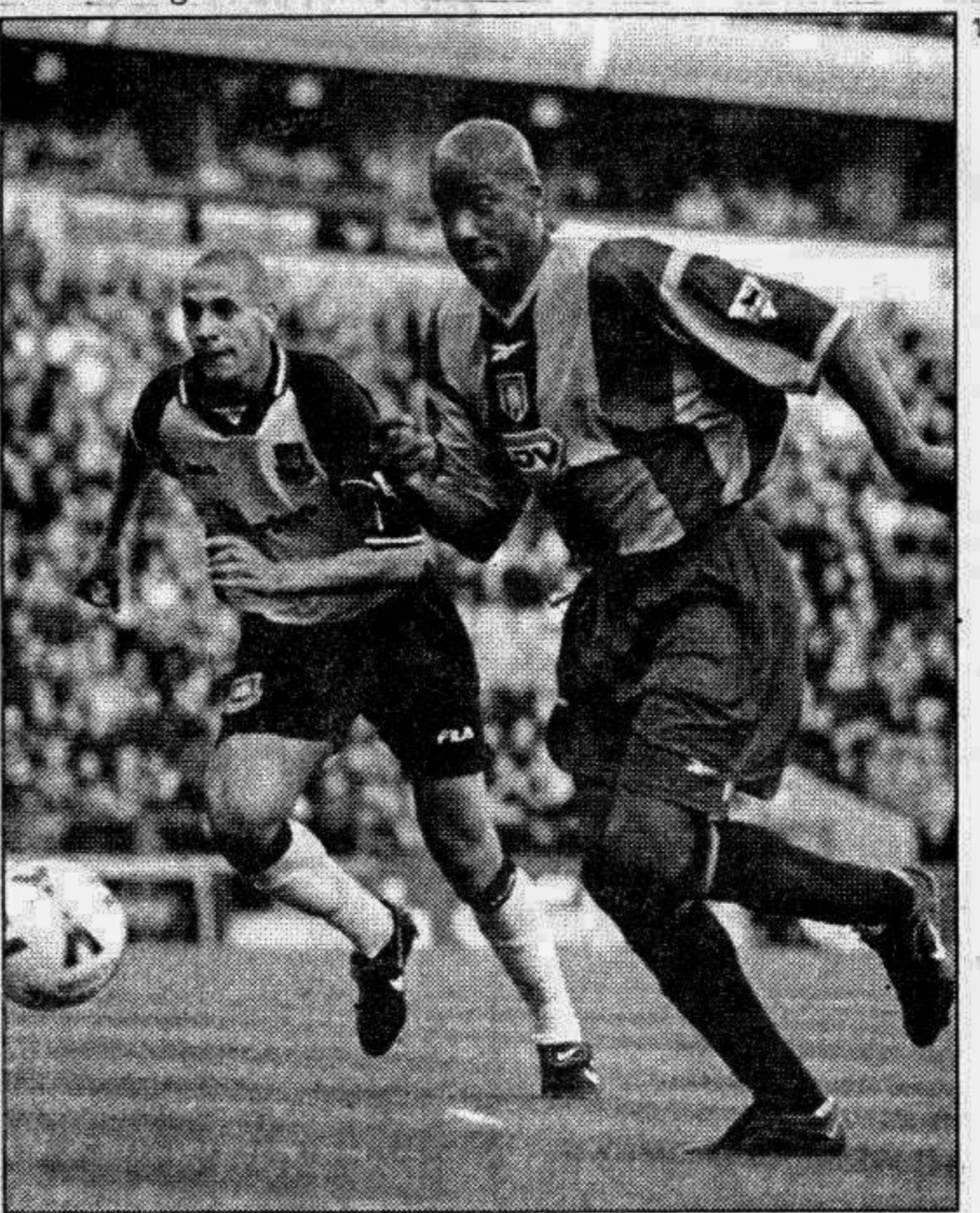
Steve Potts then had to hack the ball clear from off his own line after Frank Lampard had inadvertently deflected Thompson's corner goalwards.

West Ham also carved out several chances but lacked Villa's sharpness and Dublin looked to have sealed the three points with a fine piece of opportunism.

Joachim's powerful run forced a corner and after substitute Lee Hendrie's corner kick had bounced around the West Ham box, Dublin fired the loose ball home via a defender's outstretched leg.

English Premiership table after Monday's match (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):

Man Utd	3	2	1	0	7	17
Aston Villa	3	2	1	0	6	27
Arsenal	3	2	1	0	4	27
Middlesbrough	3	2	0	1	6	46
Tottenham	3	2	0	1	6	46
Southampton	3	2	0	1	5	56
Chelsea	2	1	1	0	6	24
Leeds	3	1	1	1	3	24
West Ham	2	1	1	0	3	24
Bradford	2	1	0	1	2	14
Wimbledon	3	1	1	1	6	64
Leicester	3	1	1	1	4	44
Sunderland	3	1	1	1	2	44



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

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

"We were so close to winning tonight - but a lapse in concentration cost us dear," said Dublin.

Liverpool 2 1 0 1 2 2 3  
Watford 3 1 0 2 3 5 3  
Coventry 3 0 1 2 1 3 1  
Derby 3 0 1 2 2 5 1  
Everton 3 0 1 2 3 7 1  
Sheff Wed 3 0 1 2 2 7 1  
Newcastle 3 0 0 3 3 8 0



Tomas (L) of Spanish outfit Celta Vigo and Argentine side Boca Juniors' La Plagia (C) fight for possession during the final of the Teresa Herrera Cup in La Coruna, Spain on August 15. —AFP photo

## PFA boss backs Beckham

LONDON, Aug 17: The English players' union on Monday urged the Football Association (FA) not to discipline Manchester United midfielder David Beckham for his reaction to derogatory crowd taunts directed at his family, reports AFP.

The FA is still awaiting referee Neale Barry's report after the furore surrounding Beckham's gesture aimed at abusive Leeds supporters during Manchester United's 2-0 win at Old Trafford on Saturday.

Beckham was pictured apparently waving two fingers at the crowd in response to some obscene chants by Leeds supporters.

Should Barry confirm that he did not see the incident, Beckham appears certain to go unpunished because it is believed the FA are unlikely to use either photographic or video evidence.

Gordon Taylor, chief executive of the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA), has warned the FA he will be extremely unhappy if they do charge Beckham with any misconduct rap.

"I can't think of any better reasons in mitigation if somebody was hurling such vile abuse at anybody. You would be less than human if it didn't affect you," said Taylor.

"These chants show a complete lack of respect to a lad who is now admired and has a child, and those supporters should put themselves in his shoes and see how they would like it. I think there you have the answer."

"I would therefore be very critical if the FA took action against him, although on the other hand the thing to do is show that you are not affected by it, if that is at all possible."

Taylor would now like to see the FA introduce more stringent guidelines to clamp down on such abusive chanting, similar to the stranglehold which has been placed on racist taunts in recent years.

He believes the clubs concerned would then take up the challenge, adding: "I think the main thing from the FA is that they start to have a general circular with regard to chants that are obscene and uncalled for."

"I would hope that would be the emphasis on this latest episode rather than on looking at the player himself who was the subject of such terrible taunts."

## BRITISH FOOTBALL BRIEFS

GLASGOW, August 17 (AFP): Scottish Premier League club Celtic have condemned a supporter who threw a drink at Dundee United's Billy Dodds at Tannadice Park on Sunday.

The Scotland striker was almost hit by the missile thrown from the visitors' section of the stadium as he celebrated his goal in the home side's shock 2-1 victory.

"It was an act of sheer stupidity and we will be carrying out our own investigation into the incident. These acts will simply not be tolerated," said Celtic spokesman Peter McLean.

The incident was one of several which marred the Premier League encounter, with two Dundee United supporters' coaches also coming under fire from missiles after the game.

Last week Celtic received a 45,000 pound (72,000 dollar) fine for the behaviour of their supporters in the controversial Old Firm clash with Rangers last May when referee Hugh Dallas was struck by a coin.

ABERDEEN TRYING OUT RENIER

ABERDEEN, Scotland: Struggling Scottish Premier League side Aberdeen are giving a trial to Bruges defender Pascal Renier.

The 28-year-old centre-half will link up with the Dons

squad this week as manager Ebbe Skovdahl seeks to end his woeful start to the season in which Aberdeen have failed to score a goal in any of their three matches.

Renier joins New Zealand skipper Gavin Wilkinson, who is also on trial at Pittodrie this week.

However a move to capture Newcastle midfielder Des Hamilton on loan has been ruled out because the player is now injured and Skovdahl is still waiting for an answer to his firm bid for Norwegian club Molde's central defender Knut Fostervold.

IRISH UNIFICATION

LONDON: A united Ireland soccer team is to appear for the first time in a professional tournament.

Former Northern Ireland international and Sheffield Wednesday manager Danny Wilson will join ex-Republic of Ireland defender Paul McGrath at the MEN Arena, Manchester, for the Carling Masters Home International on September 1.

Former Liverpool and Republic stars Ray Houghton and John Aldridge will also play for the Irish side.

McGrath said: "If people see this as two troubled countries coming together, then that is great."

Ireland will face England, Scotland and Wales in the competition in a throwback to the old Home Internationals.

## Shearer remains positive

LONDON, Aug 17: England striker Alan Shearer said on Monday he was certain his English Premiership club Newcastle United could shrug off their woeful start to the season, reports AFP.

Shearer sounded his endorsement of the United squad and refused to comment on the position of under-fire boss Ruud Gullit, who reportedly threatened to quit after the 4-2 defeat at Southampton on Sunday.

It was Newcastle's third successive defeat after Gullit's summer spending-spree and left them stranded at the foot of the table without a point.

Speaking at a promotional event in London on Monday, Shearer said: "Before the season started we all felt we could win our first three games - and that has not happened. We've got to pull together and we can get through this."

"We believed we could be successful. Whether we can still be successful remains to be seen, but I believe we can. I hope we can just turn the corner and push as far as we can."

"We are all very disappointed with the way the season has started. We've got to keep plugging away until we get some points or a win, and hopefully that will take us on to 'better things'."

Of Gullit's reported offer to quit, Shearer said the club had asked all players to remain silent on the issue.

And the England striker, who opened his account for the season with a penalty against his old club Southampton during the 4-2 defeat, shrugged off personal criticism about his own form.

He said: "I am up there to be shot at. I have to take criticism as well as praise."

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## Dortmund unveil Evanilson

DORTMUND, Germany, Aug 17: German side Borussia Dortmund have bolstered their ranks by signing 23-year-old Brazilian winger Evanilson Aparecido Ferreira, reports AFP.

He was presented to the media on Monday after signing a long-term five-year contract. His Brazilian club, Cruzeiro of Belo Horizonte, will receive the eight million dollar transfer fee in instalments.

The 1997 European champions, who lost their Bundesliga opener 1-0 at Kaiserslautern on Saturday, are hoping Evanilson will give them some fresh flair as they push for a title challenge this season.

The Brazilian international, who has 25 caps, will replace Lars Ricken on the right wing, allowing Ricken to play in Dortmund's midfield.

Ricken has been touted for several seasons as one of Germany's most promising new talents but has failed to perform in a position he does not like to play.

"When I heard they were buying a big name for the right wing I thought to myself that I would happily contribute to the transfer fee," a happy Ricken said. "I would rather fight for a place in our midfield than be guaranteed a spot in the side out on the wing."

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## France friendly won't benefit IFA

BELFAST, Aug 17: The Irish Football Association (IFA) will make substantial losses from Northern Ireland's glamour friendly on Wednesday against world champions France at Windsor Park, it was revealed on Monday, reports AFP.

Not even the gate receipts from a full house at Windsor Park, plus a British government grant will be enough to cover France's large six-figure appearance fee.

Bringing the French over has been made doubly expensive because Northern Ireland are also playing them in an Under-21 game at The Oval on Tuesday night.

The IFA has also been deprived of the usual income from television rights and advertisements on the pitchside hoardings and all this revenue is going to the French as part of the deal.

However, Irish boss Lawrie McMenemy believes it is worth going to such expense to bring over the world champions.

McMenemy said: "There's help from the government's Northern Ireland Events Committee on the financial side because - and it could only happen in Ireland - we're playing the world champions and losing money."

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## Bosnich Relief for MU

LONDON, Aug 17: Manchester United goalkeeper Mark Bosnich, who limped out of Saturday's 2-0 win over Leeds after 20 minutes, could be back in action within a fortnight, reports AFP.

The Australian was thought to be suffering from hamstring strain and United boss Sir Alex Ferguson was ready to rule him out for a month.

But a scan has shown the injury is not as serious as was first thought and Bosnich could be back in half that time.

The English Premiership giants face a tough spell of fixtures without their first-choice keeper. They are away to Arsenal on Sunday and Coventry three days later, then meet Lazio in the European Super Cup in Monaco on Friday week.

## Gunners may have Petit back

LONDON, Aug 17: French international midfielder Emmanuel Petit is expected to be back in action for Arsenal within the next two weeks after undergoing a scan on a knee injury.

The results of the scan have allayed Arsenal's fears that the French World Cup star could be out of action for up to six weeks, reports AFP.

Petit had to be substituted in the first half of Saturday's

bruising English Premiership draw at Sunderland.

He has already been ruled out of next Sunday's clash with Manchester United at Highbury and will not play in France's friendly international against Northern Ireland on Wednesday.

After Petit flew to Paris Monday for an X-ray, Arsenal received the good news.

A club spokeswoman said: "We have the results back from the scan, and he has only a minor knee ligament injury. He

will be out for no more than two weeks."

That means Petit could be fit in time for the Premiership clash with Liverpool on Saturday week.

That would also mean he is unlikely to miss Arsenal's opening European Champions' League match on September 15 when the Gunners will be without Ray Parlour and Lee Dixon, both suspended after red-card offences against French side Lens in last season's campaign.

Dutch star Dennis Bergkamp was also a casualty at Sunderland. He was forced to miss the second half after being kicked in the back by former teammate Steve Bould.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger is hopeful Bergkamp, who has been withdrawn from the Netherlands' friendly against Denmark as a precaution, will be fit to face United but is pessimistic about Petit's chances of a quick return.

"They were both serious injuries to important players and it is difficult to accept so early in the season," said Wenger.

"Dennis has a chance to be fit for next weekend but Petit is out already."

"Although we are still unbeaten we have had a stressful week and it will be important for the players to get some rest and recovery time before next Sunday."

Wenger has given his squad two days off and hopes it will also help stand-in skipper Nigel Winterburn shrug off an ankle injury which kept him out of the Sunderland game.

England goalkeeper David Seaman could return from a calf injury to face United in his first match of the season, but although captain Tony Adams is making faster progress than expected after a double-hernia operation on July 19, he is unlikely to be back until Saturday.

Wenger is also hoping Dutch winger Marc Overmars will be available this weekend, having been rested from the trips to Derby and Sunderland after aggravating a long-standing groin strain during a 20-minute spell as substitute in the Premiership opener against Leicester.



Porto's Brazilian star Mario Jardel (L) and Beira Mar's Lobao (R) are locked in an aerial battle for the ball during their Portuguese Super Cup clash in Porto on August 15. Jardel scored two goals in his team's 3-1 victory. —AFP photo

## Balkan war revisited



BELGRADE, Aug 17: The European championship football qualifier between Yugoslavia and Croatia is threatening to spill over onto the political field as the two prepare to meet for the first time since they split in 1991, reports AFP.

Fans of the two top Belgrade teams, Red Star and Partizan, are traditionally Serb nationalist and anti-Croat. But they are also hostile to the Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic whom they consider as traitor to the Serbs in Croatia and Kosovo.

Red Star fans are also hostile to the concept of the Yugoslav federation, which now consists of the dominant Serbia and the much smaller Montenegro.

They chant "Red Star, Serbia, never Yugoslavia", "Long live the Kingdom of Serbia" and the old anthem "God of Justice, save the Serb lands". They also whistle while the Yugoslav national anthem is being played.

Wednesday's match here will be the first time the Yugoslav and Croatian national teams have met since Croatia won a bitterly-fought independence campaign in 1991.

It will also be crucial to Croatian hopes of qualifying for the final stages of the competition next summer in Belgium and the Netherlands.

Red Star fans have not forgotten the violent clashes with Croat supporters during a match on May 13, 1990 in Zagreb, an event that is sometimes considered as a precursor of the independence war in the former Yugoslavia, says Zarko, a fan who attended that game.

According to Zarko, "during the war in Croatia, a certain number of Red Star fans joined the Tigers," a Serb paramilitary unit led by Zarko Raznatovic, known as Arkan, who at the time was the leader of the Red Star fans.

However, the club games played at home by Partizan Belgrade against Croatia Zagreb in 1997 and Rijeka three weeks ago, took place without a single incident.

But if the anti-Croat sentiment is being expressed with less passion, slogans against Milosevic and his regime continue.

The classic repertoire of anti-Milosevic slogans, like "Slobo, go away", "Slobo, Sadam", or "Red gang", has been reinforced by a more recent slogan "Slobo, bastard, you sold Kosovo".

But the Yugoslav Football Association (FSJ), which is organising the match, is well aware of the risk of the game's politicization, a source close to the association told AFP.

"The organisers know very well that a match of such importance presents an excellent opportunity for the political parties, and they will certainly do everything they can to concentrate the public on the sporting aspect of the game," this source said.

Ticket distribution has raised a controversy. The FSJ announced that only a small quantity of tickets will go on

public sale, while a majority of the tickets have been sold to organisations and companies directly.

But Zoran Djindjic's Democratic Party (DS, opposition) said a Serb ministry had reserved 20,000 tickets for the game in order to distribute them to the fans close to the government.

On Monday, Vladan Batice, coordinator of the Alliance for Change (SZP), an opposition coalition led by the DS, repeated these claims.

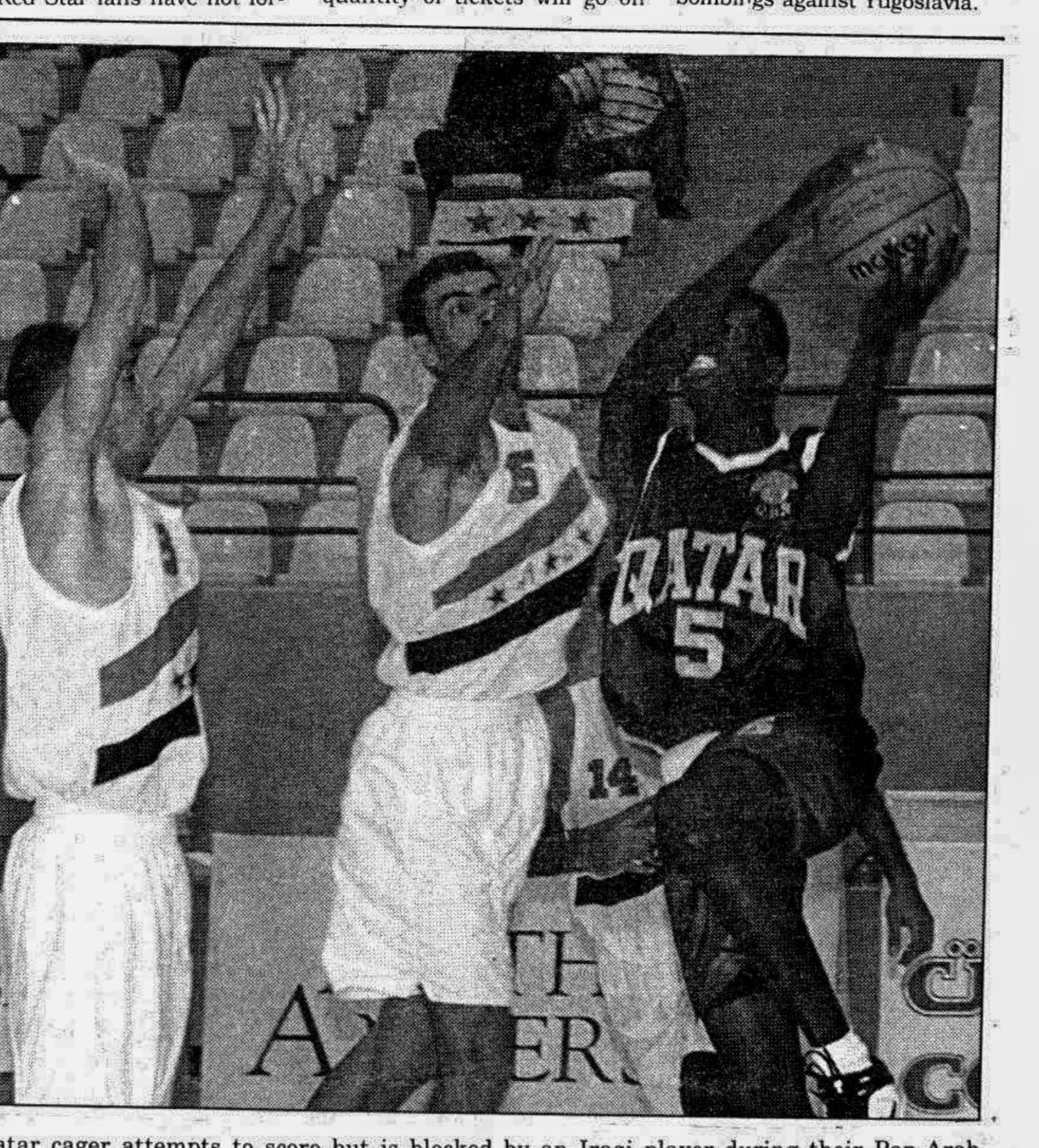
"During big games, fans demand that the government leaves. That is what probably scares the government and it tries to bring its own supporters to the game," Batice said.

Branko Bulatovic, the Secretary-General of the Yugoslav Football Association, denied such accusations.

"The large part of the tickets has been sold to companies and to the people coming from abroad," Bulatovic said. "It is true that some ministries received tickets, but only several hundreds," he said.

The official news agency Tanjug accused the Alliance for Change of having had the plan to use the match "in the context of pressures against the current regime". A Serbian opposition rally is being held in Belgrade on Thursday, the day after the match.

The Yugoslavia-Croatia match is a qualifier for Group 8, which also includes the Republic of Ireland, Macedonia and Malta. Originally scheduled for March 27, the game was postponed because of the NATO bombings against Yugoslavia.



A Qatar cager attempts to score but is blocked by an Iraqi player during their Pan-Arab basketball game on August 16. Qatar won 80-71. —AFP photo