

USA move into top 20

Brazil widen the gap

ZURICH, Aug 18 (Reuters): Brazil strengthened their hold at the top of the FIFA world rankings announced today and the United States moved into the top 20.

By reaching the finals of the Confederations' Cup, Brazil opened up an 87-point lead over World Cup winners France.

The US was the biggest mover among the top 100 nations jumping 10 places from 30 to 20.

Ranking, last month's ranking, points:

1. (1) Brazil	842
2. (2) France	755
3. (3) Czech Republic	753
4. (4) Italy	720
5. (5) Germany	718
6. (6) Argentina	715
7. (7) Spain	713
8. (8) Croatia	712
9. (11) Mexico	709
10. (9) Romania	694
11. (10) Norway	689
12. (12) Portugal	679
13. (13) Netherlands	669
14. (14) England	665
15. (15) Sweden	664
16. (16) Paraguay	647
17. (17) Denmark	627
18. (18) Colombia	627
19. (19) Morocco	625
20. (20) Austria	623
21. (21) Yugoslavia	620
22. (22) Chile	618
23. (23) Slovakia	612
24. (24) Ukraine	610
25. (25) Israel	609
26. (26) Poland	608
27. (27) Russia	598
28. (28) Tunisia	594
30. (29) South Africa	593

Silver screen

beckons Wright

LONDON, Aug 18: Former England striker Ian Wright is set to retire from football at the end of the season to become a film star, reports Reuters.

The 35-year-old showman, who scored 128 goals from 212 games in a seven-year stint at Arsenal, earning 33 England caps, told The Sun newspaper in an interview published today he wanted to go out at the top with his current club West Ham.

Wright, who already has a successful television career as presenter of a weekend chat show, said the risk of injury and a desire to be remembered at his best were the main factors in his decision to quit.

"Can you imagine the stick I'd get if I was playing week in week out in, say, the second division?" Wright told The Sun. But Wright admitted he would miss the rush of adrenaline from scoring goals in front of a sell-out crowd.

"On the pitch I'm an actor, playing to the crowd, a natural show-off," he said. He now hopes to transfer his showmanship to the big screen and has already agreed on a role in an action comedy. The Sun reported.

"I'm a natural performer," Wright said. "When the lights go on I come to life."

Owen joins practice

LONDON, Aug 18: England and Liverpool striker Michael Owen has returned to full-time training for the first time since he tore his hamstring in a pre-league game in April, his club said on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

Boskov pleads for tolerance



BELGRADE, Aug 18: Yugoslav coach Vujadin Boskov on Tuesday appealed for his own country and neighbouring Croatia to treat Wednesday's Euro 2000 qualifier as a sporting occasion without political significance, reports AFP.

The match between the two states will be their first meeting since Croatian independence in 1991 and the government and opposition forces in Belgrade have already accused each other of using the potentially highly-charged game for political purposes.

Boskov said such behaviour was uncalled for in the run-up to the crucial Group Eight encounter, originally scheduled for March 27 but postponed because of the NATO bombardment of Yugoslavia during the Kosovo crisis.

"The Yugoslav national football team is not a political organisation," said Boskov. "We are concentrating purely and simply on the match and we want to win three points," the Tanjug news agency quoted Boskov as saying.

Supporters from top Belgrade sides Red Star and Partizan have traditionally drawn their support from nationalist Serb communities, but they are also opposed to President Slobodan Milosevic, whom they accuse of having sold out Croatia-based Serbs and those living in Kosovo.

The opposition Democratic Party (DS), led by Zoran Djindjic, earlier claimed the Yugoslav Sports Ministry had bought half of the 55,000 tickets put on sale to distribute to sympathisers of the country's president Slobodan Milosevic.

A DS statement explained: "Fearing that the fans might

whistle and boo Slobodan Milosevic, the SPS and JUL (the parties of Milosevic and his wife Mira Markovic) have decided to buy half the tickets to cram the stadium with their supporters."

Milosevic was booed at several games in Belgrade and other towns in Serbia recently.

Tanjug rejected the claims that tickets had been distributed to pro-government groups.

Boskov, meanwhile, brushed aside the whole tickets issue.

"We're not interested in knowing who will come to the stadium and whether they will whistle. We just want to please the fans who expect us to deliver a victory," he said.

In stark contrast, Croatian coach Miroslav Blazevic adopted a more political tone.

"Any Croatian victory is a victory of the Croatian people," Croatian media quoted Blazevic as saying.

He explained he habitually told his players: "Win for our president," Franjo Tudjman.

Petit worry for Lemerre



BELFAST, Aug 18: France coach Roger Lemerre is keeping his fingers crossed that injured Arsenal midfielder Emmanuel Petit will be back for next month's crunch European Championship qualifier against Ukraine, reports AFP.

Petit has been ruled out of France's friendly against Northern Ireland at Windsor Park on Wednesday after he hurt his knee at Sunderland on Saturday.

Initially Arsenal and Lemerre feared he would be out for up to six weeks, but a scan has revealed he has only suffered minor ligament damage and could be back in two weeks.

That is good news for Lemerre, who would not want to face Group Four leaders Ukraine in Kiev on September 4 without Petit.

"It's a big problem for the French team when he does not play," said Lemerre.

"I don't know if he will play against Ukraine but I hope that he will play because he is such an important player for the

French team.

"He has damaged his knee ligaments, and today they say he might only be out for two to three weeks - which gives him a chance for us."

Petit is not the only star missing from the French squad to face the Irish. They are also without Zinedine Zidane, Nicolas Anelka, Thierry Henry and Christian Karembeu, while Didier Deschamps was ruled out today with a calf injury.

But they still have plenty of big names, and their World Cup back line of Bixente Lizarazu, Marcel Desailly, Laurent Blanc and Lilian Thuram should be on show.

Bordeaux midfielder Johan Micoud is expected to make his debut, and striker Robert Pires reckons those who do play have a great chance to stake a claim for a place against Ukraine.

"It's a big challenge for the new players against Northern Ireland," he said.

"It's a particularly important game for them because we all know that Zidane, Anelka, Henry and possibly Petit will be back for the next game. If the boys perform well then they will give the manager a major headache."

"We don't expect Northern Ireland to take it easy, even if it is a friendly, and we won't be taking it easy because we want to win."

Bordeaux striker Sylvain

Wiltford, who won his first cap in February and is emerging as one of the new stars of French football, agrees with Pires.

"The incentive is there for the players to do well, and we want to keep our places," he said.

"This is important for our preparations for the Ukraine game, and we must do well."

"We expect a difficult match and we aim to win, play well and not pick up any injuries."

Northern Ireland coach Lawrie McMenemy will try out as many of his squad as possible and Tommy Wright, James Quinn and Ian Nolan will all figure at some stage.

He is keen that the Irish build on their fine 1-0 win over the Republic of Ireland in Dublin in May.

He hopes they can use the match against the French as a springboard for their next two European Championship Group Two qualifiers against Turkey and Germany at the start of next month.

"Let's see if we can rise to the challenge and give the sort of performance that gives us hope for the future in the three games we've got left," said McMenemy.

"It's terrific for us to be playing the world champions here in Belfast and I'm looking for a confidence booster ahead of our double header against Turkey and Germany."

Ireland coach being strict



qualifier on September 1, reports AFP.

The Republic face a schedule of three matches in eight days as they follow the Yugoslav game with trips to play Croatia in Zagreb on September 4 and Malta in Valetta on September 8.

McCarthy is determined to have his players with him in Dublin well in advance of the first Group Eight qualifier even though that would clash with club matches.

Manchester United duo Dennis Irwin and Roy Keane would be certain to face Newcastle on Bank Holiday Monday, August 30, while the Blackburn

quartet of Alan Kelly, Jeff Kenna, Lee Carsley and Damien Duff would all be likely to feature against Bolton on the same day.

In the same category are Portsmouth's Alan Moughlin and West Brom's Kevin Kilbane, while Wolves starlet Robbie Keane would be expected to play at Crystal Palace on Tuesday, August 31.

But McCarthy said: "I am not certain whether it is a ruling or a recommendation from UEFA to have the players available to their country but I know I want them in Dublin three days before we meet the Yugoslavs."

Del Piero makes the difference

MILAN, Aug 18: Alessandro Del Piero, fully recovered from the left knee injury that sidelined him for nine months, scored in the 19th minute as Juventus of Turin beat AC Milan 1-0 on Tuesday night in the Luigi Berlusconi Trophy exhibition match, reports AP.

Del Piero, who recently signed a personal contract of 10 billion lire (\$5.5 million dollars) a year to stay with the Turin team, kicked in the decisive goal with a powerful drive from 10 metres (11 yards).

Del Piero, who returned to action a few weeks ago, also produced sparkling actions, caused a steady pressure on AC Milan defense and received a standing ovation by Juventus supporters as he was replaced during the second half at San Siro stadium.

The Juventus star forward, who tore his left knee ligaments during a Serie A match in November, underwent a long rehabilitation after his knee was repaired in a Vail, Colorado, clinic.

"I'm not yet in my top form, but I'm really satisfied with my performance tonight," Del Piero said.

The young forward hopes to regain his place on the Italian national team when the "azzurri" play Denmark in a European Championships qualifying match next month.

AC Milan, starting newly signed striker Andriy Shevchenko, Brazilian virtuoso Leonardo and Liberian veteran striker George Weah, missed some scoring chances in the first half and only collected a streak of corner kicks in the second part of the match despite their steady attacks.

Former premier and media magnate Silvio Berlusconi - AC Milan president - handed the trophy to Juventus captain Antonio Conte at the end of the match, in front of 60,000 fans.

The ninth edition of the trophy was a sort of rehearsal for the upcoming first division campaign which kicks off on Aug 28-29.

A consolation for the losers comes from the trophy history. Each time AC Milan lost to Juventus in the pre-season match in 1991, 1995 and 1998, they went on to win the league title that season.

Platt keeping mum over Booth affair

NOTTINGHAM, England, Aug 18: Nottingham Forest player-manager David Platt on Tuesday refused to be drawn into a bidding war over Sheffield Wednesday striker Andy Booth, reports AFP.

Platt has had a 2.5 million pound (4 million dollar) bid for the former England Under-21 striker rejected by Premiership strugglers Wednesday and insists that is his final offer.

"I'm not prepared to get involved in an auction. We've made what I believe to be a good offer, and I'm not prepared to increase it," said Platt, who is looking to strengthen his attack as Forest aim to win promotion from division one.

"If Wednesday aren't prepared to do business at that price I'll look elsewhere."



Juventus' superstar Alessandro Del Piero (R) losing balance while being under pressure from AC Milan's Alessandro Costacurta during their Berlusconi Trophy exhibition match at the San Siro stadium in Milan on August 17. Juve won 1-0. —AFP photo

Premiership match fixing

Asian bookies blamed

LONDON, Aug 18: An Asian betting syndicate was behind an elaborate scam to fix the results of Premiership soccer matches by tampering with the floodlights, netting it hundreds of thousands of dollars, a British court was told on Wednesday, reports AFP.

The ring was behind two abandoned matches in 1997 when the lights suddenly went out and had planned to target a third when British police broke up the plot, Middlesex Guildhall Crown Court heard.

Two Malaysians and a man of Hong Kong origin, along with a senior security guard at Charlton football club offered a 20,000 pound (32,000 dollar) bribe, have been charged in connection with the plot.

The syndicate brought an early end to matches by planting devices near the floodlights causing them to fail and matches to be abandoned.

Prosecutor Mark Dennis

told the jury of nine men and three women Tuesday that Asian betting rules meant that if a match was abandoned, all bets stood on the score at the time.

A syndicate could make a considerable gain if the game had to be abandoned while the score favoured them.

The operation struck at the heart of English football and showed "complete disregard to the damage that could be caused to the reputation and integrity of the professional game in this country," Dennis said.

The scam was only uncovered when the four men tried to sabotage Charlton's home game against Liverpool on February 13 this year by using a remote control device from within the ground to trigger a floodlight failure.

But the "careless talk" of the security guard, bribed to let the team into the ground, attracted police attention and the four were arrested three days before the targeted match, the court heard.

The first match was at Upton Park in November 1997 where West Ham were playing at home to Crystal Palace.

The lights went out 20 minutes into the second half just after West Ham had drawn level.

The second was a month later at Selhurst Park where Wimbledon were playing at home to Arsenal and again the lights went out shortly after half-time when the scores were level.

Malaysians Eng Hwa Lim, 35, and Chee Kew Ong, 49, have admitted conspiracy to cause a public nuisance along with Roger Firth, also 49.

Wai Yuen Liu, 38, born in Hong Kong but who lives in London, denied the charge and his trial started Tuesday.

The court was told how Liu was a gambler who fell heavily into debt after losing 120,000 pounds at one London casino over two years.

"It may help to explain why he was happy to be part of this money-making conspiracy," said the prosecutor.

Lothar MetroStars' from March

NEW YORK, Aug 18: Veteran German international Lothar Matthaeus will join the New York/New Jersey MetroStars of the Major Soccer League from March next year, club officials announced on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Still considered one of Europe's best midfielders at the age of 38, Matthaeus will join the struggling MetroStars in time for the next MSL season.

Matthaeus, who with Mexico's Antonio Carbajal holds the achievement of having played in five World Cups, is still a current German international and regular starter with Bayern Munich.

Matthaeus has suggested he



may quit the national team after next summer's European Championships in Holland and Belgium - but has not ruled out a role in his country's World Cup qualifying campaign for the 2002 tournament.

Matthaeus has signed a one-year contract and is expected to make the league maximum 275,000 dollars for a club that has lost a team-record seven matches in a row and stands 5-17.

Matthaeus is coming off one of the most accomplished seasons of his storied career. He captained Bayern to the Bundesliga title and to the finals of the Champions League and German League Cup. He was named the German Footballer of the Year.

TV Guide

Thursday 19th August

(All programmes are in local time. The Daily Star will not be responsible for any change in the programme)

BTV

3:00 Opening Announcement, Holy Quran, Programme Summary, 3:10 Recitation from the Holy Quran, 3:15 Patriotic Song, 3:20 Open University, 4:00 Khabar, 4:05 Cartoon: Barny and Friends, 4:30 Uzzal Ussala, 5:00 School Debate Competition, 5:50 Dharma, 6:00 Jibon, 6:30 Khabar, 6:40 Programme from the Chittagong Centre, 7:05 National Geography, 7:25 Shanda Malay, 8:00 News in Bangla, 8:30 Drama Serial, 9:00 Andharer Majhe, 9:00 Unnayan Shongon, 10:30 News at Ten, 10:30 Trakagati, 11:00 Mini Series: The Sensitive Samurai, 11:30 Khabar, The News, 11:45 Close down.

BBC

6:00 BBC World News, 6:30 World Living: Travel Show, Holiday Guide, 7:00 BBC News Inc. World Business Report/USA Direct/Asia Today, 7:24 Hours, 7:30 BBC News Inc. World Business Report/Asia Today, 7:24 Hours, 10:00 BBC World News, 10:30 USA Direct, 11:30 Europe Direct, 12:00 World News, 12:30 World Living: Face To Face, 12:40 News, 1:00 World News, 1:30 Talking Movies, 2:00 BBC World News, 2:30 World Focus: The Net, 3:00 BBC World News, 3:30 World Talk, 4:00 BBC World News, 4:30 World Living: Travel Show, Holiday Guide, 5:00 BBC World News, 5:30 World Focus: The Net, 6:00 BBC World News, 6:30 World Business Report, 7:00 BBC World News, 7:30 World Living: Travel Show, Holiday Guide, 8:00 BBC World News, 8:30 World Focus: The Net, 9:00 BBC World News, 9:30 World Talk, 10:00 BBC

World News 10:30 Money Wise, Presented By Sucharita Ghose, 11:00 The World Today, 12:00 World News, 12:30 Hard Talk, 1:30 World Focus: The Sky At Night, 2:00 BBC World News, 2:30 World Living: The Big Trip, 3:15 Europe Direct, 4:00 BBC News Inc. World Business Report/USA Direct/Asia Today, 7:24 Hours

CHANNEL [V]

7:30 Tea With [V], 8:00 Virtual 8:30 Tea With [V], 9:00 [V] Gone India, 9:30 Tea With [V], 10:00 [V] Line Lagoo, 10:30 [V] Hit Machine, 1:00 [V] FDFS, 1:30 Hit Machine, 2:30 Hit Machine, 3:00 [V] Hit Machine, 4:30 Tea With [V], 5:00 Virtual [V], 5:30 Tea With [V], 6:00 [V] On Campus, 6:30 Tea With [V], 7:00 [V] Line Lagoo, 7:30 [V] Hit Machine, 8:30 [V] Challenge, 9:00 [V] Hit Machine, 9:30 [V] FDFS, 10:00 [V] Hit Machine, 10:30 [V] PattiGalli, 11:30 [V] PattiGalli, 12:30 [V] Hit Machine, 2:00 [V] Cilmical, 2:30 Latent [V]

STAR PLUS

6:30 Ninaad, 7:30 Good Morning India, 9:30 TVC, 10:00 Good Morning India, 12:00 The Great Debate, 12:30 TVC, 1:00 Hit Ya Fit, 1:30 Virasat, 2:00 Aur Phir Ek Din, 2:30 Swabhimani, 3:00 Say Cheese, 3:30 Kahani Me Twist, 4:00 Picture This, 4:30 Story Teller, 5:00 Doogie Howser, 5:30 The Wonder Years, 6:00 Small Wonder, 6:30 Zabaan Sambhalke, 7:00 Hit Ya Fit, 7:30 Star News (Hindi), 8:00 Zindagi, 8:30 Is Duniya Ki Sitare, 9:00 Ajeeb Dastan, 9:30 Star News (English), 10:00 Kinetic Meg, Show, 10:30 Shock TV, 11:00 Aaj Ki Baat, 11:30 A Mouthful of Sky, 12:00 Star News

STAR WORLD

6:00 Aerobics Oz Style, 6:30 Hollywood Squares, 7:00 Brittas Empire, 7:30 Jack Hanna's Animal Adventure, 8:00 2 Point 4 Children, 8:30 Newhart, 9:00 Buffy the Vampire Slayer, 10:00 Ally McBeal, 11:00 The Oprah Winfrey Show, 12:00 The Practice, 1:00 The Bold and the Beautiful, 1:30 Tropical Heat, 2:30 Media TV, 3:00 Jack Hanna's Animal Adventure, 3:30 2 Point 4 Children, 4:00 Hollywood Squares, 4:30 World News, 5:00 Asia News Update, 5:15 World Business Report, 5:30 Home Improvement, 6:00 World's Greatest Hoaxes, Finally Revealed, 6:45 Asia News Update, 7:00 Walker Texas Ranger, 8:00 Due South, 9:00 The Bold and the Beautiful, 9:30 Home Improvement, 10:00 World's Greatest Hoaxes, Finally Revealed, 11:00 Walker Texas Ranger, 12:00 Due South, 1:00 Home Improvement, 1:30 World's Greatest Hoaxes, Finally Revealed, 2:30 Walker Texas Ranger, 3:30 Kennerly Copeland Ministries, 4:00 Life in the World, 4:30 With Joyce Meyer, 4:30 World News, 5:00 2 Point 4 Children, 5:30 Movie TV

STAR MOVIES

7:30 Action: The Star Chamber, 9:30 Romance: Dealers (15), 11:30 Comedy: Heartbreak Hotel, 1:30 Romance: Romeo and Juliet (15), 3:30 Family: Little Miss Magic (12), 5:00 Action: The Star Chamber (Michael Douglas), 7:15 Romance: De-

12:30 The Bold and the Beautiful, 1:00 Brittas Empire, 1:30 Dangerfield, 2:30 Tropical Heat, 3:30 Snowy River, 4:30 Movie TV, 5:00 The Bold and the Beautiful, 5:30 The Oprah Winfrey Show

PTV-2

8:00 Tiltwat Aur Tarjuma/Ham/Naat, 8:20 Cartoon, 8:30 Khabrain, 8:45 Cut Piece, 9:20 Aahang & Roshni, 9:45 Phool Chandi, 10:05 Serial, 10:30 Buttons and Raaste, 10:55 Milli Nagma, 11:00 Khabrain, 11:10 Absar, 11:55 Tele Play, 12:45 Kawaii, 12:55 Koran-e-Hakim, 8:55 Serial, 2:45 Serial, 2:50 Serial, 3:40 Talimi, 4:00 Serial, 4:30 Serial, 5:00 Serial, 5:30 Serial, 6:00 Serial, 6:30 Serial, 7:00 Serial, 7:30 Serial, 8:00 Serial, 8:30 Serial, 9:00 Serial, 9:30 Serial, 10:00 Serial, 10:30 Serial, 11:00 Serial, 11:30 Serial, 12:00 Serial, 12:30 Serial, 1:00 Serial, 1:30 Serial, 2:00 Serial, 2:30 Serial, 3:00 Serial, 3:30 Serial, 4:00 Serial, 4:30 Serial, 5:00 Serial, 5:30 Serial, 6:00 Serial, 6:30 Serial, 7:00 Serial, 7:30 Serial, 8:00 Serial, 8:30 Serial, 9:00 Serial, 9:30 Serial, 10:00 Serial, 10:30 Serial, 11:00 Serial, 11:30 Serial, 12:00 Serial, 12:30 Serial, 1:00 Serial, 1:30 Serial, 2:00 Serial, 2:30 Serial, 3:00 Serial, 3:30 Serial, 4:00 Serial, 4:30 Serial, 5:00 Serial, 5:30 Serial, 6:00 Serial, 6:30 Serial, 7:00 Serial, 7:30 Serial, 8:00 Serial, 8:30 Serial, 9:00 Serial, 9:30 Serial, 10:00 Serial, 10:30 Serial, 11:00 Serial, 11:30 Serial, 12:00 Serial, 12:30 Serial, 1:00 Serial, 1:30 Serial, 2:00 Serial, 2:30 Serial, 3:00 Serial, 3:30 Serial, 4:00 Serial, 4:30 Serial, 5:00 Serial, 5:30 Serial, 6:00 Serial, 6:30 Serial, 7:00 Serial, 7:30 Serial, 8:00 Serial, 8:30 Serial, 9:00 Serial, 9:30 Serial, 10:00 Serial, 10:30 Serial, 11:00 Serial, 11:30 Serial, 12:00 Serial, 12:30 Serial, 1:00 Serial, 1:30 Serial, 2:00 Serial, 2:30 Serial, 3:00 Serial, 3:30 Serial, 4:00 Serial, 4:30 Serial, 5:00 Serial, 5:30 Serial, 6:00 Serial, 6:30 Serial, 7:00 Serial, 7:30 Serial, 8:00 Serial, 8:30 Serial, 9:00 Serial, 9:30 Serial, 10:00 Serial, 10:30 Serial, 11:00 Serial, 11:30 Serial, 12:00 Serial, 12:30 Serial, 1:00 Serial, 1:30 Serial, 2:00 Serial, 2:30 Serial, 3:00 Serial, 3:30 Serial, 4:00 Serial, 4:30 Serial, 5:00 Serial, 5:30 Serial, 6:00 Serial, 6:30 Serial, 7:00 Serial, 7:30 Serial, 8:00 Serial, 8:30 Serial, 9:00 Serial, 9:30 Serial, 10:00 Serial, 10:30 Serial, 11:00 Serial, 11:30 Serial, 12:00 Serial, 12:30 Serial, 1:00 Serial, 1:30 Serial, 2:00 Serial, 2:30 Serial, 3:00 Serial, 3:30 Serial, 4:00 Serial, 4:30 Serial, 5:00 Serial, 5:30 Serial, 6:00 Serial, 6:30 Serial, 7:00 Serial, 7:30 Serial, 8:00 Serial, 8:30 Serial, 9:00 Serial, 9:30 Serial, 10:00 Serial, 10:30 Serial, 11:00 Serial, 11:30 Serial, 12:00 Serial, 12:30 Serial, 1:00 Serial, 1:30 Serial, 2:00 Serial, 2:30 Serial, 3:00 Serial, 3:30 Serial, 4:00 Serial, 4:30 Serial, 5:00 Serial, 5:30 Serial, 6:00 Serial, 6:30 Serial, 7:00 Serial, 7:30 Serial, 8:00 Serial, 8:30 Serial, 9:00 Serial, 9:30 Serial, 10:00 Serial, 10:30 Serial, 11:00 Serial, 11:30 Serial, 12:00 Serial, 12:30 Serial, 1:00 Serial, 1:30 Serial, 2:00 Serial, 2:30 Serial, 3:00 Serial, 3:30 Serial, 4:00 Serial, 4:30 Serial, 5:00 Serial, 5:30 Serial, 6:00 Serial, 6:30 Serial, 7:00 Serial, 7:30 Serial, 8:00 Serial, 8:30 Serial, 9:00 Serial,