

African Champions League Louisienne pip Dynamos

JOHANNESBURG, Aug 23: African Champions League giants Saint Louisienne of Reunion created another shock on Sunday with a 1-0 win over Dynamos of Zimbabwe.

Malagasy Flavien Ralalatratra snatched the winner after just six minutes at Saint-Louis with a powerful header that goalkeeper Gifty Muzadzi could not hold following a corner.

Dynamos, runners-up to ASEC of Cote d'Ivoire last year, were unlucky midway through the second half when a shot by recent signing Joseph Makwane rebounded off the post.

Saint-Louisienne became the first club on the French-governed Indian Ocean island to reach the group phase with victories over Red Star of Seychelles, DSA of Madagascar and Sundowns of South Africa.

Mighty Tunisian outfit Esperance outclassed ASEC 3-0 at home in the other Group 2 first-round match through goals from Maher Kanzari, Edith Agoye and Walid Azalez.

Revenge was particularly sweet for the only club to have won the Champions League, Cup Winners Cup and CAF Cup as they were humbled 3-1 by ASEC in the Super Cup this year.

Redouane al-Hairmeur scored after only three minutes to give 1997 champions Raja Casablanca of Morocco a 1-0 victory over Hearts of Oak from Ghana in the Moroccan commercial capital.

Al-Ahly of Egypt, winners of a record six Pan-African competitions, started and finished impressively as they snatched a 3-2 triumph over Shooting Stars in Nigeria.

Mohamed Said gave the crack Cairo outfit a six-minute lead and Mohamed Gouda and Walid Salah struck in the closing stages of the Group 1 clash after goals from Tony Alegbe and Hassan Santos had edged Stars ahead.

After six rounds of mini-league action stretching to November, the group winners meet over two legs to decide who represents Africa in the inaugural world championship in Brazil during January.

African Champions League results

Diy football

Dharmodi Club beat Victoria Sporting Club 4-3 in a super-four match of the Metropolis First Division football league at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday, reports UNB.

After a barren first half, Prashanta put Dharmodi ahead in the 47th minute. However, Hasan equalised the margin for Victoria after eight minutes.

But one minute later Bulbul again put Dharmodi in front while Gul Mohammed levelled the score in the 71st minute. In the 76th minute, Rubel netted the third goal for the winners and after three minutes Ekram completed their tally.

Hanif reduced the margin for the losers just before the last whistle.

In the day's other match, Prantik KC defeated BRTC SC by a solitary goal at the same venue.

Makbul netted the all-important goal in the 27th minute.

Israeli h'ball squad in Qatar

DOHA, Aug 23: A 22-member Israeli sports delegation arrived in Qatar yesterday to participate in a World Youth Handball Championship hit by controversy over several Arab countries pulling out of the competition, reports Reuters.

"We are glad to be here," said Israeli coach Shelly Bar-Sela as he arrived at Doha International Airport.

"This is a purely a sports event and we are sorry that Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have opted out of the game," he told Reuters.

Around 20 teams had qualified to participate in the event which begins on Monday and ends on September 6.

Satisfaction in Kiwiland

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Successful coach behind Warren Lees (1990-93) with 26 wins from 60 matches, a win ratio of 43 percent.

Howarth said England now had to go back to square one and introduce new faces for its tour of South Africa in November.

"They've got to do this to try and gain some credibility back from the public point of view," he said.

Reid pointed to a large number of all-rounders in the New Zealand side as a difference between it and England.

Spinner Daniel Vettori may have batted in the tail but Reid noted the 20-year-old delivered important half centuries.

"To have guys between seven and 10 all capable of scoring 50s in tests, and in some cases 100s, is a very comforting position to be in," Reid said.

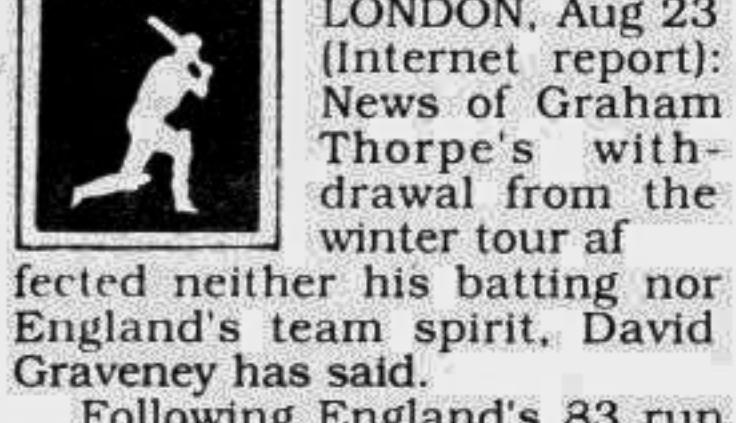
Howarth was impressed with another all-rounder, Chris Cairns, who was voted man of the match and New Zealand man of the series.

"He has shown a competitiveness, a determination that hasn't been seen before in Chris Cairns and if he continues along this vein he's going to be rated as one of the best all-rounders in the world."

Former New Zealand bowler David Trist takes over as coach after the side returns home and Howarth said he had been given a side with potential to be great.

"Give them time still to mature and develop and in a couple of years time we will be competing with the top echelon of international cricket."

Unfazed by Thorpe news



LONDON, Aug 23 (International report): News of Graham Thorpe's withdrawal from the winter tour affected neither his batting nor England's team spirit, David Graveney has said.

Following England's 83-run defeat by New Zealand at the Foster's Oval and newspaper reports that Thorpe has decided to quit touring in favour of more time with his family at home, Graveney said the announcement had not come at the best time, but it had little effect.

"For the news about Thorpe to break out in the middle of a Test match was not the best way for it to be revealed. It's a distraction, but I don't think it affected the way Graham batted."

"It certainly did not affect the dressing room, but these things do make the job difficult."

"It's a situation where he's been on tour for a period of time and everybody realises the balance you've got to achieve between the responsibility you

have as parent and to your job, International sportsmen have to weigh this up."

"He has given up his position in the team, and someone will come forward to fill his place, but to fulfil our responsibilities, we must select from play-

ers that are available all the time."

Hussain added: "Graham has put himself in a position now where you have to discuss his future at all times. I think it was important to win this game and series and Graham featured highly in that plan."

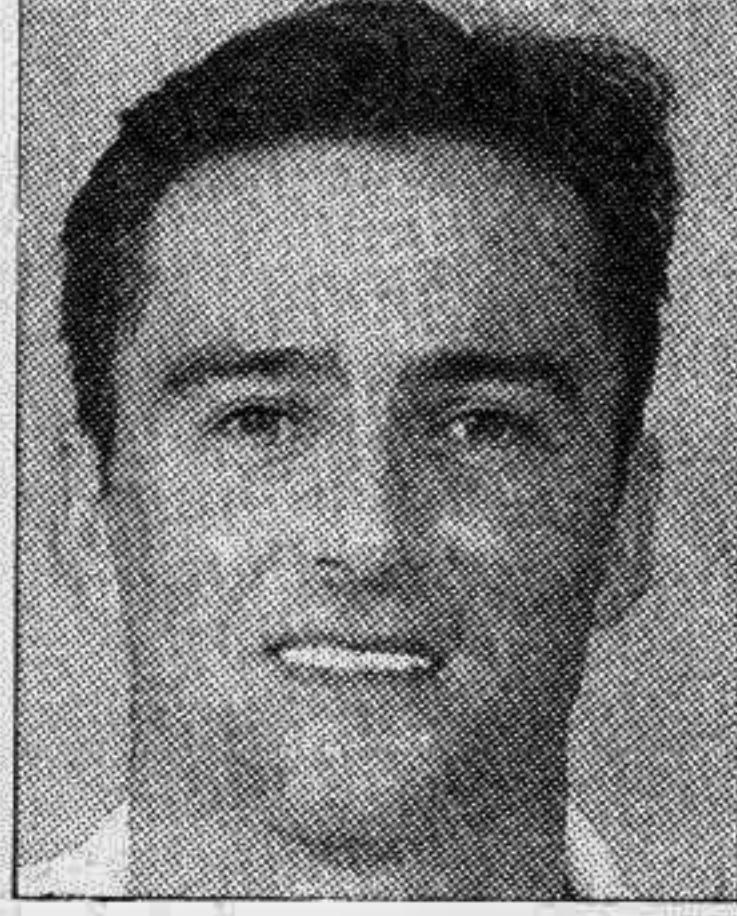
"He told me on Wednesday night: 'To lose him is bit of a blow, but it does open the door for other people.'

On Sunday, the 30-year-old Surrey left-hander said: "I have not taken this decision lightly and know exactly what it means."

"By giving up my place in the team I'm letting someone else in and I may never get back."

"But I have a young family and they come first. I need to achieve some balance in my life," he told the Mail.

Thorpe will miss the five-Test series against South Africa in order to spend more time with his wife Nicola, two-year-old son Henry and six-month-old daughter Amella.



GRAHAM THORPE

Enraged English media



LONDON, Aug 23 (Reuters): English newspapers were at their most vehement today as they lambasted the nation's cricketers for their series defeat to New Zealand.

England's 83-run defeat on Sunday handed a 2-1 series victory to the tourists and put the country that invented the game at the bottom of Wisden's unofficial list of the nine testing nations.

The England players suffered the ignominy of being booted off the pitch at The Oval on Sunday after the last seven wickets went down for 39 runs to yet again snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

Fans who gathered on the outfield for the post-match presentations sang: "We're so bad it's unbelievable" and "We've got the worst team in the world."

It was the first time in 27 home summer series that no England batsmen managed a century and, coming just two months after the failure to reach the second round of the home World Cup, represented an all-time low.

Today's newspapers were falling over themselves in their attempts to describe the debacle.

"English cricket 1744-1999" read the front-page headline in the top-selling Sun tabloid, with a picture of a pair of balls ablaze on top of a set of stumps.

The picture, a parody of the original "death of English cricket" after the first home defeat by Australia in 1882 which introduced the concept of "the ashes", was backed up by an RIP notice and a two-page obituary.

In a list of 20 things to do with "the remains of our summer game", the Sun suggested the outfield at Lord's should be turned into a testing area for genetically modified crops.

The Mirror carried a banner two-page headline quoting former national hero Ian Botham's declaration that he was "Ashamed to be English" and the Daily Mail described the team as "test dummies".

The broadsheets were no less damning in their condemnation with the Daily Telegraph committing five pages to the issue, including a two-page spread of letters from readers about the current state of the game.

The Independent used a headline quoting chairman of selectors David Graveney, who described England's batting as "Beyond belief".

The Times, one of few papers

to lead with Manchester United's Premier League soccer victory over Arsenal, declared "Miserable decline of England now complete."

Most papers had little sympathy for new captain Nasser Hussain, who said after the defeat he was proud of his team.

Hussain cut a pathetic figure," said Chris Lander in The Mirror, while The Mail's Peter Johnson said the skipper's loyalty was "misplaced and ultimately self-defeating."

Graveney today said he would not resign and said selection of the squad to tour South Africa later this year, originally to be announced on Wednesday, would "probably take a little more time now."

Tim Lamb, chairman of the English Cricket Board, asked fans to be patient.

"We are not very good in terms of the bit that matters but there were a lot of good things in that game," he said on BBC radio.

Praise for the victors was buried deep in the reports, though The Times' cricket correspondent Christopher Martin-Jenkins said "patience, discipline and thoughtfulness came only from New Zealand."

Disappointing Marseille



PARIS, Aug 23: Marseille continued their unspectacular start to the French season on Sunday with a less than inspiring goalless draw at Lens, the result leaving Rolland Courbis' side with just one win from their four matches, reports AFP.

There was little to inspire a 40,000 crowd at the Stade Felix Bollaert even though the home side made most of the early running and carved out several chances with Daniel Moreira their main threat - although it was a Philippe Brunel effort which came back off the bar which was the nearest Lens came to a goal.

Robert Pires tried manfully to spark Marseille after the break and fellow World Cup winner Christophe Dugarry almost dragged an effort beyond Lens keeper Guillaume Warmuz, who grabbed the ball at the second attempt.

Courbis has talked darkly about leaving the club if thinly-veiled criticism of his management style does not cease.

The outspoken coach has lost some credit following the pre-season sale of defensive lynchpin Laurent Blanc to Inter Milan.

In Sunday's other match, Bastia shocked Nantes 2-1.

Marseille now place seventh with six points from four games, four less than resurgent Paris Saint Germain, who thanked a Bruno Rodriguez header Friday as they kept top spot despite a 1-1 home draw with Auxerre.

Auxerre captain Stephane Guivarch, who had a hapless time with previous clubs Newcastle and Glasgow Rangers, scored a superb goal in the first half to put the visitors ahead.

Reigning champions Borussia lost for the first time, 2-1 at Rennes, and now head a group of five sides on seven points.

Three minutes before the break Elhadji Diouf equalized in a move started off by Christophe Le Roux and Youssef El Hadji, forced into error by the home side's continued pressure, put the ball past Ulrich Rame for the Rennes winner.

Marseille's David Trezeguet scored his fifth goal of the season from a metre out and Italy's Marco Simonini scored twice to bring a useful 3-2 in at Montpellier while Lyon skipper Alain Cavalier scored in the final minute at Metz for a 1-0 win.

St Etienne's Brazilians Alex and Aloisio both scored in their 2-1 win against Nancy for their first victory of the season.

Winning start for Barca



BARCELONA, Aug 23: Spanish champions Barcelona got their title defence off to a winning start yesterday as second half goals from Luis Figo and Dani Garcia earned them a 2-0 win at Real Zaragoza, reports Reuters.

Robert Pires tried manfully to spark Marseille after the break and fellow World Cup winner Christophe Dugarry almost dragged an effort beyond Lens keeper Guillaume Warmuz, who grabbed the ball at the second attempt.

Atletico Madrid lost 2-0 at home to neighbours and relegation favourites Rayo Vallecano.

Deportivo Coruna were worthy 4-1 winners at home to Alaves, with Roy Makaay netting a hattrick, while Numancia beat Valladolid 1-0 and Sevilla and Real Sociedad drew 2-2.

Real Madrid got their season off to a winning start on Saturday, coming from behind to sneak a 2-1 win at Mallorca with injury time goals from St Etienne's Brazilians Alex and Aloisio both scored in their 2-1 win against Nancy for their first victory of the season.

Elsewhere there were surprises as fellow title hopefuls Celta Vigo were beaten 1-0 at Oviedo while big spending

Bastia shocked Nantes 2-1.

At the age of 17 years and four months, Macea, who goes by the name of Nano, came on as a substitute for Rivaldo with 20 minutes left.

Barca coach Louis van Gaal called Nano into his first team squad after watching him star in the second leg of the Spanish Super Cup against Valencia, when he was preferred to Dutch international Bouwmeijer.

Nano now looks set for a bright future at the Nou Camp but it all could have been different if he had accepted a tempting offer from England's Premier League.

Nano was approached last season by Arsenal, who were impressed by his showing in the European under-16 championship and were prepared to offer him a lucrative deal at Highbury.

Van Gaal appeared resigned to losing him, reflecting ruefully that he would not be the first young player lured to Highbury.

But Nano finally decided to stay on at his home town club. "I'm delighted, obviously."

Barcelona's Dutch international Patrick Kluivert (L) battles with a Real Zaragoza player during their Spanish Primera Liga encounter on August 22. —AFP photo

Seedorf feels ill at ease

MADRID, Aug 23 Dutch international midfielder Clarence Seedorf said Sunday he was unhappy at Real Madrid after spending 90 minutes kicking his heels during Saturday's opening day Spanish league win at Mallorca, reports AFP.

"I am irritated but calm. If the coach doesn't want me I will have to sort the problem out with the club as soon as I can," said Seedorf.

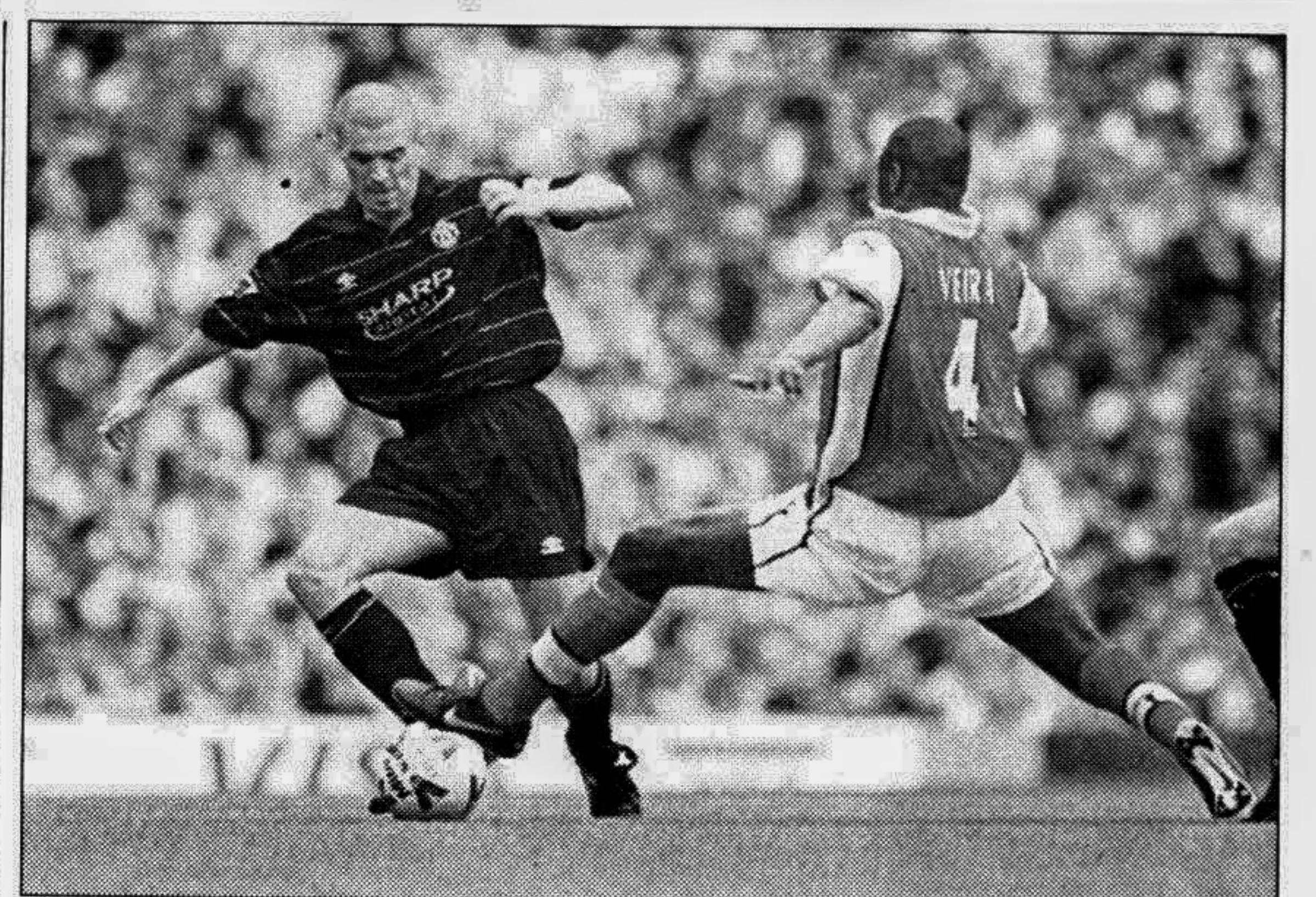
"I want to stay and for things to work themselves out but I don't see myself on the bench," he added.

"We will talk things over again Monday because I want a solution," said Seedorf, who joined Real three seasons ago and who is under contract for another season.

The player has fallen out with the club's Welsh coach John Toshack and previously said he was fed up - but the supporters appear to be on his side.

In a pre-season friendly, which Real lost 3-0 at Celta Vigo ten days ago with Seedorf again looking on from the sidelines. Real fans chanted "yes to Seedorf, no to Toshack."

Manchester United's inspirational skipper Roy Keane (L) dodges past Arsenal's Patrick Vieira in their crucial Premier League clash on August 22. —AFP photo



FA will act after ref's report

LONDON, Aug 23: The controversial scenes at Highbury between Arsenal and Manchester United will be dealt with following the referee's report, the English Football Association (FA) said on Monday.

"Most papers had little sympathy for new captain Nasser Hussain, who said after the defeat he was proud of his team."

"Hussain cut a pathetic figure," said Chris Lander in The Mirror, while The Mail's Peter Johnson said the skipper's loyalty was "misplaced and ultimately self-defeating."

Graveney today said he would not resign and said selection of