

## Rangers plan to carry on

GLASGOW, Aug 27: Glasgow Rangers are aiming to complete a glorious week by beating Hibernian and going six points clear at the top of the Scottish Premier League on Saturday, reports AFP.

The reigning Scottish champions are in buoyant mood after their historic aggregate win over Italian giants Parma in midweek which saw them qualify for the group stages of the European Champions League.

Dick Advocaat's side travel to Edinburgh to face Hibs with a three point advantage over arch-rivals Celtic who entertain Hearts on Sunday.

Ominously for Celtic and the rest of the division, Rangers are generating a formidable momentum at this early stage of the season having taken a maximum 12 points with four straight wins.

In the weekend's other matches, struggling Aberdeen, suffering their worst ever start to a season, will go in search of their first victory of the new campaign when they play host to St Johnstone.

Motherwell play at home to Dundee on Saturday while Dundee United entertain Kilmarnock 24 hours earlier.

**Scottish Premier League matches on Saturday (matches 1400 GMT)**

Hibernian v Rangers

Motherwell v Dundee

Sunday (1400 GMT)

Aberdeen v St Johnstone

Celtic v Hearts

Dundee Utd v Kilmarnock

## Radchenko Japan bound

IWATA, Japan, Aug 27: Former Russian international Dimitri Radchenko is to move to struggling J-League club Jubilo Iwata, a club official said Friday, reports AFP.

The 28-year-old forward from Spain's Deportivo La Coruna has already signed a temporary contract earlier this month in Barcelona. He will arrive in Japan soon to seal a final contract after a medical check, the official said.

Local papers estimated his transfer fee at 20 million yen (179,000 dollars) and salary at 32,500 dollars.

Jubilo won the first stage of the season, but have dropped to third from the bottom in the 16-team second stage after Hiroshi Nanami moved to Italian Serie A club Venezia and striker Masashi Nakayama was benched through injury.

## Euro 2000

## Russian 18 for qualifier

MOSCOW, Aug 27 (AFP): Russia's national team head coach Oleg Romantsev on Thursday announced his squad for the 2000 European championship Group Four qualifier matches against Armenia on September 4 and Andorra on September 8.

### SQUAD

**Goalkeepers:** Alexander Filimonov (Spartak Moscow), Stanislav Cherchesov (Tiro/Aut).

**Defenders:** Yury Drozdov, Alexei Smerdin, Igor Chugainov (all Lokomotiv Moscow), Viktor Onopko (Oviedo/Spa), Dmitry Khlestov (Spartak Moscow), Igor Yanovsky (PSG/Fra).

**Midfielders:** Dmitry Aleshchenko (AS Roma/Ita), Viktor Bulatov, Yegor Titov, Andrei Tikhonov (all Spartak Moscow), Vladimir But (Borussia Dortmund/Ger), Valery Karpen (Celta Vigo/Spa), Sergei Semak (CSKA Moscow), Dmitry Kholokov (PSV Eindhoven/Ned).

**Forwards:** Vladimir Beschastnykh (Racing Santander/Spa), Alexander Panov (Zenit Saint-Petersburg).

## Vicenza bus attacked

VICENZA, Italy, Aug 26 (AFP) - Vicenza were counting the cost of losing an Italian Cup tie on Thursday after angry fans caused thousands of dollars worth of damage by attacking their team bus.

Vicenza, relegated from the Serie A to the Serie B at the end of last season, were thrashed 3-0 by modest Alzano, stretching fans' patience to breaking point.

A group of supporters ambushed the bus as it returned to the Menti stadium here overnight, throwing bottles and rocks which dented the bodywork and smashed windows.

Police had to be called in to form a human cordon around the players as they later left the scene by their cars.

## Christian coming to Paris

PARIS, Aug 26: Brazilian international striker Christian Correa Dionisio has signed a five year deal with French first division side Paris Saint Germain, the French club announced here on Thursday, reports AFP.

Previously with International of Porto Alegre, Christian, a member of the Brazilian squad which won the Copa America, underwent a medical test in the headquarters of the French league leaders on Wednesday and will begin training with his new side next week.

The signing ends a dispute between the player's agents, PSG and his former club.

Rampaging fans attack Vicenza team bus

## UEFA Cup qualifiers

# Favourites go through



PARIS, Aug 27: Europe's little big guns - the teams not good enough for a direct European place but too good for the continent's ultra minnows - duly came through their UEFA Cup qualifying encounters Thursday - but not all went on a goal spree.

Scotland's Celtic - the first British club to lift the Champions Cup back in 1967 - made short work of Welsh part-timers Cwmbran at Parkhead despite an uninspiring performance, wrapping up a 10-0 aggregate victory with a 4-0 canter in their second leg.

Nineteen-year-old substitute Jamie Smith shook the home side out of their lethargy on his debut, smashing home the second from the edge of the area just past the hour.

The teenager's goal doubled an advantage given to them in the ninth minute by Norwegian striker Harald Brattli.

Johan Mjallby made it three and second half substitute Tommy Johnson bagged number four in injury-time.

More Scottish success came with Kilmarnock's heart-stopping success after extra time against Iceland's KR Reykjavik. The Ayrshire outfit were only saved from a 1-0 aggregate defeat against the Icelandic part-timers by Paul Wright's penalty in the last minute of normal time.

That took the contest into extra-time and in the 92nd minute substitute David Bagan curled home a stunning winner to send Kilmarnock into the first round draw proper.

St Johnstone crept through against Finland's VPS Vaas with super sub Miguel Simao hammering both goals in a 2-0 win to send his side into the UEFA Cup proper for the first time in 28 years.

Belgium's Anderlecht, the 1983 UEFA Cup winners, crushed Iceland's Leifur 9-1 on aggregate following a 3-0 win in Thursday's away leg.

Grasshopper of Zurich, coached by Englishman Roy Hodgson, cruised through as they ousted Irish part-timers Bray Wanderers even with star striker Stephane Chapuisat on

the bench.

Leading 4-0 from the first leg in Switzerland a fortnight ago, Grasshopper handed out another four-goal lesson.

They stretched their lead after just six minutes when Abram Tikva finished clinically from 10 yards and went two up after 39 minutes when Patrick De Napoli crossed for Tikva at home but still slid out 3-1 on aggregate.

Yugoslavia's Red Star Belgrade, who like Celtic have known the joy of lifting the European Cup - just nine years ago in their case - struggled before ousting Azerbaijan's FC Neftchi 1-0 on the night and 4-2 on aggregate.

Elsewhere, it was alphabet soup time as various shades of



Dynamo Bucharest striker Niculae Marius (R) faces a sliding tackle from Minault of Mondercange during their UEFA Cup second round qualifier on August 26. The home team won 7-0. —AFP photo

## Serie A kicks off today

# Milan to miss key stars



MILAN, Aug 27: Italian champions AC Milan open their title defence against Lecce on Sunday with a five-star injury-list and a major headache for luckless coach Alberto Zaccheroni, reports AFP.

Zac has been hoping for a flying start to the new Serie A, especially after a worrying series of four consecutive pre-season defeats to Benfica, Juventus, Parma and Real Madrid.

Instead, fate has dealt him an injury list that features skipper Paolo Maldini, goalkeeper Christian Abbiati, playmaker Zvonimir Boban and probably strikers George Weah and/or Andrey Shevchenko.

Weah, who is carrying a knee injury, and new signing Shevchenko, who has a bruised thigh, are both doubtful for the match down south.

Maldini's broken toe should see him replaced by Bruno N'Gotty on the left, while Leonardo and Maurizio Ganz are ready to join Oliver Bierhoff up front in Zaccheroni's attacking trident.

Lecce will be out to prove themselves in front of the home fans and the Milan coach warned his men: "They'll have to be ready. They'll have to realise that now we'll be playing for real."

Neighbours Inter Milan host another newly-promoted club, Verona.

Coach Marcello Lippi will be without injured midfielder Vladimir Jugovic, one of five Inter men whom the coach once trained at Juventus; the others being Roberto Baggio, Christian Vieri, Paulo Sousa and Angelo Peruzzi.

Ronaldo and Vieri should lead the attack, supported by

Sousa, Baggio, the joint top scorer still playing in Italian football, level with Roberto Mancini on 156 goals, will probably sit on the subs' bench.

Given the huge investment by the club and the great expectations of the San Siro crowd, only a win will do for Lippi for his first league match in charge.

Juventus open for business on Sunday night against Serie A newcomers Reggina, also hoping that their strikers can live up to expectations.

Like Ronaldo, Alessandro Del Piero is coming back after a season ruined by injury, although Filippo Inzaghi, shrugging off a kick in the calf, is on great goalscoring form.

Fiorentina are at home to Bari with coach Giovanni Trapattoni having to contend with a questionmark over his star striker Gabriel Batistuta.

The Argentinian skipper sprained knee ligaments at the start of their Champions League qualifier against Widzew Lodz on August 11 and hasn't played since.

Team doctor Marcello Manzulli expects a late decision, saying: "Gabriel is following a programme of gradual recovery. I'm not ruling him out of Sunday's game, but I'm not turning it into a race against time either."

Everything will depend on how the player feels in the days ahead as we increase the workload."

AS Roma are away to perennial strugglers Piacenza, where 40-year-old Pietro Vierchowod will start his 25th season as a professional footballer.

Parma, who need to pick themselves up from their mid-season failure to reach the Champions League, are at home to Cagliari at the Olympic stadium.

Bologna start after a summertime transfusion of Inter Milan blood - with goalkeeper Gianluca Pagliuca, Brazilian midfielders Ze Elias and striker Nicola Ventola all joining from the 1998 UEFA Cup winners.

Everything will depend on how the player feels in the days ahead as we increase the workload."

**Weekend's Serie A fixtures**

**Saturday:** Bologna v Torino (evening kick-off); Sunday: Fiorentina v Bari, Inter Milan v Verona, Lecce v AC Milan, Parma v Parma, Piacenza v AS Roma, Venezia v Udinese, Juventus v Reggina (evening kick-off);

**Monday:** Lazio v Cagliari (evening kick-off)

## Primera Liga preview

# Easy outing await big two



MADRID, Aug 27: The haves and the have-nots come together in Spain this weekend as cash-laden title hopefuls Real Madrid welcome promoted Numancia to their fiery Bernabeu Stadium while champions Barcelona travel to Racing Santander, reports AFP.

Real, who have invested some 50 million dollars in the likes of Nicolas Anelka in an attempt to wrest the title from Barcelona, began their campaign with a hard-fought 2-1 win in Mallorca, taking the points with both their goals coming right at the death.

Yet while that result sets Real up nicely for this weekend, Numancia will be no pushovers having opened with a home win against Valladolid.

Real also have some injury worries, not least an ankle injury to Bosnian striker Elvir Balic.

However, coach John Toshack has already warned fans his raft of new signings will take time to blend and even in the absence of Balic Real should be too hot to handle on their own patch.

Toshack meanwhile praised French striker Nicolas Anelka,

Real's record signing from Arsenal, for adapting well to life in the Spanish capital.

I am surprised that some people have doubts about him. He is real quality," Toshack told Spanish radio.

The future of Atletico's Brazilian midfielder Juninho was again up for discussion Thursday with his father saying the player, in and out of the team since joining from England's Middlesbrough two seasons ago, had not had any offers "either from Middlesbrough or any other club. All I know is he is still an Atletico player."

Coach Claudio Ranieri is thought to be ready to dispense with Juninho's services and recoup some of the 20 million dollars the club splashed out on him.

**Primera Liga matches over the weekend:**

**Saturday:** Real Sociedad v Atletico Madrid

**Sunday:** Rayo Vallecano v Real Mallorca, Celta Vigo v Sevilla, Zaragoza v Oviedo, Racing Santander v Barcelona, Espanyol v Valencia, Alaves v Malaga, Real Betis v Deportivo La Coruna, Valladolid v Athletic Bilbao, Real Madrid v Numancia

## Sport

### Blatter hoping for the best

ZURICH, Switzerland, Aug 27: A threatened boycott of the 2002 World Cup finals by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) will not go ahead, FIFA president Sepp Blatter said here on Thursday, reports AFP.

The head of football's world governing body was speaking following the signing of an agreement between co-hosts South Korea and Japan confirming the organisational details of the first World Cup to be held in Asia and the first to be organised by two countries. The AFC threatened to boycott the final after Asia got only four places at the tournament, including those for joint hosts Japan and South Korea. They were offered a play-off chance against a European nation but continue to demand for five automatic berths.

Blatter said on Thursday: "There will be no Asian boycott. I shall be meeting personally with the AFC President, His Royal Highness Sultan Ahmad Shah, in the next two weeks, just as I have had discussions with the four Asian members of the FIFA Executive Committee and will have clarified the situation before the Executive meets in Las Vegas on October 1-2."

Blatter said that the Organising Association Agreement signed here on Thursday between FIFA and the two national organising committees demonstrated that the 2002 World Cup would be a cohesive event.

"There will be only one World Cup, jointly organised, and not two World Cups organised separately," he said.

Lennart Johansson, chairman of the FIFA World Cup organising committee, said that the agreement was a sign of the growing co-operation between the Japanese and Korean organising committees.

**Keegan keeps faith in Shearer**

LONDON, Aug 27: He may not be good enough to play for Ruud Gullit at English Premiership side Newcastle United, but Alan Shearer is still highly regarded by England coach Kevin Keegan, reports AFP.

Centre-forward Shearer was left out of the Newcastle team by manager Ruud Gullit for Wednesday night's match against Sunderland, which the Magpies lost 2-1.

But 18 hours later the former Southampton and Blackburn ace, England's most successful striker in the 1990s, was named in England's squad for the vital Euro 2000 qualifiers against Luxembourg and Poland next month.

Keegan, who do not play until Monday night because of their Friday date in Monte Carlo with Manchester United in the European Super Cup, are at home to Cagliari at the Olympic stadium.

Coach Sven Goran Eriksson is likely to play Croatia's Alen Boksic in a place in the starting line-up, alongside Chilean ace Marcelo "El Matador" Salas.

The new Italian season first kicks off on Saturday night with two great clubs from yesteryear, Bologna and Torino.

The Turin club are back up in the Serie A in the 50th year since the plane disaster which wiped out the "Grande Torino" side of the 1940s, who won five consecutive league titles.

The stars of the current team are winger Gigi Lentini, the former AC Milan golden boy who cheated death in a car crash, and Marco Ferrante, the Serie B's top scorer last season with 26 goals.

Wednesday night's match will be the start of a new era for the Serie A, with the departure of such stalwarts as Laurent Blanc, Cyril Domnoraz and Titi Camara.

But