

Bangladesh's futile

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their creative works, built from the midfield, went in vain because of poor finishing. Bangladesh also suffered a big blow when midfielder Matur Rahman Munna went out after suffering a head injury in the 29th minute following an aerial clash. He needed six stitches.

The Hungarians were quite cool in the first half playing mostly in the midfield in order to exhaust the home team. With their body advantage, the Hungarians launched their rough and tough soccer in the second session and took the lead in the 48th minute when Sagi placed the ball home after being nicely fed by Gyula Hegeogs from the right (1-0).

Sagi doubled the margin by converting a penalty in the 72nd minute (2-0). Goalkeeper Rakib Mahboob earned the penalty as he illegally brought down Sagi inside the danger area.

After conceding the second goal, coach Samir Shakir made two changes bringing in Anwar and Shahajuddin to replace Parvez and Alfaz. That gave Bangladesh a fresh boost as they went all out from then onwards.

Bangladesh scored their first goal also from a penalty when Kerulet defender Cjaba handled the ball inside the danger area and Oman referee Ali Hassan Abdullah signalled the spot in the 86th minute. Skipper Jewel Rana did the rest with a power packed right footer (1-2) that the goalkeeper judged correctly but in vain.

Inspired by the goal, Bangladesh kept mounting the pressure on the Hungarians and finally came up with the equaliser in the second minute of the three-minute injury time when defender Masood Rana's rainbow shot from the left flank went home kissing the balding head of defender Cjaba (2-2).

Cjaba, involved in both the Bangladesh goals, was later adjudged man-of-the-match due to his overall performance.

Yellor Kovacs, Norret Kovacs, Tamas, Cjaba, Andres (Kerulet FC), Rakib Mahboob and Mizanur Rahman Dawn (Bangladesh)

TEAMS

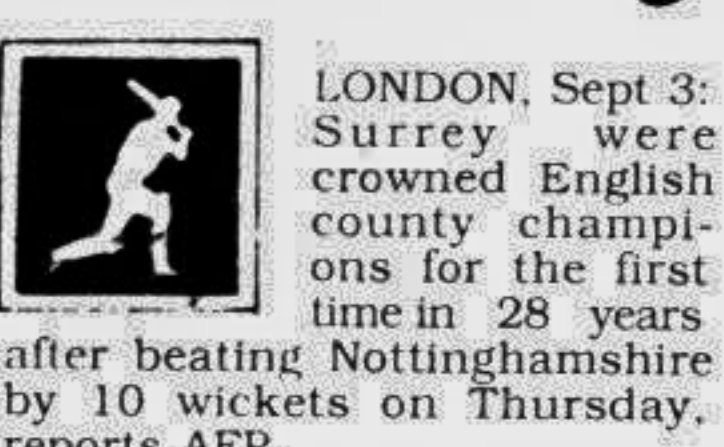
Kerulet FC: Jusfej Liptak, Norret Kovacs, Gyula, Tamas, Cjaba, Tibok Markus, Andres (Witan Leccess), Rubert Morvaj (Lajzlo Sejcessy), Attital Rajay, Attila Sagi (Lajos) and Illes.

Bangladesh: Rakib Mahboob, Hasan Al-Mamun, Jewel Rana, Rajani Kanta Barman, Masood Rana, Matur Rahman (Parvez/Anwar), Iqbal Hossain, Monwar Hossain, Alfaz Ahmed (Shahajuddin), Nazrul and Mizanur Rahman.

Referee: Ali Hassan Abdullah (Oman)

Group A M W D L F A Pts
Kerulet FC 2 1 1 0 5 4 4
Bangladesh 2 1 1 0 3 2 4
Malaysia 2 0 0 2 2 4 0

Surrey reach summit



LONDON, Sept 3: Surrey were crowned English county champions for the first time in 28 years after beating Nottinghamshire by 10 wickets on Thursday, reports AFP.

Surrey's 12th triumph from their 15th championship match of the season ensured that Leicestershire, title-winners for two of the last three years, could not catch them at the summit.

England opener Mark Butcher (81 not out) rushed the county to victory with two days and two matches to spare to underline their summer-long supremacy.

Set to make 150 in a maximum of 27 overs to complete the win by the halfway point of the match, Surrey got the job done by 10 wickets with embarrassing ease in 95 minutes.

To celebrate the achievement, Surrey announced they will serve drinks in the Members Pavilion at the Oval at 1971 prices for their concluding match against Yorkshire — the year of their last title victory.

Surrey's last title came under the captaincy of club President Mickey Stewart, the former England coach and father of Surrey's former Test captain Alec.

Last summer Adam Holoake's side could have won the title in the final match but were thrashed by eventual champions Leicestershire and finished fifth.

Crucial to Surrey's triumph was Pakistan's off spin master Saqlain Mushtaq, whose four for 100 on Thursday took his tally to 58 wickets in the last eight matches.

Surrey chief executive Paul Sheldon said: "This is one of the great moments in the history of Surrey cricket. To have won in such emphatic and dominant style is a tribute to a fabulous side."

called Surrey's "magnificent achievement." They have been the best side in the country by a long way," he said.

"They have been so consistently all season, even when their England players were away at the beginning of the summer for the World Cup and also for the Test series against New Zealand."

He added: "I think Saqlain has made such a massive difference to them because along with Muralitharan (of Lancashire and Sri Lanka), he is the best spinner in the world. He's been helped by a dry summer, but players like those two can spin it in any conditions."

At Taunton: Somerset 203 (G Rose 50, S Thomas 4-40, O Parkin 4-38) v Glamorgan 113 (G Rose 4-14).

At Edgbaston: Gloucestershire 132 (J Snape 57, A Richardson 8-51) v Warwickshire 159-6.

At Old Trafford: Durham 226 (J Daley 66, J Lewis 61, C Schofield 5-68) v Lancashire 352-7 (J Crawley 117 no, G Lloyd 86, N Phillips 4-142).

At Leicestershire: Leicestershire 343 (P Nixon 72, V Wells 68, T Smith 5-87) and 81-4 v Derbyshire 308 (P DeFreitas 105, K Krikken 60, M Kasprowicz 4-70).

At Northampton: Hampshire 357 (W Kendall 98, R Smith 94, C White 55) v Northamptonshire 293-6 (R Bailey 92, R Warren 87 no, D Ripley 58 no).

At Scarborough: Kent 302 (M Ealham 59, M McCague 53, C Silverwood 5-67) v Yorkshire 290-7 (M Vaughan 133 no, R Harden, 64, D Headley 4-83).

At Eastbourne: Sussex (18 pts) bt Essex (4pts) by 8 wickets. Essex 179 (N Hussain 61, R

Cyprus okays Mossad's entry

NICOSIA, Sept 3: Cyprus has agreed to allow armed agents of Israel's Mossad foreign intelligence service to accompany the thousands of fans expected to travel here for their crunch European Championship qualifying tie on Sunday, the Philhellenos newspaper reported Friday, reports AFP.

Seven agents have already arrived aboard a Cyprus Airways flight, the respected daily said quoting "official sources."

Government spokesman Michalis Papapetrou would confirm only that permission had been granted for Israeli police to accompany the team.

"Regarding the presence of Israeli police, the government, now as in the past, has granted temporary permission for a limited number of Israeli police officers for the purpose of guarding the Israeli football team," he told AFP.

"In taking this decision, taken into account was the sensitivity of the Israeli police, especially after the assassination of athletes during Munich," he said.

Sunday is the anniversary of the September 5 hostage taking at the 1972 Olympics — 11 of those seized by Palestinian militants from Black September were killed.

Israel asked for an allocation of 7,000 tickets for the game in the island's second city of Limassol but the Cyprus authorities are expecting as many as 12,000 to make the short trip across the eastern Mediterranean — the largest number of travelling Israeli fans ever according to Tel Aviv press reports.

Germans need to impress

COLOGNE, Germany, Sept 3: German football pride is again on the line this weekend as the national team sets out to prove against Finland that July's Confederations Cup debacle really was just an aberration, reports AFP.

The Finns face a German team that has a lot of face to save after that miserable summer foray to Mexico which brought with it crushing losses at the hands of Brazil and the United States.

World champs in a tight spot

PARIS, Sept 3: France travel to Ukraine for Saturday's crucial Euro 2000 Group Four qualifier with their backs against the wall as the world champions struggle to recapture their form — but they have an ace up their sleeve with the return to action of Zinedine Zidane, reports AFP.

In Zidane's absence - he has not played for France since March and is only just back to fitness following knee surgery - things have gone decidedly pear-shaped for Roger Lemerre's side with a home defeat against Russia at the Stade de France handing the initiative to the Ukrainians.

Defeat in Kiev could see France slide to fourth if Russia and Iceland win their home games with also-rans Armenia and Andorra respectively and even a draw would leave them teetering on the brink with qualification for the finals then likely to come through only the back door via the playoffs.

Ukraine, while they themselves have dropped points in cavalier fashion - notably at home to Iceland - will be the overwhelming favourites to take top spot in the group and a guaranteed slot in the finals next summer if they can merely avoid defeat.

If France play anything like they did in their last official outing against Andorra - officially the worst team in Europe whom they beat with a late Frank Leboeuf penalty - that should not prove beyond the hosts, despite Zidane's return.

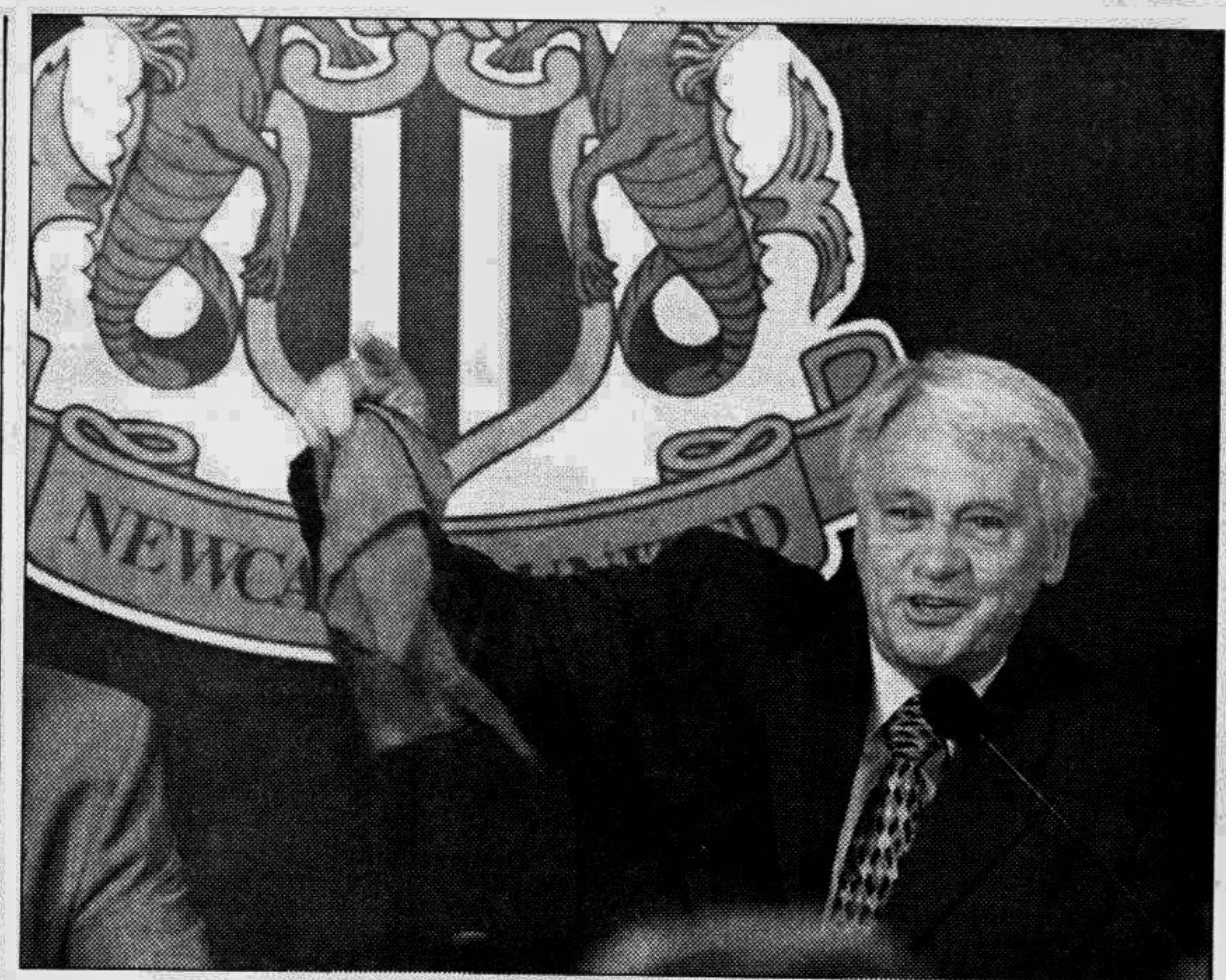
And the world champions are well aware they were desperately lucky to escape with a 0-0 draw with Ukraine at the Stade de France in a game the visitors dominated. Only uncharacteristically poor finishing from Andriy Shevchenko and superb goalkeeping by Fabien Barthez prevented a French defeat.

Ukraine's toughest obstacle after Saturday is an away trip to Russia, now improving after a dreadful start.

Lemerre said Thursday he would be preaching "defensive realism" meaning essentially that France would look first to contain Ukraine's attacking stars such as Shevchenko before going on the attack.

"We have to keep it tight to begin with and because Zidane is back it doesn't mean we are automatically going to take the points."

"We are expecting a very tense encounter and I have to decide on the best team to do the job. But if I have called up the players I have it means I have the utmost confidence in them," Lemerre told AFP.



Former England coach Bobby Robson speaking during a media conference at Newcastle United's base in Saint James Park yesterday. — AFP photo

Robson asks for patience

NEWCASTLE, England, Sept 3 (Reuters/Internet): Former England coach Bobby Robson, the new manager of Newcastle United, said on Friday he faced a massive job to turn the ailing English premier league club around.

But the 66-year-old, replacing Dutchman Ruud Gullit who resigned last week, told a news conference there was no need to panic.

"I have a massive job ahead of me. I thought Barcelona was quite big but I think this has just pipped it," Robson said. "We are joint bottom...the club needs a victory badly."

"It's a great challenge but I'm up for it. I don't underestimate it. I'm not afraid of it. We have a fight on our hands but there's no panic. It's very retrievable."

Newcastle have just one point from six games -- their worst start to a season -- and are second from bottom in the table.

Robson, who comes from the north-east of England and has always dreamed of managing Newcastle, said his priority was to stabilise the club but added he would not head straight into the transfer market.

"We have to look at our present squad. The club has spent a massive sum of money (on players). My job is to ascertain what quality we have...It may be that we don't have to spend. Everybody has a chance, everybody starts afresh."

Robson, who said he would retain Gullit's number two Steve Clarke as his assistant, added: "There are no changes at Newcastle football club until I have had a really good look at the scenario."

England pin hopes on Owen

LONDON, Sept 3: A string of injuries has disrupted England's preparations for the upcoming Euro 2000 qualifiers against Luxembourg and Poland, reports AFP.

win to stand any chance of qualifying for the finals. Keegan's options for Saturday's clash with Luxembourg, who have won just three times in the past 14 years, at Wembley were reduced during the week when Liverpool midfielder Jamie Redknapp and Chelsea

Seaman, defenders Sol Campbell and Rio Ferdinand and winger Darren Anderton all forced to withdraw and midfielder Paul Scholes suspended, Keegan is left with a 20-strong squad for Saturday.

Despite the injury problems elsewhere in his squad, Keegan is spotted for choice as he considers who to play in attack.

With captain Alan Shearer almost certain to be named in the line-up despite poor recent form, Keegan will choose one - possibly two - strikers from Owen, Robbie Fowler, Teddy Sheringham and Kevin Phillips.

Owen seemed to have convinced Keegan in training that he is fit to play after only just returning to action as a late substitute for Liverpool against Arsenal last weekend following a four-month lay-off with a hamstring injury.

The 19-year-old Owen, who made such an impact in the World Cup finals in France last year, said he is desperate to play.

"I feel match-fit and I'm ready to go," said Owen. "I'm available for selection and if the manager picks me I'd have no problems playing 90 minutes both against Luxembourg and Poland."

Ireland to take things easy

DUBLIN, Sept 3: Republic of Ireland boss Mick McCarthy may rest the heroes of the midweek victory over Yugoslavia for Saturday's trip to Croatia that could see the Irish take a giant leap towards the European Championship 2000 Finals in Holland and Belgium, reports AFP.

Both midweek goalscorers Robbie Keane and Mark Kennedy may be rested with McCarthy ready to make changes even though he is already without inspirational captain Roy Keane and Manchester United clubmate Denis Irwin, who are both injured.

McCarthy is worried that 23-year-old Kennedy, who scored with a spectacular strike to seal the 2-1 win over Yugoslavia, is at risk of running out of steam as he would be playing his fourth game in eight days if he were to face the Croats.

McCarthy virtually admits he would settle for a draw in Zagreb - a result which would almost certainly knock Croatia out of contention for the top spot in Group Eight which the Irish currently hold.

"I'm toying with the idea of playing with just one up front and five in midfield," he said.

McCarthy said: "I won't be naming my team too early because I don't want the Croats knowing it straight away. I've got to try to glean any small kind of advantage in these circumstances."

Croatia are set to spring a surprise by naming Everton's Slaven Bilic in the heart of their defence even though he could be on the verge of quitting the game after not playing club football for nearly a year and then a medical problem ruining his chance of a comeback move to West Ham last month.

Arsenal's new 3.5 million pounds striker Davor Suker, the top scorer at last year's World Cup finals, leads Croatia's attack having missed the 2-0 defeat in Dublin a year ago through injury.

Gilgespie might miss Euro clash

BELFAST, Sept 3: Northern Ireland manager Lawrie McMenemy is expected to stick with the side that ran France so close last month for Saturday's Euro 2000 qualifier against Turkey at Windsor Park, reports AFP.

McMenemy has no serious injury worries and is almost certain to keep faith with the team that lost 1-0 in a tight match against the World Cup winners.

That means Blackburn Rovers winger Keith Gilgespie, who is regarded as the team's most talented player, is set to start on the bench as Birmingham's Jon McCarthy continues on the right wing.

Northern Ireland's hopes of qualifying are all but extinct as they trail joint group leaders Turkey and Germany by six points with three games remaining.

Turkey, who are level with Germany on 12 points at the top of Group Five, could be without star striker Hakan Sukur, dubbed the Bull of the Bosphorus.

Giggs all praise for Hughes

Luxemburgo to Juninho's aid

MIDDLESBROUGH, England, Sept 3 (AFP/Internet): Brazilian national coach Wanderley Luxemburgo sought to rescue midfielder Juninho's move to English Premier League side Middlesbrough on Thursday saying that he would be selecting the midfielder in the coming months.

Luxemburgo, who said he had not selected the inspirational playmaker since he took over last July because he had been recovering from injury, said he had written to English football's ruling body the Football Association (FA) explaining that Juninho was an important part of his team.

The Brazilian coach's move came only hours after Middlesbrough's bid to re-sign Juninho on loan from Atletico Madrid came under threat after British government officials indicated that his application for a work permit was almost certain to be rejected on the grounds he had not played in 75 percent of Brazil's matches in the past two years.

The English Premier League club announced on Wednesday that they had signed the 26-year-old on a short-term contract until June next year with a

view to offering him an extended deal at a later date.

But the club has been told that the player does not satisfy work permit criteria.

The club will now have to persuade an appeals panel that the player should be allowed special dispensation to return to the club.

The criteria for qualification for non-European Community players are straightforward: The country of origin must be ranked in the top 70 and the player must have played in 75 percent of their competitive international matches during the two years before the date of the application.

While Brazil qualify easily in the rankings table, Juninho's injuries and lack of club football mean that he is nowhere near meeting the second requirement and he will have to hope that he can be treated as a special case.

he was looking forward to put behind his unhappy days at Atletico and start regaining confidence on the pitch.

"I am going to Middlesbrough determined to triumph," after my injury problems, I needed the support of my club when I returned to playing, I didn't get it.

"I'll have my confidence when I'm back playing in England. That's why I'm going to be able to play."

Juninho, who was not used by new Atletico coach Claudio Ranieri in the first two games of the Spanish season left it was in the best interest of the club that he was leaving.

"They were obviously looking for players with different abilities," Juninho said. "They have their system and they just don't suit me."



Juninho, the out of favour former Atletico Madrid playmaker, smiles during a farewell press conference at Atletico's training camp at Majadahonda on September 2. Juninho is expected to play in the English Premiership for Middlesbrough. — AFP photo