

Villa doesn't want Stan back

BIRMINGHAM, England, Sept 7: Aston Villa manager John Gregory has warned troubled striker Stan Collymore he must seal a permanent move to First Division side Fulham, where he is currently playing on loan, reports AFP.

Speculation is growing that Fulham might decide to send the 28-year-old former England international striker back to Villa Park when his three-month loan deal ends on October 19.

However the Villa boss made it clear Tuesday that, for the sake of his career, Collymore needs to make the move permanent.

"This might be his last chance of getting himself a club and he has to make them keen to sign him," said Gregory.

"I have a feeling that Fulham might want to buy him."

"He would be better off staying there than coming back to us."

"He was training with the reserves before he went there and he would go back to that if he returned."

Villa paid a club record 7 million pounds (£11.2 million dollars) to sign Collymore from Liverpool in the summer of 1997. But a combination of poor form and much-publicised problems in his private life over the past two years has seen his value plummet.

Soccercide!

TBILISI, Sept 7: A security man was killed when fire nearly destroyed the main soccer stadium in Kutaisi, Georgia's second largest city, a senior Torpedo Kutaisi official said on Monday, reports Reuters.

The fire, which broke out on Sunday morning, spread so quickly that by the time the firefighters arrived the blaze had already destroyed the club house, locker rooms and part of the wooden stands in the 8,000-seat stadium, club director Murad Kutateladze told Reuters.

"A security man, who apparently was asleep when the fire started, was found burned to death."

Kutateladze said that Torpedo would probably be forced to move their UEFA Cup first round match against AEK Athens on September 16 to Tbilisi.

However, Torpedo Kutaisi president Mikhail Korkia insisted his club will repair the stadium in time for the UEFA Cup tie.

"I can assure you, we'll do our best to restore our stadium for that game. I personally guarantee it," said Korkia, who won 1972 Olympic basketball gold with the Soviet Union.

It was the second misfortune for the Georgian Cup holders in the last two weeks.

Armed gunmen raided their club house during a UEFA Cup qualifier on August 26, stealing a video, a television set and sets of players' kits.

The police told us that the fire looked very suspicious," Kutateladze said. "They are investigating if the latest incident had anything to do with the previous robbery."

Vazquez new Mallorca coach

MADRID, Sept 7: Spaniard Fernando Vazquez has replaced Argentinian Carlos Gomez as coach of last season's Cup Winners Cup finalists Real Mallorca, it was announced on Monday, reports AFP.

The 45-year-old Vazquez, former coach of Spanish sides Compostella and Oviedo, has signed a contract with the Spanish First Division side until next June, with the option of an additional year.

The Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) on Thursday refused to allow Gomez to coach Mallorca - dealing another blow to their appalling start to the season.

In a statement the Federation supported the Spanish Coaches' Commission which had said that Gomez, with 18 months experience of being in charge of a club and not the three years required by the Spanish authorities in order for a foreign coach to be given a licence.

The Commission had rejected Mallorca's claim that Gomez's tenure at Ferrocaril and Lanus qualified him for the post saying that the Argentinian had been an assistant coach and not the chief.

Gomez, who had had to sit on the sidelines watching Mallorca lose their first two League matches and get knocked out of the Champions League preliminary round by unheralded Norwegian side Molde, said he was devastated by the decision.

Chance to be on camera

GLASGOW, Sept 7: More than 23,000 supporters sat for six hours in Scotland's national stadium on Sunday for the ultimate fantasy football match, reports Reuters.

The start-struck fans turned up at Hampden Park simply in the hope of making it into the cinema screen for a split-second as part of a new film featuring Oscar winner Robert Duvall and former Scotland striker Ally McCoist.

The producers of The Cup Final, a rags-to-riches tale about a football team from a small Scottish village, believe that Hampden's cast of thousands will help provide the authenticity which has plagued so many of football's attempts to score on the big screen.

Rob Carliner, producer of the 7.5 million pound (£12.02 million dollars) film, said, "We wanted to capture the spirit of the famous Hampden roar."

Romania just a whisker away Work cut out for France

PARIS, Sept 7: On a night of potentially decisive Euro 2000 qualifiers, arguably the most mouthwatering match is the Group Seven meeting where Romania, inspired by the ageing Maradona of the Carpathians' Gheorghe Hagi, host Portugal - a win for the Romanians would wrap up the group and even a draw



GEORGHE HAGI

should suffice as their last match is in Liechtenstein. The Portuguese, who trail Romania by a point, will only have themselves to blame as what should have been a certain three points in Azerbaijan on Saturday ended in the European giants grabbing an injury-time draw and allowed Romania to take back the initiative.

Elsewhere in Group Four World Cup winners France, who were unimpressive in the 0-0 draw against Ukraine, must win in Armenia to keep in touch with Ukraine, who lead the French by a point and travel to Iceland, and second-placed Russia, who are away at Andorra.

The French, who have really struggled in their last three group matches losing 3-2 to Russia at home, beating Andorra 1-0 thanks to a late penalty and the scoreless draw with the Ukraine, will not have it easy in Armenia - as their hosts showed when holding Ukraine 0-0 earlier in the campaign.

It is scoring that is proving the World Champions Achilles heel and a tally out of sorts Nicolas Anelka could well be dropped for the match after what even the normally self-assured 20-year-old admitted was a poor performance on Saturday.

French captain Didier Deschamps, who has proved a great buy for English Premiership side Chelsea, admitted that Anelka, who has not scored for the national side since a marvellous double against England in February, was perhaps not in the right frame of mind to lead the French forward line.

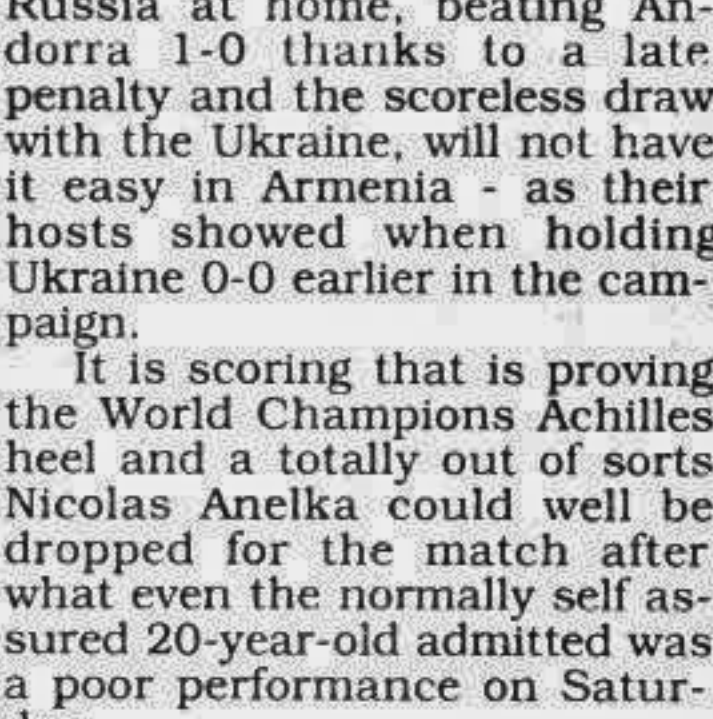
"He's still only 20-years-old and needs to mature more," Deschamps said.

"He isn't in very good form at the moment and the element of surprise he had when he first broke through as an international has worn off plus now he's usually shadowed by two defenders," he added.

Ironically two of the players currently under fire from Anelka his Real Madrid team-

mates Raul and Fernando Morientes should have no problems in shooting past Cyprus in their Group Six match despite the Cypriots having cost them three points and then coach Javier Clemente his job last September.

The duo, who have been accused by the Frenchman of deliberately not passing to him just as he accused Dennis



NICOLAS ANELKA

Bergkamp and Marc Overmars of doing the same when he was at Arsenal, should have too much firepower for the Cypriots and assure their side of winning the group.

Polish coach Jozef Ziejewski started the psychological war ahead of his side's crucial Euro 2000 Group Five qualifier with England on Wednesday saying whichever side lost the match would leave their coach without a job, reports AFP.

The Poles, who are level on points with England but trail them because they lost 3-1 at Wembley, must garner at least a point from the match and hope to grab a draw against group winners Sweden away from home next month if they are to enter November's runners-up play-offs while England also need at least a point as it is their last match.

Wojcik was reported as saying "It could be 1973 all over again" - a reference to the Poles' 1-1 draw at Wembley which stopped England from qualifying for the 1973 World Cup finals.

He also tried to place more pressure onto Keegan ahead of Wednesday's European Championship qualifier.

"It's not just about England and Poland. It's about Keegan and me - and whoever loses the game will lose their job."

But Keegan, who took over the England post last year after Glenn Hoddle was sacked for making ill advised comments about the handicapped, declined to get involved.

"Every coach has the right to set his team up and say the things he wants to say," Keegan said.

In the same way I've got the chance to tell the world that my team is really well prepared and everything has gone well."

"I don't blame anyone for doing that. We all have our own concerns. I haven't talked too much about the Poles because I am concerned with managing England and getting the best out of my players."

"But I suppose by late on Wednesday night everything will be answered and all that we thought and said will not mean as much or will mean more depending on the result."

Polish coach psyches up Keegan

WARSAW, Sept 7: Polish coach Jozef Ziejewski started the psychological war ahead of his side's crucial Euro 2000 Group Five qualifier with England on Wednesday saying whichever side lost the match would leave their coach without a job, reports AFP.

The Poles, who are level on points with England but trail them because they lost 3-1 at Wembley, must garner at least a point from the match and hope to grab a draw against group winners Sweden away from home next month if they are to enter November's runners-up play-offs while England also need at least a point as it is their last match.

Wojcik was reported as saying "It could be 1973 all over again" - a reference to the Poles' 1-1 draw at Wembley which stopped England from qualifying for the 1973 World Cup finals.

He also tried to place more pressure onto Keegan ahead of Wednesday's European Championship qualifier.

"It's not just about England and Poland. It's about Keegan and me - and whoever loses the game will lose their job."

But Keegan, who took over the England post last year after Glenn Hoddle was sacked for making ill advised comments about the handicapped, declined to get involved.

"Every coach has the right to set his team up and say the things he wants to say," Keegan said.

In the same way I've got the chance to tell the world that my team is really well prepared and everything has gone well."

"I don't blame anyone for doing that. We all have our own concerns. I haven't talked too much about the Poles because I am concerned with managing England and getting the best out of my players."

"But I suppose by late on Wednesday night everything will be answered and all that we thought and said will not mean as much or will mean more depending on the result."

'New Maradona' signs for Boro

LONDON, Sept 7: English Premier League club Middlesbrough have signed Argentine under-18 international midfielder Carlos Arturo Marinelli - described as the "New Maradona" - for 1.5 million pounds (£2.4 million dollars), reports Reuters.

Manager Bryan Robson clinched the capture of Boca Juniors' outstanding prospect with a visit to Buenos Aires. Marinelli has signed a five-year contract.

He will arrive in England this week for training with Middlesbrough's array of internationals including Paul Gascoigne and Paul Ince (England), Hamilton Ricard (Colombia) and Mark Schwarzer (Australia).

Robson said: "The boy has huge potential. Everyone who has seen him agreed he is one of the best players of his age they have ever seen. The talks went well and Carlos was keen to join us."

Marinelli's signing is compensation for Middlesbrough after French international Ibrahim Ba decided against a move from AC Milan.

England undecided upfront

WARSAW, Sept 7: England coach Kevin Keegan faces one pressing selection headache ahead of Wednesday's crucial Euro 2000 Group Five match with Poland - who to play up front, reports AFP.

Keegan, whose selection policy during his brief reign has drawn heavy criticism, must choose two from the three of captain Alan Shearer, whose

which is their last qualifying match, if they are to keep alive their hopes of finishing as runners-up and make the second placed play-offs - Poland could still grab the spot if they draw here and at group winners Sweden in October.

However, Keegan looks certain to stick by Shearer, who he says he would willingly pay 15 million pounds for now just as he did when he was Newcastle manager, and pick one of the two Liverpool stars to accompany him even though the Owen-Shearer partnership failed to sparkle in last year's World Cup finals.

Fowler, who has been in inspiring form for Liverpool, played well on Saturday doing far more work than Shearer while Owen, who had just three minutes of Premiership football behind him following a four month lay-off with a hamstring injury, came on and scored the goal of the match at the end of the second-half.

"Michael's goal was tremendous. I didn't realise what a goal it was until I saw it on TV on Saturday night. All I wanted was a goal, any goal for the fans so a special one like that was a bonus," he said.

"He's a great player. I've been watching him in training and even though he has hardly played this season because of his hamstring injury, he doesn't look rusty - he looks ready."

"When you are looking for a front pairing, you put some in and light the touchpaper and they go off like a crackerjack."

Then you can try and be clever and say 'I knew it would work'. But others need time."

"I like the combination of Alan Shearer and Robbie Fowler. Robbie didn't score but he played a part in some of the other goals."

Robbie Fowler

hat-trick against whipping boys Luxembourg on Saturday failed to hide the rapid decline in his ability, and the potentially more impressive duo of Robbie Fowler and Michael Owen.

England have to take at least a point from the encounter,

England undecided upfront

WARSAW, Sept 7: England coach Kevin Keegan faces one pressing selection headache ahead of Wednesday's crucial Euro 2000 Group Five match with Poland - who to play up front, reports AFP.

Keegan, whose selection policy during his brief reign has drawn heavy criticism, must choose two from the three of captain Alan Shearer, whose

which is their last qualifying match, if they are to keep alive their hopes of finishing as runners-up and make the second placed play-offs - Poland could still grab the spot if they draw here and at group winners Sweden in October.

However, Keegan looks certain to stick by Shearer, who he says he would willingly pay 15 million pounds for now just as he did when he was Newcastle manager, and pick one of the two Liverpool stars to accompany him even though the Owen-Shearer partnership failed to sparkle in last year's World Cup finals.

Fowler, who has been in inspiring form for Liverpool, played well on Saturday doing far more work than Shearer while Owen, who had just three minutes of Premiership football behind him following a four month lay-off with a hamstring injury, came on and scored the goal of the match at the end of the second-half.

"Michael's goal was tremendous. I didn't realise what a goal it was until I saw it on TV on Saturday night. All I wanted was a goal, any goal for the fans so a special one like that was a bonus," he said.

"He's a great player. I've been watching him in training and even though he has hardly played this season because of his hamstring injury, he doesn't look rusty - he looks ready."

"When you are looking for a front pairing, you put some in and light the touchpaper and they go off like a crackerjack."

Then you can try and be clever and say 'I knew it would work'. But others need time."

"I like the combination of Alan Shearer and Robbie Fowler. Robbie didn't score but he played a part in some of the other goals."

Robbie Fowler

hat-trick against whipping boys Luxembourg on Saturday failed to hide the rapid decline in his ability, and the potentially more impressive duo of Robbie Fowler and Michael Owen.

England have to take at least a point from the encounter,

England undecided upfront

WARSAW, Sept 7: England coach Kevin Keegan faces one pressing selection headache ahead of Wednesday's crucial Euro 2000 Group Five match with Poland - who to play up front, reports AFP.

Keegan, whose selection policy during his brief reign has drawn heavy criticism, must choose two from the three of captain Alan Shearer, whose

which is their last qualifying match, if they are to keep alive their hopes of finishing as runners-up and make the second placed play-offs - Poland could still grab the spot if they draw here and at group winners Sweden in October.

However, Keegan looks certain to stick by Shearer, who he says he would willingly pay 15 million pounds for now just as he did when he was Newcastle manager, and pick one of the two Liverpool stars to accompany him even though the Owen-Shearer partnership failed to sparkle in last year's World Cup finals.

Fowler, who has been in inspiring form for Liverpool, played well on Saturday doing far more work than Shearer while Owen, who had just three minutes of Premiership football behind him following a four month lay-off with a hamstring injury, came on and scored the goal of the match at the end of the second-half.

"Michael's goal was tremendous. I didn't realise what a goal it was until I saw it on TV on Saturday night. All I wanted was a goal, any goal for the fans so a special one like that was a bonus," he said.

"He's a great player. I've been watching him in training and even though he has hardly played this season because of his hamstring injury, he doesn't look rusty - he looks ready."

"When you are looking for a front pairing, you put some in and light the touchpaper and they go off like a crackerjack."

Then you can try and be clever and say 'I knew it would work'. But others need time."

"I like the combination of Alan Shearer and Robbie Fowler. Robbie didn't score but he played a part in some of the other goals."

Robbie Fowler

hat-trick against whipping boys Luxembourg on Saturday failed to hide the rapid decline in his ability, and the potentially more impressive duo of Robbie Fowler and Michael Owen.

England have to take at least a point from the encounter,

England undecided upfront

WARSAW, Sept 7: England coach Kevin Keegan faces one pressing selection headache ahead of Wednesday's crucial Euro 2000 Group Five match with Poland - who to play up front, reports AFP.

Keegan, whose selection policy during his brief reign has drawn heavy criticism, must choose two from the three of captain Alan Shearer, whose

which is their last qualifying match, if they are to keep alive their hopes of finishing as runners-up and make the second placed play-offs - Poland could still grab the spot if they draw here and at group winners Sweden in October.

However, Keegan looks certain to stick by Shearer, who he says he would willingly pay 15 million pounds for now just as he did when he was Newcastle manager, and pick one of the two Liverpool stars to accompany him even though the Owen-Shearer partnership failed to sparkle in last year's World Cup finals.

Fowler, who has been in inspiring form for Liverpool, played well on Saturday doing far more work than Shearer while Owen, who had just three minutes of Premiership football behind him following a four month lay-off with a hamstring injury, came on and scored the goal of the match at the end of the second-half.

"Michael's goal was tremendous. I didn't realise what a goal it was until I saw it on TV on Saturday night. All I wanted was a goal, any goal for the fans so a special one like that was a bonus," he said.

"He's a great player. I've been watching him in training and even though he has hardly played this season because of his hamstring injury, he doesn't look rusty - he looks ready."

"When you are looking for a front pairing, you put some in and light the touchpaper and they go off like a crackerjack."

Then you can try and be clever and say 'I knew it would work'. But others need time."

"I like the combination of Alan Shearer and Robbie Fowler. Robbie didn't score but he played a part in some of the other goals."

Robbie Fowler

hat-trick against whipping boys Luxembourg on Saturday failed to hide the rapid decline in his ability, and the potentially more impressive duo of Robbie Fowler and Michael Owen.

England have to take at least a point from the encounter,

Not much at stake for Italy

NAPLES, Italy, Sept 7: Whether or not Christian Vieri is at the helm, Italy should cruise into the Euro 2000 finals here on Wednesday night after facing Group 1 rivals Denmark, reports AFP.

Vieri pulled out of training with a tweaked muscle on Monday, but team officials claimed that it wouldn't stop their World Cup star from turning out for the victory march against the Danes.

Vieri gave coach Dino Zoff food for thought when the burly striker missed all but the first few minutes of training. He completed a few laps of the pitch at Italy's training ground here before heading back into the locker-room.

Zoff said: "Christian felt a small pain at the start of training and we preferred not to take any chances. I believe, and I hope, that it's nothing serious, so I haven't even considered the idea of replacing him."

Unbeaten so far, Italy have done so well that they can even afford to lose 1-0, let alone draw, here at Diego Maradona's old San Paolo stadium. Even if they then went on to lose against Belarus.

However, their ever-cautious coach Zoff has no desire to waste time poring over UEFA regulations with a pocket calculator.

"Those kind of sums are of no interest to me whatsoever," said Zoff. "We will be playing to get the best possible result we can."

To prove that, Zoff will be fielding the two most prolific strikers currently in Italian football, Vieri and his best mate



FILIPPO INZAGHI

off the pitch, Filippo Inzaghi of Juventus.

Friends since their Under-21 days together, and now paired in the absence of striker Alessandro Del Piero, Zoff

hopes their natural understanding will translate into goals on Wednesday.

Vieri blasted a hat-trick on his Inter Milan debut 10 days ago, while "Pippo" Inzaghi scored half of the 14 goals in Juventus' successful intertoto campaign, and another in their opening league match.

"Pippo and I have never let Zoff down," said Vieri, who scored five times in his country's ill-fated run at France 98. "And if Italy are just one step away from qualifying, then it's also down to our goals."

Though Zoff would obviously like to win, he is also ready to settle for a draw, judging by the kind of muscle he is planning to put in the middle of the park: Parma hit-man Dino Baggio returns to partner Demetrio Albertini.

Eusebio Di Francesco and Diego Fuser will man the flanks, while injured skipper Paolo Maldini makes way for Giuseppe Pancaro in defence, alongside Fabio Cannavaro, Alessandro Nesta and Christian Panucci.

Parma's Gianluigi Buffon will be between the posts.

Italy reached the 1998 World Cup by winning a play-off against Russia two years ago in this same stadium, where Cannavaro was once a ball-boy. On Wednesday night, there should be a second round of celebrations.

Dugarry's fate to be decided soon



CHRISTOPHE DUGARRY

PARIS, Sept 7: The fate of France's World Cup winning striker Christophe Dugarry, who tested positive for the banned sero androline in April, will be decided by the French Football Federation (FFF) next week, his lawyers confirmed on Monday, reports AFP.

The Marseille player will appear before a special sitting of the FFF anti-doping commission on September 16.

The initial hearing had been set for September 7 but was pushed back at the request of Dugarry's lawyers who wanted additional time to produce evidence from French team doctor Jean-Marcel Ferrer.

According to Dr. Ferrer the substance nandrolone can be present in creams used by team physiotherapists, as well as samples provided by laboratories which do not specify their contents.

Dugarry, who has denied taking banned substances, would face a six-month ban from football if the result is confirmed.

The former Bordeaux, AC Milan and Barcelona forward said: "I have been a professional for 10 years. If I had been doped I would have been on other occasions (the player has previously tested negative on 20 occasions)."

Serie A coaches slam fakers

ROME, Sept 7: Italian coaches and officials called Tuesday for a crackdown on cheats who are ruining the Serie A every weekend by diving in the penalty area or feigning injury.

Bari coach Eugenio Fascetti led the charge at a meeting here by calling for the culprits to be sent off instead of given a yellow card, as the rules currently stand.

The talks started off with a FIFA circular which obliges referees to dismiss any goalkeeper who trips an opponent on his way to goal.

But Fascetti broke in to say: "The problem isn't to do with

red cards for goalkeepers. The real emergency we are facing is with players faking things."

"The battle which we should all be waging now is to make it a red card offence for anyone who tries to be clever by taking a dive."

"These are the people who are ruining football," Fascetti was quickly backed by Lazio's keeper Luca Marchegiani, who said: "The fight against players who fake things could be made easier."

"Because let's be honest, they are the ones who cause all the unpleasant situations which end up involving us goalkeepers as well. And giving them a red card could be a good deterrent."

Other coaches were less optimistic, believing that cheating was now endemic to soccer in Italy.

Verona's Claudio Prandelli said: "Faking is part of the game. People have been talking about changing football for the last 25 years. But tendencies like these have put down roots."

Inter's Marcello Lippi, who made world champions out of Juventus before resigning last February, said: "I've often been to schools to talk about football. And I found kids of 10 who admitted that if they scored a goal with their hands, they certainly wouldn't own up to the teachers."

"When I played," said the former defender of the 1970s, "I didn't often end up in the opposing penalty area. But when I did, the idea of diving would never have entered my mind."

"It's all changed now and partly because of the new rules. It's created the new position of a sliding-striker."

Another target at Monday's meeting was the players who hit the ground writhing and crying out in agony, apparently on the point of death, only to hop up to their feet a minute later.

AC Milan coach Fabio Capello said: "It's now got to the point where some players are specialising. There are some who take a dive and then scream, just to make an impression on the referee."

"We need to set up a commission that can use TV evidence to suspend players like these."

His anger was echoed by players union boss Sergio Campana, who said: "It's disgusting to see off-the-ball incidents where one player gets just a flick from an opponent - and then drops to the ground as if he'd been struck by lightning."

But pointing the finger, he added: "I'm the first to want to change the (sporting) culture of this country. But are you coaches really willing to help?"

Ireland confident of full points

VALETTA, Sept 7: Republic of Ireland coach Mick McCarthy stood by his decision to rest his first-choice strikers in Saturday's 1-0 defeat by Croatia and said that his tactics would pay off here on Wednesday against minnows Malta, reports AFP.

The former Republic of Ireland captain, who led the side to the 1990 World Cup quarter-finals, said that he had hoped for at least six points from the three Group Eight matches in the last week.

With a win against Yugoslavia last Wednesday already in the bag which briefly lifted the Irish to the top of the table, another three points against Malta should fulfil that promise and revive their challenge with just an away match in Macedonia to come while Yugoslavia, who lost 2-1 in

Dublin, face a quick return match with Macedonia, whom they beat 3-1 on Sunday in Belgrade - another three points for them would put all the pressure back on the Croatians - currently heading the group - and leave their head to head in Zagreb on October 10 as even more of a grudge match than usual.

The major worries for McCarthy is a lengthy injury list and the searing heat which during the day reaches 94 degrees.

Stand-in captain Steve Staunton is one of four Republic of Ireland players battling for fitness along with centre-backs Kenny Cunningham (hip), Gary Breen (groin) and midfielder Mark Kinsella (knee) - veterans Roy Keane and Denis Irwin were already out injured following the Yugoslavia match.

"It is no coincidence that all