

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 Kutatadze told Reuters.

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

Kutatadze 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," Kutatadze 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 had only 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 Ferrocarril 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 Norwegians 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 on to the cinema screen for a split-second 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.

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 totally 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 became 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 problem 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

Wojciech Szczesny of the same, should have no problem 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 Poles, who are level on points with England but trail them because they lost 3-1 at Wembley, must gather 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.

Wojciech Szczesny 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."

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 already 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 Cannavaro, 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.

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

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.

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