

### Newcastle celebrate with bond offer

LONDON, Sept 21: Newcastle United followed up its first Premiership win of the season on Monday with another first: a multimillion-pound loan underwritten by future ticket sales, to finance the expansion of its stadium, reports AFP.

The club celebrated Sunday's 8-0 win over Sheffield Wednesday with a bond issue to the tune of 55 million pounds (85.8 million euros, 89 million dollars) which its advisers said was the first to be securitised by the receipts from future turnstile takings.

Newcastle will use the funds to overhaul its home ground at St James Park in the heart of the city, boosting capacity from 26,000 to 51,000 by August next year. It will pay back the 7.43-percent bond in annual instalments from 2001 to 2016 using the revenues drummed up from the additional ticket sales.

Revenues from broadcasting rights, sponsorship and merchandising are not included, the club said in a statement.

"We are very pleased to have achieved a highly cost effective method of refinancing our stadium expansion scheme," said club chief operating officer Les Wheatley. "The expansion is on schedule and we expect to start the 2000/2001 season in a magnificent new 51,000 seater stadium that will be among the very best in Europe."

The move is the latest step in the topsy-turvy fortunes of northeast England's best supported club.

### Dugarry to undergo surgery

MARSEILLE, France, Sept 21: Marseille striker Christophe Dugarry is to undergo an operation on a recurring knee problem on Wednesday, his club announced here on Monday, reports AFP.

The French World Cup winning striker, who has been suffering with continuing knee problems for several weeks, is expected to be out of action for at least a month.

Dugarry still has a three-month suspension in the Champions League after being banned by European football governing body UEFA for striking a player during the UEFA semi-final against Bologna on April 20.

### SA coach blames Benni's manager

JOHANNESBURG, Sept 21: South Africa coach Trott Moloto claims the manager of Spain-blamed Benni McCarthy was behind his shock retirement from international football, reports AFP.

"I was surprised to learn that Benni had decided to quit. This is not Benni speaking. There is a master behind these utterances," Moloto told the Sowetan newspaper.

Moloto did not name the "master" but team manager Zola Duniwa blamed Rob Moore, a football official and assistant manager from Cape Town who manages Celta Vigo striker McCarthy.

"Rob made it clear last week he was going to advise Benni to retire from international football. I told him that that would be diabolical, but he went ahead," Duniwa said.

Moore denied the allegations. "If Benni scored an own goal, Safa would blame me. He has had four weeks break in 28 months and is facing burn out unless he cuts back on international appearances," he said.

Announcing his retirement after South Africa beat Saudi Arabia 1-0 on Saturday in the first leg of the Afro-Asian Nations Cup, Benni said he was tired of being torn between club and country.

### Caniggia debuts for Atalanta

BERGAMO, Italy, Sept 21: Former Argentina international Claudio Caniggia made his league debut for Atalanta Bergamo last night after moving from Boca Juniors in the close season, reports Reuters.

Caniggia, veteran of two World Cups and the former striking partner of Diego Maradona, came on as a 71st-minute substitute in Atalanta's 1-0 victory over Maradona's old club Napoli in the Serie B championship.

The long-haired Argentine joined Atalanta in August on a one-year contract after two difficult seasons at Boca in which he struggled with injury and poor form.

He has an option for a second year and a reported annual salary of around 3.0 billion lire (1.61 million dollars).

Caniggia first played for Atalanta between 1989 and 1992, making 85 appearances and scoring 26 goals.

### Mijac replaces Ivic at Standard Liege

LIEGE, Belgium, Sept 21: Croatia's Zeljko Mijac has been appointed temporary coach of Belgian first division side Standard Liege in place of Tomislav Ivic following a disastrous start to the season, reports AFP.

The atmosphere with the players became very tense, the said Ivic, who remained at the club as technical advisor.

The club has had a disastrous start to the season, with only four points from six matches, leaving them 11 points adrift from league leaders Lierse.

# MU's star cast due for return

PARIS, Sept 21: European champions Manchester United head for Sturmgraz for Wednesday's Champions League clash hoping to see Irish midfielder Roy Keane give them the extra bite missing Saturday against Wimbledon, reports AFP.

Just as opening Group D opponents Croatia Zagreb before them a week ago, the Dons, pinched a point at Old Trafford and United are keen to register a win against the Austrian champions which would set them up nicely for coming encounters with Marseille of France.

As well as Keane, mercurial England midfielder David Beckham and striker Andy Cole should also return after starting Saturday's game on the bench with minor knocks.

But a blow is the absence of Welsh winger Ryan Giggs, who faces six weeks out with hamstring trouble - the injury Republic of Ireland skipper Keane has just recovered from.

Coach Sir Alex Ferguson said: "If Roy comes through then we will have quite a bit of experience in centre midfield with Scholes and Keane, and hopefully David Beckham will also be all right."

A question mark against United is their choice of goalkeeper with Dutchman Raimond van der Gouw and Mark Bosnich vying for the nod, given that Italian new signing Massimo Taibi is ineligible.

Another new signing, Frenchman Mikael Silvestre, is likewise ineligible so Denis Irwin will return to left back with Phil Neville switching to the right side of defence. Ferguson is waiting on Nicky Butt's fitness as the youngster gets

over a groin injury.

In the other match in the group, Marseille, having a poor time of it in the French league after just missing out on the title last May, travel to Ossi Ardiles' Croatia Zagreb, who are anxious to build on the platform of their battling draw at Old Trafford. The French outfit began with a solid if unspectacular 2-0 home win over Graz.

Arsenal, who started off with an encouraging draw at Fiorentina, must impose themselves in Group B against Alk Solna of Sweden at Wembley.

Arsene Wenger's Gunners might have had one foot already in the second phase had Nigerian star Kanu not missed a late spotkick in Florence.

Wenger may opt to play French starlet Thierry Henry in Kanu's place to start with after Henry's stunning winner at Southampton as Kanu's confidence appears to have taken a knock.

"He is not the same player after that penalty. You can see he has lost a lot of confidence," said Wenger after his side's narrow win at the Dell.

Dennis Bergkamp will be raring to make the most of a home match after enduring a 3,000km return trip by road to Italy due to his fear of flying.

Waiting in the wings is vastly experienced Croatian forward Davor Suker.

Group B's other match sees Barcelona, buoyed by their narrow win over Fiorentina in Stockholm, host Fiorentina, a match the Italians in particular cannot afford to lose.

Barca's Louis Van Gaal is under pressure to deliver a win which would go some way towards sealing qualification for the second stage after poor European campaigns in recent years. The Catalan club also have to bounce back after an

embarrassing defeat - their first of the season - at modest Alaves on Saturday.

Wednesday's other matchups come in Group A, where surprise packets Maribor of Slovenia take on Bayer Leverkusen of Germany and Lazio host Dynamo Kyiv, and Group C, where 1997 champions Borussia Dortmund are at home to Boavista of Portugal while Norway's Rosenborg host Dutch outfit Feyenoord.

Maribor, who knocked out French 'nouveau riche' side Lyon in the qualifiers, stunned last year's semi-finalists Kyiv by winning in Ukraine in their opening group match.

Kyiv now have to be bold and go for three points at Lazio to recover lost ground, while fully aware that a second defeat would probably prove fatal.

Maribor head coach Bojan Prsnikar is looking forward to putting Leverkusen to the sword.

"After Kyiv we believe our chances to qualify are good," said a confident Prsnikar.

However, mitigating against Maribor's hopes are injuries to Dalibor Filipovic and Marinko Sarkez - two of their pillars in the Kyiv victory.

Lazio, one of four sides joint top of the Serie A after three matches, were happy with their opening draw at Leverkusen but another draw in Rome could compromise their hopes of securing one of the top two spots in the group.

Dortmund, meanwhile, having already drawn in the Netherlands, should on paper coast past a Boavista side who already hammered 3-0 by muscular Rosenborg. If the Norwegians continue that form at home to Feyenoord they would be well placed for the second phase.

# UEFA not going for cuts

LONDON, Sept 21: European football's ruling body UEFA on Monday dismissed reports that they are bidding to limit the number of foreigners playing in English teams, reports AFP.

This follows suggestions that FIFA and UEFA wanted to reduce the number of foreigners in Premiership teams to five.

But according to UEFA's lawyers it is impossible for such a policy to be drawn up concerning European Union citizens.

"UEFA is always committed to advancing grass roots football, but these foreigners are EU citizens and have a right to play in Britain," said Aisdaid Bell, one of UEFA's advisers.

"There is no way that such a change could be brought about because you have to change the whole concept of employment law within Europe."

"At [UEFA's forthcoming conference in] Helsinki they will discuss how to limit the damage of the Bosman Ruling but they won't change anything to do with European employment law."

The Helsinki conference, which begins on December 13, will see the conclusion of the Finnish presidency of the European Union and the heads of the 15 EU countries will gather to discuss their future.

"The only way that you could limit European players from playing in other European countries is to say that footballers were no longer workers and have the same working rights," added Bell.

"UEFA would love to see grass-roots football flourishing but that should be done by incentives to promote the game at that level."

"There's no way footballers would have those rights taken away, because they are workers

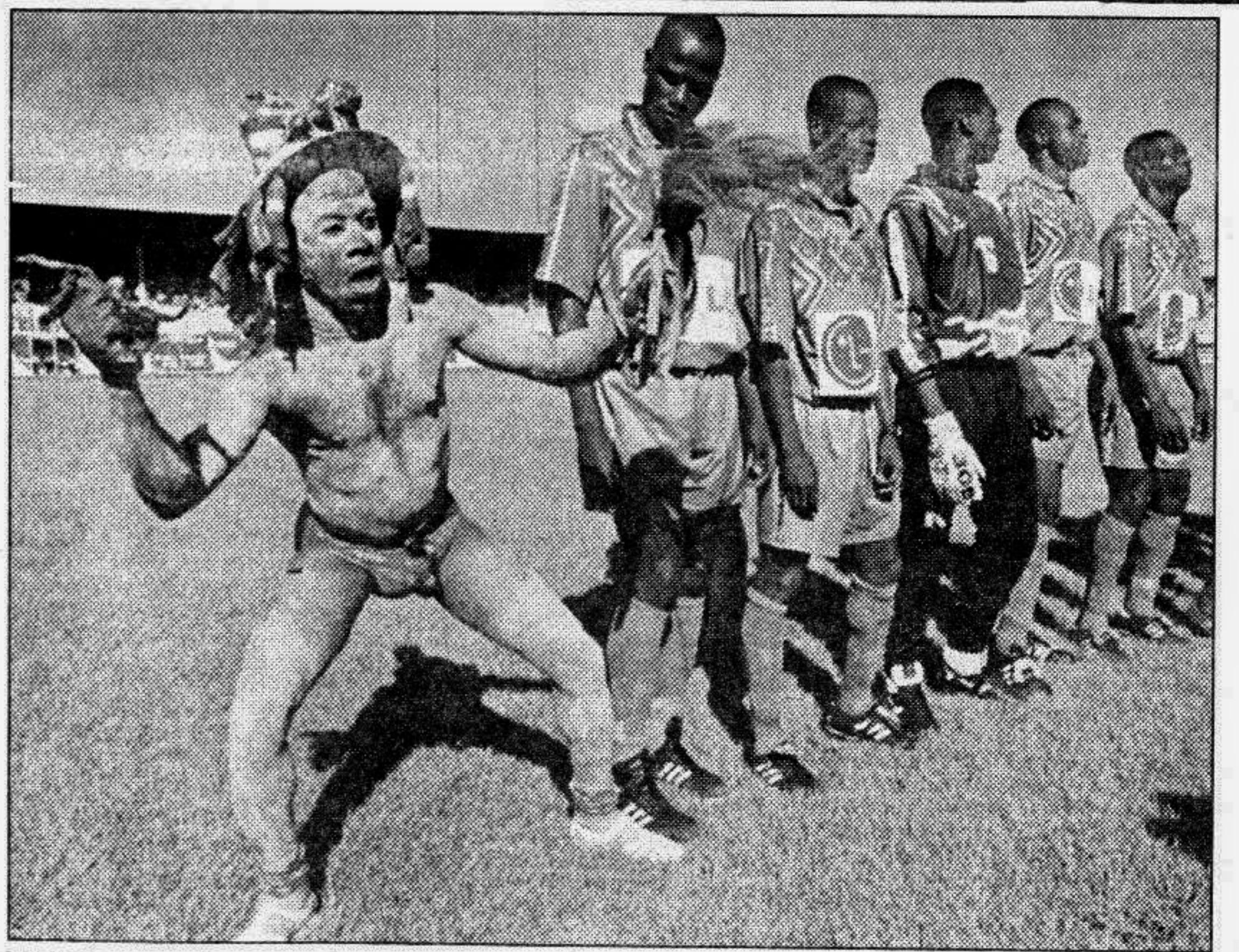
like anybody else.

"Individual countries already have working regulations for those players from outside of the European Union and I don't think that the governments would want to change current employment rules within the EU."

However, Bell admitted that the Bosman Ruling has caused huge headaches for those in charge of European and world football and said the issue would be high on the agenda in Finland.

"We will want to have a look at that closely because there are many issues surrounding the Bosman case which sport needs to look at."

"A report will be put together and the plan would be then to put pressure on the European commissioners to have a look carefully at everything surrounding this ruling but it is highly unlikely any changes will be made at that meeting."



VOODOO FOR VICTORY: A witch doctor casting his magic on the Abidjan Africa Sports team ahead of their Africa Cup fourth round match against Morocco's Royal Armed Forces at Abidjan, Ivory Coast on September 19. The local side won 1-0. —AFP photo

# Elliott repentant

LONDON, Sept 21: Leicester skipper Matt Elliott has apologised to Michael Owen over the challenge which left the England striker unconscious in Saturday's Premiership clash with Liverpool at Filbert Street, reports AFP.

Elliott could face a Football Association charge with match referee Uriah Rennie having been asked to look again at the video after taking no action at the time against the Scotland central defender.

Elliott appeared to cut across Owen and strike him in the face with his elbow.

But the defender insisted Monday there had been no malicious intent - however bad the incident might look in television replays - and he even was given Owen's shirt after the match.

Elliott told PA Sport: "At the time I did not think too much of what had happened."

"I came across to challenge Michael Owen and he was a bit too quick for me. I thought I had barged him more than anything else."

"I had still apologised to him after the game, he showed no re-

pentment and I asked him for his shirt. I collect shirts of all the top strikers and he was pretty forthcoming with that."

### Swept away by rain!

GLASGOW, Sept 21: Motherwell and Hearts were caught out by the deluge Monday when their Scottish Premier league match had to be abandoned at halftime for a waterlogged pitch with Well leading 1-0, reports AFP.

Shaun Teale's 24th minute penalty was separating the sides after 45 minutes played out in farcical conditions as torrential rain swept Fir Park.

It was raining from the outset but in the early stages the pitch was playable. Thomas Floegel testing Goram with an angled free while at the other end Ged Brannan 'shot wide from distance.

By the 20th minute however the weather was already having a major bearing on proceedings as the rain fell harder and visible puddles emerged on a waterlogged playing surface.

### Ba says sorry

MILAN, Sept 21: Perugia's French winger Ibrahim Ba has apologised for head-butting an opponent on his debut last weekend, reports AFP.

Ba, who arrived last week on loan from Serie A champions AC Milan, poleaxed Cagliari defender Fabio Macellari in an off-the-ball incident on Saturday that was missed by all four match officials.

Condemned by the Italian press, Ba apologised in a phone-in to a late-night TV talkshow on Monday night, pointing out that he had retaliated to Macellari's apparent attempt to elbow him in the face.

"I just want to apologise for what happened, above all to the crowd, to the club and to the players," said Ba. "It was a moment of madness. It's never happened to me before."

"I've been feeling bad for the last two days because of that foul; there are a lot of youngsters who watch football and that was a negative thing for me and for them."

However, Ba explained: "What made me lose my head was the elbow, it could have caused me serious problems."

Macellari, who claimed that his elbow swung out simply because he was running, was also keen to bury the hatchet.

"Obviously, I want to forgive Ba," he said. "Everything's fine as it is."

### EU quiz for Premiership clubs

BRUSSELS, Sept 21: The European Commission is quizzing England's top football clubs about exclusive television rights sold by their Premier League to BSkyB television, a commission spokesman said Monday, reports AFP.

Questionnaires have gone out to all 20 sides - including league leaders Manchester United - to determine if a lucrative five-year contract respects European competition law, the spokesman said.

Britain's Office of Fair Trading tried challenging the deal's legality, arguing that the Premier League was acting as a cartel by selling television rights en bloc, rather than letting teams make their own deals.

But in July the Restrictive Practices Court ruled that the contract - worth 670 million pounds (1.085 billion dollars) and expiring in 2001 - does not harm the public's interest.

BSkyB is part of Rupert Murdoch's global media empire.

The Premier League also has an arrangement worth 77 million pounds with the British Broadcasting Corp. that allows the BBC to run weekly Premier League highlights.



Nuno Gomes (C) of Benfica and Setubal's Pedro Henrique fight for the ball during their Portuguese League encounter on September 20. — AFP photo

### Benfica leaders of Portugal

LISBON, Sept 21: Benfica took the lead of the Portuguese soccer championship with a 3-0 win over Vitoria Setubal at home yesterday, reports Reuters.

Benfica led with 10 points after four games, with second place shared by Porto, Boavista, Sporting Lisbon and Vitoria Guimaraes two points behind.

Setubal, who were crushed by Roma 7-0 in the UEFA Cup first round first leg last week, played the second half with 10 men after defender Mario Loja was sent off for bookable offences.

Ukrainian midfielder Sergiy Kandaurov put Benfica ahead two minutes into the game with a penalty.

Midfielder Maniche Ribeiro raised Benfica's score to 2-0 with a shot in the 33rd minute.

Striker Nuno Gomes celebrated his 150th game in the Portuguese league with the third goal two minutes before the final whistle.

Sporting Lisbon drew 1-1 at home with fancied Estrela da Amadora. Sporting's players were booed by their own fans as they left the field.

Amadora were reduced to 10 men from the 25th minute when Brazilian midfielder Veron Bezerra was sent off after collecting his second yellow card.

# Robson can breathe easy

NEWCASTLE, England, Sept 21 (AFP): Bobby Robson's first game in charge at home took on the air of a fairy tale as struggling striker Alan Shearer scored five times to lead Newcastle United to a crushing 8-0 win over Sheffield Wednesday.

The 66-year-old grandfather was left to reflect on a stunning triumph engineered by a player his predecessor Ruud Гуллит had seen fit to leave on the substitutes' bench in his last game in charge.

Shearer's five-star haul was the best of his career and equalled the record set by former manager Andy Cole.

Only the legendary Len Shackleton has scored more in a single match for United, netting six times in a 13-0 Division Two victory over Newport County in October 1946.

The game was a triumph for both manager and striker and brought to an end a run of 14 Premiership games without victory dating back to April 3, but both were careful to point out that it is only a start.

"We have a long way to go," said Robson. "I've said to the players now we can actually begin to work, now we can improve things because there were certain issues there when we weren't very good and against a better team, we might have had some problems, with respect to Sheffield."

"There are certain areas we have to improve on and we'll do it. We've seen what those issues are and we know how to solve it. The game is about players really. They've listened and learned and they've had a good attitude. They were getting to a point of no return really so that's passed us by now. We're over that hump."

"Chelsea was a start and a good away European victory added to that. I think we'll have sold the tickets for the return leg - we're playing so well. I might even be one."

"But the next match is Leeds United away and it's a different kettle of fish. It's a start, but it's not the end."

"There's still a lot of work to do and we must not underestimate the fragile position we're still in."

Shearer, whose tally included two penalties, added: "We're still second bottom. We said before the game that it was a six-pointer and there's no hiding that it was."

"We got the three points and hopefully it will give us a platform now. We've done it in one league game, we've done it in the cup last week, so we have to continue that for another 33 or 34 games whether it's in the league or in the cup."

Robson was again full of praise for Shearer, who has taken his manager's advice to heart and prospered as a result.

"He just needed a bit of guidance. I think, and he's got it," he said. "He played well. He had a lot of movement, held the ball up well and got on the half-turn as well, which he's now doing better than he's ever done."

"He's meeting the ball instead of waiting for the ball to come to him, not always playing the ball back but playing diagonal balls to the wings so he's setting people up on the flanks as well."

"Apart from the five goals, his general play was of a high standard. He's turned the corner for us."

# Inter Berlusconi's favourite

MILAN, Sept 21: AC Milan president Silvio Berlusconi has tipped archrivals Inter to succeed his team as Italian champions, reports AFP.

It's very probably going to be Inter's year. But so far, the score is 6-1 in our favour since I took over the club (1986), without mentioning all our international victories," said Berlusconi.

Italian bookies have shortened their odds to 2-1 on for an Inter championship triumph next May, down from 3-1 before Sunday night's five-goal demolition of Parma at San Siro.

With new centre-forward Christian Vieri in startling form, scoring four and making three of Inter's eight league goals this season, the spotlight in Italy has moved from one side of this city to the other.

Inter president Massimo Moratti has spent around 200 million dollars in transfer fees in recent years, culminating in Vieri's record-breaking 50-million dollar move from Lazio over the summer.

Berlusconi said: "Sooner or later, Moratti's moment has to come. He's made a major effort, on many occasions, and he deserves to be rewarded."

Commenting on Vieri's stunning goal against Parma, he said: "I saw it, and I have to say I was really impressed. It was a great feat from someone with a great talent for scoring goals."

Berlusconi was even resigned about Vieri's record fee.

"It seems to me that nowadays all reasonable limits have been exceeded," he said. "But if that's the result of offer and demand, then you can't really complain."

The club president will be watching his team in their Tuesday night's Champions League tie here against Galatasaray, hoping they can go all the way to a victorious final - possibly in front of the home fans.

In fact, if Berlusconi is willing to let Moratti have the Serie A title, it's because the media mogul and former prime minister wants to win back Europe's top trophy.

"In our centenary year, having won the league championship, it would be just extraordinary to win the (European) Cup once again," he said.

"And if it's true that they're going to play the final in Milan, it would be even more wonderful to win at San Siro, in our stadium, the footballing 'La Scala'."

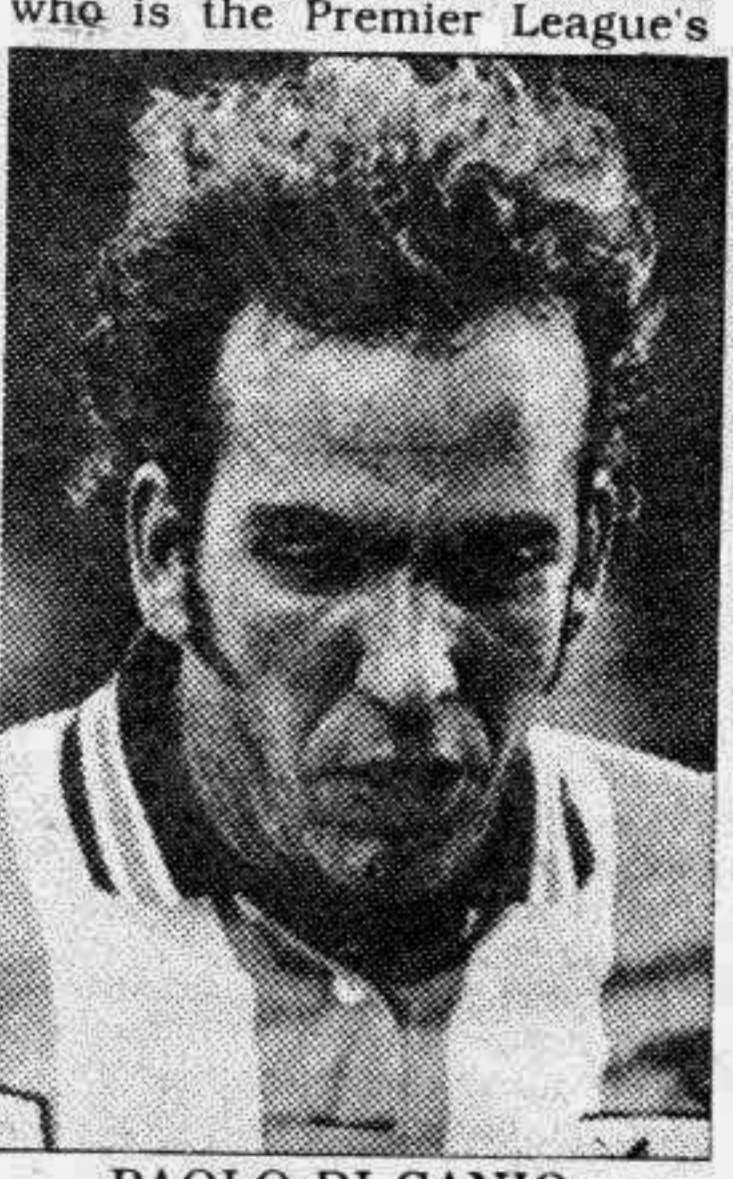
However well his team do this time around, Berlusconi is convinced that Europe is heading for its own season-long soccer league.

UEFA has expanded the Champions League to 32 teams this season, while a private Milan-based company, Media Partners, has touted support for a new satellite TV "Super League."

Referring to UEFA's new competition, Berlusconi said: "I think that this format is only a transition, on the way to a true European championship that would be played on a Wednesday, perhaps with a first and a second division, while the national championships are played on Saturdays."

"I think it will happen because Europe has to keep moving towards political integration. And football can contribute to a unique sense of feeling European," he said.

"Even football can play its part in the battle to give citizens of all the states of Europe a sense of a common identity, a common mission and a common civilisation."



PAOLO DI CANIO

chairman, comes as a debate on limiting the number of foreign players in the domestic game is gathering force.

Richards, whose club are in crisis at the bottom of the Premiership, lays the blame squarely at the doors of Carbone, who has been involved in a series of disputes with the Hillsborough club and the controversial Di Canio who left Wednesday to join West Ham.

"The Carbone and Di Canio situations have killed us. The players are killing us and killing the game," said Richards.

"They come over here and take the money and it's great when everything is going their way, but when things go wrong it can be disastrous."

"I think Sheffield Wednesday have had a raw deal over the last couple of years."

Di Canio courted controversy during his spell at Hillsborough with his infamous push on referee Paul Alcock while Carbone has been involved in a series of disputes which culminated in him storming away from Southampton in a taxi after refusing to play as substitute.

Richards, who has backed under-fired Owls boss Danny Wilson, said: "We were the ones punished for the Di Canio inci-



BENITO CARBONE