

Sport

Milan players strike back

MILAN, Sept 23: AC Milan players are hitting back at club president Silvio Berlusconi after the media mogul ridiculed their performance in the Champions League this week, reports AFP.

Berlusconi watched them struggle to a 2-1 win over Galatasaray thanks to some crucial saves by goalkeeper Christian Abbiati and reached a damning verdict: "Great Abbiati, small Milan."

However, the remark has infuriated Milan's old guard led by defenders Alessandro Costacurta and Paolo Maldini.

"The president has exaggerated, that wasn't a small Milan," snapped Costacurta. "It was a positive result ... Galatasaray are a good team. Try asking other sides who have come against us. And we beat them."

The veteran libero also argued that small teams don't get results.

"We're top of our group and we're three points in front of the third-placed side. And we're unbeaten in the Serie A," he said.

Costacurta's resentment was also shared Maldini, who as team captain tried to be diplomatic.

"Talking about a small Milan is a bit simplistic, when you consider how well we played in the first 45 minutes," he said.

"But I'm not going to make a drama out of it. The season has barely started."

Maldini also tried to point out the difference between seeing a match and playing in one, saying: "People watching often see a different game."

And he tried to be realistic about Milan's performance.

They may be the Italian champions and Berlusconi may want them to win back the European Cup, but last season's league triumph came after two disastrous years as the legendary era of the club came to an end.

"We've seen worse in recent years," he said. "The important thing with Galatasaray was to win, and in the end, it's the result that counts."

"AC Milan are AC Milan. And we are always going to be compared with our recent past, and it's something which weighs heavily on us."

"Given the current situation, certain achievements are going to be very difficult to repeat, even though everybody is calling on us to do so -- from the fans."

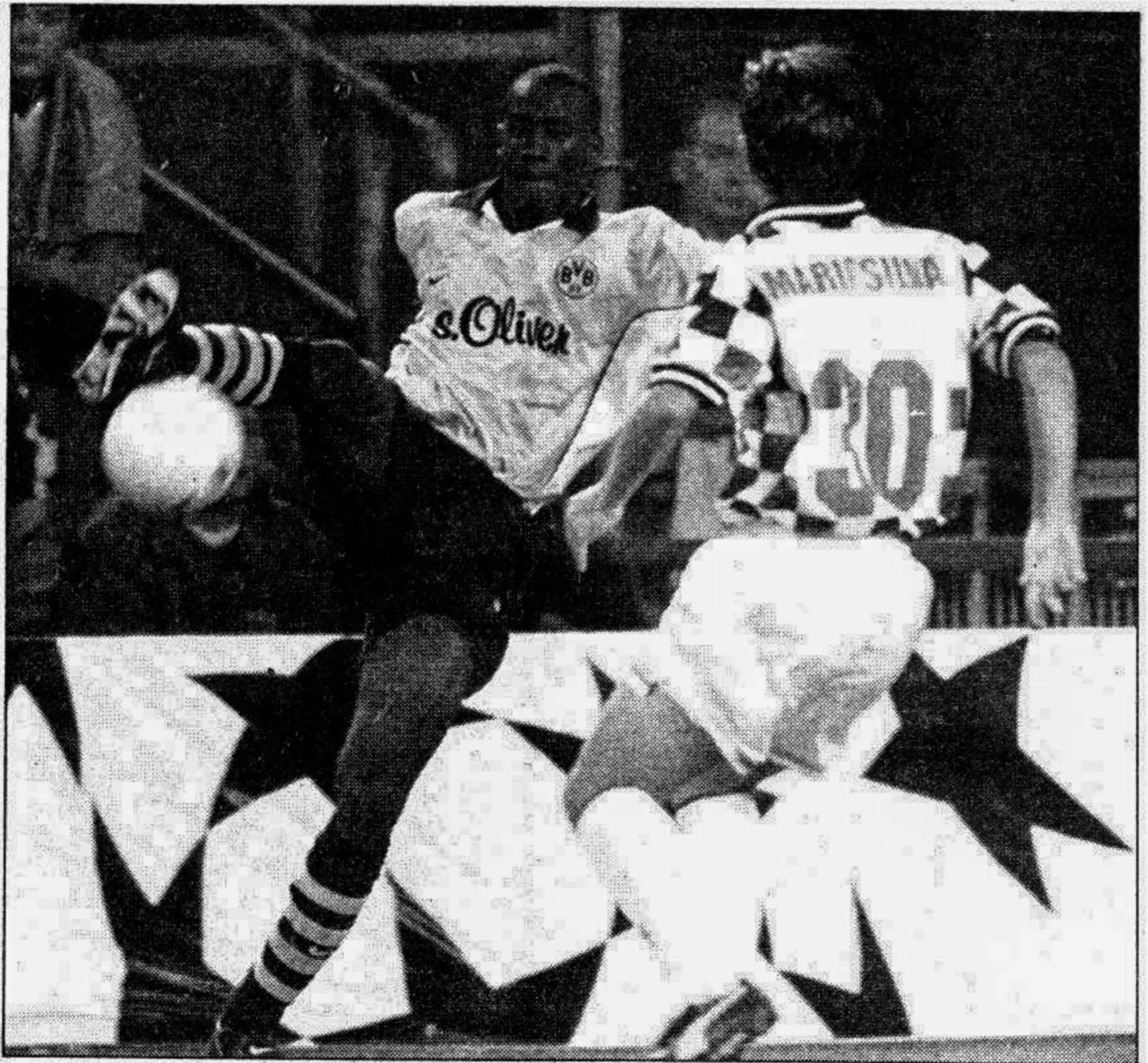
Million dollar boost for Sino ladies

BEIJING, Sept 23: China's women's soccer team landed a million dollar sponsorship deal with a Chinese computer maker Thursday and vowed to avenge its World Cup defeat by the US at next year's Sydney Olympics, reports AFP.

The sponsorship deal was struck between the China Football Association and the Legend Group, one of China's leading information technology companies, in what was touted as the largest sponsorship ever for women's soccer in Asia.

"We are setting the goal of a gold medal in Sydney and I am sure that our dreams are shared by China's football fans," Wang Junsheng, secretary general of the CFA said.

China's women's team lost the Women's World Cup final to the US in June. At the time there were reports that Chinese players and coaches were not being paid due to a lack of state funding.



Borussia Dortmund's Otto Addo (L) trying to take control of the ball during a Champions' League game against Boavista. — AFP photo

Bobic double sinks Boavista



DORTMUND, Sept 23: Two goals by former German international Friedel Bobic paved the way for a 3-1

Borussia Dortmund victory over Portuguese side Boavista here Wednesday, keeping them second in Group C of the Champions League, reports AFP.

Dortmund, the 1997 European champions, are level with Rosenborg of Norway on four points after Rosenborg drew 2-2 with Feyenoord of the Netherlands in Norway. Feyenoord have two points and Boavista one.

Dortmund worked hard against an uninspired Boavista, who were intent on defence from the outset and who stubbornly failed to revise their attitude even when Bobic struck in the 53rd and 65th minutes to put the home side in command after Andi Moller's 40th-minute opener.

All risk-taking was left to the Germans and they found the

Lloyd calls for physio

UNDATED (Internet report): West Indies manager Clive Lloyd has asked the Cricket Board (WICB) to appoint a full-time physiotherapist to look after injured players.

Former Test captain Lloyd made the call after the team were plagued by injuries during the Toronto Cricket Festival, where they lost separate three-match series to India and Pakistan.

"Most of the injuries should not have been as prolonged as they were. I would like to see a qualified physiotherapist to look after our injuries and know how long they will take to heal so that we can pick teams accordingly," Lloyd told a Caribbean news agency.

role hard to deal with at first. Moller's goal was an unexpected breakthrough and came from a 20-metre free kick which curled neatly inside the near post.

Boavista's equaliser four minutes later, a Rui Bento header, was likewise a surprise, but a fair reward because neither side deserved a half time lead.

Boavista coach Jaime Paci eco made an effort to stir things up in the 45th minute when he sent in playmaker Formoso but, with his comrades solely intent on holding off Dortmund with rock solid defence, he had few opportunities to be creative.

The character of the game could have been different had Boavista's Rogério been luckier with a promising chance after just three minutes but it went begging and Bobic was allowed time to grow into his role as match winner.

His header in the 53rd minute to make it 2-1 came from another Moller free kick after assistance from Otto Addo.

For his second goal the tall Bobic was well served by Brazilian winger Evanilson, who drew the keeper and then passed to Bobic in the middle for a gentle tap-in.

His equaliser gave his new club a deserved point last week at Feyenoord, although his enthusiasm got the better of him as he pulled a shoulder muscle punching the air celebrating his second goal. As a result he was replaced by Heiko Herrlich after 73 minutes.

Bobic laughed off his painful shoulder, even though shoulder injuries and collar bone breaks have been a debilitating problem for him in recent seasons.

"I have to be a bit careful with my shoulder. It tweaked for a moment but then it was okay," the striker said.

Bobic has become adept at scoring valuable goals for Dortmund since moving northward from VfB Stuttgart

Moller said he was wary of the Dortmund fans getting impatient with the side before they finally found their goalscoring touch.

"They knew that Trondheim beat Boavista 3-0 away last

week and they thought we would score a sackful tonight as well.

It was actually hard work for us. I thought we controlled the game over the full 90 minutes though and deserved to win."

Dortmund coach Michael Skibbe was happy with the three points but annoyed at the way his side almost let Boavista in for a point.

The Portuguese were rigid at the back and broke fast when they got possession. That made it tough for us and it was a shame we let them equalise just before the break. That goal was totally unnecessary," said Skibbe.

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Walsh was annoyed by a "casual, carefree" second half performance from his players who allowed India to rally from 5-1 down with 16 minutes remaining.

And he was also perturbed by several fiery on-field incidents, believing stronger action should have been taken, especially after forward Stephen Holt's head was cut by a stick in one skirmish.

"We were told at the tourna-

ment director's briefing that any physical contests like that were going to be treated in the harshest of manners," said Walsh.

The officials gave out two green card warnings — one to Australia, the other to India — and three yellow card sinbinings — to Holt and India's Anwar Khan after their clash and to India's Subbir Singh Gill.

Walsh did not consider Khan's yellow card sufficient.

"When a guy has a slash on his head and he is six foot five..." said Walsh.

"It was just a reaction we don't need in world hockey and there were several of them in the game today."

New UEFA home unveiled

NYONS, Switzerland, Sept 23: European football governing body (UEFA) inaugurated its new headquarters, dubbed "European Football House," here yesterday, reports AFP.

Built on a former campsite the new edifice is the work of French architect Patrick Berger. It is a two-storey building on a lakeside and cost 35 million dollars.

It will become operational on October 5.

Egypt World squash champs

CAIRO, Sept 23: For the first time, Egypt took the top pedestal of the Al-Ahram World team squash championship, crushing Wales in a heated 3-0 match in Wednesday's finals, reports AP.

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