

Real might swap Anelka for Zidane

MADRID, Oct 1: Real president Lorenzo Sanz on Friday suggested a swap deal between controversial French striker Nicolas Anelka and his compatriot Zinedine Zidane of Juventus, reports AFP.

The former Arsenal striker may be loaned out to the Italian Serie A side until the end of the season unless his performances begin to merit his 30 million dollar transfer fee, the largest in Spanish football history.

Sanz said the December transfer window may see him contact Juventus with a view to conducting the deal.

According to Spanish newspaper AS, Sanz said: "I was reminded of the December break the other day. I hope and I trust that Anelka's signing will pay off: he is 20 years old and I'm sure his form will eventually take off."

However, if I see that Anelka doesn't deserve his place in the squad I would think about transferring him to Juve in mid-season and bringing in Zidane."

But Sanz added: "This is not a permanent exchange. I wouldn't swap Zidane for Anelka at this point in time, he is just 20 years old."

Sanz's announcement follows a horrendous first two months in Spain for Anelka, who has found himself under pressure from the Spanish media.

The French international has yet to score in a competitive game for his new side and is currently on the treatment table with a knee injury picked up in the Champions League against FC Molde and is expected to be out for at least another week.

World Cup winner Zidane, 27, only recently returned to first-team action for Juve after a long injury lay-off.

Zidane, whose wife is Spanish, has made no secret of his desire to play in Spain.

2002 World Cup 83 venues bid for becoming training camps

TOKYO, Oct 1: A total of 83 cities and villages throughout Japan have applied as training camps for the 2002 World Cup finals to be co-hosted by Japan and South Korea, organizers said here Friday, reports AFP.

"We received applications from almost all the prefectures. It means the World Cup has been recognized by the whole country. We are going to select the best training camps for the participating teams," said Japanese football association president Shunichiro Okano.

The Japanese organizing committee and the association will inspect candidates, check the conditions of the facilities and accommodation, and make a recommendation list by the end of June 2001.

Okano said even though countries choose to train in a city which was not recommended by the organizers, Japan will take the surest measures for their security.

Candidate cities included some J-League clubs' home grounds, ancient cities of Nara and Kyoto. They also included Mito, some 15 kilometres (nine miles) from Tokaimura where the country's worst nuclear accident occurred Thursday.

Cole one goal shy of European mark

MANCHESTER, England, Oct 1: Andy Cole on Thursday spoke of his pride at being just one strike away from equalling the legendary Denis Law's goalscoring record for Manchester United in Europe, reports AFP.

Law is United's leading marksman in Europe's premier club competition with 14 goals.

Cole's spectacular overhead kick in the 2-1 win over Marseille on Wednesday was reminiscent of Law at his best and it was his 13th for United in the Champions League.

He is now level with former Busby Babe Dennis Viollet and it seems only a matter of time before he breaks Law's 30-year record.

Cole feels privileged to be in the company of such great United strikers.

"I'm very proud to be up there on 13 goals," he said.

"I've taken a bit of stick from the lads now that I'm only one behind Denis Law."

"If I get there I will be delighted with it. It's a great landmark for me because Denis Law was such a great player."

"I'm delighted to even be as close as I am to Denis Law's number of goals in Europe."

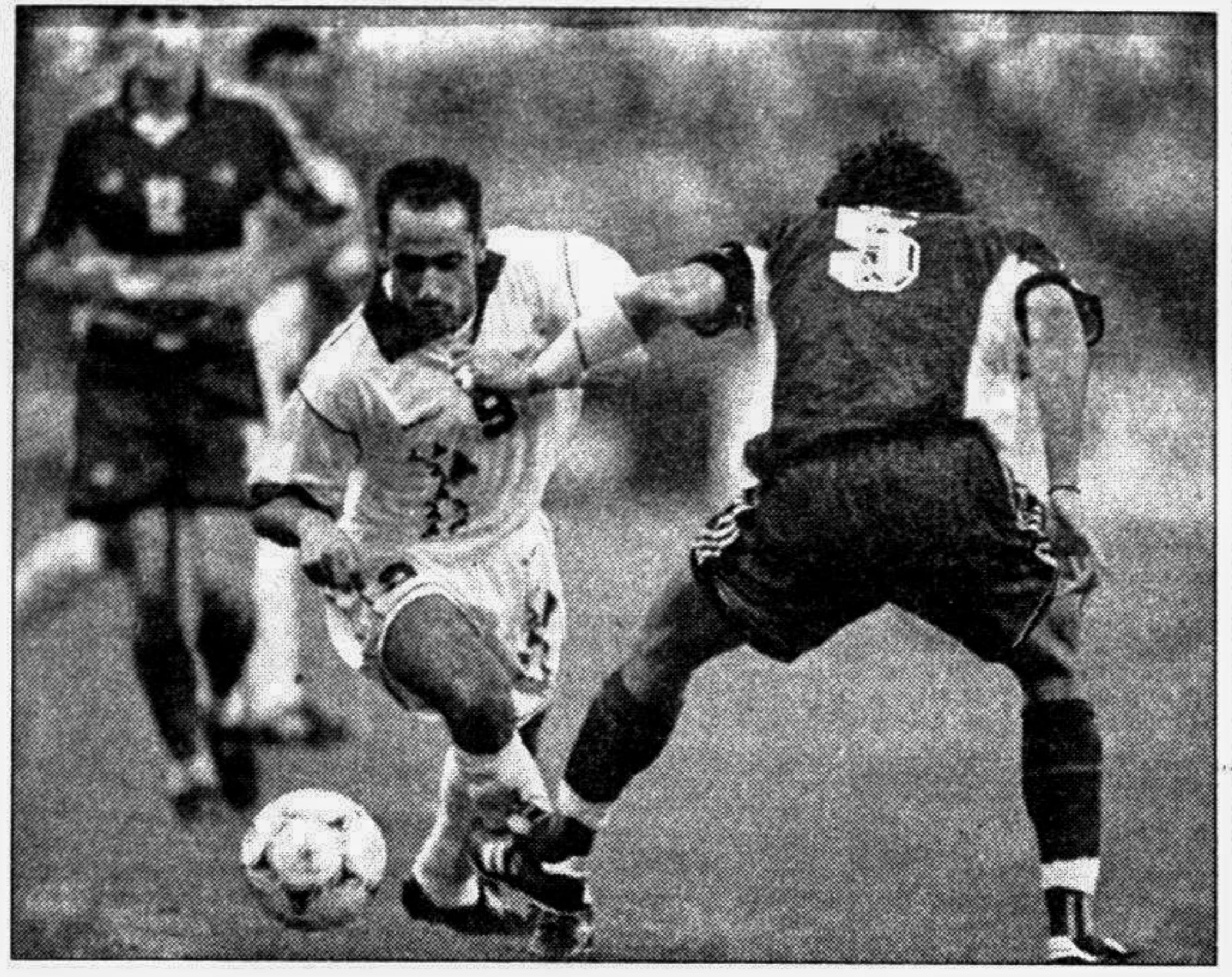
Denis Irwin is also closing in on another United record in Europe.

The Republic of Ireland defender equalled Peter Schmeichel's club record of 36 Champions League appearances against Marseille and needs just one more game to set a new best.

FA finds Elliott at fault

LONDON, Oct 1: The English FA charged Leicester City defender Matt Elliott with misconduct on Thursday following a clash with Liverpool's striker Michael Owen in a league match this month, reports Reuters.

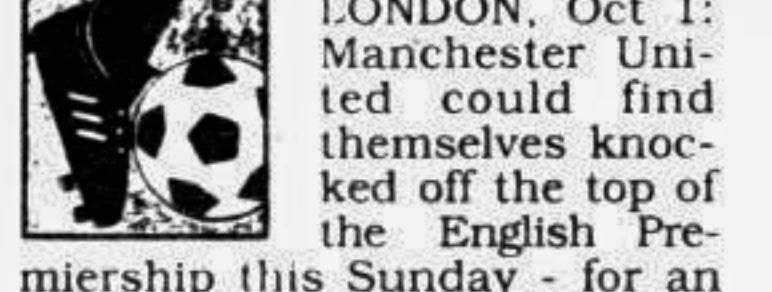
Aston Villa manager John Gregory and his England defender Gareth Southgate were also charged for comments made to a match referee after another league game at Leices-



Saudi international Sami Al Jaber dodges past South Africa's Mark Fish during their Afro-Asian Nations' Cup return leg encounter in Riyadh on September 30. — AFP photo

Premiership preview

Euro hangover top guns' worry



LONDON, Oct 1: Manchester United could find themselves knocked off the top of the English Premiership this Sunday - for an hour at least, reports AFP.

Sir Alex Ferguson's side, who have 21 points, visit Chelsea in the game of the weekend which kicks off an hour after second-placed Leeds United's match at Watford.

Leeds, together with Arsenal, have 19 points but with all four sides coming off a heavy schedule of European games, the real winners of the weekend could be Sunderland.

Currently fourth on 17 points, Peter Reid's promoted side will gatecrash the early season title race if they can register their sixth win in 10 games at fellow promoted Watford.

England pair Kevin Phillips, with eight goals so far, and left-sided Michael Gray have been two important reasons for the Wearside's far from weary start to the season.

However, Swede Stefan Schwarzer, scorer of the winner against Sheffield Wednesday last week, reckons the fiercely competitive atmosphere at the club is the secret of their success.

"I think that we are doing well at Sunderland because the players in the side know that they have to perform at their best to stay in the team," said the ex-Arsenal and Florentine star.

"There is so much competition for places that no-one can afford to relax and that is good for the club."

Australian Harry Kewell is the Premiership player with the most shots so far this season - 31 - and the Leeds United teenager will be looking to add to his tally of two goals at Watford.

Graham Taylor's gritty side showed their mettle by conceding just one goal in games against Liverpool, Chelsea and Arsenal and they hope tie up the signing of Rangers midfielder Charlie Miller in time for the match.

Manchester United needed late strikes by Andy Cole and Paul Scholes to see off a stubborn Marseille side in midweek but they have an excellent record against Chelsea.

Ferguson's side are unbeaten in their last seven visits to Stamford Bridge, though it is now 542 minutes since an away team scored at Chelsea, who beat Turkish visitors Galatasaray 1-0 on Tuesday.

United will need to cut out the defensive goofs which have gifted goals to their opponents in recent games.

Italian goalkeeper Massimo Taibi let a Matt Le Tissier daisy cutter pass through his legs in the 3-3 draw with Southampton last Saturday.

On Wednesday against Marseille, dawdling Norwegian defender Henning Berg was dispossessed by Ibrahima Bakayoko who put the French side ahead before half-time.

"It was a very stupid, stupid mistake," admitted Berg. "I was gutted and it's the worst I have ever felt on the pitch. I've made mistakes before, but you just don't do things like that."

Paul Gascoigne, sent off for using "industrial" language while conversing with a linesman last week, will doubtless have washed his mouth out with soap and may line up for Boro against his old teammates, though he faces a battle with Brazilian Juninho for a place in the starting line-up.

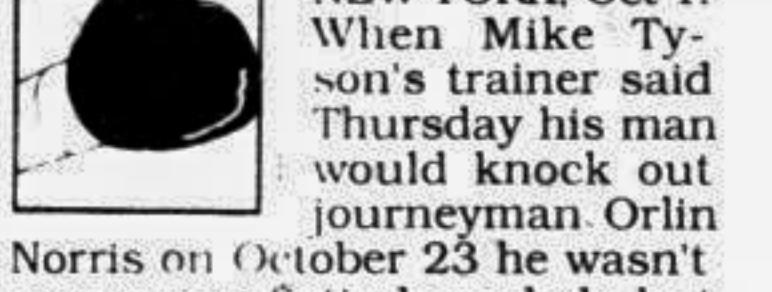
Fixtures

Saturday (kick-offs 1400 GMT): Aston Villa v Liverpool, Bradford v Sunderland, Everton v Coventry, Sheffield Wednesday v Wimbledon

Sunday (kick-offs 1500 GMT unless stated): Chelsea v Manchester United, Newcastle v Middlesbrough (1400), Tottenham v Leicester, Watford v Leeds (1400), West Ham v Arsenal

Monday (1900): Southampton v Derby

Mike in need of money?



NEW YORK, Oct 1: When Mike Tyson's trainer said Thursday his man would knock out journeyman Orlin Norris on October 23 he wasn't expressingistic hyperbole but rather fiscal reality for the former heavyweight champion of the world, reports Reuters.

These days Tyson, in debt for some 20 million dollars, is reduced to fighting on regular cable television rather than on lucrative pay-per-view, and nothing short of a spectacular once knockout will put the once prolific Tyson money machine back on track.

"There's no question about the outcome of the fight," Tommy Brooks said in a telephone conference call from Las Vegas. It's just a question of how he does it."

Brooks, brought in as part of a shake-up in Tyson's camp before Tyson fought South African Francois Botha last February, said: "If Mike does what we've been working on in the gym the fight lasts three rounds."

And that's just the outcome Tyson has to produce, Brooks said, to begin to once again recapture the interests of boxing fans and their money.

Brooks alluded to the disappointing Oscar De La Hoya-Felix Trinidad fight earlier this month which Trinidad won on a majority decision. But the fight didn't come close to being the spectacular brawl so many people had predicted.

So Brooks expects the 33-

year-old Tyson to jump into the breach against the nearly 34-year-old Norris and to begin to pump excitement back into boxing and his bank account.

In Tyson's latest comeback, after 3-1/2 months in a Maryland jail for assaulting two motorists, Brooks will be joined by long-time Tyson friend Jay Bright, who had been jettisoned by Tyson's former handlers, whom Tyson is suing, alleging they stole millions of dollars from him.

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