

Sport

Daei named AFC player for Sept

Iranian international striker Ali Daei has been named the Asian Football Confederation's Asian player-of-the-month for September. He won this recognition on becoming the first Asian player to score in the group stages of Europe's Champions' League, says a press release.

Daei scored both the goals in Hertha Berlin's 2-1 defeat of English side Chelsea as his club recorded their first win in this year's Champions' League. A week later he added to this tally by scoring again in the 1-1 draw against former European Cup winners and current Italian champions, AC Milan, at the San Siro Stadium.

The 30-year-old who joined Hertha during the summer from Bayern Munich has also been busy for his country, scoring Iran's equaliser from a 25-yard free-kick in their 1-1 draw in a friendly against Japan in Yokohama.

Al Jaish became the Syrian to win an award from the AFC when they bagged the team-of-the-month title for September. The club collected the accolade after defeating the United Arab Emirates side Al-Ain in the opening round of the Asian Cup Winners' Cup on the away goals ruling. The result was the biggest shock of the competition's first round and for Al-Ain who reached the semi-finals of last year's Asian Club championship.

After losing the opening leg 0-1 at home, Al-Jaish came back to win 2-1 in the away challenge at Al-Ain. The goals came from Fadi Afash in the 41st minute and Nihad Mustafa in the 69th. Al Jaish face Saudi Arabian side Al-Ahli in the second round.

Englishman Steve Perryman has been named the Motorola coach-of-the-month for his success with Japanese club Shimizu S-Pulse. Perryman, who worked as Ossie Ardiles' assistant for two years before taking over as head coach at the start of the year, guided the club to the top of the second stage standings as the J-League went into a month-long break.

Shimizu, who have never won the J-League title, lead the table by three points from 1995 champions Yokohama Marinos and with five matches to go are favourites to meet Asian Club champions and first stage winners, Jubilo Iwata in the championship play-offs in December.

The month's final award, the Heineken goal-of-the-month, goes to Qatar's international midfielder Adel Khamis for his goal in the Arab Cup Winners' Cup for his club Al-Arabi. Khamis struck with a sweet, low drive from 25 yards to give his side a 2-1 win over Kuwaiti side, Al-Ittihad.

West Ham protest

London, Oct 7: English UEFA Cup hopefuls West Ham United have protested their innocence after it emerged Croatian defender Igor Stimac could be banned for the two legs of their second-round tie against Steaua Bucharest because of a suspension hanging over him since 1995, reports AFP.

Stimac, then with Croatian side Hajduk Split, was hit with a two-match ban after a European game against Panathinaikos.

European body UEFA have admitted they forged about the defender's punishment and say they only remembered following a complaint by NK Osijek, beaten 6-1 aggregate by West Ham in the first round of the UEFA Cup.

UEFA now say he is likely to serve the ban against Romania's Steaua Bucharest, with the first leg on October 21.

A West Ham spokesman said: "As far as we are concerned we have not done anything wrong. UEFA sent out a list of suspensions at the start of the season and Igor Stimac's name was not on it."

"But Osijek have made a complaint, which is the way of the world, and now we must wait and see if Igor is banned for the next round."

UEFA have admitted the mistake but if they decide that he will still have to serve the ban then there is not a lot we can do."

Brawl over

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Prizemoney for the winning side has doubled this year to \$75,000 and competition organisers have reinstated the boundary targets which offer cash rewards for lusty hits. Of the seven team captains, four are new. Tasmanian Jamie Cox replaces the retired David Boon, former NSW all-rounder Rod Tucker takes the helm for the Canberra Comets. Paul Reiffel assumes full-time captaincy for Victoria and Michael Bevan takes over for NSW.

Everything

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On growing older he said: "I'm not much of a showman anymore. I'm pretty much business minded now when I step on to the court — that's sometimes the best show."

On charity he added: "I knew I wanted to focus on children they've been a good motivation of mine. We've been very blessed. In five years we've raised 14 million dollars and this year 3.9 million dollars in one night."

"It's very rewarding for me." On tennis he said he still wanted to play better than anybody else.

But when asked what he expected to be doing in the future he said simply: "Hopefully not press conferences."



Brazilian Ronaldo (R) and teammate Rivaldo laugh during practice in Amsterdam on October 6. Brazil play the Netherlands on Saturday. — AFP photo

J League Cup

Antlers, Reysol in final



TOKYO, Oct 7: Brazilian soccer great Zico headed home to Rio de Janeiro for a brief break today after guiding Kashima Antlers into Japan's Nabilco League Cup final, reports Reuters.

Zico, who ended his playing career with Kashima in 1994 and is now the club's general manager and caretaker coach, saw the Antlers recover from 1-0 down to draw 1-1 against FC Tokyo in the second leg of their semifinal at Tokyo's National Stadium on Wednesday night.

A 2-0 victory in the first leg at Kashima Stadium the previous week carried Antlers through 3-1 on aggregate.

In the final on November 3, Kashima will play Kashiwa Reysol, who lost 2-1 at home to Nagoya Grampus Eight but progressed 4-3 over the two legs.

Zico, 46, has business interests in Rio and will take advantage of a break in the league season to check on things back

home. As for the 1-1 draw against Second Division FC Tokyo, Zico said: "It was a typical semi-final, with both sides attacking and lots of excitement for the fans."

"Having won the first leg, our goal was to reach the final, not necessarily to win this game too. Even when we lost a goal, we did not panic and kept our shape as a team right to the end."

FC Tokyo are second in the 10-team Second Division and seem certain to be promoted at the end of the season. Zico thinks they will have few problems adapting to life in the top flight.

We knew they were a good team because they'd beaten three First Division sides to reach the semifinals. They have shown they are capable of doing fine in the First Division."

In the 114 minute, Reysol led 3-1 from the first leg at Nagoya but conceded first-half goals to conceded first-half goals to World Cup midfielder Takashi Hirano and Brazilian central defender Carlos Tores to trail 2-0 after 90 minutes, forcing the tie into sudden-death extra time.

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right by Brazilian import Almir.

The introduction of former Flamengo striker Mazinho as a 67th-minute substitute for Antlers changed the course of the game, however, as he led a counter-attack with nine minutes to go. From the resulting corner, taken on the right flank by playmaker Bismarck, Antlers equalised with a thundering diving header from World Cup defender Yutaka Akiti.

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Leboeuf gets it off his chest



CLAREFONTAINE, France, Oct 7: France and Chelsea defender Frank Leboeuf said the English Premiership is violent, its referees ineffective and weak players use foul play to make up for their technical deficiencies, reports AFP.

Leboeuf said he would back his French teammate Patrick Vieira whose recent sending off in a match between Arsenal and West Ham has triggered a debate about player's behaviour in England.

"English football is extremely violent," said Leboeuf. "When they go up for high ball, the attackers are only thinking of one thing: to put their elbow in your face."

"Patrick is very impulsive, so people are always after him," said Leboeuf, speaking from the French national team's training centre where he is preparing for his country's Euro 2000 qualifier against Ireland on Saturday.

"It wasn't a coincidence that the first person to run towards him after his sending off was (Neil) Ruddock, a 34-year-old player who tried to say on television afterwards that he was trying to calm things down," he added.

Leboeuf also said that Manchester United players and Leeds manager David O'Leary had harassed him on and off the pitch — but he still prefers the Premiership to Italy's Serie A.

Leboeuf was asked if France's World Cup-winning players were singled out by English players for rough treatment.

"I don't know. Probably a little bit," said Leboeuf. "But one thing's for sure: the fabled English fair play is a big myth. Players are hitting you and the referees hardly take notice. The British are fighters, they love a fight and it's the best way for

weak players to bring themselves up to the same level as the others."

Leboeuf said Tedd Sheringham had "done everything he could" to provoke him in Chelsea's 5-0 win over Manchester United on Sunday.

He added: "Last year, O'Leary, the Leeds manager, even came into the corridor next to the changing rooms to insult me."

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"But in the end I prefer this sort of football to the Italian league. The Italians try to take advantage. When I see (Filippo) Inzaghi rolling on the ground 25 times in a match it's annoying."

Vieira was Monday charged with "Balkan match of century" sold out

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by the English Football Association (FA) with misconduct for improper behaviour — including alleged spitting — following his sending off. He said Ruddock had called him "a French prat."

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