

Under-17 World Cup USA beat New Zealand

ALBANY, New Zealand, Nov 10: In the opening match of the FIFA Under-17 World Cup, USA defeated hosts New Zealand 2-1 in Group A here today, reports AFP.

Euro 2000 play-off Cunningham hopes to be fit

DUBLIN, Nov 10: Wimbledon defender Kenny Cunningham is hopeful of taking his place in the Republic of Ireland side for Saturday's Euro 2000 play-off first leg with Turkey at Lansdowne Road, reports AFP.

Cunningham suffered a hamstring injury in Sunday's 2-0 victory over Leeds at Selhurst Park.

But Republic manager Mick McCarthy is confident the 27-times capped defender will be able to take his place.

"Kenny, although he didn't train today with the squad in Dublin, is much improved. I am optimistic about his chances because he very much wants to play in this game," said McCarthy.

At art from the times he was injured he has always been in my means and of course has captained Ireland on a number of occasions. I've never left him out of the starting line-up.

But should he miss out I will not be worried about including Phil Babb even though he has not played a first team game for Liverpool this season.

Leeds defender Ian Harte seems certain to play having almost fully recovered from a back injury.

Veteran Manchester United full-back Dennis Irwin is expected to link up with the squad on Wednesday after receiving treatment on a ligament injury at Old Trafford.

That is a boost for the Irish boss after the withdrawal of Mark Kennedy, Steve Staunton, Gary Kelly and Matt Holland because of injuries.

Blackburn pair Jason McAteer and Jeff Kenna, both late call-ups, joined the squad yesterday and Middlesbrough defender Curtis Fleming broke a four-day holiday with his club in Malaga and will arrive in Dublin on Wednesday.

Veteran striker Tony Cascaro, who plays for French first division side Nancy, is confident that he has recovered from a knee injury and is scheduled to link up with the squad on Thursday.

Israeli gesture for Palestinian football officials

GAZA, Nov 10: Israel has invited the Palestinian Football Federation to Saturday's Euro 2000 play-off first leg match with Denmark at Tel Aviv, a top Palestinian sports official told AFP.

Issa Zaher, the Palestinian body's international relations chief, said the invitation had been issued by the Israeli football federation for the first leg of the two-legged tie that will determine which team will qualify for next year's finals in Holland and Belgium.

An Israeli Federation spokesman confirmed to AFP that the invitation had been issued to Palestinian Federation president Ahmed Afifi in a gesture of goodwill.

World governing body FIFA's Swiss president, Sepp Blatter, who has just completed a middle east tour, will also attend the match.

Blatter indicated Sunday that FIFA would try and organise a match between Israel and Palestine either in Gaza or Tel Aviv and not New York as had been previously suggested.

Zaher said the Israeli invitation had been accepted and a delegation led by vice-president George Ghattas would attend the match.

He said: "Blatter's presence encouraged us to go. By our courageous decision we wanted to underline that we are attached to a true peace with Israel and a peaceful coexistence with the Israeli people."

Ardiles sues Zagreb

ZAGREB, Nov 10: Argentinian Osvaldo Ardiles, sacked by Croatia Zagreb on October 28, will take legal action against the club claiming 240,000 dollars for breach of contract, it was reported Tuesday, reports AFP.

Ardiles, who had a long stint as player and coach with English side Tottenham and who also managed Newcastle United, has refused the offer of one month's wages (40,000 dollars) and wants the remaining six months of his contract to be settled in full.

Ardiles was sacked and replaced by his deputy Marjan Vlak after the club was eliminated from the European Champions League.

Club president Zlatko Cankija justified the move, saying: "Ardiles arrived as a well known name in the world of football, we were expecting a bit more from him than the previous season."

Stoichkov's new mission

SOFIA, Nov 10: Bulgaria's Hristo Stoichkov is going through possibly the biggest change of his life, reports Reuters.

The change involves nothing less than going from the biggest star in his country to a new career as an assistant coach.

Of course he should not remain anyone's assistant for too long and will soon be his own boss somewhere. But right now, at the age of 33, it's a tough step to make.

It's also a tough step during a week like this when many of Europe's teams are preparing for the play-offs for the Euro 2000 finals — or playing in friendlies preparing for those finals.

Bulgaria, long since eliminated from the competition, are on the sidelines for the time being — but Stoichkov more mature and less explosive than in his playing days, told Reuters the time was perfect for him to make the move.

He says he has been "working flat out" to accumulate the knowledge he needs to help Bulgaria regain the form which made the national team, which he captained, the biggest surprise of the 1994 World Cup when it reached the semifinals for the first time.

Stoichkov now divides his time between the Bulgarian national side and Spain where he watches training sessions and analyses matches with his former coach, Dutch master Johan Cruyff.

"Almost every week I meet

Johan. We watch matches together and discuss different issues. I do not think I can find a better teacher than him," Stoichkov said.

The Bulgarian forward who won't the European Cup in 1992 with Barcelona — then coached by Cruyff — plans also to attend a coaching school in Germany or Italy.



HRISTO STOICHKOV

He waved good-bye to international soccer in June in the presence of Cruyff after Bulgaria's Euro 1994 qualifier against England, his 83rd appearance for the national team.

After 17 years and 37 goals for his country, Stoichkov vows: "The experience I have piled up playing abroad will help me now in my work."

He marked his debut as assistant coach under Dimitar Dimitrov in October when Bulgaria beat Luxembourg 3-0

in a Euro 2000 qualifier which unfortunately was just an academic exercise as Bulgaria were already eliminated from group five.

The 1994 European Footballer of the Year, who has refused to accept a salary in his new job, said he faced an uphill battle as "Bulgarian soccer is plunging down each day."

So one immediate target is to improve the players' professional standards, their lack of discipline and low training load.

"I think they want to get money first and then play while it should be vice versa," he said.

Stoichkov made a local history in 1990 when he was transferred from then champions CSKA Sofia to Barcelona for almost 4.0 million dollars an astronomical sum in immediate post-communist eastern Europe. And while he has been at the very top of the soccer pyramid, he believes the revival of Bulgarian soccer must start at grass-roots level.

The revival of children's and junior's soccer could give a boost to local soccer. But it is hard. Unfortunately, only a handful of clubs work to develop junior soccer," he said.

Ambitious but down to earth, Stoichkov said he knew what he had to do and would do it.

"I have always said: soccer is a simple game — but for clever people," he said.

There were few clever on the pitch than Stoichkov. If he can recreate that innate understanding off the pitch, Bulgarian soccer should be especially grateful.

Euro 2000 play-off Hendry confident of taking the field

GLASGOW, Nov 10: Scotland captain Colin Hendry has vowed to prove his fitness ahead of the Euro 2000 play-off with England at Hampden Park on Saturday, reports AFP.

There were fears the Rangers defender might be forced to withdraw from the squad today with a knee problem, but Hendry is determined to play a part in at least part of the double header.

Scotland manager Craig Brown will monitor Hendry's progress throughout the week with the player confident his shortage of match practice will not count against him.

Brown said he planned to offer a further update after training at the national stadium later on Tuesday.

He said: "There has been no change since yesterday and I would hope after the training session later we will be able to confirm all three of our doubtful players are available."

Alongside Hendry there are concerns over his libero colleague Barry Ferguson, who has a rib problem, and Hearts striker Gary McSwegan, whose hamstring is failing to respond to treatment.

But most of the focus was on Derby County-bound Hendry, who said: "More than anything I'm battling against the course of nature, but I'm still hopeful I'm going to make it."

"I know I cannot let my hurt rule my head and I won't take a risk if I don't feel right."

"Yet if I'm fit enough I'd like to think I can do a job for my country."

Friendly against Norway Germany's injury woes

COLOGNE, Germany, Nov 10: Injury has forced Germany coach Erich Ribbeck to drop two more players from his squad which will play Norway this Sunday in a friendly international in Oslo, reports AFP.

Bayer Leverkusen defender Jens Nowotny has a broken toe while goalkeeper Oliver Kahn will be rested after advice from Bayern Munich's physician Dr Hans-Wilhelm Muller-Wohlfahrt.

Kahn still recovering from disc problems in his neck and upper back. "Oliver Kahn's symptoms haven't got any worse but they are not better either so Erich Ribbeck has followed the doctor's advice and won't be taking him," German Football Federation (DFB) press spokesman Wolfgang Niersbach said Tuesday.

That opens the way for Hamburg's Hans-Jorg Butz to join the squad while Jens Lehmann moves up to take Kahn's place in goal.

Hertha Berlin midfielder Dariusz Wozniak remains an outside chance to play. He was meant to skip the Norway game because of a knee ligament strain but on Tuesday he let DFB medics examine the injury and will almost certainly fly to Oslo with the rest of the 18 man squad.

Friendly against Czech Rep. Hasselbank comes in for Van Hooijdonk

THE HAGUE, Nov 10: Atletico Madrid striker Jimmy Floyd Hasselbank has been called up Tuesday to replace Vitesse Arnhem forward Pierre van Hooijdonk in the Holland squad for Saturday's friendly with the Czech Republic at Eindhoven, reports AFP.

Van Hooijdonk is absent because of an abdominal muscle problem. Twenty-seven-year-old Hasselbank, who signed from English Premiership side Leeds in the summer, has scored two goals in six appearances for the national side.

Primo Nebiolo laid to rest

ROME, Nov 10: The funeral service for IAAF president Primo Nebiolo, which took place here on Tuesday, was a simple ceremony attended by leading personalities from the world of sport, reports AFP.

A commemorative ceremony took place in Rome's Marmi Stadium Tuesday afternoon followed by an hour-long religious service in the Sacro Cuore Immacolata di Maria Church, in Piazza Euclidea.

During the ceremony International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Juan Antonio Samaranch paid tribute to Nebiolo, who died of a heart attack on Saturday night at the age of 76 years.

Nebiolo's widow Giovanna was seated in the front pew beside Samaranch and former Italian premier, Giulio Andreotti, a long time personal friend of the deceased.

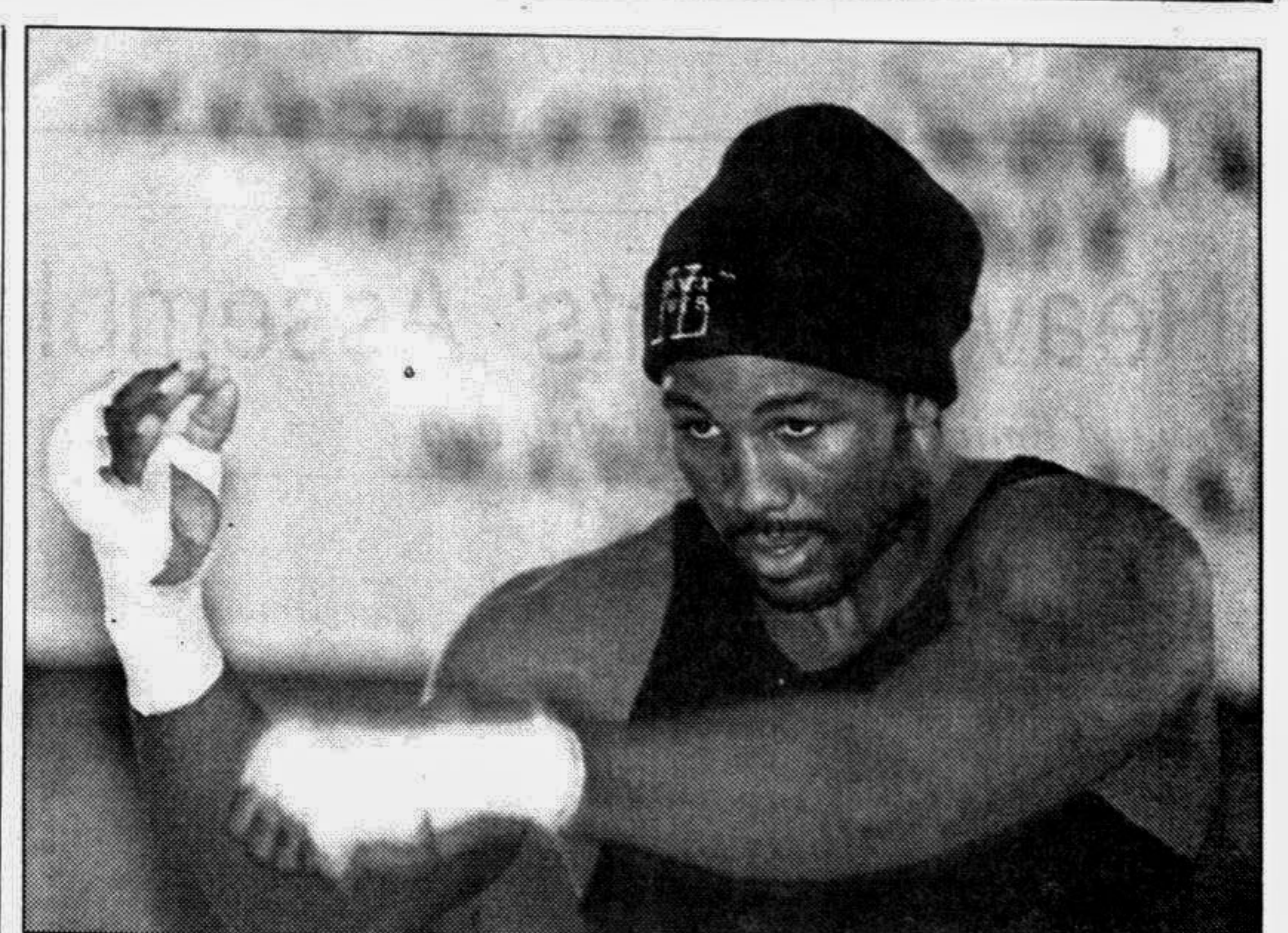
CONI president, Gianni Petrucci, also attended along with the Italian Athletics Federation president Gianni Gola, and the 23 members of the IAAF executive committee, headed by Lamine Diack, IAAF senior vice-president, appointed interim president Sunday of the athletic governing body.

Former Olympic 200m champion Pietro Mennea paid tribute to his former friend and mentor during his homely funeral.

While Sabatino Araceli, president of the Artistic Skating Federation said: "He was the first man who knew how to join management and sport."

Young Italian athletes, who carried out a vigil as Nebiolo lay in state at the "Sala d'Onore" (Hall of Fame) of the Italian National Olympic Committee on Monday night, formed a guard of honour at the Tuesday funeral ceremony.

Nebiolo will be buried Wednesday in his native Turin.



WBC champion Lennox Lewis during a workout session at a Las Vegas hotel on November 9.

Lewis expects a knockout

LAS VEGAS, Nov 10: Having thwarted Evander Holyfield's third-round knockout prediction in their first fight, Lennox Lewis has a knockout boast of his own for their heavyweight unification rematch, reports AFP.

"He's going to go down," Lewis said. "This is his retirement fight. It's time for him to retire. I'm going to make him retire."

Emanuel Steward, Lewis' trainer and a former Holyfield world champion, even has a round picked out here Saturday for Lewis to become the first British undisputed world heavyweight boxing champion in a century.

"I don't see any way any heavyweight in the world will win more than six rounds with him," Steward said. "His conditioning is great. He had the best training camp of any heavyweight I have had."

And Frank Maloney, Lewis' manager, got into the act Tuesday as well.

"This is a one-horse race. It's like a donkey against a thoroughbred. Evander is the donkey," Maloney said. "Lennox knocks out Holyfield. When depends on Holyfield."

The role reversal in pre-fight verbal taunts stems from a larceny draw in March when larger Lewis kept Holyfield at bay with superior reach. Instead of victory and two more titles, Lewis won only the re-

spect of fight fans despite landing three times as many blows as the American.

But public opinion remains a powerful force. Lewis has risen to pay parity with Holyfield at 15 million dollars each and Holyfield has spoken about the draw as the disappointing setback it truly was.

"I definitely have a lot more confidence," Lewis said. "Fans say I'm the true king. They believe I'm the uncrowned undisputed champion. It's my job to go and prove it. I can't wait to prove myself to the world."

Holyfield has spoken mainly of strategy and fixing errors this time instead of predicting knockouts as he did after Lewis labelled him a "hypocrite" in March for his Christian piety while fathering children out of wedlock.

"That was something I said out of anger," Holyfield said. "That guy showed himself to be better than I thought. After that third round, I had nothing left. I didn't want to be a quitter. I made it to the end and now I have another chance to face this guy."

"I will redeem myself and people will see a better Evander than they have ever seen in my whole boxing career."

Holyfield, who plans a post-fight rest to ponder his future regardless of the outcome, ripped Lewis' resolve as a facade pioneer than the global landmarks replicated at casinos along the famed Las Vegas Strip.

"People are listening to him. They give him some false confidence," Holyfield said. "When I resist him, he will go back to the Lennox Lewis of the first fight. I don't think it will work, whatever he tries to do."

Lewis expects to cause Holyfield some flashbacks as well.

"After I hit him a couple times, he is going to feel the memories of the first fight. He doesn't want to get hurt," Lewis said. "He is talking a lot of fallacy. He has lost a lot of respect from a lot of people."

Both fighters appeared fit in workouts. Holyfield's training sessions have been at night, a change from old morning habits to coincide with the start time of the fight and ward off tired feelings in past fights.

"When you're looking to make changes to be better, you can't take anything for granted," he said. "It's what I learn about myself. I have to go back and correct the mistakes."

Few are as good at it as Holyfield. He avenged first-fight losses to Riddick Bowe and Michael Moorer in rematches and looked stronger against Mike Tyson in their rematch halted by ear-biting. And he knows what he must do.

"I can't hunt for the head all the time," Holyfield said. "I have to go for the body and break him down. I have to take my head out of the way of some of those jabs and land some of these jabs and hooks."

Bribery affair upsets biggies

LAS VEGAS, Nov 10 (AFP): Lennox Lewis told you so. Evander Holyfield lamented fan and fighter woe. And promoter Don King said he never did anything wrong. Oh no, no, no.

Those were the reactions to boxing's latest scandal from the principal names in Saturday's heavyweight boxing unification rematch between Lewis and Holyfield after a controversial draw in New York last March.

International Boxing Federation (IBF) president Bob Lee was indicted on 32 federal charges of taking bribes to fix his sanctioning body's rankings to create title bouts for fighters whose promoters made payoffs.

The corruption came as no surprise to Lewis, the British fighter who appeared to have beaten Holyfield eight months ago only to settle for a draw when IBF-appointed judge Eugenia Williams saw Holyfield as a winner.

"I have it on good authority that before the first fight, Bob Lee said he had Holyfield as his champion," Lewis said. "He is the one who put Eugenia Williams into my fight."

"Now everything is coming out. It just confirms our suspicions of skulduggery."

Holyfield, who owns the IBF and World Boxing Association (WBA) titles, was unhappy that superior boxers were cheated out of championship bouts for bribes, depriving fans and fighters alike.

"It's sad," he said. "A lot of people didn't get their chances and the public got robbed of some good matches."

King was the only winner from the draw debacle that gave boxing a black eye and paved the way for legal reform. He got a lucrative rematch instead of an ouster from heavyweight title power with a Holyfield loss.

King also paid expenses and salaries for the judges in the first bout, including bankrupt Williams. King's offices were raided of paperwork by federal investigators but he was not charged.

"I would be shocked and amazed" to be indicted, King said. "I'm saying categorically I didn't bribe nobody. If you do your work, you don't have to bribe nobody."

King's contracts with fighters generally contain generous fees for services that dip deep into prize money and world title bouts, especially among

heavyweights, have clauses giving King promotion rights to the next title bout no matter which fighter wins, giving King no-lose positions.

"What's the preconceived notion I have got to be doing something wrong because I'm working hard and being number one for 30 years?" King said. "Maybe I ain't doing nothing."

King is criticizing long-time arch-rival Bob Arum, saying the un-indicted promoter should be a federal target despite King's love of a US legal premise of innocence until guilt is proven.

"If you're in the game, you don't play the game one way and be a link the other way," King said. "That kind of justice is not justice. If I'm going to seduce you, it's not just the seduce. (Arum) likes to bring temptation to the table. If you succumb to temptation you're condemned."

"But okay lonesome Bob, you can go."

Frank Maloney, Lewis' promoter, said he is not worried about judges appointed by Nevada authorities for this fight and said the sense of injustice over the draw helped Lewis more than a victory might have.



German football icon Lothar Matthaeus displaying his No 10 shirt of the New York/New Jersey MetroStars team during a media conference in New Jersey on November 9.

Matthaeus committed to MetroStars

NEW YORK, Nov 10: German national team captain Lothar Matthaeus said Tuesday that he will leave Bayern Munich at the end of the year despite pressure to remain and will join the New York/New Jersey MetroStars of Major League Soccer, reports Reuters.

Bayern president Franz Beckenbauer, who played for the star-studded New York Cosmos a generation ago, wants the veteran defender to remain with his team through the 1999-2000 Bundesliga season, according to a source close to Matthaeus.

Matthaeus reached the second stage of the European Champions League last week.

"I have a commitment to Bayern through December 31 and I am member of the MetroStars on January 1," Matthaeus told a news conference which introduced him to US media.

"Of course it's a difficult decision which I made long ago. I'm not someone who looks back. I am someone who looks forward."

A number of Bayern officials, including former German international forward Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, are trying to convince Matthaeus, one of only two players to have played in five World Cups, to stay through the season, the source said.

Matthaeus, who needs only one international appearance to tie the world record of 143 held by Swedish goalkeeper Thomas Ravelli, has stated in the past he would like to play for Germany at the 2000 European Championship this summer.

"If the coach calls me up for next year's European Championship, we'll see what happens," he said.

Matthaeus is scheduled to play in his final Bundesliga match against Werder Bremen on December 18, take a vacation and report for MLS preseason training in Florida in February.

He is expected to boost the sagging fortunes of the MetroStars, who finished with a league all-time worst record of 7-25 under former coach Bora Milutinovic.

The MetroStars are seeking a new coach after Milutinovic

and the club parted ways two weeks ago.

"I don't think one player alone can make a difference," Matthaeus said. "With a new commitment from the players, hopefully the team can be successful."

Asked about the quality of the play in the four-year-old league, Matthaeus replied, "I feel the level of play here in America is not as bad as it has been made out to be."

Matthaeus, who turns 39 on March 12, signed a one-year contract in August with Major League Soccer, which allocated him to the MetroStars.

"Obviously, I'm not the youngest one anymore," he said. "I have to take things one year at a time. If this is the year I am still having fun, I would consider playing soccer (for another year)."

In a sporting gesture, MetroStars captain Tab Ramos presented Matthaeus with his No 10 jersey. US national team star Ramos has always worn that number.

"The league may go on for another 100 years," Ramos said. "We might not have another player like Lothar Matthaeus."

Bebeto has had enough

MEXICO CITY, Nov 10: Brazilian veteran Beбето said he planned to leave Mexican club Neza, accusing directors of refusing to pay him and trying him to force him to play when injured, reports Reuters.

Bebeto, who played in the 1994 and 1998 World Cup for his country, told Reuters in an interview that for the last week he has been forced to train separately from his team-mates.

"Without doubt, I'm leaving in two weeks' time when the season ends," he said.

"I've got a two-year contract but there's no way I'm staying here that long. I hope that FIFA intervene to get me out of this, because I'm in excellent shape and there's no reason for me to train alone."

He (Neza president Juan Antonio Hernandez) sent a letter to the Mexican Federation telling lies. He said I had to train apart because I'm a troublemaker, but fortunately my curriculum says otherwise and I'm known the world over."

Bebeto, 35, joined Neza, nicknamed Toros (the Bulls), in July for what has turned into a miserable experience. He has scored only one goal and missed several games through injury.

His team have the worst record in the championship, having won only three out of 15 games.

I'm sure that if I had come to a big team like Toluca, America, Cruz Azul, Necaxa or Atlas, I would have been different because they're professionals. My bad luck here was with the management because my team-mates have been excellent."

In August, club directors said they would stop paying midfielders Camilo Romero and Nicolas Ramirez as well as Argentine striker German Arango because their performances had not been upto scratch.

Bebeto played 74 full internationals and scored 37 goals in an international career spanning 13 years. His last appearance was against France in last year's World Cup final.

He also played in the 1988 and 1996 Olympic teams. He says he has had offers from the United States, Brazil and other Mexican clubs to continue his career.

Cvitanovic returns to Croatia ZAGREB, Nov 10: Croatian international Igor Cvitanovic has transferred from Spanish side Real Sociedad to his former club Croatia Zagreb on a two year deal worth 1.6 million dollars, it was revealed Tuesday, reports AFP.

Cvitanovic, who has scored 104 goals in his career, played with Croatia Zagreb between 1989 and 1997, before transferring to Sociedad, based in the Basque city of San Sebastian.



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