

Group of life!

AUCKLAND, Nov 15: They call it the group of death and for Germany, Mali, Brazil and Australia Group C at the World Under-17 Soccer Championship in New Zealand has lived up to its billing as the tournament's toughest, reports AFP.

With one match to play, all four sides can still qualify for the quarterfinals although Brazil and Australia have a slight edge going into Wednesday's decisive round when Brazil play Germany and Australia faced Mali.

"This group is dynamic," said Australian coach Les Scheinflug.

Brazil led with four points after a scoreless draw with Mali in Christchurch on Sunday.

Australia are second with three points after a late goal by captain Mark Byrnes clinched a come-from-behind 2-1 win over a devastated German side.

Mali, who have dominated both their games but are yet to score a goal, have two points from two 0-0 draws, and Germany have one.

Defending champions Brazil are yet to produce their expected flair but coach Carlos Cesar was happy with a "very, very nice result" against Mali.

"We keep our position as first in the group, and if we get a draw against Germany, we will qualify," he said.

Cesar felt the odds favoured Brazil and Australia, because Germany and Mali had to beat them to qualify.

But there was no denying, he said, this was the strongest group.

"All the others have two good teams and two weak teams. But here, all the teams are strong."

**ROK soccer boss off to North**

SEOUL, Nov 15: South Korea's top soccer official left for North Korea Monday with hopes that the North's communist government will agree to take part in the 2002 World Cup, reports AP.

"I'll ask North Korea to decide as early as possible," Chung Mong-Joon said at an airport news conference.

He said the North Korean decision should come before FIFA, soccer's world governing body, holds a meeting in Tokyo in early December to announce groupings for the 2002 World Cup final.

South Korea, as a co-hosts of the 2002 World Cup with Japan, have the right to stage 32 matches. They have offered two games to North Korea but Pyongyang have not responded.

Chung, heading an eight-member delegation, was to fly into North Korea Tuesday by way of Beijing. His group included several top officials of the South Korean Football Association.

In addition to the World Cup, Chung said he plans to discuss with North Korean officials inter-Korea soccer exchanges and the creation of a new North Asia soccer tournament involving the two Koreas, Japan and China.

Inter-Korea soccer exchanges could lead to the formation of a single Korean team for all future FIFA-organized international events, said Chung, who also serves as a FIFA vice-president.

Chung's trip, originally scheduled for early this year, was twice postponed because of procedural and other reasons.

Chung's visit is at the invitation of the North's Asia-Pacific Peace Committee, a quasi-governmental group headed by Kim Young Sun, a close confidant of North Korean leader Kim Jong Il.

Chung said he was not sure whether he will be allowed to meet the North Korean leader.

Chung's father, Chung Ju-yung, founder and owner of Seoul's giant Hyundai business group, has met Kim Jong Il twice in the past year.

Sports exchanges between the two Koreas are always vulnerable to political and military tensions. The Koreas technically are still enemies.

Star women beat USA

EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey, Nov 15: Roselli of Brazil and Patience Avre of Nigeria each scored three goals Sunday night as a women's world star soccer team beat the United States 12-7, reports AP.

Shannon Schallan scored three times for the US team, which lost its fourth straight game. The Americans are 2-4 in their 12-game exhibition tour.

A crowd of 14,525, the largest so far in the series, watched the Americans return to the area where their drive to the 1999 World Cup championship began.

"It's a celebration. We're doing this to thank the fans," Julie Foudy said. "That's why we're playing indoors in a more intimate setting. It's a good show, it enables us to get close to the fans. And even with the losses, I think there are a lot of positives."

"Indoor is a completely different game," she said. "Since we won the World Cup, everybody is gunning for us. We hate to lose. I haven't lost four straight anything since high school volleyball."

Hege Rise of Norway snapped the 5-5 tie with a goal in the 41st minute. Avre made it 7-5 two minutes later and Julie Murray of Australia added another a minute later and celebrated by pulling off her shirt in the same manner that US defender Brandi Chastain had done after her World Cup-winning penalty.

Laurie Hill of Mexico, Murray and Rise each had two goals for the world team. Foudy, Chastain, Carla Overbeck and Cindy Parlow each had a goal for the US team.



Oeyvind Leonhardsen (R) of Norway leaving behind a host of German defenders during their international friendly at Oslo on November 14. —AFP photo

Germany's chancy win

OSLO, Nov 15: European champions Germany turned football logic on its head Sunday evening when, despite having rings around them by Norway, they walked away with an undeserved 1-0 victory secured in the final second, reports AFP.

It was truly a great escape and rarely can a side consider itself so lucky. The millennium ought to have ended badly for the Germans who slipped back into their worst ways on an icy Oslo evening.

If it hadn't been for a combination of keeper Jens Lehmann and good luck, Norway would quite rightly have scored their first victory over Germany since the Berlin Olympic games in 1933.

In the end though the friendly match turned into a free kick - the final touch of the evening - two minutes into injury time.

He lifted the ball over a wall of red shirts onto the leading edge of the near post and, amid an atmosphere of disbelief among the 19,000 fans, was celebrated as the match winner.

The Norwegians were tactically clever and covered up their half well, while we often lost the ball in the first half or failed to bring it under control or foolishly just slammed it away when we weren't under pressure and that allowed Norway to take possession," said German veteran Lothar Matthaeus.

The 38-year-old was playing his 143rd international Sunday equalling the world record of Swedish keeper Thomas Ravelli.

"It was obvious that Norway didn't qualify for the European championship - and qualified easily - by accident," Matthaeus added. "They are a team to be reckoned with."

Both sides were keen to try out new ideas in the lead up to Euro 2000 and five substitutions were agreed on beforehand to give all a chance.

Germany sent out an offensive unit with four men nominated for goal scoring duties. Central strikers Oliver Bierhof and Ulf Kirsten remained unsighted though and, as pre-arranged, Kirsten made way for Hertha Berlin's Magic Mouse' Dariusz Wozniak at half time, who laboured in spite of a knee ligament strain.

Most of the action though came before the break and all of it on behalf of Norway. The Scandinavians ought to have taken at least three goals with them into the break as Germany's defence puffed steam and froze in place.

Oeyvind Leonhardsen's low shot on 10 minutes was pushed aside by keeper Lehmann but he could do nothing to defuse the resulting corner kick.

Lured out to punch the ball, Steffen Iversen's header to play to continue.

Shortly afterwards, in the 14th minute, Iversen and Leonhardsen combined beautifully again but the latter's shot from 15 metres flew unhindered into Lehmann's arms.

Manchester United's superb' Ole-Gunnar Solskjaer replaced the injured Iversen after a heavy collision on the half hour and minutes later ought to have put the Norwegians ahead but missed an open net from directly in front.

Germany barely had time to catch their breath when Vegard Heggem broke through their defensive line too only to have his shot thwarted by Lehmann's leg in the 38th minute.

The visitors knew they had ridden their luck as far as it could go by that point and breathed deeply when they allowed to retreat to the dressing rooms to regroup.

"We were permanently under pressure in the first half and never got our game going but improved after that and at least had an equal share of the ball," said German coach Erich Ribbeck.

"We don't talk enough. Two of our guys in the first half blocked each other when they had space to move. That's a sign there's not enough communication. It's something we keep talking about at training."

"But I think if we stick to the same bunch of players leaders will slowly begin to appear and they will open their mouths a bit more on the pitch."

Norway pressed on after the break but with not quite the same intensity, clearly in control but still lacking incisive finishing. Only a 70th minute header from Liverpool midfielder Dieter Hamann, which was cleared on the line, gave them any indication of the nightmare to come.

The Germans pulled themselves together in the second half but it was certainly not sufficient to warrant Mehmet Scholl's lady fortune free kick at the end of the game which secured them their 1-0 victory.

"Sometimes luck is all part of the game," Ribbeck added.

pressing his "disappointment" at the amount of booing, which was the loudest that many observers had ever heard inside a sporting arena during a national anthem.

The England coach routinely issues an appeal immediately before matches at Wembley over the public address system for the visiting team's anthem to be respected by home supporters - with only a certain measure of success.

But on this occasion he felt the need to issue a public statement three days before the game urging restraint from England fans to ensure the Scottish players are not given any extra inspiration to overturn the 2-0 deficit from the first leg.

Keegan said: "While we were all disappointed by the national anthem being booted on Saturday, it did help make our players even more determined."

"So before anyone thinks about booing Flower of Scotland on Wednesday night, just think what it may do to their players."

"Please make yourself heard"

**Kaiser voted player-of-the century**

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Fritz Walter, the captain of the 1954 World Cup-winning side, came a distant second with 135 votes. Former Bayern and Germany striker Gerd Mueller was third on 67.

The 1954 World Cup squad won the team of the century award and their coach, Sepp Herberger, was voted the best trainer.

Israel coach won't take responsibility

JERUSALEM, Nov 14: A defiant Shlomo Sharf, coach of Israel's national football side, rejected calls for his dismissal Sunday and said he was not responsible for his team's 5-0 trouncing at the hands of Denmark, reports AFP.

"I am not to blame," Sharf told the Maariv paper after the Danes walloped Israel in the first leg of a playoff tie Saturday for the Euro 2000 finals and all but guaranteed the Israelis are on their way out of the competition.

"I don't draw any personal conclusions from the result. It's happened before to more prestigious teams than ours," he said.

But Gabry Levy, head of the Israeli football association, echoed furious calls in the national press for Sharf's dismissal following the team's hapless home performance.

"It's time to get the Israeli team ready for a new coach," he told Maariv, which headlined its front-page story on the shutout: "The Great Shame."

"Everyone remembers our team once beat Austria 5-0 but our shameful performance against Denmark on Saturday makes the return leg in Copenhagen a pitiful joke and demands Sharf's rapid dismissal," said Maariv, which published a picture of the coach with his face buried in his hands.

Denmark never looked back after opening Saturday's scoring in the second minute, going on to add four more at Israel's Ramat Gan stadium while the home side were reduced to 10 men in the second half.

Yediot Aharonot also blasted Israel's "humiliation," saying that Denmark would go on to next summer's Euro 2000 finals in the Netherlands and Belgium while Israel will simply "continue to dream."

"There's only one conclusion to be drawn," the daily said. "Sharf has not properly prepared the team and his tenure at the helm has ended -- in catastrophe."

Derby striker denied entry

DERBY, England, Nov 15: Derby County striker Esteban Furler has been forced to return to Argentina after being refused re-entry to Britain at London's Heathrow airport, reports AFP.

The incident occurred on Saturday as the Derby squad returned from a training camp in Portugal.

As a result of a discrepancy in his passport, the 26-year-old has flown home to Argentina.

A club statement read: "Derby County Football Club can confirm that their Argentinian striker Esteban Furler was questioned by immigration officials at Heathrow Airport on Saturday as Derby's squad returned from a training camp in Portugal."

As a result of a discrepancy in his passport, Furler has now flown home to Argentina. Derby County are currently taking legal advice and consequently will not be adding to this statement for the time being.

Ince to meet his nemesis again

LONDON, Nov 15: Italian referee Pierluigi Collina, who sent off Paul Ince in England's opening Euro 2000 qualifier against Sweden last year, has been assigned to take charge of Wednesday's play-off second leg with Scotland at Wembley, reports AFP.

Collina, renowned for being a strict disciplinarian, dismissed midfielder Ince in Stockholm for two bookable offences.

England lead 2-0 following their success at Hampden Park on Saturday.

Luxemburgo demands justice

MELBOURNE, Australia, Nov 15: Brazil coach Wanderley Luxemburgo on Monday blasted Australia for their rough tactics in Sunday's clash -- prompting a "stop whingeing" retort from Aussie coach Frank Farina, reports AFP.

Brazil's 2-0 win in Sydney on Sunday was tainted by some violent challenges by Australian defenders, including what appeared to be a headbutt on midfielder Marcos Paulo.

After watching a match video on Monday, Luxemburgo was fuming.

"I disliked a lot of scenes before a free-kick is taken when Marcos Paulo gets hit by an Australian with his head," Luxemburgo said.

"That is very unsporting," he said.

Luxemburgo called on the referee in Wednesday night's return match here to punish fouls with yellow and red cards. One tackle on Sunday

Brazil's left winger Dede with a badly damaged knee. Dede was due to fly back to Germany.



LUXEMBURGO

where he plays with Borussia Dortmund, for further treatment.

"I was surprised by the violent tackling of some of the Australian players, some of my players became injured and others could have become even more injured," Luxemburgo said.

Farina and star Socceroo striker Mark Viduka accused the Brazilians of making too much of the issue and said tough tackling was a part of the game.

"I wouldn't say it was violent at all, they were very hard tackles," Farina said.

"There were one or two that were badly timed, but that's unfortunate, that's football, these things happen and I'm not going to tell the boys not to go in for tackles."

"Everyone calls them friendly games, but I've never played in a friendly game in my life," the Australian coach said.

Viduka said: "A couple of the tackles were a little bit harsh but that's how it is in football."

Injured Bosnich sent back

MELBOURNE, Australia, Nov 15: Australian goalkeeper Mark Bosnich returned to England late Monday after injuring his hamstring during Australia's 2-0 loss to Brazil on Sunday, reports AFP.

Bosnich, who was urgently recalled by European champions Manchester United, will miss the second game here on Wednesday night when the Socceroos will be desperate for a much-improved performance.

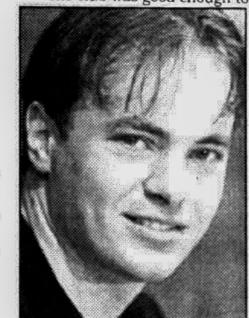
Bosnich was forced out of the friendly international after limping off in the second half at Sydney's Olympic stadium and now faces a battle to be fit for United's match at Derby County on Saturday.

"I explained that my medical staff didn't believe he would be fit in time for Wednesday night's game, and it has been determined that it was in Mark's best interest for him to go back to Manchester United today,"

Australian coach Frank Farina said.

"The club are desperate to get him back because they want to get a look at it, assess it, see how it is, but he'll be right, there's no problems."

"The club was good enough to



MARK BOSNICH

send him out here and unfortunately this has happened, so I'm not going to even bother about it," he said.

Brisbane Strikers goalkeeper Clint Bolton will join the Australian squad in Melbourne while Dutch-based Zeljko Kalac - who replaced Bosnich late in yesterday's game - is set to start in goal on Wednesday.

Glasgow Celtic striker Mark Viduka remains doubtful after missing the first game with a thigh strain. But he is hopeful of playing before his hometown crowd.

"My chances are pretty good at this stage, I didn't want to risk it yesterday because I got the injury a couple of days before the game so it was a bit early, but hopefully I'll be right for Wednesday night," Viduka said.

Florentina's Paul Okon was also troubled by a groin strain, which will be put to the test when the Australians train on Tuesday morning.

Ninety rare minutes of relief

EURO 2000

DUZCE, Turkey, Nov 15: A violent aftershock reminded could and weary Turks of the horror of their latest earthquake even as they sought 90 minutes of escape on Saturday to cheer on their national soccer team against Ireland, reports Reuters.

A group of around 80 men huddled into a small transport cafe on the main road outside the quake-stricken northwest town of Duzce to watch the

European international match on a screen hanging in the corner of the room.

Bundled in jumpers and winter jackets, they drank glass after glass of steaming tea and filled the air with cigarette smoke. The windows of the Silyri Cafe, one of few places with electricity in the region, dripped with condensation from the icy cold outside.

The crowd exploded in cheers as Turkish player Yavuz Havutcu equalised with a late penalty to make the score 1-1 in the Euro 2000 playoff game.

But two minutes later half the men were charging for the doors as the building shuddered violently in an aftershock, a grim reminder of the devastation and fear brought by Friday's earthquake, measuring 7.2 on the Richter scale.

As the game was broadcast, the latest official death toll stood at 362 and most of the crowd had been awake for more than 24 hours as they struggled to rescue the hundreds still trapped under collapsed homes.

Among the spectators was a team of emergency workers from the Aegean town of Usak. They had just returned from Istanbul where they had delivered to hospital an old woman with serious burns from a fire in an apartment block.

"You can't live with this sort of stress all the time. This is a chance to relax," Asim Ada said as he sipped tea and cracked nuts.

Like most of the spectators, he found it hard to concentrate on the game. Many of the unshaven and dusty men stared wanly into the middle distance, exhausted.

Five minutes after kickoff they managed a groan of disappointment when the generator

gave out and plunged the room into darkness. Cafe staff got it running again 10 minutes later.

The 1-1 draw puts Turkey in a strong position for the return match on Wednesday. That will be played in the Turkish city of Bursa, on the fringes of Friday's quake and of the August tremor that killed more than 17,000 people.

"Not a bad result, I'm pleased with that," said rescue worker Kasim Karahan. "The team had to do well tonight for Turkey after what has happened."

Then he joined the flow of weary men back into the icy night to rejoin the rescue effort or to stamp their feet around blazing bonfires lit to keep the cold at bay.

Goalkeeper blow for Germans

AUCKLAND, Nov 15: Germany's hopes in the under-17 world soccer championships at New Zealand have suffered a severe blow with news that goalkeeper Jan Schlosser is highly doubtful for their must-win match against Brazil on Wednesday, reports AFP.

The brilliant Bayern Munich junior had to be stretched off when he collided with Australian midfielder Wayne Srhoj after a corner just before halftime in Germany's game against Australia on Sunday.

Srhoj got a yellow card for the incident, which came as Germany were leading 1-0 in a game they finally lost 2-1.

A German team official confirmed Schlosser had suffered concussion and was unlikely to be available against Brazil.

Keegan for good behaviour



KEVIN KEEGAN

pressing his "disappointment" at the amount of booing, which was the loudest that many observers had ever heard inside a sporting arena during a national anthem.

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cheering on England rather than inspiring Scotland's players.

With at least one eye apparently on England's bid to host the 2006 World Cup, Football Association executive director David Davies added: "There will be a worldwide audience for the Wembley game so it's an opportunity for our fans to set a good example."

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Former vocalist of English band Take That Robbie Williams (L) playing in an 'England vs Scotland' charity football match between Robbie's XI and Calton Athletic as part of a Drugs rehabilitation and prevention project in Glasgow on November 14. —AFP photo

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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Crossword grid with numbers 1-39 indicating starting positions for words.

CRYPTOQUIP T B G X G J I Q C X J C J W L N C R F G I J C C X G F L N T W N X R D C I T D D G Q R B G I J W X R I Q Yesterday's Cryptquip: WON'T STEEL WORKERS STRIKE WHILE THE IRON IS HOT? Today's Cryptquip clue: J equals A