

Spirited Spain take on weary Argentina

MADRID, Nov 16: An exhibition match Wednesday in Seville between the national teams of Spain and Argentina pits two teams in drastically different moods, reports AP.

For Spain, these are sweet times. The team is savouring praise in the local press for their performance against the legendary Brazilian national team in a friendly match Saturday night in Vigo in northwest Spain.

The game ended in a scoreless tie but Spain dominated and was widely credited as having deserved to win.

Spain have also qualified for the European Championship tournament next year after dominating Group 6, winning six of their seven games and outscoring opponents by 39-5. National coach Jose Antonio Camacho has reached an almost godlike status in Spain.

Argentina, meanwhile, are feeling demoralised after suffering a 2-0 loss in Barcelona Sunday in a friendly with Espanyol, a Catalan team walloping in ninth place in the Spanish domestic league.

It was the fifth loss for Marcelo Bielsa as coach of the Argentine national side.

World Youth soccer scores

AUCKLAND, Nov 16: Ghana thumped Thailand 7-1 Tuesday to finish top of Group B at the under-17 world soccer championship while Mexico gained the second playoff spot by upsetting Spain 1-0, reports AP.

New Zealand scored an upset 2-1 win over Poland, relegating the Poles to bottom place in Group A.

Tyson may fight in Europe

NEW YORK, Nov 16: Former undisputed heavyweight champion Mike Tyson will return to the ring on Saturday, January 15 in either the United Kingdom or Germany, Showtime Boxing announced yesterday, reports Reuters.

Tyson's opponent is yet to be named.

It will be the first fight for Tyson since his October 23 no contest when opponent Orlin Norris

Cuban eves retain title

NAGOYA, Japan, Nov 16: All-conquering Cuba proved they are back in top form again by beating top favourites Russia to win the World Cup women's volleyball tournament for the fourth time in a row today, reports AP.

The Cuban women, who have suffered several upset losses this season, regained their pride with their 25-19, 25-15, 25-19 victory over the European champions, the current world number one team.

Ben the loser!

TORONTO, Nov 16: Banned sprinter Ben Johnson has apparently failed another doping test — one that he himself has arranged in his continuing fight for reinstatement by Canadian authorities, reports Reuters.

Johnson's agent, Morris Chrobotek, confirmed yesterday to Canadian Press, the national news agency, that Johnson had tested positive for a banned diuretic in October, but said it was taken for medical reasons to assuage severe pain.

Nat'l men's h'ball on

The 13th national men's handball championship began at the Mirpur National Indoor Stadium yesterday, reports UNB.

Six matches were decided on the opening day, till fling this report with five matches deciding in the morning and the rest one in the afternoon.

Dhaka outplayed Pabna by 30-5 goals, Bangladesh Police beat Jhalakati 36-18, Natore defeated Panchagarh 27-22. Chittagong crushed Faridpur 30-9 and Rajshahi beat Dinajpur 32-14 in the morning session.

Dhaka defeated Jessore 32-16 after dominating the first half by 14-9 in the lone match held in the afternoon.

Bengal beat

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embarrassment of a heavy defeat. The gritty goalkeeper saved two certain attempts by Shaikh Sanjeeb and Raman Vijayan. On another occasion, he tipped a powerful shot from Jackson over the bar. Besides, Vijayan was also guilty of shooting wide from close at least on three occasions.

The goal came when Das, chased down a through from Jackson and side-stepped Mohammed Sujon and Fattai to shoot home past an advancing Titumear.

Jagaran, who meet Goa-based Churchill Brothers on November 18, need to rev up their game if they want to cross the hurdle of the knockout first round.

CGA v'ball

The CGA Volleyball Cup '99 organised by the Office of the Controller General of Accounts, began on Monday, says a press release.

CGA Asif Ali inaugurated the tournament at the office premises.

Pressure on Ukraine, Ireland

Danes, English can afford to relax



PARIS, Nov 16: England are odds-on favourites to earn their place in the Euro 2000 finals following Wednesday's second leg of Euro 2000 qualifiers against Scotland at Wembley, reports AFP.

Denmark have an even easier task in at home to Israel though everything is still to play for when Ireland travel to Turkey. Meanwhile little Slovenia are on the verge of upstaging glamorous Ukraine after their first leg win.

All 16 nations for next year's finals in Belgium and Holland will be known following the four ties.

SCOTLAND - ENGLAND

It is 50 years since Scotland achieved the kind of result at Wembley they need to overturn their 2-0 first leg deficit.

The Scots' 3-1 success at Wembley in 1949 was the last time they beat their neighbours by two clear goals at the so-called venue of legends.

The Scots would be better off not consulting the history books if they are looking for comfort. They have mustered just three goals in their last 10 encounters with England and last won at Wembley 18 years ago.

Adding to Scottish pessimism is the fact that Kevin Gallacher, probably their most technically gifted striker, misses the Wembley return after getting himself booked for a pointless tackle on Michael Owen at Hampden.

Judging by his aimless finishing on Saturday, that may be a blessing in disguise for coach Craig Brown, though his likely replacement, Gary McSwegan, is hardly Ronaldo - and he has

been struggling with injury. Midfielder Don Hutchison is also facing a race to get fit after picking up a calf strain.

Keegan holds all the aces, although his England side hardly look like they will set Europe alight at next year's finals.

Keegan is likely to stick with largely the same side, though he may opt to field Leicester's Steve Guppy to deliver some crosses in from the left flank, with Phil Neville missing out.

Goalkeeper David Seaman is expected to be fit despite missing training with a calf injury on Monday.

TURKEY - IRELAND

Ireland have a tough task in Bursa, Turkey, having conceded a late goal for a 1-1 draw in Dublin and with Robbie Keane suspended.

Keane scored with 11 minutes to go to give them a well-deserved lead but was booked for dissent following the penalty decision only three minutes later.

Lee Carsley handled the ball and Swedish referee Anders Frisk did not hesitate in signalling a spot kick. Tayfur Havutcu stepped up to knock the ball home and give the Turks the edge for the return.

Goalkeeper Alan Kelly had already been sent back to Blackburn for treatment on a groin injury before the Irish set out on a marathon eight-hour journey to Turkey.

But a roll-call of other casualties also revealed fitness doubts over centre backs Kenny Cunningham and Gary Breen, who both have knee injuries, midfielder Lee Carsley, suffering from bruised Achilles tendons, and full back Steve Carr with a hamstring strain.

McCarthy remains hopeful that all four will be fit in time and that striker Niall Quinn, who was an 11th hour withdrawal on Saturday with a neck muscle injury, will also be available.

And the manager has already decided that David Connolly will take Robbie Keane's place on Wednesday in preference to veteran Tony Cascarino,

who won his 87th cap in the first league game.

Charlton goalkeeper Dean Kiely, having replaced the stricken Kelly as a 61st minute substitute on Saturday, is certain to make his full debut even though Oldham's Gary Kelly - Alan's older brother - was due to join the squad as emergency cover.

UKRAINE - SLOVENIA

Slovenia, only a country since January 1992 following the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, have a chance to qualify after their surprise 2-1 win over Ukraine in Ljubljana.

Milenko Acimovic hit an astonishing late goal against Ukraine, who had both Dmitri Parfintov and Andrii Husin sent off and therefore out for the return match.

Acimovic, himself surprised that his 50m job sailed past Alexandr Shovkovsky into the net, is optimistic they can go through. "I am confident and I believe that we can reach the European championship finals," he said.

Coach Srecko Katanec was not quite as upbeat about their chances to say: "I am well aware how narrow a victory this is. We must narrow our feet firmly on the ground."

DENMARK - ISRAEL

Denmark's 5-0 thrashing of Israel in Ramat Gan has surely meant they will earn their place following the Copenhagen fixture.

The 43,000 spectators at the Ramat Gan stadium saw a comprehensive display of attacking football culminating in goals for Jon Dahl Tomasson (2), Stig Tofte, Martin Jorgensen and finally Brian Steen Nielsen.

Israel's Haim Revivo was, meanwhile, sent off in the 58th minute for a reckless challenge when the home side were two goals adrift and will be out of the second leg.

Denmark will not have forgotten their victory run in this competition seven years ago. In 1992, they replaced Yugoslavia because of the war in the Balkans and became surprising yet popular champions.

Brown not smiling



LONDON, Nov 16: Scotland's 3-1 success at Wembley in 1949 was the last time they beat their neighbours by two clear goals at the so-called venue of legends and they need a repeat of that spirit to overturn their 2-0 first leg deficit against England in the return leg of their Euro 2000 play-off, reports AFP.

As one respected English soccer writer put it after England's 2-0 first leg success at Hampden Park on Saturday: "If they can't defend a 2-0 lead at Wembley against this sort of opposition, England should take up tiddlywinks."

Limp-wristed defending by the Scots allowed English forward Paul Scholes to twice drive a dagger through the not-so-brave hearts at Hampden and the Scots will travel south fearing the worst in the English capital on Wednesday.

Coach Craig Brown's position has already been questioned following the Hampden horror show when Scotland failed abjectly to break down a mean English side happy to sit on its lead.

Brown admits it would be "remarkable" if his team were to overturn the deficit though rightly he recognises that the Scots will be written off at England's peril.

"If we get an early goal the match will open up," he said. "It's important we did a third goal (at Hampden). We are in touch. But Kevin (Keegan) must be feeling supremely optimistic."

The Scots' woes were mounted by the suspension of striker Kevin Gallacher, who got himself booked for a pointless tackle on Michael Owen at Hampden.

For Brown, his likely replacement is Gary McSwegan. "We expect McSwegan to be fit," Brown said. "And we have good options up front with



CRAIG BROWN

Mark Burchill is also in contention, which is why I put him on at the end of the game."

Midfielder Don Hutchison is also an injury worry.

Bravehearts' Wembley challenge

LONDON, Nov 16(AFP): Scotland must reverse a 2-0 deficit at Wembley on Wednesday to advance to next summer's European Championships at the expense of Kevin Keegan's England.

The Scots have won by two goals on English soil on only four occasions and just once since the Second World War.

Two-goal wins:
1877 (at Kennington Oval): England 1 Scotland 3
1881 (Kennington Oval): England 1 Scotland 6
1928 (Wembley): England 1 Scotland 5
1949 (Wembley): England 1 Scotland 3
Scotland's other Wembley wins:

1938: England 0 Scotland 1
1951: England 2 Scotland 3
1963: England 1 Scotland 2
1967: England 2 Scotland 3
1977: England 1 Scotland 2
1981: England 0 Scotland 1

Keegan defends charges



LONDON, Nov 16: England coach Kevin Keegan has angrily rounded on critics who belittled his side's achievement in beating Scotland in Glasgow on Saturday, reports AFP.

England won 2-0 at Hampden to take a firm grip on their two-legged Euro 2000 play-off against the Auld Enemy but certain sections of the media have suggested it was a case of one mediocre side beating another.

"I think you're totally disrespected the opposition," snapped Keegan in response to a question from a reporter on Monday.

"My job is to build the players up, some of yours is to pull them down again."

"You carry on pulling them down and I'll keep building them up," Keegan added, saying: "I think the performance on

Saturday was excellent." The England coach was speaking as his side reunited in preparation for the return leg of the tie at Wembley on Wednesday.

England's two-goal first leg hero Paul Scholes missed training, though, to see his baby. Scholes travelled home but was due to return to the England camp later on Monday, while goalkeeper David Seaman also missed training.

Keegan said: "Paul's wife rang up a little concerned about the baby, but it's nothing."

"He will be back this afternoon. Missing a morning's training won't do him too much harm."

"David Seaman has not trained either. He has a slight problem, but other than that we had everyone there."

"It would be a first for me if I could say 'same again'. There have always been so many changes with injuries and suspensions in my previous matches in charge."

Keegan did not elaborate on Seaman's injury, but if he is not fit Leeds stopper Nigel Martyn will take over in goal.

Keegan also came to the de-

fence of Liverpool midfielder Jamie Redknapp, the one England player who came in for criticism in the win at Hampden when he was playing out of position on the left.

"I thought he did terrific," said Keegan.

"Would he sooner be in the side playing on the left or not playing? I know what the answer will be."

"It was his best game for England while I have been in charge and gave Paul Scholes the chance to push forward and do what he does best."

"When push came to shove and you looked at the players and the game and the opposition I felt experience was the key thing, and in spite of being a young lad he was an experienced player. He's captain of Liverpool."

"I asked him to do a job and he did an excellent job. Other people disagree."

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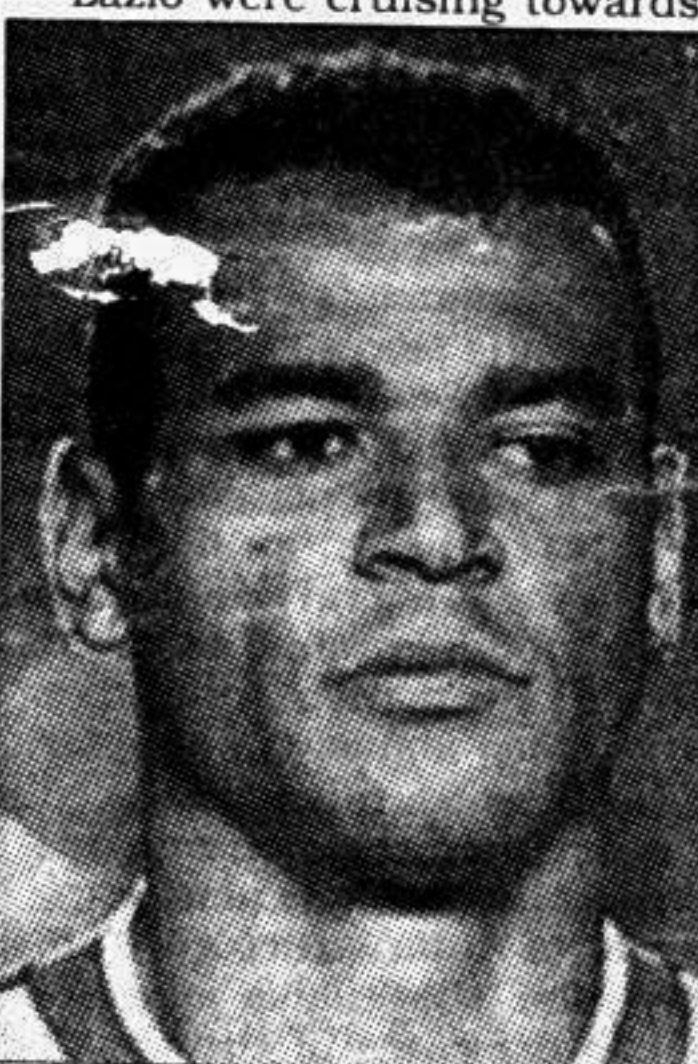
—Sports Editor

Series A All roads lead to Rome

ROME, Nov 16: Top Lazio defender Nestor Sensini reckons that this weekend's derby with AS Roma could be a turning point for the league title, reports AP.

Rome plays host to the most charged derby in Italian soccer in any season. But Sunday's will be even more frantic as Lazio look to avenge a defeat earlier this year which cost them the championship.

Lazio were cruising towards



CAPU

the title when they lost a late season derby, with the psychological after-effects sending the team into a tailspin and allowing AC Milan to steal the trophy on the last day.

Lazio are once again top of the table, but this time determined to beat a team that has turned into title challengers under new coach Fabio Capello.

"I think this match has come at a decisive time for us," said Sensini, the captain of Argentina.

"The five point lead we have over Roma is a fair reflection of how we've done. We deserve to be where we are. Lazio have made a good start and we've taken points off big teams and small teams alike."

"Everyone is still talking about our collapse at the end of last season. But I think that what went against us was our really poor start. Now the derby comes at a crucial time. If we win, we're on our way," he said.

The sell-out match at the Olympic stadium is set to be a festival of South American rather than Italian football, with Roma's squad including five Brazilians and Lazio's four Argentinians.

But Roma's Brazil captain Cafu, said: "Brazil v Argentina is a match best left to the national sides."

"You can't deny the Brazilian and Argentinian characteristics of the two teams here, but turning the Rome derby into a European edition of the South American one is going a bit far."

Roma striker Vincenzo Montella was upbeat about his team's chances, saying: "Lazio have done a bit better than the other sides up to now, you only have to look at the league table. But that doesn't mean they're the best team."

And Montella, who joined from Sampdoria last summer, added: "The Roma fans have been asking me for just one thing ever since I came here - to beat Lazio... and there's no reason why I shouldn't score on Sunday."

Emerson likely to stay

BERLIN, Nov 16: Brazilian international Emerson, the target of several top European clubs, said he was likely to remain with his present club German Bundesliga outfit Bayer Leverkusen, reports AP.

The 23-year-old player told Monday's German football magazine Kicker: "Leverkusen is not out of the running. My advisor Gilmar Veloz will visit Leverkusen at the end of November to speak to club bosses. Some discussion is still needed before a decision is made."

Italian Serie A side AS Roma have reportedly offered 22 million dollars and Spanish outfit Atletico Madrid are also interested in the player who signed for Leverkusen in 1997. His contract, with an option for an extra year, runs till June 30, 2002.

However, Emerson dismissed speculation of a transfer in January to AS Roma. "I've signed nothing," he said.

He added that his decision would depend on what was financially advantageous, good for his family and his career.

Ravanelli moving back to Italy?

MILAN, Nov 16: Olympique Marseille striker Fabrizio Ravanelli is hoping to return to Italian football in January in a bid to win a place in the national squad for Euro 2000, reports AP.

Ravanelli, who won the 1996 European Cup with Juventus before being sold to the Middlesbrough, told Italian state radio: "Unless anything unexpected happens, I'll be coming back in January."

The Silver Fox did not reveal his destination, but speculation quickly focussed on newly-promoted Torino, who are looking for an experienced striker.

Ravanelli knows the city from his Juventus years and Torino-based Tuttosport claimed Tuesday there could even be a player swap with defender Djibril Diawara, who joined from top French club Monaco last summer.

Ravanelli later told the Gazzetta dello Sport that his desire to return to Italy was not intended as a slight for OM.

"I'd just like to make it clear that I'm happy at Olympique Marseille and that I've got an excellent rapport with my teammates, the coach and the club."



Winners of the Transcom Cup golf tournament pose with Kurmitola Golf Club president and Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen M Mustafizur Rahman, BB, at the club on November 12.

Second international with Socceroos today

Brazil to shuffle squad

MELBOURNE, Australia, Nov 16: Brazil coach Vanderley Luxemburgo wants to bring his under-

23 football team back to Australia to play again in the lead-up to next September's Olympics, reports AP.

He said he wanted his Olympians to come back to Australia to show Australians just how good his nation's football was and to prepare for the Games.



DENILSON

Diego blames Boca for failed move to Italy

Severe injury sidelines Palermo

BUENOS AIRES, Nov 16: Former Argentine star Diego Maradona on Monday blamed Boca Juniors

as a proposed transfer to Italy collapsed for up and coming talent Martin Palermo, out for the season after suffering a cruciate ligament injury at the weekend, reports AP.

Boca doctor Gustavo Liotta said that Palermo, an emerging star in the national side, would be out for between six and nine



MARTIN PALERMO

months and would have surgery this week, meaning he will miss the rest of the season and the Copa Libertadores.

Palermo is the most prolific scorer active in Argentinian domestic football, having netted his 100th in Saturday's 2-1 win over Colon.

In the summer, however, he earned an unwanted place in the record books by missing three penalties in a single match for Argentina in their 3-0 Copa America defeat by Colombia.

Struggling Italian champions AC Milan had been hoping to lure the striker to Serie A after making a 12 million dollar bid earlier this month while Lazio are also interested, but Palermo's injury torpedoes any hope of a move.

That angered Maradona, who made a name for himself in Italy with Napoli in the 1980s and who said Palermo now would potentially never have the chance to prove himself in Italy.

"What has happened to Martin is terrible. Those in charge of the club were speculating on how much Boca could receive for a transfer and now this happens," Maradona told Radio Rivadavia.

It emerged meanwhile that Boca might be willing to pay some form of compensation to Palermo while he recovers to make up for his lost chance of gaining a move this season.

But that wasn't good enough for Maradona, who said: "Someone will have to answer for this. They will have to look for the reasons why the player was not sold."

Maradona suggested there should be some kind of insurance for players to guard against career-threatening injuries, otherwise a player might one minute be valued at 20 million dollars and then next to nothing following serious injury.



MARADONA

Matthaeus having second thoughts

COLOGNE, Germany, Nov 16: Bayern Munich veteran Lothar Matthaeus has begun to back pedal

on his decision to leave the German champions at year's end after fresh pleas by coach Ottmar Hitzfeld, it emerged on Monday, reports AP.

Matthaeus was formally presented to the press by the New York New Jersey MetroStars last week and has a contract starting in the new year.

The deal has been placed in doubt, however, by the double blow to Bayern that Thomas Strunz is injured and Jens Jeremies suspended for the Champions League, leaving Bayern without a libero to martial their defence.

Until now 38-year-old Matthaeus, who played a record equalling 143rd international for Germany against Norway on Sunday, has steadfastly blocked all Bayern overtures to prolong his love affair with them.

Now though, in Bayern's hour of need, he has begun to waver.

"My contract with New York starts on January 1, which is why Bayern have to speak with the MetroStars," Matthaeus said Monday. "If the MetroStars are cooperative then it may work. I think there's a chance but the two clubs have to reach agreement."

Matthaeus had a bumpy start in the Big Apple last week when the local press parodied his clumsy English and one paper ran the headline: "I come here for play soccer." As Monday's edition of the "Kölnischer Stadtanzeiger" newspaper in Cologne commented: "It leaves the unspoken question: Is this any way to treat a football

hero?" Hurt pride is less a factor to motivate Matthaeus than loyalty. He feels a deep sense of gratitude to Bayern Munich and president Franz Beckenbauer when they signed him from Italy in 1992 despite having a smashed knee.

"I'm not one to chop and change. The whole thing only started after Strunz was injured," Matthaeus said. "Actually I wanted to toss in the Bundesliga and Champions League

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First indications are that a deal is more than likely to be struck allowing the German

veteran to stay on at Bayern to play against Real Madrid on February 29 and in the return leg a week later.

With the new US Major League Soccer season not due to start until the middle of March MetroStars general manager Charlie Stillitano said he saw no problems if the player arrived in the spring.

If Lothar Matthaeus comes to New York after the Champions League game against Real Madrid on March 8 he will still have time to get to know the team and integrate," Stillitano told the SID