

Pegasus cruise, Khelaghar crawl

Sports Reporter
Young Pegasus and Khelaghar Samaj Kalyan Sangha won their respective matches of the 19th Damal Smriti Cricket Tournament at different city venues yesterday.

At the Bangabandhu national stadium, Young Pegasus recorded a comprehensive 54-run victory over Azad Sporting Club.

Batting first, Young Pegasus scored a fighting 179 before being all out in 46.4 overs with middle-order batsman Mostakim notching highest 30 off 54 ball. Mostakim apart, Rafeel (senior), coming in to bat

BRIEF SCORES
Young Pegasus v Azad SC (Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium)
Young Pegasus: 179 all out in 46.4 overs (Mostakim 30, Bidyut 22, Labbu 21; Kamran 2/37, Shamim 2/26)
Azad SC: 125 all out in 44.2 overs (Liton Jr. 30, Shamim 16; Saad 3/19, Labbu 3/16)
Result: Young Pegasus won by 54 runs.

GMCC v Khelaghar SKS (Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium)
GMCC: 168 all out in 49.4 overs (Anu 25, Rinku 21, Extras 52; Alamgir 3/42, Lal 3/29, Rana 2/16)
Khelaghar SKS: 171 for 5 wickets in 39.4 overs (Raju 44 not out, Sumon 35 not out)
Result: Khelaghar won by 5 wickets.

at number nine, scored a very useful 27 off 30 deliveries.

In reply, Azad were bundled out for a paltry 125 in 44.2 overs in the face of some controlled bowling by Labbu and Saad, who evenly shared six wickets among them.

Labbu, who had earlier contributed 21 runs with the bat, captured three wickets giving away only 16 runs in his six overs.

At the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, Khelaghar shrugged off a disappointing start to record a five-wicket win against GMCC.

Chasing a modest GMCC total of 168, Khelaghar lost half of their wickets with only 89 runs on the board. But skipper Raju and Sumon throttled their side to safety, producing 82 runs for the undefeated sixth wicket.

Raju scored a captain's knock of an unbeaten 44 while Sumon remained not out on 35.

Biman stay at the top

Sports Reporter
Bangladesh Biman maintained their solo lead with 36 points at the end of 11th round in the First Division Chess League yesterday.

In this round of the league, being played at the Chess Room of the National Sports Council, Biman beat Farashganj Sporting Club by 3-1 points.

International Master (IM) Reefat-Bin-Sattar of Biman won against Mizanur Rahman Labu of Farashganj while IM Ziaur Rahman got walkover against Shawkat Hossain. Abdullah-Al-Rakib, the other IM in the Biman rank, and FM (Fide Master) Syed Tahmidur Rahman drew with Farashganj's Indian duo of Devasis Roy and Prosenjit Dutt.

Titas Club blanked Kamalapur SKS 4-0 to maintain their second position with 32.5 points while Bangladesh Ansar, who scored an identical margin victory over Nakhalpara Juba Sangha, closely followed them with 31.5 points.

In the other matches of the day, Leoneine Chess Club beat Touch-Stone Chess Club by 4-0 points; Uttara Central Chess Club won against Dhaka University Chess Team by 2.5-1.5 points; Sonali Bank recorded a 3-1 win over Mohakkali Prodig Sangha; Narayanangj Chess Players Association outclassed Brothers Union by 4-0 points.

TODAY MATCHES:
Uttara Central v Touch Stone
Titas v Leoneine
Nakhalpara v Kamalapur Prodig Sangha v Ansar
Narayanangj v Sonali Bank
Farashganj v Brothers
Dhaka University v Biman.

Women's b'ball begins today

Sports Reporter
The Shital First Division women's basketball League begins at the Sultana Kamal Women's Complex today.

Although leading champions Jatrabari expressed their non-availability in the fourth edition of the League, excitement would not be short-supplied in the eight-team meet.

Four matches will be held on the opening day.

The participating teams are: Group A: Sister Concerns, Dikusha SC, Narayanangj District Women's Sports Association and Shiddiyawari Girls High School.

Group B: Arambagh Krira Sangha, Mirpur Girls Ideal Laboratory Institution, Bangladesh-Kwaiti Moitri Hall and K & K Sporting Club.

M Akram warned

PERTH, Nov 27: Pakistan fast bowler Mohammad Akram was given a severe reprimand in the third Test today after he appeared to deliberately drop his shoulder into Shane Warne as the Australian ran past him while batting, reports Reuters.

Akram, reported to independent match referee John Reid by umpire Darrell Hair, apologised for his behaviour and said the incident had occurred in the heat of the moment.

The paceman had faced charges relating to on-field behaviour under the players' Code of Conduct.

Socceroos succumb in shootout

Brazil keep U-17 world title



AUCKLAND, Nov 27: Brazil beat Australia 8-7 in a penalty shootout Saturday to lift the under-17 World Soccer Championship and become the first team to claim successive titles, reports AP.

Brazil deserved their win after looking far superior throughout, but tight defence restricted the South Americans to long-range shooting and the match was 0-0 after extra time.

Brazil's goalkeeper Rubinho dived to his left to save Australia's ninth kick from Iain Pyrie and the Wellington drove home the winner under Australian goalkeeper Jess Van Stratten.

The shootout was 4-4 after the first five kicks each. Australia's captain Mark Byrnes missing with the opening shot and Van Stratten saving Brazil's second kick from Marquinhos.

Van Stratten almost saved the opening shot from Leonardo, getting good contact only to turn and watch the ball dribble across the line.

The usual conflicting emotions of a shootout were amplified at the finish — Australian players laid sobbing on the turf while the Brazilians started a samba which continued right through the presentation ceremony and the lap of honour.

"I'm trying not to think about it too much," said Byrnes. "Everyone is just gutted."

It was Australia's first ever appearance in a world soccer final and coach Les Schemmug said he was proud of the team.

"I think I will paint their silver medals gold as I think they all deserve one," Schemmug said. "They really showed the Australian spirit and never gave up for one moment."

Brazil's Leo was in outstanding form and had the best chance to open the scoring with a dipping drive from outside the penalty box which hurried onto Van Stratten in the 11th minute.

Rain made it difficult for both teams to control the ball but took nothing out of some tough challenges.

Australia tried to work an opening by going down the flanks but its best chance of normal time came from Brazil's Eduardo in the second half.

Booked earlier in the match, Eduardo gave away a free kick with a poor challenge wide on the right and when the ball was swung in he almost sent a scorching header into his own net.

The near miss galvanised the South Americans who turned up the tempo but were still unable to break through, although Eduardo went close with a stunning free kick.

Twice in the last 15 minutes Brazil managed to slip Souza in

behind the defence but both times he was deprived as Van Stratten came off his line to make crucial saves.

Brazil kept pushing for the winner in extra time and Eduardo came close after a free kick rebounded into his path and his drive flew just wide of Australia's right post.

Leo had the next chance in a match becoming rapidly one-sided but his long-range attempt was hit hard but straight at Van Stratten.

The teams both endured penalty shootouts in the semi-finals and were showing signs of fatigue at the end and Brazil almost got caught out on 112 minutes.

Australia launched a rare counter attack which left Joseph Di Iorio clear in the box, but he dragged his shot across Rubinho and wide of the far post.

Ghana, beaten by Brazil in the semis, beat the United

States 2-0 in the playoff for third earlier Saturday.

Ghana, a two-time champion, went 1-0 up in the 35th minute when Ishmael Addo's corner kick was flicked on to the far post for Pimpeng Razak to head home.

Both sides had opportunities in the second half and Ghana should have gone 2-0 up on 74 minutes when US fullback Alex Vi brought Addo down inside the box.

Addo took the spot kick but it was saved by DJ Countess. Addo made up for the miss by sealing the match with a goal 10 minutes later and it was enough to give him the golden boot award for seven goals in the tournament.

The Americans, who won 24 straight games before the semi-final loss to Australia, went home without a medal but Landon Donovan was named player-of-the-tournament.



Brazil U-17 goalkeeper Rubinho exults after their victory was ensured. —AFP photo

SAFA given ultimatum



JOHANNESBURG, Nov 27: South African soccer leaders were told on Friday to clean up the game, reports Reuters.

Sports Minister Ngconde Balfour said public bickering among leading administrators and a series of embarrassing incidents were harming South Africa's bid to host the 2006 World Cup finals.

He told the South African Football Association (SAFA) to resolve long-running rows by the end of January.

The unprecedented meeting followed a tumultuous two weeks for the domestic game including allegations of a drive-by shooting at the home of the chief executive officer of the national premier league, the kidnapping of a coach, charges of tax evasion and a courtroom battle over the outcome of a cup match.

Balfour warned that if no steps were taken he would consider putting legislation to parliament in Cape Town.

"The hanging out of dirty linen by these soccer bosses is putting the game and the bid in a bad light," Balfour told reporters after the meeting.

"They have until the end of January to sort this out, get their house in order and give me a full written report."

The minister discussed allegations by Joe Ndhlala, head of the professional league, that shots had been fired at his home in Johannesburg and that powerful club owners were trying

to force him out of his job.

Ndhlala, subject of an investigation into financial irregularities, has been at odds with his own board of governors, made up of club owners, since he took up his job earlier this year.

But he has been accused of making up the incident.

Also in the last week, Brazilian-born coach Walter da

Barthez set to be back

PARIS, Nov 27: France goalkeeper Fabien Barthez, out of action since undergoing surgery on an injured thigh in mid-October, looks set to return for Monaco against AJ Auxerre in a French League match on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

Barthez, who has missed France's last two international matches, said on Friday he was not ready for today's match at Nancy and understudy Jean-Marie Aubry would play.

Monaco will welcome back his France colleague David Trezeguet after he missed their victory over Sedan last weekend and Tuesday's UEFA Cup match at AEK Athens with a knee injury.

"I'm coming back with a lot of motivation. I haven't scored in almost a month and I'm keen to finish as top scorer," said Trezeguet, who was recently overtaken by Olympique Lyon's Brazilian Sonny Anderson as the First Division's top marksman.

Silva was kidnapped and robbed by two men who forced him at gun point to sit in the back of a car and miss a league match involving his struggling club Moroka Swallows.

Da Silva, who also had money stolen, was told to telephone his two assistants and order them to stay away from the match too.

On Monday former SAFA president Solomon Mosewa appeared in court on tax evasion charges in his capacity as former trustee of a special fund for grassroots development and academic bursaries for players.

The incidents came on top of a legal dispute which has brought the Rothmans Cup, the richest national cup competition in Africa, to a halt.

SAFA's disciplinary procedures have failed to end a dispute between two clubs — Jomo Cosmos and Free State Stars — over an alleged suspended player.

Gordon Igesund, coach of the Durban club Manning Rangers, said the only winners in the Saga were Brazil, England, Germany and Morocco, the four countries bidding alongside South Africa for the 2006 World Cup finals.

"We want to host a 32-nation competition yet we cannot even run a knock-out tournament involving 18 clubs," Igesund said earlier this week.

SAFA president Molefi Oliphant said on Friday that his organisation would present a report to the minister in a week.



Players of the Australian U-17 football team are in a state of shock after losing to Brazil in the World Youth Championship final in Auckland yesterday. —AFP photo

Nat'l youth hockey

Rajshahi in group semis

Rajshahi moved into the group semifinals of the Acme 18th national youth hockey championship beating Myensingh 4-2 at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday, reports UNB.

They will take on Dhaka Education Board in the Group-B semis on Tuesday at 3 pm.

After a barren first half, Nabi Sheikh, Azad Hossain, Raju Sarkar and Arafat Ali scored one each for Rajshahi while Murad and Rashedul netted for Myensingh.

Besides, Rangpur beat Sylhet 5-2 while Gazipur got walkover against Khulna at the same venue to reach the next round.

The two teams will meet each other today at 1:30 pm.

Rezwanul Haq struck three, Russel Kabir and Russel Hossain netted one each for Rangpur while Hashem and Sharifur scored for Sylhet.

ITF tennis results

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAH, Nov 27: Dmitri Tomashovich of Uzbekistan and Donovan, September of South Africa moved into the singles final beating their respective rivals in the second leg of the International Tennis Federation (ITF) Alpha men's future tennis tournament played at the Rajshahi Tennis Complex today.

In the first semifinal, Dmitri Tomashovich defeated Ashley Fisher of Australia after a tough competition 6-7, 6-3, 6-2.

In the other match, Donovan September beat Alsam Qureshi of Pakistan 6-4, 6-4.

The singles final will be held tomorrow at the same playground.

On the other hand, Ashley Fisher and Le Minh pair and Felei Widiyanto and Susilo Pramouo couple moved into the doubles final.

The results are: Ashley Fisher of Australia and Le Minh of USA won an easy fight over Niko Karagiannis of Uzbekistan and Viktor Bruthans of Slovakia, by 6-0, 6-2.

Felei Widiyanto of Indonesia and Susilo Pramouo of the same country beat Sebastian Da Costa of Indonesia and Robert Nita of Romania duo 6-2, 6-0.

The doubles final will be held tomorrow at the same venue.

Bagan retain IFA Shield

CALCUTTA, Nov 27: Holders Mohun Bagan overcame a stiff resistance from giant-killers Tollymore Aggragant before scripting a solitary goal victory to retain the IFA Shield soccer title here yesterday, reports PTI.

Substitute striker Abdul Khaliq pumped in the match winner just six minutes before the full whistle to help Mohun Bagan lift the coveted title for the 20th time at the Salt Lake Stadium.

After maintaining a strange hold for most part of the contest, the speedy Khaliq found the target with a crisp volley from inside the box following a neat pass by the Nigerian-recruit Stephen Aborawole much to the delight of the vociferous Bagan supporters.

Khaliq's brilliant goal also helped Bagan to end the long title drought and salvage their awesome reputation to some extent ahead of the high-profile national league.

Bundesliga Mixed day for Sand

COLOGNE, Germany, Nov 27: Ebbe Sand let loose Danish dynamite at both ends Friday evening as Schalke 04 limped their way to a 1-1 draw at SSV Ulm, reports AFP.

Sand, bought this season to improve Schalke's unimpressive scoring record, did the Royal Blues a disservice just before half time when he put the ball in his own net.

He made up for that error in the 76th minute though with an equaliser.

VfB Stuttgart beat local rivals Freiburg 2-0 in Friday's other Bundesliga clash. Krisztian Lisztes put the visitors ahead on 20 minutes and South African born Sean Dundee continued his form revival with his second goal in as many weeks after 76 minutes.

Benfica beg pardon

LISBON, Nov 27: A contrite Benfica made a public apology here Friday for their embarrassing performance in the UEFA Cup against Spanish outfit Celta Vigo, reports AFP.

Portugal's former European champions were trounced 7-0 by their Spanish rivals in the third round first leg encounter at Vigo on Thursday.

The players issued a press release telling their fans: "Given the abnormal result against Vigo we recognise we didn't do justice to Benfica's past standards and because of that we want to formally present our apologies to Benfica supporters."

The statement was signed by the entire team and read out by their captain, Portugal's international striker Joao Pinto before a training session.

The battered squad came under fire at the work out from a couple of hundred Benfica diehards upset at the woe of the heaviest suffered by Benfica in European competition.



Manchester United players train at a Tokyo stadium yesterday ahead of their Intercontinental Cup final clash against Palmeiras. —AFP photo

Intercontinental Cup final Tuesday

MU go where no British club has gone before



LONDON, Nov 27 (Reuters): A series of uncharacteristically inconsistent performances could undermine Manchester United's attempt to add the World Cup title to the European crown they won so dramatically last May.

A poor display culminating in a 2-0 defeat by Fiorentina in the opening match of the second phase of the Champions' League earlier this week means that the European crown is sitting uneasily on the head of Alex Ferguson's team.

It was their second defeat in their last four European matches — following the end of an unbeaten 18-match European run that stretched back to 1997 — and Ferguson will be looking for a vastly improved performance when they face Brazilians Palmeiras in the Intercontinental Cup final in Tokyo next Tuesday.

United are bidding to become the fifth successive European champions, and the first English club, to win the trophy following the successes of Ajax Amsterdam (1995), Juventus (1996), Borussia Dortmund (1997) and Real Madrid last year.

United were the first English club to take part in the final, losing 2-1 on aggregate to Estudiantes of Argentina in a notoriously ill-tempered two-leg battle in 1968. Since then Nottingham Forest (1980), Liverpool (1981), Aston Villa (1982) and Liverpool again in 1984 have all reached the final and lost.

Although winning the match will add another impressive piece of silverware to the bulging United trophy room, it is unclear whether the annual encounter between the European and South American champions will continue for much longer.

The contract between UEFA and CONMEBOL to play the game annually in Tokyo expires early in the next century.

In January Manchester United are travelling to Brazil to take part in the new FIFA-sponsored World Club Championship comprising eight continental champions.

Whether that competition, which UEFA has said it would not support in the future, becomes established and supercedes the Intercontinental Cup remains to be decided.

What also has to be decided is just how much further this

current United side can develop. Fiorentina coach Giovanni Trapattoni mischievously suggested this week the team were ready to break up and that the younger players should consider a move to Italy.

With skipper Roy Keane widely believed to be on his way to Serie A next season and growing rumours that David Beckham will move to a London club on the insistence of his pop star wife Victoria "Posh Spice" Adams, there is a feeling that the foundations of the fortress Ferguson has built with such success are beginning to crumble.

That remains to be seen but success in Tokyo next Tuesday and even victory in the new tournament in Brazil in the New Year will count for little in the long run.

What matters to United is retaining their Champions League and English Premier League crowns.

If a win on Tuesday helps restore confidence in his team after their recent shaky performances then it will have been worthwhile but the trophy and the title will in reality be mere icing on the cake for United at the moment.

Palmeiras aim to end Latin drought



RIO DE JANEIRO, Nov 27 (Reuters): Palmeiras are not the best club side in South America and they are certainly not the prettiest, but under the iron fist of a coach known as Big Phil, they are the team most likely to end South America's sequence of defeats in the Intercontinental Cup.

The straight-talking and sometime abrasive Luis Felipe Scolari, better known by his nickname Felipeao or Big Phil, has often been criticised for the physical approach employed by his teams.

But when it comes to building teams to win cups, he has no equal on the continent.

Scolari's total of ten major titles this decade is matched among Brazilians only by the

great Tele Santana, who has been forced to retire through ill health.

He is also the only coach to have won the Libertadores this decade with two different clubs, having led Gremio to the title in 1993 and Palmeiras in 1999.

Scolari is making his second visit to Tokyo for the match, having led Gremio four years ago.

Then, he left empty-handed as they lost on penalties to Dutch club Ajax Amsterdam. He will hope to make amends in Tuesday's game and help Palmeiras become the first South American club to win the annual clash since Velez Sarsfield in 1994.

Before Scolari arrived two-and-a-half years ago, Palmeiras had a reputation for refined football but had consis-

tently failed in their bid to win the Libertadores Cup. That has been sacrificed in the name of successes.

Scolari makes no apologies if his team go over the top, nor does he have any qualms about publicly humiliating his players if he thinks they are not pulling their weight.

He deliberately gives the media wrong information about injuries and suspensions to confuse opponents.

During games, he stands on the touchline ranting at match officials and his own players and has been known to throw balls onto the field to disrupt play when opponents are pressing for a late goal.

He publicly calls on his players to commit more fouls, claims that other Brazilian trainers do the same but he is the only one to own up to it. "I am stupid because I tell the truth while the others lie," he once said.

Scolari has built his team around three former World Cup players. Team captain Zinho, an ever-present in the 1994 World Cup winning team, orchestrates the midfield alongside Alex, a gifted left-sided player still in his early twenties.

Cesar Sampaio, who played for Brazil in France last year, is responsible for protecting the defence where the intimidating but blunder-prone Junior Baniro, another who played in France last year, is the key figure.

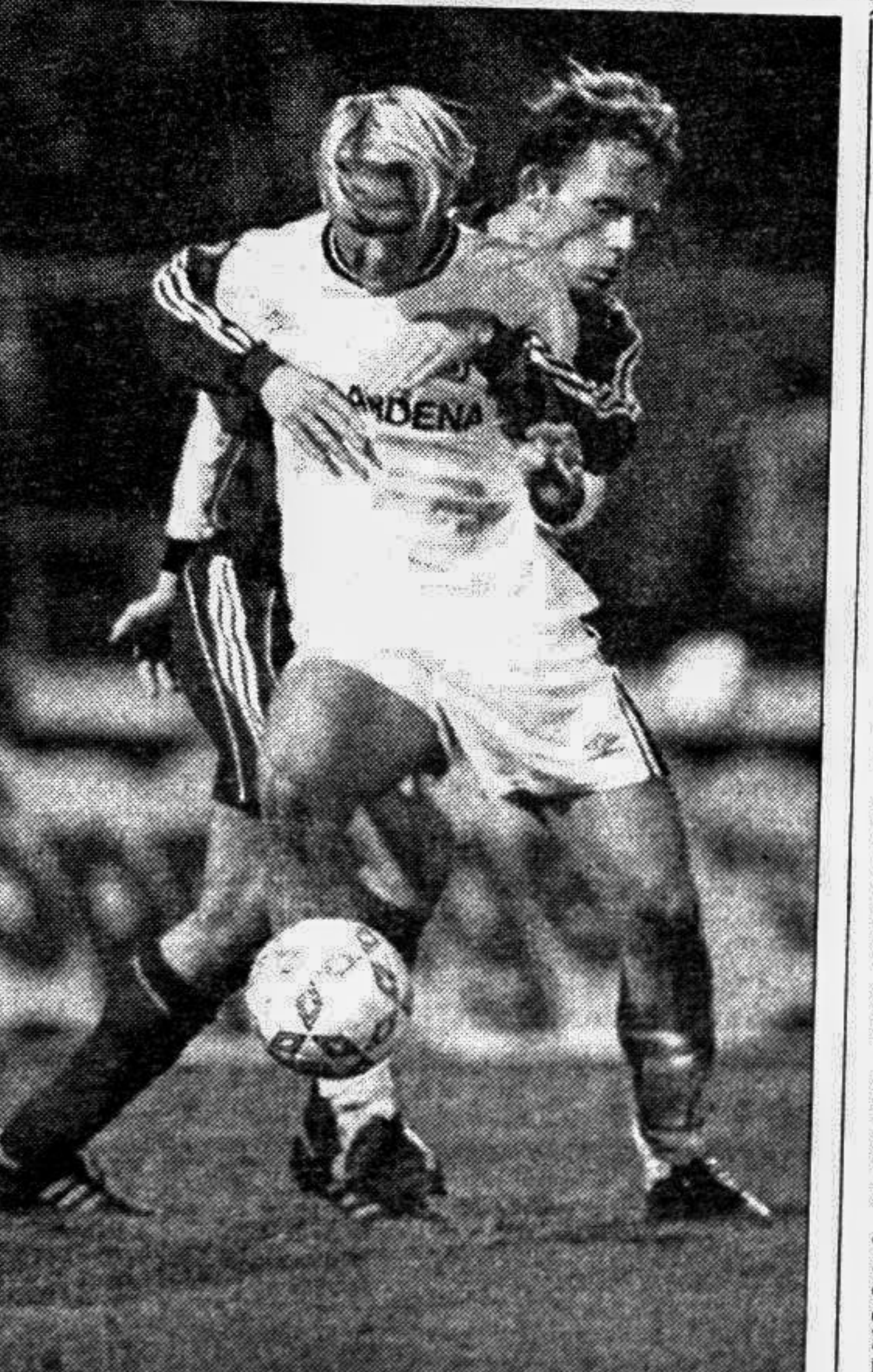
Other important players include quicksilver striker Paulo Nunes, whose speed and expertise at winning free kicks by fair means and foul make him a nightmare to mark, and the full backs Francisco Arce and Junior. Paraguay's Arce is one of the best crossers of the ball playing in Brazil.

The big question is whether maverick Colombian Faustino Asprilla will play. Scolari, clearly not a number one fan of the former Newcastle and Parma striker, has kept him largely confined to the substitutes' bench since he joined in July but appeared to be won over by a two-goal performance in a recent win over Botafogo.

He's quick and he knows English soccer," said Scolari, hinting that Asprilla could still get the nod ahead of veteran striker Evair and the more physical Osas.

Palmeiras left for Tokyo late on Sunday amid jubilant scenes. Around 300 fans cheered as the coach pulled out of the club headquarters and hundreds of noisy supporters invaded Sao Paulo airport to wish them well.

Their backing moved Scolari, whose sergeant-major image temporarily shattered as he wiped tears from his eyes.



Schalke 04's Oude Kamphuis (behind) and SSV Ulm's Sascha Roesler fight for possession during their Bundesliga encounter on November 26. —AFP photo