

Italian Cup

Bologna put Inter on the back foot

MILAN, Dec 1: Inter Milan faced a tricky return match in Bologna after their narrow 2-1 Italian Cup third round, first leg, win on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Inter led in the 10th minute when Alvaro Recoba put Grigoris Georgatos through on goal and the Greek wing-back's chip over Gianluca Pagliuca went in off the post.

The tally doubled in the 36th minute when Pagliuca parried a shot from Javier Zanetti but Bologna defender Massimo Tarantini made a hash of a header clear, allowing Zanetti to tap home from close range.

Inter appeared to be cruising home until 10 minutes from time when Italy under-21 international Nicola Ventola rose well to head home the vital away goal against his former club from a corner by Pierre Wome.

Indonesian GM plays longest game

JAKARTA, Dec 1: Indonesian Grand Master Utut Adrianto broke the world record playing a marathon 28.5-hour simulatant chess game against 833 players in Surabaya, capital of Indonesia's East Java province, reports Xinhua.

Utut broke the world record playing for two days, totaling 28.5 hours, non stop at Taman Surya in Surabaya on Sunday.

He recorded 637 wins, 185 draws and 11 defeats.

Utut's record outpassed Bojan Kurajica of Yugoslavia who played against 666 players. The longest time record is held by Swedish Ulf Anderson who played for 26 hours.

But Utut said that he does not want to play any more simulatant games because he felt tired afterward.

"Should there be an offer for me to play another simulatant game, I certainly will refuse it. I am already fed up playing long games," Utut was quoted by the Jakarta Post Wednesday as saying.

He added that it would be the last time he would play a simulatant game.

"The game is too much for me because I have to force my brain to play for 28.5 hours. I didn't have any sleep throughout the play," he said.

Coach Imam Buchori said that Utut could have played 30 hours but Utut was offered by the organizer to accept draws against 130 players.

"Utut had to obey to the rules and only played 28.5 hours," Imam said.

Soprapto, chairman of the East Java office of the Indonesian Chess Federation, said that Utut's success would be put in the Indonesian Record Museum and that it would be proposed to the Guinness Book of records to obtain acknowledgment as a world record.

DFB's incentive

BERLIN, Dec 1: Germany's players will receive 150,000 marks (77,160 dollars) each if they retain their crown at next year's European Championship finals, the German Football Federation (DFB) said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Every player will get 65,000 marks if the team reach the quarter-finals, 100,000 for a semifinal appearance and 125,000 if they lose in the final. They will not get anything if Germany fail to get past the group stage.

The finals are in Belgium and the Netherlands from June 10 until July 2.

Ayala still hopes to get title shot

LOS ANGELES, Dec 1: When Tony Ayala Jr. was convicted of rape 17 years ago, he was one of boxing's most promising young fighters, on the verge of getting a title shot, reports AP.

Now, at age 36, after serving a 16-year prison sentence, he still hopes to become a champion.

Ayala can move one step closer to that goal on Dec 11, when he faces Tony Menefee in a 10-round middleweight bout in his hometown of San Antonio.

"Every day I wake up and know that it's another great day because I'm free," said Ayala, the top-ranked middleweight contender at age 19 when he went to prison. "No locked doors, no bars on the windows: nothing bad can happen to me, whether it's in a boxing ring or in my personal life, as long as I'm a free man."

Ayala, 24-0 with 22 knockouts has stopped his only two opponents since being released from prison last summer.

Menefee, of Lincoln, Nebraska, figures to be a much tougher foe.

The Menefee fight is like a world championship fight to me," Ayala said. "At this stage of my life, people aren't really going to tolerate many losses."

Ayala hopes a victory over the 27-year-old Menefee, 64-6 with 36 knockouts, will be enough to command respect and ultimately get him fights against ranked opponents.

Ayala realizes he has something in common with Mike Tyson. Both served prison time after being convicted of rape. But Ayala believes he looks at life differently than the former heavyweight champion.

"Mike Tyson is a jerk," Ayala said. "Four years in jail, and dirs 100 million in purses, and he cries to the world that he's misunderstood."

Ronaldo out for four/five months

Inter won't rush star striker



MILAN, Dec 1: (Reuters/Internet): Ronaldo is to be told by his Inter Milan club president Massimo Moratti to take his time recovering from the knee operation he underwent on Tuesday.

When the Brazil striker finally returns, the Italian Serie A team's coach Marcello Lippi is hoping he will have a "complete new player".

Staff at the Pitie Salpetriere hospital in Paris where Ronaldo had surgery on a damaged knee tendon said the player would need four to five months rest and recuperation.

Inter had previously said they believed Ronaldo would need only a maximum of three months to recover, but Moratti said they would not rush him back into action.

"As soon as I speak to him I will tell him not to hurry things and just to concentrate on the best possible recovery," Moratti told the daily Gazzetta dello Sport on Wednesday.

Moratti said there was no dispute over the amount of time Ronaldo was expected to be out. "I think it is not only prudent but intelligent to give the maximum amount of time necessary for recovery."

"It doesn't worry me, it is fundamental that Ronaldo will be feeling very good when he returns," Moratti added.

Ronaldo suffered the latest in a series of injury setbacks in Inter's 6-0 Serie A win over Lecce on November 21. He twisted his right leg and partially ruptured his knee cap tendon after catching his foot in a divot on the rain-soaked San Siro pitch.

The Brazilian has been hampered by knee problems over the past two seasons and never recaptured the breathtaking form he showed during his first season in Italy in 1997-98, following his move from Barcelona.

Lippi says the operation and lay-off could finally end Ronald-

do's fitness problems.

"I hope this is the final act of this year and a half of suffering. The operation should have finally resolved everything, we hope to have a completely new player at the end of his recovery," he said.

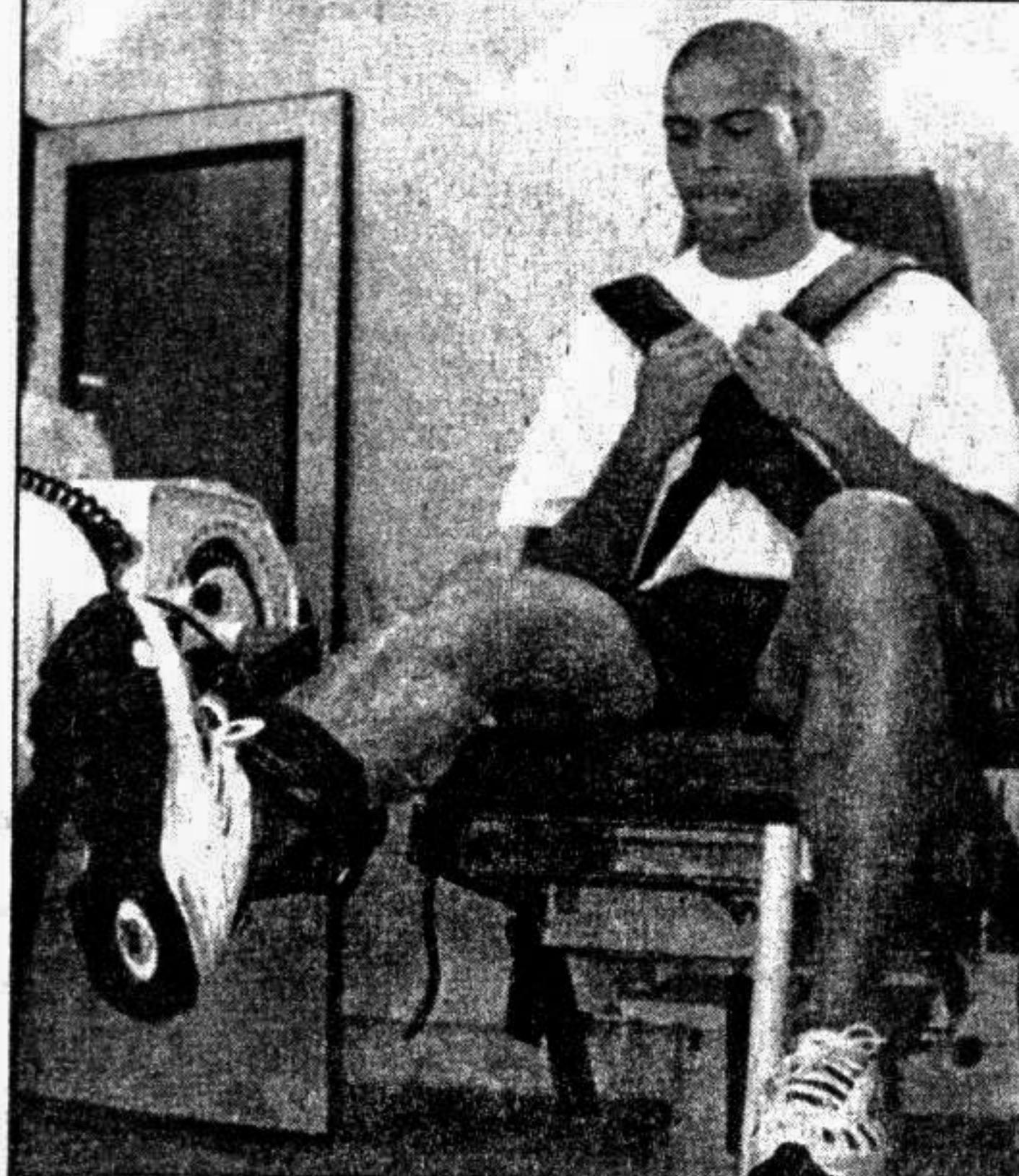
Ronaldo played only 11 full matches for Inter last season and has played for 90 minutes in only two of the club's 11 games this season.

Moratti said Inter would not be going into the transfer market to find a replacement for the Brazilian as he believes they

have enough strength in depth to cope with Ronaldo's absence.

Lippi has relied on Chilean Ivan Zamorano to partner Christian Vieri in attack for most of this season, but has Roberto Baggio and Alvaro Recoba as cover.

In addition, Romanian striker Adrian Mutu is to complete his move from Dinamo Bucharest to Inter when the Italian transfer "window" opens on January 4, after an agreement was reached on a deal last week.



SAME OLD PAINFUL ROUTINE: An AFP file photo of Inter Milan superstar Ronaldo going through a rehabilitation programme after a knee surgery in 1998. Ronaldo underwent another knee operation in Paris on November 30 and will start a rehabilitation routine shortly.

English League Cup

Boro show Gunners the door



LONDON, Dec 1: (Reuters/Internet): Middlesbrough dumped Arsenal out of the English League Cup.

Cup 3-1 on penalties on Tuesday while West Ham United

squeezed into the quarter-finals thanks to a last minute winner by teenager Joe Cole.

French international striker Thierry Henry was both hero and villain for Arsenal, scoring his side's first half equaliser before conceding a penalty with an 83rd minute handball that threw Boro a lifeline.

Colombian Hamilton Ricard, who had put the home side ahead in the seventh minute, converted the penalty that cancelled out Davor Suker's 80th

minute goal.

The score stayed locked at 2-2 after extra time before Middlesbrough won the penalty shoot-out 3-1.

Paul Gascoigne scored the final spot kick for Middlesbrough after Arsenal's Nelson Vivas had his shot saved by Australian goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer and Brazilian defender Silvinho completely missed the mark. Arsenal's Matthew Upson then had his final effort saved.

The result was some revenge for Arsenal's 5-1 thrashing of Middlesbrough in the premier league this month and left Boro among the favourites in a competition already without Manchester United, Chelsea and Liverpool.

West Ham United staged a late fightback and beat First Division Birmingham City 3-2 after trailing 2-1.

Paul Kitson grabbed an 87th minute equaliser in a goal-mouth scramble and midfielder Cole then scored his first goal for the club off a cross from Paolo di Canio in the last minute.

Trevor Sinclair also had the ball in the net for West Ham in the 76th but was ruled offside and Birmingham goalkeeper Kevin Pool made a great diving save from Frank Lampard.

When he made that save I really thought it was curtains and we weren't going to beat them, said West Ham manager Harry Redknapp. "I really couldn't see the goal coming."

Di Canio's old club Sheffield Wednesday went out 1-0 at Bolton Wanderers after Belgian Gilles de Bilde missed an 82nd minute penalty.

Wimbledon reached the last eight by beating Huddersfield Town 2-1 after extra time. Ja-

son Euell headed the winner.

Holders Tottenham Hotspur play First Division Fulham on Wednesday.

In the F.A. Cup, third division Hull beat minor league Hayes 3-2 after extra time in their second round replay to set up a lucrative home clash with Chelsea.

— Euro 2000

Volunteers in demand

BRUSSELS, Dec 1: Euro 2000 organisers launched a campaign on Tuesday to recruit 3,200 volunteers over the Internet to help next summer's tournament run smoothly, reports Reuters.

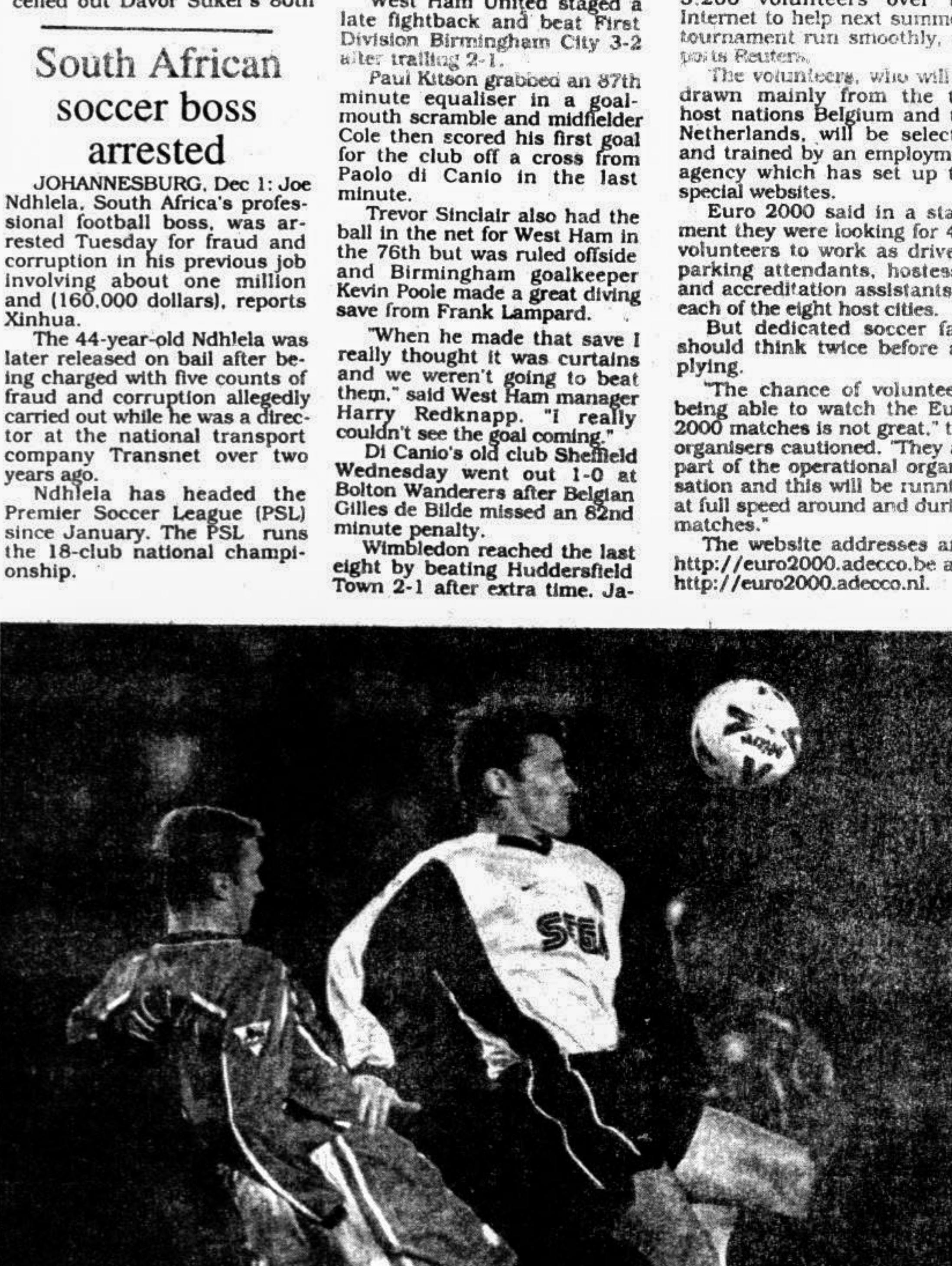
The volunteers, who will be drawn mainly from the two host nations Belgium and the Netherlands, will be selected and trained by an employment agency which has set up two special websites.

Euro 2000 said in a statement they were looking for 400 volunteers to work as drivers, parking attendants, hostesses and accreditation assistants in each of the eight host cities.

But dedicated soccer fans should think twice before applying.

The chance of volunteers being able to watch the Euro 2000 matches is not great, the organisers cautioned. They are part of the operational organisation and this will be running at full speed around and during matches.

The website addresses are: <http://euro2000.adeco.be> and <http://euro2000.adeco.nl>.



Arsenal's Croatian super-striker Davor Suker (C) trying to take control of the ball while Middlesbrough defender Steve Vickers puts pressure on him during their English League Cup match at Middlesbrough on November 30. — AFP photo

Durand Cup soccer

JCT, Bagan in semis

NEW DELHI, Dec 1: Former champions JCT, Phagwara, outclassed Bhutan XI 3-0 while IFA Shield winners Mohun Bagan beat Army XI by a solitary goal as the two clinched the two remaining semifinal spots in the Durand Cup football tournament here yesterday.

Hardeep Saini struck in the 45th and 55th minutes of the group A quarterfinal clash and substitute Jaswant Singh completed the tally in the 67th minute to give JCT a comfortable victory at the Ambedkar Stadium here.

JCT take on favourites East Bengal in the first semifinal today while Bagan will face Rovers Cup winners Salgaocar Club, Goa, in the second tomorrow.

Forward Abdul Khalique headed in a fine goal in the 36th minute off a superb cross by right half James Singh for Bagan in a lackluster group D encounter in which both teams earned a number of chances but failed to convert.

The Bagan team, which won the IFA shield on Friday, was sluggish and clearly out of sorts playing its third match in five days. But the former champions had enough resources even on an off day to quell the challenge of the Arymen.

JCT, who have won the prestigious tournament five times, controlled the match throughout and could have won by a bigger margin but its forwards missed chances galore.

JCT's comfortable victory over Bhutan XI ended the slender hopes of holders Mahindra and Mahindra, hoping for an upset victory for the Bhutanese team after they were beaten 2-1 by the Millmen in their league match.

Casiraghi has surgery again

BOLOGNA, Italy, Dec 1: Chelsea's Italian striker Pierluigi Casiraghi underwent a further operation on his right knee on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

The former Italy international, who has not played for more than a year, had the surgery at a clinic in Bologna.

The operation was to clean away scar tissue on the right knee. It lasted little more than an hour, said Maurilio Maracci, the surgeon who performed the operation.

"He will need to stay at the clinic for a few more days. I'm not in a position to say when he will be able to play again, largely because his knee is not the only problem. He also has a foot injury."

"Hopefully though, this is the last operation on his knee."

Casiraghi tore knee ligaments and damaged nerves in a collision with West Ham United goalkeeper Shaka Hislop in November 1998 and has had at least eight operations since.

Once one of Italy's top strikers, he spent nine seasons at Juventus and Lazio before moving to London last year.

Hagi operated on

BUCHAREST, Dec 1: Romanian soccer captain Gheorghe Hagi had knee surgery on Tuesday, according to his agent, reports Reuters.

"A small cyst was removed from Hagi's right knee," Ioan Beccal said. "The operation, which took no more than half an hour, was successful and Hagi is now feeling well."

The 34-year-old is also captain of his Turkish club side Galatasaray. Beccal said he should be fit to play again in a week's time.

WC men's v'ball

Russia alone atop

TOKYO, Dec 1: European silver medalist and 1991 World Cup champions Russia beat Cuba 25-15, 25-23, 25-18 and moved into first place with an 8-1 record on Tuesday with two matches left in the 12-nation men's volleyball World Cup round-robin tournament, reports AP.

Cuba, Italy and the United States tied at 7-2, but Cuba stand second, triple champion Italy are third and the United States fourth on the basis of sets won and lost.

The top three finishers in this tournament qualify for the Sydney Olympics.

Playing in Tokyo's Yoyogi gymnasium, the United States, the 1984 and 1988 Olympic champion, beat Argentina 25-23, 25-21, 25-17. Japan is 3-6.

Brazil, a bronze medalist in the 1995 World Cup, led by Max Pereira's 19 points, beat Spain 25-18, 20-25, 25-17, 25-20 in one hour and 34 minutes.

Brazil are 5-4 and Spain 6-3.

At Tokyo's Komazawa Gymnasium, the United States, the 1984 and 1988 Olympic champion, beat Argentina 25-23, 25-21, 25-17. Japan is 3-6.

The third set was a real thriller with the South Americans leading 23-20, before the United States came back. When Argentina missed out on eight set points, the United States took the sixth chance to win the match.

We were a little bit out of our rhythm after a day off, but the team fought very hard, said American coach Doug Beal.

Argentina are 2-7.