

J-League play-off Nakayama's dazzling show

TOKYO, Dec 5 (Reuters/Internet): A captain's display by striker Masashi Nakayama helped Jublo Iwata to a 2-1 victory over Shimizu S-Pulse in the first leg of the J-League Championship play-off at Iwata Stadium on Saturday.

The 32-year-old centre forward scored both his team's goals in a frenetic Shizuoka derby, heading home in spectacular fashion after 30 minutes and then netting the winner from the penalty spot in the first period of sudden-death extra time after the 90 minutes had ended 1-1.

S-Pulse captain Masaaki Sawanobori played his part, too, curling a left-foot shot from 25 metres into the top corner after 34 minutes to cancel out Nakayama's first goal.

Nakayama, who notched Japan's only goal at the France World Cup, in a 2-1 defeat by Jamaica, has not had the best of seasons, scoring only six times in 23 appearances.

After the game, Jublo manager Takashi Kuwahara saluted his inspirational skipper. "He's had a few injuries this season, but he's come back well and is now in extremely good condition," said Kuwahara.

Japan's league is played over two stages. Jublo, the 1997 champions, won the first stage and S-Pulse the second.

Cup Winners' Cup Africa Sports lift title

JOHANNESBURG, Dec 5: Tunisian hopes of a clean sweep in the African club competitions were shattered on Saturday when Africa Sports of Cote d'Ivoire held Club Africain 1-1 in Tunis to lift the Cup Winners' Cup, reports AFP.

The Abidjan club won 2-1 on aggregate after taking a narrow lead into the second leg through a first-half goal from Fadel Keita in West Africa two weeks ago.

Kader Keita, younger brother of Fadel and on the wanted list of French First Division side Lens, put Africa Sports ahead after 32 minutes at the Al-Menzah Stadium.

Algerian international defender Rezki Amrouche levelled inside 60 seconds with his third goal of the competition, but the task of scoring at least two more proved beyond Club Africain.

Etoile du Sahel of Tunisia won the African Football Confederation (CAF) Cup last weekend on the away-goal rule after a 2-2 deadlock with Wydad Casablanca of Morocco.

And Esperance are favoured to bring another trophy to Tunisia next weekend when they entertain Raja Casablanca in the second leg of the Champions League with the teams level on aggregate.

No country has completed a title treble since the CAF Cup was introduced in 1992 and the feat of Club Africain follows Cup Winners' Cup triumphs by Etoile in 1997 and Esperance last year.

Although the Tunisians were widely expected to overcome the narrow deficit and collect a trophy named after former South African leader Nelson Mandela, tradition offered hope to Africa Sports.

Al-Ahly of Egypt and Al-Merreikh of Sudan — the other clubs to build 1-0 first-leg leads at home in Cup Winners' Cup finals — successfully defended their advantages.

Africa Sports will not defend the title next year, however, as they have qualified for the more lucrative Champions League while Club Africain will return to the Cup Winners' Cup.

Ardiles to manage Marinos

TOKYO, Dec 5 (Reuters/Internet): A year after leaving Japan, Ossi Ardiles has decided to go back, agreeing to coach the Yokohama F Marinos on a two-year contract, the club said.

Ardiles will succeed Spain's Antonio De La Cruz, whose contract ends on January 1, officials said on Friday.

The Marinos, one of the J-League's 10 founder-members in 1993 and backed by Nissan, have always had a Spanish/Argentine connection. Their former players include ex-Argentina striker Ramon Diaz and former Spanish international Julio Salinas.

Ardiles, a World Cup-winning midfielder for Argentina in 1978 before moving to England with Tottenham Hotspur, managed Shimizu S-Pulse for three seasons from 1996, leaving at the end of last year and eventually taking over at Croatia Zagreb.

When Croatia were eliminated from the European Champions League this season, Ardiles was fired. He visited Japan recently to watch his old club S-Pulse, playing under his former assistant Steve Perryman, clinch the second-stage championship with a 2-1 victory away to the Marinos.

Next season, Ardiles will be without at least one, possibly two, of the Yokohama club's most experienced players, club captain Masashi Nakayama and defender Masami Ihara. Japan's World Cup captain in France and the Asian Player of the Year when Marinos won the league in 1995, will be released after turning down a coaching post. He is negotiating with several teams to continue his playing career next season.

Seeds for the preliminary round draw Nervous wait for Italy, England

TOKYO, Dec 5 (Reuters/Internet): Former World Cup winners Italy and England face potentially tough qualifying campaigns for the 2002 World Cup finals after being left out of the top group of seeds for the preliminary round draw, announced by FIFA on Sunday.

FIFA accepted the rankings used by UEFA to determine the current status of their 51 member nations, so Italy, who have won the World Cup three times and hosted the tournament twice, were placed 13th in the rankings, missing the cut-off for the top seeded nations by four places. England who won the World Cup as hosts in 1966, were a lowly 17th.

With world champions France qualifying automatically, the 50 remaining European nations have been ranked for seeding purposes.

The top seeds are Spain, Romania, Norway, Sweden, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Germany, Belgium and Yugoslavia.

The European competition will consist of nine groups with the group winners qualifying for the finals.

The nine runners-up plus the third-placed team from the final Asian qualifying competition will go into five play-offs. The winners of those play-offs will also qualify for the finals.

The seedings were based on each team's record in the qualifying competitions for the 1998 World Cup in France and the 2000 European championships which ended last month. Those records added together produced a coefficient used by UEFA to determine their rankings.

UEFA president Lennart Johansson, who is also chairman of the World Cup Organising Committee, told a news conference on Sunday: "The rankings list is based on the most recent qualifying competitions and reflects the current situation in the order of European football, not what the situation may have been like a number of years ago."

Seven of the top nine seeds — Spain, Romania, Norway, Sweden, Czech Republic, Germany and Yugoslavia — all won their groups in the Euro 2000 qualifying competition.

The other two group winners are out of the top group for different reasons — France because they qualify as world champions and Italy because, although they won their Euro 2000 group, they had a relatively poor campaign, topping their group with only 15 points.

The second group of seeds also includes Portugal, England, Turkey and Denmark who have all qualified for the European championships.

But Ireland, who narrowly failed to clinch a place in Euro 2000, have slipped into the third tier, while Hungary, who boasted the best team in the world in the mid-1950s, are ranked in the fourth tier along with Iceland, Bosnia and Latvia.

The raw procedures for the other five confederations were also announced on Sunday, with the South American (CONMEBOL) competition the most straightforward.

The 10 CONMEBOL teams will play home and away matches against each other in one league, with the top four and the fifth-placed team meeting the winners of the Oceania confederation for a place in the finals.

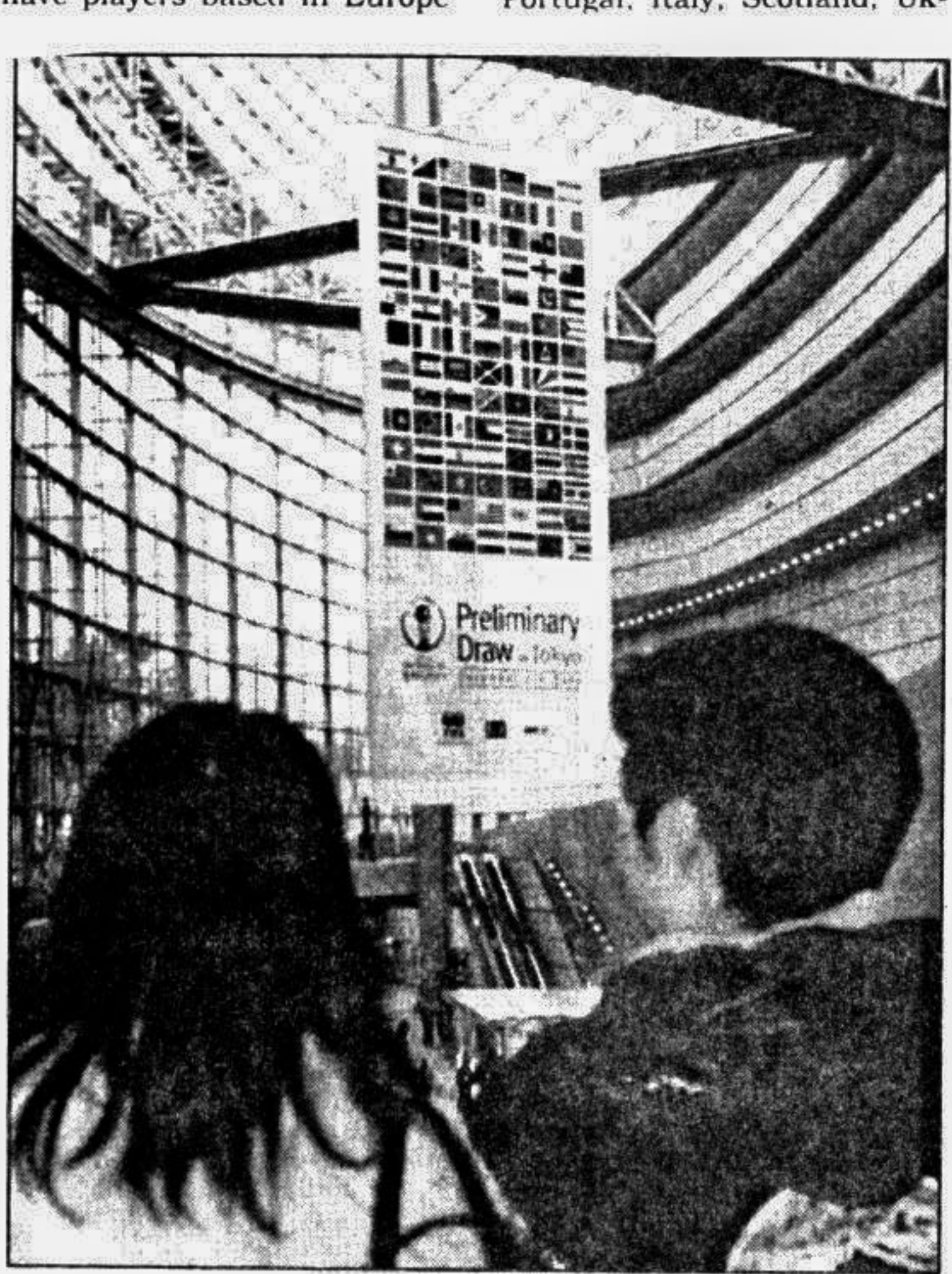
Brazil, having qualified for the 1998 World Cup as champions, did not take part in the last South American



qualifying competition and so this time each team will play 18

matches instead of 16.

FIFA general secretary Michel Zen-Ruffinen admitted this posed a problem because so many South American teams have players based in Europe



A Japanese couple read a banner for the preliminary draw of the 2002 World Cup at the Tokyo Forum Hall yesterday.

and there would be a total of 90 matches to organise.

"By the time the competition starts we will have the unified calendar in place for when international matches can be played but the South American competition still provides problems for us," he said.

The qualifying procedure for the CONCACAF zone with 35 teams vying for three places is the most convoluted of all the competitions. After a highly complicated system of group matches

and knockout games a final group of six will emerge from which three will qualify.

The Asian competition comprises 40 teams who will play a first round comprising 10 groups of four teams in each. The 10 group winners advance into two groups of five with the winners joining co-hosts Japan and South Korea in the finals.

The two runners-up meet and the winners will take on a

European team in a final play-off for a place in the finals.

The African competition comprising 50 teams play a straightforward knockout in the first round, producing 25 winners who are then drawn into five groups of five. Each group winner qualifies.

The Oceania competition comprises 10 teams in two groups of five with the winners meeting in a play-off. The winners of that meet the fifth-placed South American team.

Zen-Ruffinen confirmed that a record 198 of FIFA's 203 member associations had entered the World Cup. The draw is on Tuesday.

SEEDINGS

List for the European qualifying competition for the 2002 World Cup finals. The qualifying round draw takes place on Tuesday:

Top seeds: Spain, Romania, Norway, Sweden, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Germany, Belgium, Yugoslavia

Second seeds: Austria, Portugal, Italy, Scotland, UK

2002 World Cup Japan after Wenger

LONDON, Dec 5: A week that opened with Manchester United making Tokyo the focus of the soccer world has ended with Arsene Wenger keeping it firmly in the spotlight, reports Reuters.

Frenchman Wenger is the target of ambitious Japanese soccer chiefs who want the manager of English Premier League Arsenal to coach their country when it jointly hosts the 2002 World Cup finals with South Korea.

However, the Japanese Football Association may have their work cut out persuading Wenger to leave Arsenal to take over from current Japan coach Philippe Troussier when his contract runs out towards the end of 2001.

"I have a contract at Arsenal until 2002, and I am committed to the club and I want to win things here," Wenger said after his team convincingly beat Leicester City 3-0 away in a league match on Saturday.

In 2002 my contract will end in June, so that will be too short (in terms of time) to manage Japan (before the finals start), the Frenchman added.

Apart from his credentials with Arsenal, whom he guided to the league and FA Cup double in 1997-98, Wenger is well known in Japan after being in charge of J-League side Nagoya Grampus-8 before he joined the London club.

Recalling his experience in the Far East, Wenger said: "I have great memories of being in the Japan. I had a great period over there and that's maybe why people sometimes talk about me (as coach) for Japan."

"But I am committed to Arsenal," he added.

Frenchman, who joined the Londoners in September 1996, Wenger's side went top of the table for 3-1/2 hours on Saturday because their televised match was played in the morning.

However, he looked at it realistically: "If we play four hours before everybody else, we can be top of the table. In fairness, I don't consider we are top."

"But it's good to have an away win because we had two losses in a row at West Ham and at Tottenham."

By the time the rest of the day's programme was complete Arsenal had slipped to second place, one point behind Manchester United.

The European champions took over at the top by trouncing Everton 5-1 at Old Trafford, four days after adding the World Cup Cup to their trophy cabinet when they beat Brazil's Palmeiras 1-0 in Tokyo.

Dutch First Div PSV hot on Ajax's heels

AMSTERDAM, Dec 5: PSV Eindhoven beat Roda JC Kerkrade 2-0 in the Dutch First Division on Saturday, to narrow the gap with leaders Ajax Amsterdam to one point, reports Reuters.

Goals from Luc Nilis, his 100th in the league, and youngster Wilfried Bouma gave PSV their victory.

Ajax, who are at home to RKC Waalwijk today, have 35 points with PSV on 34.

After a poor spell in the league, champions Feyenoord picked up their third victory in a row, coming from behind to beat Sparta Rotterdam 3-1.

Sparta took the lead after 20 minutes of the Rotterdam derby through Michael Langerak, but Feyenoord, keen to shine ahead of next week's champions League match against Olympique Marseille, moved up the gears.

Julio Cruz scored in the 53rd and 57th minutes with a diving header and then a left-footed shot from just inside the box.

Four minutes before time Bonaventure Kalou sealed the victory when he shot the ball through the legs of the Sparta goalkeeper.

Feyenoord have risen to fifth with 29 points from 15 games, six behind Ajax who have a match in hand.

Premiership

Solskjaer massacres Everton

LONDON, Dec 5: Norwegian Ole Gunnar Solskjaer hit four goals in 29 minutes as European champions Manchester United swept imperiously to the top of the English Premier League on Saturday, reports Reuters.

Solskjaer's strikes and a spot kick by defender Denis Irwin fired league title holders United to a 5-1 victory over Everton at Old Trafford after they had trailed to a seventh-minute goal from Francis Jeffers.

United, who added the World Club Cup to their honours when they beat Brazil's Palmeiras 1-0 in Tokyo on Tuesday, moved up from second overnight to head the table with 36 points — one clear of Arsenal and Leeds United.

Arsenal had been top for 3-1/2 hours after they dispatched Leicester City 3-0 away in a televised match that kicked off in the morning.

Both second-placed Arsenal and third-placed Leeds, who

play Derby County today, have 35 points but the London team are ahead on goal difference.

They were reminded just how difficult it will be to wrest the crown from United when the league champions underlined their immense strength in depth with a formidable display to overwhelm Everton.

With first-choice strikers Dwight Yorke and Andy Cole, together with midfielder David Beckham, on the bench after the club's midweek trip to Tokyo, Solskjaer seized his chance in devastating style.

The Norwegian scored after 29, 43, 52 and 58 minutes to turn the match into a personal triumph that was acclaimed by manager Sir Alex Ferguson.

"He's a marvellous finisher, makes wonderful runs and is clever. He played very, very well today and I'm very pleased for him," Ferguson said.

Solskjaer played in an effective attacking partnership with Teddy Sheringham which helped to produce what Ferguson described as "absolutely magnificent football."

"They both needed that game today. They're both very much in our plans. Teddy's missed a lot of the season with injury and he's come back today and orchestrated a lot of our moves," said the United boss.

Arsenal, third overnight, temporarily took top spot thanks essentially to goals from Frenchman Gilles Grimandi and fellow defender Lee Dixon in the 23rd and 58th minutes.

They put Arsenal on course for victory in a match which the Londoners dominated, Dutch winger Marc Overmars sealing success with the third goal 15 minutes from the end.

Fourth-placed Sunderland sustained their challenge since being promoted at the end of last season by powering to a 4-1 home victory against Chelsea.

Strikers Niall Quinn and Kevin Phillips each scored twice during the first 38 minutes to overwhelm a Chelsea side whose erratic domestic form continues to contrast sharply with their performances in Europe.

Chelsea have reached the second group phase of the Champions League but have now won only once in their last six Premier League games.

Their Italian manager Gianluca Vialli said: "That is something which is difficult to take. We have not shown enough consistency in the Premier League and we have got to put that right soon because we have responsibilities to our supporters, to the club and to ourselves."

Sunderland, beaten 4-0 at Chelsea on the opening day of the season, exacted ample revenge in Peter Reid's 200th league game as their manager.

"We owed them one and paid them back today so I am delighted," Reid said. "We looked solid... I'm disappointed we let a goal in but there were much more pluses than minuses here today."

"Niall Quinn, I must say, this season has been outstanding. He and Kevin Phillips have been almost telepathic."

Wimbledon also enjoyed a free-scoring day as they crushed Watford, who are next to bottom, 5-0.

Carl Cort and Robbie Earle opened up a 2-0 lead in the first half before a three-goal burst in 17 minutes from John Hartson, Jason Euell and Marcus Gayle midway through the second half put the result beyond doubt.

Bundesliga

Bayern top on goal difference

BERLIN, Dec 5: Bayern Munich were held to a 1-1 draw Saturday by Borussia Dortmund on an icy pitch at Olympiastadion, but that was enough to gain top of the Bundesliga table again, reports AP.

Jens Jeremies 23rd minute goal was equalised by veteran defender Juergen Kohler's header in the 49th, a result likely to keep the heat on embattled Dortmund coach Michael Skibbe.

Dortmund, Munich's biggest rival of the 90s, failed to win for the 10th straight match as players slipped all over the pitch after a snowstorm hit Bavaria.

"I think we're still in a critical phase, but we came away with a moral victory," said Skibbe.

Munich are top on goal difference over Bayer Leverkusen, with both teams at 27 points. Hamburger SV have 26.

Leverkusen needed a 66th-minute header by Brazilian international Emerson to earn a hard-fought 3-2 victory against fifth-placed Werder Bremen.

Leverkusen twice threatened to break open the match, dominating play, only to watch the North German side scramble back with equalisers.

"Due to the hard checking there wasn't a lot of beautiful passing but the entertainment level was very high," said Leverkusen coach Christoph Daum.

Hertha Berlin, struggling in the league while mchning into the Champions Cup second round, finally won two straight matches as they blasted SSV Ulm 3-0.

1860 Munich moved into fourth and have 24 points with a 3-1 away victory against Stuttgart, while Schalke had to settle for another home draw, 2-2 against Freiburg.

On Friday, Hamburg posted a 1-0 victory against Frankfurt and Dortmund and Rostock fought to a 2-2 draw.

Munich scored when Mehmet Scholl kicked a corner out to Jeremies at the top of the box and the German international sent a rocket past the left post.

Anelka again sidelined

MADRID, Dec 5: Real Madrid's troubled French international striker Nicolas Anelka has once again been ruled out of action and will not play in Saturday's Primera Liga game against Real Zaragoza, team doctors confirmed Friday, reports AFP.

"Anelka has an infectious throat virus and as a result is out of the match against Zaragoza. For next Tuesday's Champions League match we will have to see how he feels in the coming hours," team doctor Dr. Manuel Chamorro said.

Koehler's long header to equalise, which bounced inside the far post, was the defender's first this season.

Leverkusen dominance was spoiled by the way Bremen kept fighting back with Brazilian player Ailton doing most of the damage.

Ailton, regarded as a bust in Bremen until recently, lofted a soft shot over Leverkusen keeper Adam Matyssek's head to knot the match at 2-2 in the 54th minute.

Ailton also set up Peruvian striker Claudio Pizarro's 20th-minute score that levelled the match at 1-1 after Boris Zivkovics's early goal.

Ulf Kirsten then put Leverkusen ahead again with a 47th minute penalty the German international's eighth goal this season.

Berlin, strapped by 12 injured players, got a 16-meter blast from Dariusz Woz just two minutes into the match while his free kick also set up the team's second score by Icelandic's Eyjoelifer Sveinsson.

Lanky striker Michael Preetz, the Bundesliga leading scorer, last season, scored a goal in his third straight match in the 73rd minute as Berlin dropped Ulm into the cellar.

1860 Munich stopped Stuttgart's recent run with goals by Markus Schroth in the 33rd minute, Ned Zelic in the 54th minute and Daniel Borimirov with seven minutes to play.

Serie A

Juve, Lazio going neck to neck

MILAN, Italy, Dec 5: Juventus downed Lazio 2-0 at home but Lazio responded with a win by the same score at Perugia Saturday to keep the two soccer powerhouses tied atop the Serie A with 25 points, reports AP.

At Turin's Delle Alpi arena striker Filippo Inzaghi scored two second-half goals before limping off with a knee injury to improve Juventus' record to 7-4-1 (win-draw-loss).

Lazio also improved 7-4-1 by capturing their third victory on the road on goals by their international stars Marcelo Salas and Sergio Conceicao.

Salas, the Chilean striker nicknamed "El Matador" (the Bullfighter) by his fans, headed his sixth goal of the season from a few metres on a perfect cross by his Croat teammate Alen Boksic in the 37th minute.

Portugal's Conceicao secured Lazio's success with a powerful right drive in the 63rd.

AS Roma, tied with Lazio and Juventus prior to Week 12 matches this weekend, have the chance to reshape a three-way tie in first place when they play Lazio on Sunday's Olympic stadium in Sunday's action, also featuring defending champion AC Milan vs Fiorentina and Internazionale vs Udinese.

Crosstown rivals Inter and Milan both have 20 points from 11 matches.

At Turin, Inzaghi scored the opening goal from one metre, in the 55th, on a precise pass from Alessandro Del Piero.

Inzaghi made it two in the 71st kicking into the open mouth a rebound on a previous shot by teammate Gianluca Zambrotta.

Minutes later Inzaghi had to leave the field with a bruised knee following a foul by Lazio defender Massimo Paganini, who gave a yellow card for his rough tackle.

Saturday's goals improved Inzaghi's season total to 17 in all competitions.

Inzaghi, 26, has tallied six in Serie A matches.

Bologna caused some problems to Juventus defence — the league best with 6 goals allowed — only in the first 20 minutes of play when keeper Edwin Van der Sar — returning from injury — made saves on shots by Brazilian Ze Elias and Swede Kennet Andersson.

Bologna's record worsened to 3-5-4 for 14 points in the table.

Juventus, Italy's most titled club with 25 "Scudetti," will be again at home in the next round against Internazionale. Lazio will play host to Fiorentina.

In the only other match of the day at Perugia, Lazio commanded play for long periods relying on a star-studded team including Argentine internationals Nestor Senzini and Juan Sebastian Veron, Yugoslav Dejan Stankovic, Conceicao, Salas and Boksic.

Perugia, their midfield play masterminded by Japan's Hidetoshi Nakata, had their best scoring chance in the 57th but the powerful drive by Milan Rapaic hit the bar and went out.

The Croat forward again hit the bar, on a free kick, with 10 minutes left when Conceicao's goal already had cooled down Perugia's hopes.

Perugia was left with 16

Hearts rope in Petric

GLASGOW, Dec 5 (Reuters/Internet): Hearts brought Yugoslav international Gordian Petric back to the Scottish premier league when they completed the central defender's 500,000 pounds (\$800,000) transfer from AEK Athens on Sunday.

Petric signed a three-and-a-half year contract with the Edinburgh club after two years playing in England and Greece.

points (5-1-6).

The victory and co-leadership overall, following a 1-4 upset by Roma and a goalless draw with Juventus, was likely to boost the morale of Lazio players for Tuesday's Champions League match against Chelsea.



Juventus striker Filippo Inzaghi (bottom) feels the presence of Bologna's Brazilian international Ze Elias during their Serie A tussle on December 4.

— Internet photo

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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