

## J-League play-off

## Nakayama's dazzling show

TOKYO, Dec 5 (Reuters/Internet): A captain's display by striker Masashi Nakayama swept Jubilo 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 Masaki 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.

But he put the Asian club champions in the driving seat for the second leg at Shimizu's Nihondaira Stadium next Saturday night.

After the game, Jubilo 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. Jubilo, 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 failure 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, Ossie 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-Argentine 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.

Central defender Masami Ibara, 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 clubs to continue his playing career next season.

## Seeds for the preliminary round draw

## Nervous wait for Italy, England



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

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 and Yugoslavia.

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

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 qualifying for the finals and the fifth-placed team meeting the winners of the Oceania campaign.

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.

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## Sport

## 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.

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.

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 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," added the 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