

Francis Tyson's British foe

LONDON, Dec 14 (Reuters): British heavyweight champion Julius Francis was confirmed on Tuesday as Mike Tyson's opponent for the former world champion's first fight in Britain on January 29.

Tyson, 33, is trying to resurrect his career after he was banned for biting Evander Holyfield's ear in their 1997 world title fight.

He last appeared in the ring on October 23 when his comeback fight against Orlin Norris was ruled a no-contest. Tyson punched Norris after the bell had sounded for the first round.

In his only previous fight outside the United States, Douglas lost his title to James "Buster" Douglas in Tokyo in 1990.

The fight against 35-year-old Francis is scheduled for Manchester.

Asked about Tyson's record of knockouts, Francis replied: "I know how to get down and dirty. I'm not going to let Tyson intimidate me with his Tyson tactics."

Tyson's American promoter Jay Larkin told a news conference the fight was being staged in England to avoid "the darkness and anger that has surrounded previous fights".

Rafter, who was recovering from shoulder surgery when Mark Philippoussis guided the Aussies to last week's Davis Cup final triumph against France, said missing the decider in Nice prompted a rethink of his comeback schedule.

"Missing the final, you realise how important Davis Cup tennis is and where I want to be," said the 26-year-old former World No 1 at the launch Monday of his book: "Rocket to the Top" — on the road with Patrick Rafter.

"I would have liked to have been part of (Australia's campaign) more," said Rafter, who is hitting balls in practice and is on target for a January comeback.

He underwent surgery on his right shoulder in October after pulling out of the New York tournament in August following an injury plagued six months. He also missed the chance to defend his US Open title and Australia's Davis Cup semifinal against Russia.

Rafter said he had "every event pencilled in" next year but would monitor his fitness before deciding whether or not to play in any tournament, despite new ATP rules which require top-ranked players to compete in the nine events which comprise the Masters series.

"The ranking doesn't mean anything to me next year. I don't like where (the ATP) have put the tournaments," Rafter said. "And if I went (overseas) I would find myself being injured or trying to chase points and it's not worth it."

Aussie Open admission fee reduced

MELBOURNE, Dec 14: Australian Open organisers on Tuesday dropped admission prices for the January 17-30 Grand Slam event after revealing that a new indoor court would not be completed in time, reports AP.

Tennis Australia president Geoff Pollard made an inspection of the new 10,000-seat indoor facility at Melbourne Tennis Centre before announcing that the "ambitious project" of completing construction before next month's Australian Open had "been defeated by time constraints."

The 65 million Australian dollar (\$41 million US) stadium has retractable roof and retractable seating and is expected to be an alternative to center court as an indoor venue on the site.

Marseille fans go berserk

MARSEILLE, France, Dec 14: Furious fans of ailing French footballing giants Marseille went on the rampage at the team's training ground here on Monday damaging players cars and manhandling several members of the team, reports AP.

The fans, who watched in disbelief as Marseille went down 5-1 to newly-promoted St Etienne on Sunday leaving them eighth in the table 13 points off leaders Monaco, also fired smoke bombs onto the roof of the training centre.

The supporters, who had been invited to a meeting with club directors and players, damaged the cars of captain Robert Pires and defender Sebastien Perez and then jostled several players, singling out Pires fellow World Cup winner Christophe Dugarry in particular.

Marseille, who won the 1993 European Cup before being relegated because of a match fixing scandal, are currently undergoing the most traumatic season since the end of the Bernard Tapie era.

They are bottom of their Champions League group, under investigation over fraud allegations involving transfers and with little hope of winning the title.



Arsenal's Emmanuel Petit blocks Blackpool's Phil Clarkson shot during their FA Cup third round encounter at Highbury on December 13. — AFP photo

Overmars bails Arsenal out

LONDON, Dec 14: Marc Overmars scored one goal and set up two more as Arsenal survived a first half scare to down Blackpool 3-1 on Monday and reach the fourth round of the FA Cup, reports AP.

There were fears that Arsenal, a seven-time FA Cup winner, might join the four other Premier League clubs already eliminated from the competition when Blackpool levelled in the first half for 1-1. But second half goals by Tony Adams and Overmars made sure that Arsenal's team made it.

In another third round game, Southampton scored a 1-0 win at Ipswich.

Without Dennis Bergkamp, David Seaman, Patrick Vieira, Martin Keown and Nigel Winterburn because of injuries, the Gunners fielded a weakened lineup but still took the lead midway through the first half against Blackpool when Gilles Grimandi fired home from 20 yards from a pass by Overmars.

Blackpool, struggling near the foot of Division Two, hitback with an equalizer seven minutes before half time when the unmarked Phil Clarkson turned home a cross from Paul Beesley to silence the Arsenal faithful at Highbury.

The Gunners were back in front in the 65th minute after a period of strong pressure when Adams fired home from close range from another pass by Overmars. And the Dutch winger added a third in injury time to ensure that Arsenal are at home to Hereford or Leicester in the fourth round.

At Portman Road, veteran Wales player-manager Mark Hughes, who remains a Saint until the end of the season, missed the target with a header from only six yards (meters) midway through the first half.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

But Blackpool, struggling near the foot of Division Two, hitback with an equalizer seven minutes before half time when the unmarked Phil Clarkson turned home a cross from Paul Beesley to silence the Arsenal faithful at Highbury.

The Gunners were back in front in the 65th minute after a period of strong pressure when Adams fired home from close range from another pass by Overmars. And the Dutch winger added a third in injury time to ensure that Arsenal are at home to Hereford or Leicester in the fourth round.

At Portman Road, veteran Wales player-manager Mark Hughes, who remains a Saint until the end of the season, missed the target with a header from only six yards (meters) midway through the first half.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Southampton went into the game with no goals from four games, and had gone out of the FA Cup at the first attempt for the past four seasons. But defender Dean Richards gave the Saints some hope with a headed goal five minutes before the break.

Richardson also headed against the crossbar in the second half as Southampton earned a visit to Astonvilla for a place in round four.

The big upsets of the third round were Derby losing 1-0 at home to Division Two Burnley, Division Two Wrexham's 2-1 ousting of Middlesbrough, West Ham's 1-0 loss at Division One Tranmere and Watford's loss at home to Birmingham.

The two surviving non-league teams, Hereford and Rushden and Diamonds, were in the fourth round draw although they haven't yet advanced from the third round.

Hereford held Premier League Leicester to a 0-0 tie and Rushden and Diamonds gained a 1-1 tie at Division One Sheffield United and both must replay next week.

Other replays outstanding after the weekend games are Newcastle-Tottenham, who tied 1-1 at White Hart Lane on Sunday, Everton-Exeter, Luton-Fulham, Torquay-Queens Park Rangers, Plymouth-Reading, Gillingham-Walsall, Blackburn-West Bromwich Albion and Oxford-Nottingham Forest.

Leicester City manager Martin O'Neill on Monday said he is in the frame to succeed Schuster as coach of the Israeli national side, reports AP.

"I will meet the president of the Israeli federation in Geneva on Tuesday and we will discuss the possibility of working together," Moller Nielsen told AFP.

"It will be a first informal meeting at the Israeli federation's initiative. We will talk about plans for the Israeli team and its perspectives for the future."

"It's possible I would be interested in this new challenge," said Moller Nielsen, who led the Danes to the European Championship title in 1992.

Lama leaving PSG PARIS, Dec 14: Former French international goalkeeper Bernard Lama is set to leave championship-chasing Paris St Germain after the 1999-2000 season, reports AP.

Lama, who had asked for a contract extension, will instead be allowed to leave the club, officials said Monday.

The PSG decision to free the 36-year-old was announced by deputy president Laurent Perre after talks with coach Philippe Bergeroo and sporting director Jean-Luc Lamarche.

PSG are anxious to give a chance to current number two goalkeeper Dominique Casagrande, who has been unhappy playing in Lama's shadow.

PSG's statement said that Lama had played "exceptionally" so far this season, but would be free to pursue his wish to end his career in Brazil.

PSG are currently second in the French championship, three points behind leaders Monaco.

Rangers after Tugay GLASGOW, Dec 14: Glasgow Rangers on Monday are reportedly on the verge of signing Turkish international midfielder Kerimoglu Tugay on a free transfer under the Bosman Ruling, reports AP.

According to Press Association reports the Galatasaray star was in Glasgow and looks set to sign a pre-contract agreement with the Scottish champions.

The 29-year-old midfielder could be the first of several new signings as Rangers bid to bounce back from the disappointment of another European exit before Christmas after the narrow UEFA Cup defeat to Borussia Dortmund last week.

Eng-Ger match UEFA won't change kick-off time

LONDON, Dec 14: UEFA, European football's governing body, on Monday ruled out any change to the kick-off time for England's Euro 2000 match against Germany in June despite fears of possible trouble, reports AP.

The game in Charleroi, Belgium, on June 17 is due to start at 8.45pm local time and Belgian organisers have already launched a security review.

UEFA insist the kick-off time cannot be changed and are confident their security arrangements will cope with any potential trouble.

A UEFA spokeswoman said: "The draw is the draw and we are sticking to it. The kick-off time cannot be changed."

"All matches in the European Championships have the same risk and we are not making a special case for any of them."

There are no flights out scheduled for after the match and local accommodation for the thousands of fans is limited.

Jacques van Gompel, the mayor of Charleroi, said: "We will have to review all our security measures."

"It's the match people are dreading. I've said all along that we will need extra assistance."

According to the Press Association, the PSA (Football Supporters' Association) are concerned over the possibility of trouble occurring between rival fans and will visit Charleroi on a fact-finding mission.

Euro 2000 Germany's warm-up matches BERLIN, Dec 14 (AFP): Germany pre-Euro 2000 warm-up matches announced on Monday.

Feb 23 - Netherlands in Amsterdam

Mar 29 - Croatia in Zagreb

Apr 26 - Switzerland in Kaiserslautern (Ger)

June 3 - team and venue to be announced

June 8 - Liechtenstein in Freiburg (Ger)

Nielsen may take over Israel COPENHAGEN, Dec 14: Former Denmark and Finland coach Richard Moller Nielsen said Monday he is in the frame to succeed Schuster as coach of the Israeli national side, reports AP.

"I will meet the president of the Israeli federation in Geneva on Tuesday and we will discuss the possibility of working together," Moller Nielsen told AFP.

"It will be a first informal meeting at the Israeli federation's initiative. We will talk about plans for the Israeli team and its perspectives for the future."

"It's possible I would be interested in this new challenge," said Moller Nielsen, who led the Danes to the European Championship title in 1992.

Lama leaving PSG PARIS, Dec 14: Former French international goalkeeper Bernard Lama is set to leave championship-chasing Paris St Germain after the 1999-2000 season, reports AP.

Lama, who had asked for a contract extension, will instead be allowed to leave the club, officials said Monday.

The PSG decision to free the 36-year-old was announced by deputy president Laurent Perre after talks with coach Philippe Bergeroo and sporting director Jean-Luc Lamarche.

PSG are anxious to give a chance to current number two goalkeeper Dominique Casagrande, who has been unhappy playing in Lama's shadow.

PSG's statement said that Lama had played "exceptionally" so far this season, but would be free to pursue his wish to end his career in Brazil.

PSG are currently second in the French championship, three points behind leaders Monaco.

Rangers after Tugay GLASGOW, Dec 14: Glasgow Rangers on Monday are reportedly on the verge of signing Turkish international midfielder Kerimoglu Tugay on a free transfer under the Bosman Ruling, reports AP.

Baggio opens his mouth

MILAN, Dec 14: A bitter Roberto Baggio fired a shot at his coach Marcello Lippi on Tuesday, claiming he had broken his promise to give him a regular first-team slot at Inter Milan, reports AP.

Baggio, who has hardly been seen this season, told the Gazzetta dello Sport that he wants a fresh start alongside Christian Vieri.

"I don't get to play very much," he said. "And since Inter are not in Europe, there are even fewer opportunities to show what I can do."

Baggio was thrown into the fray on Sunday against Juventus in the 78th minute, in the vain hope he could miraculously turn around a 1-0 defeat.

"But that's just the point," he said. "There's only been one man who performed miracles and he was put on the cross."

"It's not easy for anyone to come on for the last quarter of an hour and show their true worth and maybe change the course of a game."

"Unfortunately, I've only made four appearances this season and they've all been at the end, and on three of those occasions the team were losing."

Filling in the background, Baggio said: "When he arrived at Inter, Lippi told me I would have a first-team place, because he considered me an important player."

"I then went on holiday to Argentina, convinced I would have a leading role in the season ahead."

Obviously, things have changed, for reasons I don't know and which I wouldn't want to discuss anyway because Lippi is the coach and it's only right that he makes the choices."

"All I'm saying today is that if I'd known then that I'd be spending so much time on the substitutes' bench, I would have accepted one of the many offers that were made to me."

Looking back to similar experiences, Baggio said: "The same thing happened when (Fabio) Capello came back to coach AC Milan two years ago."

"With a great deal of honesty, he made me understand that I didn't fit into the club's plans. So, I went to Bologna and by playing each week scored 22 goals and earned a place at the World Cup finals."

As for now, Baggio said: "After the talk I had with Lippi I

form has helped Juventus become joint leaders of Serie A, also admitted that he made the mistake of taking things too easy after winning the World Cup last year.

The man from Marseille was linked with a move to Spain last season, following reports that he was an unhappy in Turin, an industrial powerhouse that is long on economic importance but often short on charm.

"Turin is not my city, there's no avoiding that," he told reporters during a sponsors' event in Brussels.

"I'm saying that it is ugly," he claimed. "It's just that I am used to living in sunlight not far from the sea. But it's nothing to do with Juventus, it's not their problem if I'm not living in my ideal city."

"I wear a Juventus shirt and I'm about Turkey," he told state radio.

"Turkish football is to be feared and they have fans in every corner of the world."

Zoff said he would be talking to former Lazio and AS Roma coach Zdenek Zeman, now at Turkish club Fenerbahce, for some tips.

As for Sweden, he said: "They're a lot better than some of the big name teams. They came top of England's qualifying group, which was a frightening one in itself."

"Though Italy were beaten 3-1 by Belgium just last month in a friendly at Lecce, Zoff said: "Belgium are the only opponents who I'm encouraged by, because we got a lot of things wrong when we played them, both in attack and in defence."

"But in the matches that count, we are always different."

Zoff is counting on his squad to overcome a punishment to the Serie A season for the players, with some also likely to be involved in the final rounds of the European Champions League and UEFA Cup.

"I think that my players will be able to dig down into their last reserves of energy, as they always have done in the past," he said.

But the 1982 World Cup winner added: "In June, the players' physical condition will be fundamental, because if you haven't got that, you can't have any tactics or organisation."

want to discuss anyway because Lippi is the coach and it's only right that he makes the choices."

"All I'm saying today is that if I'd known then that I'd be spending so much time on the substitutes' bench, I would have accepted one of the many offers that were made to me."

Looking back to similar experiences, Baggio said: "The same thing happened when (Fabio) Capello came back to coach AC Milan two years ago."

"With a great deal of honesty, he made me understand that I didn't fit into the club's plans. So, I went to Bologna and by playing each week scored 22 goals and earned a place at the World Cup finals."

As for now, Baggio said: "After the talk I had with Lippi I

form has helped Juventus become joint leaders of Serie A, also admitted that he made the mistake of taking things too easy after winning the World Cup last year.

The man from Marseille was linked with a move to Spain last season, following reports that he was an unhappy in Turin, an industrial powerhouse that is long on economic importance but often short on charm.

"Turin is not my city, there's no avoiding that," he told reporters during a sponsors' event in Brussels.

"I'm saying that it is ugly," he claimed. "It's just that I am used to living in sunlight not far from the sea. But it's nothing to do with Juventus, it's not their problem if I'm not living in my ideal city."

"I wear a Juventus shirt and I'm about Turkey," he told state radio.

"Turkish football is to be feared and they have fans in every corner of the world."

Zoff said he would be talking to former Lazio and AS Roma coach Zdenek Zeman, now at Turkish club Fenerbahce, for some tips.

As for Sweden, he said: "They're a lot better than some of the big name teams. They came top of England's qualifying group, which was a frightening one in itself."

"Though Italy were beaten 3-1 by Belgium just last month in a friendly at Lecce, Zoff said: "Belgium are the only opponents who I'm encouraged by, because we got a lot of things wrong when we played them, both in attack and in defence."

"But in the matches that count, we are always different."

Zoff is counting on his squad to overcome a punishment to the Serie A season for the players, with some also likely to be involved in the final rounds of the European Champions League and UEFA Cup.

"I think that my players will be able to dig down into their last reserves of energy, as they always have done in the past," he said.

But the 1982 World Cup winner added: "In June, the players' physical condition will be fundamental, because if you haven't got that, you can't have any tactics or organisation."

"Turkish football is to be feared and they have fans in every corner of the world."

Zoff said he would be talking to former Lazio and AS Roma coach Zdenek Zeman, now at Turkish club Fenerbahce, for some tips.

As for Sweden, he said: "They're a lot better than some of the big name teams. They came top of England's qualifying group, which was a frightening one in itself."

"Though Italy were beaten 3-1 by Belgium just last month in a friendly at Lecce, Zoff said: "Belgium are the only opponents who I'm encouraged by, because we got a lot of things wrong when we played them, both in attack and in defence."

"But in the matches that count, we are always different."

Zoff is counting on his squad to overcome a punishment to the Serie A season for the players, with some also likely to be involved in the final rounds of the European Champions League and UEFA Cup.

"I think that my players will be able to dig down into their last reserves of energy, as they always have done in the past," he said.

But the 1982 World Cup winner added: "In June, the players' physical condition will be fundamental, because if you haven't got that, you can't have any tactics or organisation."

was enthusiastic. But now I realise that he has not kept his promises and I can't say I've got the same enthusiasm I had last summer."

The two men had already parted company under cloud in 1995 when Lippi allowed Juventus to ditch the striker, selling him to AC Milan, in order to make room for Alessandro Del Piero.

As for confronting the problem, Baggio said: "I spoke to Lippi a month and a half ago when I realised there was no room for me. I asked him if there was any chance of me playing and he said that at that time, the team couldn't cope with having three men in attack."

"There were five strikers then, because there was still Ronaldo, but only two of them got to play."

Though Baggio's future is uncertain, the 32-year-old said he would keep working hard at Inter's Appiano Gentile training ground - "I go there to train, not to eat ice creams" - had no desire to leave.

"I've changed cities and clubs so many times in the past and I don't want to create even more problems for my family... I want to stay at Inter because I still think we can be the league."

And he summed up: "My dream is to be in the starting line-up, but not just for one or two matches. The ideal would be 10, because that's the only way someone can show their worth, as I did at Bologna."

"Vieri seems to be the first choice and ... I'd like to play alongside him. He's really good and we played together at the World Cup and we didn't get on at all badly."

which has changed - now we have a team spirit that's made of steel.