

Rutherford Irish coach

DUBLIN, Dec 23: Ireland have appointed former New Zealand captain Ken Rutherford as their national coach. The Irish Cricket Union announced on Thursday, reports AFP.

Rutherford, who played 56 Tests and 121 one-day internationals for the Kiwis, will take up his post in the spring and join the Irish team for a pre-season six-nation tournament in Zimbabwe in April.

His contract will run up to the ICC Trophy in Toronto in 2001 -- from which Ireland will be attempting to qualify for the 2003 World Cup.

"My main objective is simple: To take Ireland to the World Cup finals in South Africa," said 34-year-old Rutherford.

"The team almost made it to this year's finals in England and I'm confident they can go a stage further next time.

Rutherford, currently in the middle of another successful season as a batsman with Gauteng in South Africa, succeeds Mike Hendrick at the helm of Irish cricket.

Soccer rules at Wembley

LONDON, Dec 23: Soccer has won the battle for the new 475-million-pound (dhs 760 million) Wembley Stadium, reports AP.

Chris Smith, the secretary of state responsible for sports, was to detail plans Wednesday for Wembley to be rebuilt as a soccer-only stadium and the centerpiece of England's bid for the 2006 World Cup.

The decision, which scraps plans to add an athletics track, means Wembley will no longer be the focal point of a possible bid for the 2005 World Athletics Championships and 2012 Olympic Games.

Controversy erupted last month when Britain's sports minister Kate Hoey criticized the new Wembley layout, saying the 90,000-seat stadium was unsuitable for track and field and had been railroaded through by soccer interests.

Smith is reported to be adamant that some of the 120 million pounds (192 million dollars) going to the project from Britain's national lottery be returned by the Wembley National Stadium Limited, the English Football Association Subsidiary set up to oversee the redevelopment.

The returned money could go into redevelopment work at south London's Twickenham stadium -- home of English rugby -- to adapt the facility to athletics.

The money might also be used to help rebuild the small, rundown Crystal Palace facility in south London, which has been the city's traditional host for track and field events.

Smith ruled out spending an additional 20-45 million pounds (dhs 32-72 million) to add a temporary running track to Wembley, arguing it was unworkable.

The current north London stadium, opened in 1923, is to be demolished in 2000. Original plans called for the new stadium to be open in 2003, but delays now suggest it will open in 2004.

The Norman-Foster designed stadium is to be topped by a 300-foot (91-meter) high arch, a symbolic replacement for Wembley's famous twin towers.

Friendly Tunisia blank Ghana

SFAX, Tunisia, Dec 23: Tunisia warmed up for the African Nations' Cup with a 2-0 international friendly win over Ghana here on Wednesday, reports AFP.

The goals, both in the second half, came from Imed Mhadhbi and Bechir Mogaddi.

The result served as a timely boost for Tunisia with both teams preparing for the CAN 2000 competition in Nigeria and Ghana between January 22 and February 13.

Tunisia face a tough time in Group D against Nigeria, Morocco and the Congo.

The final part of their build-up comes on January 14 when they host the topflight Dutch club Ajax in Tunis on January 14 and Ghana, again, in Accra four days later.

Rafter needs more time

MELBOURNE, Dec 23: Australian Pat Rafter will decide in the next two weeks whether he will play in the singles draw in next month's Australian Open tennis here, reports AFP.

Rafter, who is recovering from a shoulder injury, still cannot serve but said Wednesday he was progressing well.

He has pulled out of the Australian Hardcourt Championships in Adelaide and the Koozing Classic here the week preceding the year's first Grand Slam tournament, but has not ruled out contesting the national title.

Speaking after a ticket parade here where several thousand people saluted Australia's triumphant Davis Cup team, Rafter said the next fortnight was crucial.

"If I can play and practise over the next couple of weeks at 100 per cent I may be ready to play singles," he said.

"My shoulder is coming on really well and I may try to play doubles in Sydney.

"My groundstrokes are great. It's only my serve at the moment. It will depend how much I can do in the next couple of weeks."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	35 Hawkeye Slater	2 Exchange woe	23 Winter premium
1 Hiatus	36 "Sound of Music"	3 Arequipa's country	24 Kuvshina's take on "King Lear"
4 Dumpty's perch	37 Black-bird	4 Walk like a duck	25 Chartres chum
8 Super-market shefful	38 Shylock's fee	5 Obeyed the rooster's crow	26 Lustrous black
12 Candle count	45 People selection	6 Scourge of serge	27 "Wham!"
13 "Siegfried"	46 Villa d'	7 Side-ways	28 Historic period
14 Bread spread	47 Macabre writer	8 Adjective for St. Nick	29 Buddhist sect
15 Madam's counter-part	48 A will	9 Follower	31 What still waters do
16 1958 Presley hit	50 Unsatisfactory	10 Control	32 Dual tool
17 Reclined	51 Crucifix	11 Medley	34 Sample of wordplay
18 100 pence	52 Harbor	35 Contaminant	36 Used the microwave
21 Brewery product	53 Filch	37 Pursuing	38 Not nearby
22 Beam of light	DOWN	39 Ralph Lauren brand	40 Hodge-podge
23 Implicate innocent	1 Horror film	41 Scandi-navian city	42 Grand-scale
26 Gridlock	2 Arises	43 Helpless?	44 Bealies movie

Solution time: 25 mins.

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Yesterday's answer

Scottish Premiership preview Parkhead brace for dream derby

GLASGOW, Dec 23: Controversial Scottish FIFA referee Hugh Dallas will take charge of Monday's Old Firm derby between Rangers and Celtic and he can't wait for the test, reports AFP.

Dallas will revisit Parkhead with memories of the decisive game of last season still fresh in the memory.

He was struck by a coin and saw several spectators attempt to attack him after he sent off Celtic's Stephen Mahe and Vidar Riseth alongside Rangers' Rod Wallace as Dick Advocaat's side regained the championship in their deadly rival's own backyard.

Dallas admitted Old Firm games were 'special' for a referee, and that Monday's match would be no different.

"I'd be kidding you if I didn't say it was special.

The players look forward to these games, and for a referee and the assistants it's absolutely no different.

"The Old Firm game is known throughout the world, so to be given one to take charge of is always an honour.

"But you have got to keep a lid on it. You must not treat it differently. You are only as good as the players allow you to be. If you think the players will play -- then you let it flow.

"As it happens, though, you don't get much time to enjoy it. I've spoken to the players and they agree.

"The game just flashes past. One moment it's five minutes before half-time, the next it's two minutes before the end."

Dallas admitted he is not the type of referee to issue any warning to players or officials before the game.

"I have no special message to the players. I will not demean them by going in laying down the law.

"There will be some banter especially in the tunnel - but you have to give it to those who want it and know which ones will not."

Rangers top the table on 43 points after beating Hearts 1-0 on Wednesday thanks to a late goal from Jorg Albertz and are four points clear of their Glasgow rivals who have played a game more.

Meanwhile, Kenny Dalglish, Celtic's Director of Football Operations, predicted the whole of Scottish football will benefit from Celtic's capture of Brazilian international Rafael Felipe Scheidt.

Rafael can join up with the Parkhead club in the New Year having already agreed a four-and-a-half-year contract with Celtic, who will pay Gremio 4.8 million pounds (7.7 million dollars) for his services.

The news is a coup for Celtic and will bolster their title aspirations, but Dalglish was keen to stress that the Scottish Premiership League's status will be boosted by the signing.

He said: "From Celtic's perspective, we are delighted to be bringing a player of Rafael's quality to Celtic and we are sure that he will not only enhance the Celtic squad but also Scottish football as a whole."

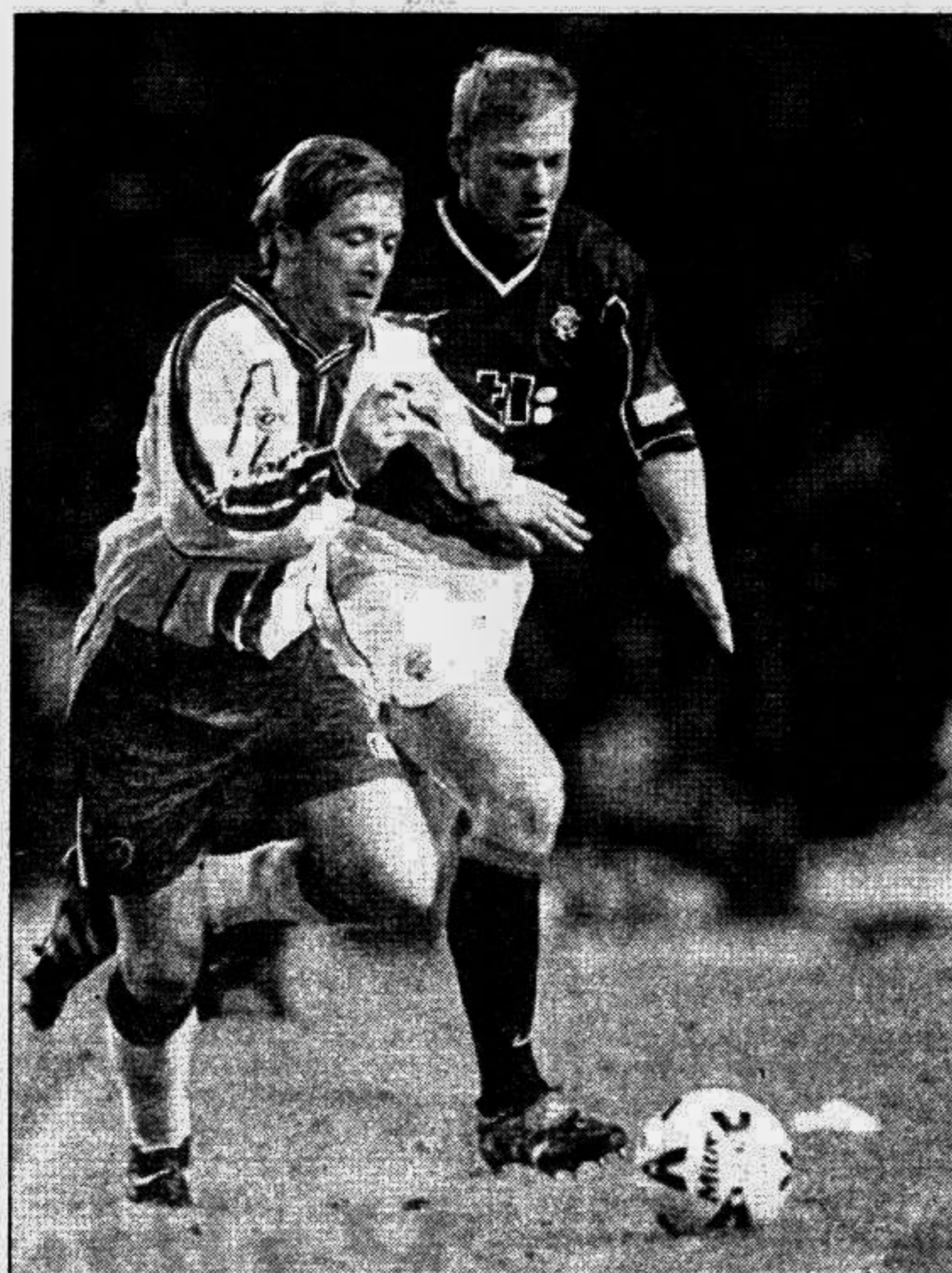
Third-placed Dundee United will be looking to close the gap on Celtic when they travel to bottom club Aberdeen.

Ebbe Skovdahl's club have just 9 points from a possible 51

and are three points adrift of Kilmarnock on 12.

Fourth-placed Motherwell will be looking to bounce back from their 5-1 home defeat by Rangers last weekend when they take on Hearts at Fir Park while Kilmarnock visit Hibernian at Easter Road, having won only one game away from home all season.

Dundee, third from bottom on 18 points and six clear of Kilmarnock, host St Johnstone, a place above on 19.



Glasgow Rangers' Joerg Albertz and Hearts' Gary Locke are locked in pursuit in their Scottish Premier League game on December 22. — AFP photo

Morocco looks for Bangladeshi support

Morocco has applied twice in 1994 and 1998 to host the football World Cup and now is again in the forefront to host the world's biggest sports event in 2006. Germany, England, South Africa and Brazil have also applied to host the game.

Already South America, Central America, North America and Europe have hosted the prestigious competition. Asia will host the 2002 World Cup. And now the popular demand is that an African country should play host.

Morocco has always been a nation of football as the national sport is practiced with talent, art and generosity. One cannot forget the legendary Larbi Ben Bark popularly nicknamed "The Black Pearl" and Mustapha Hadji, elected 1998 best African player-of-the-year by the African Football Confederation (CAF).

The first Africans to have reached the playoffs in Mexico in 1970 and four times participants at the World Cup finals, the Moroccan team has always proved its worth as representative of African and Arab football. It qualified for the Mexico '86 second round after topping Group F and the thrill of France '98 performance were events which cannot be forgotten.

Among the African countries, Morocco is certainly the country with the best record. It participated in the preliminary heats in 1961 when they were still inter-continental with four times since at the World Cup play-offs since 1970 and the First Arab and African country to have reached the second round in 1986 which was once again demonstrated in France '98.

Moreover, Morocco is fully engaged in modernising and developing its infrastructures. Morocco has attained spectacular progress in service industries and in the realms of

MAROC

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Apart from these, the progress attained by Morocco in terms of sports results and organisation call for its international recognition. The country feels that it is ready to host the football World Cup 2006 and seeks support from the Arabs, third world and Muslim countries including Bangladesh.

The Charge d'Affaires of the Kingdom of Morocco in Bangladesh Abdelillah Marsil is scheduled to meet the State Minister for Sports and Chief of the Football Federation for seeking support of Bangladesh and present souvenirs of the football World Cup 2006.

Valdano's says no

MADRID, Dec 23: Argentinian coach Jorge Valdano on Wednesday turned down an offer from Real Madrid to become the club's general manager, citing existing commitments club sources revealed, reports AFP.

Real sources said that Valdano, a former player and coach at the club between 1994 and 1996, turned the position down because it was "incompatible with his current professional situation."

Valdano, who won the 1995 league title for Real before being sacked the following season, explained: "We were unable to make headway with our discussions as other commitments prevented it. But it was an honour for me that Real Madrid remembered me."

"I have various professional engagements and I have commitments to many people regarding these projects. I cannot square this situation with the club's requirements," added Valdano, although he said both parties had "left the door open" for future cooperation.

"Real Madrid are a part of my life and Real are the best club in the world, the ideal place to put my ideas into practice," Valdano admitted, while explaining that existing engagements had to come first.

"It's a shame to have to say no, but in life, when you take on obligations such as those I have, you have to fulfil them," said Valdano, a member of the Argentina side which lifted the 1986 World Cup.

President Lorenzo Sanz had offered Valdano the chance to work as a general manager in tandem with Vicente del Bosque, appointed a month ago following the sacking of Welshman John Toshack.

Real had hoped to strengthen their technical staff as the seven-times European champions are struggling badly in the league this season, although they are still in the Champions League.

They have, however, won their last two league matches against Espanyol and Alaves to creep into the top half of the table having previously come within a point of a relegation slot.

The club suffered a further blow, alongside Valdano's rejection, when it emerged that Brazilian defender Julio Cesar will miss the World Club Championship in his home country in January with a shoulder injury.

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Australia Cup US eves threaten boycott

SYDNEY, Dec 23: America's world champion women's football team threatened Thursday to boycott next month's Australia Cup tournament over a pay dispute with US Soccer, reports AFP.

The Australian Women's Soccer Association said the women were scheduled to travel to Australia on January 2 to play against Australia, the Czech Republic and Sweden.

But the contract the players signed in 1996 expired six months ago after they won the World Cup and, according to a lawyer for the players, the US Soccer Federation said it would not make a new proposal in the near future.

Instead, the federation proposed the players work under terms of the expired agreement.

Australian Women's Soccer Association chief executive Warren Fisher said the development was "of great concern" with the tournament banking on at least four of the American stars being available.

"We have a contract with the US Soccer Federation which specifically names eight players and the team has to include any four of those eight," Fisher said.

The key players AWSA would like to see are superstar Mia Hamm, co-captain Julie Foudy, veteran Michelle Akers and Brandi Chastain.

"US soccer has given an undertaking to send out their best team," said Fisher, who added the tournament had been moved from December to January to accommodate the players' schedules.

"We moved the entire tournament to make sure the best players would be available and this development is of great concern to us."

Corinthians defend title

RIO DE JANEIRO, Dec 23: Corinthians, the Brazilian champions for the second year running on Wednesday after hanging on grimly for a goals draw at home to Atletico Mineiro in the third leg of the final, reports Reuters.

Corinthians, who started as clear favourites, won the final on having the best first stage record in the competition. Atletico had won the first leg 3-2 and Corinthians the second 2-0.

Despite home advantage in Sao Paulo, Corinthians fielded a defensive formation, clearly intent on playing for a draw.

Atletico made little headway in a dull first half but after the interval, they created several good chances and several times came close to scoring.

The game's best chances fell to Atletico striker Guilherme, who finished as the championship's leading topscorer with 28 goals, and Marcelinho Carioca of Corinthians.

Guilherme, who finished one goal short of the record set by Vasco da Gama's Edmundo two years ago, had an early shot on goal tipped over the crossbar by goalkeeper Dida while Marcelinho hit the bar with a swerving free kick.

Atletico midfielder Beletti was sent off for two crude challenges on Marcelinho while seven other players were booked.

The match was preceded by amazing confusion over the kick off time, which was only confirmed at 1315 local time.

It was originally scheduled for 1600 but on Tuesday evening, the Sao Paulo city council, fearing traffic chaos, won a court order transferring it to 2140.

The Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) appealed and lost, but the court's decision was not made until less than three hours before the original start time leaving the 80,000 fans who had bought tickets in the dark.

Hundreds of fans arrived at the stadium in the morning.

unaware that the game had been switched to the evening.

Many had travelled to Sao Paulo especially for the game and were left with nowhere to stay, having expected to return home in the evening.

Meanwhile, television stations had to make last-minute changes to their programme schedules and the teams had to alter their pre-match preparations.

There was also uncertainty over whether Corinthians could field topscorer Luizao, sent off in Sunday's second leg. The decision to ban him was made only hours before kickoff on Wednesday.

It was a remarkable triumph for Corinthians coach Oswaldo de Oliveira.

He had been promoted from assistant coach at the start of the year, sacked three weeks later and then reinstated in May after the man brought in to replace him was himself fired.

It was the third Brazilian title for Corinthians who will play in next year's inaugural World Club Championship.

out of their last 10 matches and with their front pairing of Titi Camara and Michael Owen beginning to blossom will be looking for maximum points away at Newcastle.

Newcastle, sixth from bottom on 19 points, crashed to their ninth defeat of the season at Bradford last weekend and another defeat would leave Bobby Robson's side dangerously close to the drop-zone.

Wimbledon, a place above Newcastle on 21 points, will be looking for maximum points away at West Ham in ninth, with Egil Olsen's side in high spirits after snatching a point at Highbury last week.

West Ham, meanwhile, were on the receiving end of a 4-2 home defeat by Manchester United and Harry Redknapp's side will be troubled by the fact that away from Upton Park they have only scored five goals in nine matches.

Seventh-placed Tottenham take on Graham Taylor's Wolves at White Hart Lane and are still well-placed to challenge for a place in Europe despite having already lost eight games this season.

Watford, second from bottom on 11 points, have lost 13 out of 18 matches this season and are another side also struggling to score on their travels.

Taylor's side, however, could receive a welcome Christmas boost with the return of strikers Noel-Williams and Nick Wright after long-term injuries.

Bottom club Sheffield Wednesday, five points adrift of Watford, host Bryan Robson's Middlesbrough at Hillsborough.

Danny Wilson's side have won just once in 17 games and will be wondering what they have to do to pick up points after losing 2-1 at Aston Villa last weekend.

Wilson must have thought his luck was about to change with his team leading 1-0 after

Premiership preview

Leicester test for leaders

Leicester City, buoyed this week by the end of a four-month boardroom power struggle, reports AFP.

Highly-rated Leicester manager Martin O'Neill's position was assured on Wednesday after chief executive Brian Pierpoint, the final member of the so-called Gang of Four directors, resigned.

The struggle, which could have led to O'Neill quitting the Premiership hierarchy, had already forced three other directors to quit.

Chairman John Elson and vice chief Sir Rodney Walker, the two men O'Neill had publicly backed, will resume control at Leicester.

Leeds, however, will start favourites - especially after an impressive display in their 2-0 victory away to Chelsea last Sunday.

Chelsea manager Gianluca Vialli paid tribute to Leeds after their win at Stamford Bridge and he believes they have the look of a title-winning side. He said: "They have talent and they are young but they have a few experienced players as well."

"They aren't scared of anything and they have had a bit of the luck that you always need to win a few matches in the last minute recently.

"All these things put together mean a team which has a great chance of winning the title."

David O'Leary's young guns have lost only once at home all season and have conceded only six goals on home soil.

Second-placed Manchester United, a game in hand, will start as red-hot favourites at home to fourth-from-bottom Bradford City, who have lost seven out of nine games on the road.

United are unbeaten at Old Trafford this season and have averaged more than three goals a game at home, by far the best record in the Premiership.

Sunderland continue to defy the odds by holding out third place in the table and with leading striker Kevin Phillips continuing to hit the targets, the Wearers will fancy their chances away to an Everton side who took 175 minutes to dispose of Third Division Exeter City in the third round of the FA Cup before prevailing on Tuesday.

Peter Reid's Sunderland side are two points behind United on 37 points, but have played a game more.

Arsenal, in fourth spot on 36 points, travel to Coventry hoping their recent disciplinary problems do not undermine their own Premiership challenge.

Frenchman Emmanuel Petit was lucky to escape punishment from the Football Association (FA) this week having allegedly spat at John Hartson in the 1-1 draw with Wimbledon last weekend.

Liverpool, three points behind Arsenal, have won eight

70 minutes and goalkeeper Pavel Srnicek having saved two penalties.

Wednesday pressed the self-destruct button once again, however, and Paul Merson's equaliser was followed by Ian Taylor's late winner to leave Wilson wondering whether the chairman may be running out of patience with him.

Robson, who saw his Middlesbrough side slip out of both domestic cup competitions last week after being beaten by lower division opposition, could be without German defender Christian Ziege and central defender Colin Cooper.

Ziege will be the biggest blow for Robson - who is already without Paul Ince, Curtis Fleming and Gary Pallister - as he has been their player of the season following his move from Italian giants AC Milan in the summer.

Southampton, fifth from bottom on 17 points, face a Chelsea side struggling to find form in the Premiership and whose title hopes were virtually killed off by Leeds last weekend.

Latvian international Imants Bleidiss is unlikely to start for Dave Jones' side because his work permit has yet to arrive.

The club have agreed a deal with Skonto Riga for the 24-year-old midfielder, who has arranged personal terms in a three-and-a-half year contract.

Manager David Jones was hoping Bleidiss could link up with compatriot Marian Pahars.

Derby host Villa in the East Midlands derby hoping last week's victory away to Leicester will kick-start their season, although they still remain third from bottom on 15 points.

Defender Darryl Powell's first goal in three years handed Jim Smith's side the vital win against Leicester, only their fourth victory all season.

Government of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer
PWD Division, Kushtia

Tender Notice

- Tender Notice No : 35/99-2000.
- Name of work : Const of 25 Nos Fire Service & Civil Defence Station in different important thana headquarter in Bangladesh one at Mirpur in the dist of Kushtia (SH: Internal Sanitary & water supply arrangement main building)
- Estimated cost : Tk 2,57,065/-
- Earnest money : Tk 5,141/-
- Place of sell & receiving of the tender : Office of all the Executive Engineers, PWD Division, under PWD Circle, Jossore.
- Last date of selling : Dated 29.12.99 during office hours.
- Date of receiving : Up to 12.00 Noon of 30.12.99 & will be opened on the same day at 12.15 PM.
- Eligibility of contractor/firm : Enlisted & valid PWD sanitary & plumbing contractor/firm of PWD according to their financial capacity.

Executive Engineer
PWD Division, Kushtia

Project Management Organisation

Bangladesh Railway, Chittagong Tender Notice

No: COS/CLEARANCE/RAIL/MLR/99 Dated: 20-12-99

Sealed tenders are invited from eligible clearing & forwarding agents for clearance of 10,000 M/Tons 90 Lbs 'A' Rails (approximate C&F price Tk 30.34 crore) from Mongla Port including loading, carriage up to Khulna Railway Yard, unloading, stacking & loading into Railway Wagons there.

- Only those firms which are approved as C&F agent of Khulna Custom Authority and have valid licence from Mongla Port Authority and have the past experience of clearing and transportation of bulk and heavy materials from Mongla Port to Khulna areas, are eligible to participate in this tender.
- Tender document can be purchased during office hours on all working days with effect from 26-12-99 to 25-1-2000 from the office of the Controller of Stores/Project, Bangladesh Railway, Central Railway Building, Chittagong as well as from the office of the Executive Engineer/Project, Bangladesh Railway, Kamalapur, Dhaka on cash payment of non-refundable sum of Tk 750.00 (Taka seven hundred fifty) only.
- The tender document must reach the office of the Controller of Stores/Project, Bangladesh Railway, Central Railway Building, Chittagong or be dropped in the tender box placed in his Office Chamber at Central Railway Building, Chittagong by 11:00 hrs on 26-1-2000 which will be opened at the same place on the same date at 11:30 hrs.
- Tenders will not be received after the specified date and time.

M Abdullah
Controller of Stores/Project
GD-1231
Bangladesh Railway, Chittagong.

DFP-28364-21/12/99 G-2154