

## Rangers reject Van Bronckhorst bid.

GLASGOW Dec 24: Rangers have rejected a 6 million pound (9 million dollars) bid for Dutch midfielder Giovanni van Bronckhorst, it was reported Friday, reports AFP.

The 24-year-old star was outstanding in the Ibrox club's Treble-winning campaign last term and, although his form has dipped slightly this season, he remains an integral part of Dick Advocaat's first-choice line-up.

The former Feyenoord man has attracted interest across Europe and is the number one target of Atletico Madrid coach Claudio Ranieri.

Rangers chairman David Murray received a call from an unnamed agent who proposed a 6 million transfer - but the Ibrox supremo rejected the offer out of hand, the Press Association reported.

"We are not interested in selling Giovanni," Advocaat said. "We would not even entertain an offer of 6 million for him anyway."

"We are building a team here, not breaking one up. Other clubs, no matter who they are, must realise this."

And van Bronckhorst, who is preparing for Monday's final Old Firm clash of the century at Celtic Park, is happy with life in Glasgow.

"Of course it is flattering," he said.

"It's a good sign when the chairman says that because I must be doing well for the club and its nice to hear that."

"But I'm not too bothered about hearing transfer speculation because it's not the first time I've been linked with other clubs."

"I want to concentrate on other things and not think about it. It's better that I focus on Monday's game with Celtic."

## Morrison hospitalised

WASHINGTON, Dec 24: Former heavyweight boxing champion Tommy Morrison, facing various drug and weapons charges, has been hospitalised to determine whether his HIV has developed into AIDS, reports Xinhua.

Morrison was at the Washington Regional Medical Center Thursday at the urging of his attorney, who said he has noticed a change in Morrison's physical and mental condition.

A judge on Tuesday revoked Morrison's bond and ordered him to jail after a Thanksgiving Day arrest on narcotics and weapon charges in Madison County.

Morrison began taking medication a year ago to treat the virus that causes AIDS.

## Trip down Olympic Memory Lane

LONDON, Dec 24 (AP): Baron Pierre de Coubertin's vision brought us Jesse Owens, Carl Lewis and Alberto Tomba and launched the career of Muhammad Ali.

What he didn't envisage were the terrorist murder of 11 Israeli team members at Munich,

persistent disruptive political

boycotts, the Ben Johnson

doping scandal that smeared

the name of sport and a vote-

rigging can of worms that

shamed the entire Olympic

movement.

The Olympic Games has

moved a long way since de Coubertin revived the ancient event practised by the Greeks and created a platform for the first modern Olympics in 1896.

A century later it is big money and an Olympic gold medal transforms many of its owners into millionaires. It costs billions to stage an Olympics and that's why sleaze has crept into the bidding. Ask Salt Lake City, who will stage the 2002 Winter Games, yet was at the centre of a vote-rigging scandal that almost brought the movement to its knees.

The first Olympics in Athens in 1896 attracted only 311 competitors - all male - from 13 nations while some 10,000 from 200 countries are expected to turn up for Sydney 2000.

Now the Olympics are open with highly paid soccer and tennis stars rubbing shoulders in the athletes village with the big names track, swimming, gymnastics and figure skating. There have even been moves to bring golf into the games.

But even the early Games weren't free from political turmoil.

At London in 1908 the Russians tried to prevent the Finnish team using their flag and the English objected to the Irish using theirs.

But Owens made the biggest political statement of all at Berlin in 1936. The grandson of slaves, the black American exposed the fallacy of Adolf Hitler's racist policies by winning the 100 and 200-metre sprints and the long jump to the fury of the German Chancellor.

The Winter Games were added to the sports calendar in 1924 while the intervention of World War II put the Olympics on hold for 12 years. The Germans and Japanese, the defeated nations of the war, weren't invited to compete in London in 1948, whereas versatile Dutch sprinter Fanny Blankers-Koen won four golds.

A big star of the 1952 Games in Helsinki was Czech long distance runner Emil Zatopek, who won the 5,000, 10,000 metres and marathon to go with the 10,000 gold and 5,000 silver from four years earlier. His wife, Dana, also won gold in the 1952 javelin.

That was the year the Soviet Union competed as a united force for the first time and began four decades of Olympic success, funded by the state.

Many Olympics became a straight fight between the



RECOGNITION COMES FLOWING: Barcelona's World and European footballer-of-the-year Rivaldo (L) receiving the trophy for being the best Latin American player in the Spanish league from EFE news agency's information officer Miguel Platon at Barcelona on December 23. — AFP photo

## Dugarry may lead mass departure



MARSEILLE, France, Dec 24: Marseille striker Christophe Dugarry met with directors of his former club Bordeaux on Thursday with a view to returning to his home city, sources close to the player revealed, reports AFP.

If a move is agreed Dugarry is likely to be the first of several players to leave the Stade Velodrome following the recent slump that has afflicted last-season's runners-up.

Dugarry hopes to tie up a deal with the French champions by the weekend with the fee believed to be in the region of 4 million pounds (6.3 million dollars) although Bordeaux regard that figure as being excessive.

The French World Cup winner, who will be 28 in March, had two unsuccessful spells with AC Milan and Barcelona after making his name with the Bordeaux team that featured France 98 team-mates Zinedine Zidane and Bixente Lizarazu. Zidane remains his close friend and business partner.

Dugarry returned to France with Marseille in summer '98 but has not really made an impact with the Cote d'Azur club.

He was handed a five-match suspension by UEFA for his part in a brawl following the UEFA Cup semi-final with Bologna last season and then tested positive for Nandrolone over the summer.

However, Dugarry, who came

as a substitute during the World Cup Final win over Brazil, successfully persuaded anti-doping officials of his innocence.

But Dugarry remains the most vilified footballer in

between fans and players are at all time low with fans verbally and even physically abusing players.

Dugarry openly admits he

wants to go as he was particularly badly treated by rogue fans after a meeting on December 13. Players were jostled and their cars damaged by angry supporters with Dugarry bearing the brunt.

Bernard Casoni, who replaced Courbis as coach, and Marseille president Yves Marchand, have pledged that several players will leave the club during the midwinter break and will endeavour to bring in new faces before the French First Division resumes.

Casoni has already said avoiding relegation is his only priority for this season.

Dugarry did not exactly endear himself to Bordeaux's fans last season when his former club pipped his current employers to win the title on the last day of the season.

He cast doubt on the motivation of Paris St Germain players who lost 3-2 to Bordeaux in the last fixture.

There is mutual loathing between Parisian fans and Marseille and the normally partisan PSG supporters openly cheered on Bordeaux during that match.

Dugarry was strongly criti-

cised by Bordeaux fans in the light of those remarks but now it looks as though he could be returning to the only club where he has been an unqualified success.

CHRISTOPHE DUGARRY

France and is frequently the target of abuse when playing for club and country. He has been particularly scapegoated by Marseille fans, who have in recent weeks made their contempt for the club's entire skater clear.

Marseille are in midtable, struggling in the European Champions League and last month sacked coach Rolland Courbis.

They are also facing investigations for fraud and relations

with the police.

United States and the Soviet Union at the top of the medals table with Soviet-backed East Germany also becoming a major force although some of its methods were later to be exposed as blatant cheating through doping.

The 1968 Summer Games were held at altitude in Mexico City and included the amazing Bob Beaman long jump leap of 8.90 metres (29 feet 2 1/2 inches) — breaking the existing mark by 0.55 meters (21 3/4 inches) — and Lee Evans 43.86 for the 400 metres which stood for 20 years.

The Soviets responded by staying away from Los Angeles in 1984 when Lewis started his long and glittering career, emulating Owens by winning both sprints and the long jump but also collecting a fourth gold in the short sprint relay.

He repeated his 100 triumph at Seoul four years later when Canada's Johnson, first across the line, was disqualified as a drugs cheat, and Lewis collected his second long jump gold medal in a row. The American won the long for the third time in 1992 in Barcelona and collected a relay gold medal to make it a record eight in total.

Over on the ski slopes, Tomba became the Carl Lewis of the Winter Games with three golds and two silvers over three Olympics between 1988 and '94 even though the flamboyant Italian stayed well away from the downhill and super giant slalom races partly on the instructions of his mother.

Among the other sports stars to make an impact at the Olympics were Kenya's middle distance star Kip Keino, Finnish long distance runners Paavo Nurmi and Lasse Viren, Ethiopian marathon star Abebe Bikila, Norwegian figure skater Sonja Henie, Hungarian swimmer Tamas Darnyi and Australia's Dawn Fraser, Turkish weightlifter Naim Suleymanoglu and Cuban heavyweight boxer Teofilo Stevenson.

Keino sparked a Kenyan revolution in middle and long distance running with a gold in the 1,500 metres and silver at 5,000 at Mexico City in 1968. To get to the 1,500 final on time, he had to jog through a traffic jam.

Nurmi won nine Olympic golds, although five were in events that no longer exist, between 1920 and '28. At Paris in 1924, he won the 1,500 and 5,000 races within an hour of each other breaking the Olympic record each time.

Viren's performances were boosted by the controversial though not illegal practice of blood doping and won the 5,000 and 10,000 metres gold medals at both the 1972 and '76 Games.

Bikila, a member of the Ethiopian Imperial Bodyguard, won back to back marathons in 1960 and '64 each time breaking the world's best time while Henie won three Olympic titles in 1928, '32 and '36 and Fraser did the same in the 100m freestyle between '56-64.

Darnyi, who could only see out of one eye, won both the 200 and 400 individual medleys in 1988 and '92 while the 4-foot-11 (1.50-metre) Suleymanoglu, known as the "Pocket Hercules" because he could lift three times his 132-pound (59.9 kg) body-weight, won golds at three Games in a row between 1988 and '96.

At Lake Placid in 1980, Ingemar Stenmark, from a town in Swedish Lapland, won the slalom double during a career that made him the winningest skier of all time.

African nations led a boy-

teen for those sports that rarely get the spotlight away from giants such as soccer and basketball. Gymnastics, figure skating, swimming and Nordic skiing don't often get big coverage until the Olympics come round and give a platform for such stars as Comaneci, skating star Katerina Witt, and Nordic skier Bjorn Daehlie.

Basketball played a minor role in the Olympics until the Americans, who had won every gold medal since 1936, lost for the first time in 1972 to the Soviets in a highly controversial ending.

In 1992, they entered their "Dream Team", which included stars such as Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, Patrick Ewing, Larry Bird and Scottie Pippen, to win the title, overwhelming everyone by wide margins.

The soccer competitions have been restricted to amateur or players age under 23 so they don't pull the spotlight away from the World Cup.

But the sport made a big impact at the 1996 Games when a Brazilian lineup that included Ronaldo and a powerful Argentine team were upstaged by Nigeria, who became the first African nation to win an Olympic team event.

The first women's competition ended with a win by the United States over China in the biggest crowd ever to see a women's soccer game, 76,481 at Stanford Stadium, Athens, Georgia.

It also had the black power salute by American 200-metre stars Tommie Smith and John Carlos as they stood on the podium their arms outstretched with the US anthem was playing.

That also was the year that Frenchman Jean-Claude Killy emulated the feat by Austria's Tony Sailer by winning all three Alpine skiing gold medals to establish himself as the biggest name in skiing.

American swimmer Mark Spitz won seven gold medals in the pool at Munich in 1972 while 17-year-old Soviet gymnast Olga Korbut, with her elfin figure and beaming smile, became a star around the world after her three golds.

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He said the majority of Russian coaches remained "insensitive" to the modern needs of the world's most popular sport.

## Sport

### AFP ENGLISH FOOTBALL BRIEFS

COVENTRY: Swedish international defender Tomas Gustafsson could make his debut in English Premiership football for Coventry against Arsenal at Highfield Road on Sunday.

The 26-year-old former AIK Stockholm player is set to get his chance as the Sky Blues' have seven players on the injury list.

#### UNITED LONE · MAY OUT

MANCHESTER: Manchester United defender David May has joined English First Division leaders Huddersfield on a month's loan.

The 29-year-old central defender will be available for the Terriers' holiday programme and is expected to make his debut at Crewe on Sunday. The move will help Huddersfield's injury crisis at centre-back with both Chris Luckett and Ken Monkou out injured.

May, who cost United 1.4 million pounds from Blackburn in July 1994, links up again with former Old Trafford defender Steve Bruce, who is now manager at the McAlpine Stadium. (AFP)

#### WORTHINGTON QUITTS BLACKPOOL

BLACKPOOL: Nigel Worthington on Thursday resigned as manager of Second Division Blackpool, indicating he had taken the struggling side as far as he could.

The former Northern Ireland defender believed he could not improve his playing staff with the resources he had at his disposal and so has chosen to quit the Bloomfield Road hot-seat, the Press Association reported.

President of Spanish Primer Liga club Atletico Madrid, Jesus Gil (C) leaving a court in Madrid on December 23. Gil, who is also the mayor of Marbella, has been removed by Judge Garcia Castellon from his post in the team following allegations of fraudulent dealings between Atletico and the city council of Marbella.



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— AFP photo

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— AFP photo