China too good for Macau

MACAU, Dec 25: Not even Juergen Klinsmann, Carlos Dunga and Franco Baresi could stop tiny Macau from succumbing 4-0 to the might of China in a match on Friday celebrating the ex-Portuguese enclave's return to Chinese rule, reports Reuters.

Four headers by striker Su Maozhen secured victory as China's national squad, playing their first match in two years without the talents of sacked English coach Bob Houghton, made their debut appearance in Macau.

But while the Chinese were celebrating a performance that allowed them to chisel off the rustiness that had developed as a result of a long period of international activity, the real interest in the game lay in the appearance of three of the modern era's greatest players.

Klinsmann, Baresi and Dunga featured for just over an hour before leaving the field to catch flights back to their families in time for Christmas.

Yet in that short time, the memories of some of the game's greatest sporting achievements were revived by a group of players who, among them, have won just about every major international and club honour in the world game.

"I enjoyed playing so much with Franco because it's easier than playing against him," said Dunga, who captained Brazil to their fourth World Cup victory

"This match was a very friendly match, it wasn't so aggressive." If we'd had the chance to spend more time together we probably would have had of a chance to play better together.

"At the beginning we were a bit confused but after that we were okay." "I enjoyed playing together (with Klinsmann and Dunga), agreed three-time European Cup winner Baresi. "When we were up against each other everything was too complicated so I'd rather play with great champions like Dunga than against them."

The illustrious trio took to the pitch with a group of Macanese players, all of whom were amateurs and who were as much in awe of the three as anyone in the stadium.

Only the Chinese failed to be overawed by their presence, and Baresi complemented China on the way they played.

"This is the first time I have seen the Chinese national team and I was very impressed by their strengths," said Baresi. "They could achieve some good results in the near future."

Swedish fans fight for 'Square Nacka'

STOCKHOLM, Dec 25; More than 500 people demonstrated here Friday as part of a campaign for a square in Soeder, a district in the south of Stockholm, to be named after legendary Swedish footballer Lennart "Nacka" Skoglund. Swedish television reported reports AFP.

The rally was timed to coincide with the 70th anniversary of the birth of "Nacka" (1929-1975), who was a big star in Swedish football in the 1950s and made his name as a striker in the national team that made it to the 1958 World Cup Final in Stockholm where the host nation was defeated 5-2 by a Brazil team inspired by a 17year-old prodigy named Pele.

"Nacka" Skoglund had already been a squad member of the Sweden team that finished third in the 1950 World Cup held in Brazil.

As a club player he reached the zenith of his career with Italian giants Inter Milan in 1953-4 where he won a Serie A

He is still fondly remembered both in Sweden and Italy. Between 1964 and 1967 he played for Stockholm outfit Hammaeby.

"Nacka" was a famous dribbler who specialised in scoring goals from apparently impossible angles on the wing and was a national hero in Sweden. particularly in Stockholm.

He has already been honoured in his home city by a statue in the Katerinabangatan street but that has not satisfied his fans who now want a square named after him.

Zambian soccer boss quits

LUSAKA, Dec 25: Zambian soccer bosses have resigned in the face of intense pressure from international players. government and disgruntled affiliates, reports Reuters.

Football Association of Zambia (FAZ) executives quit on Thursday, a week after the national squad returned from a disastrous trip to North and Central America.

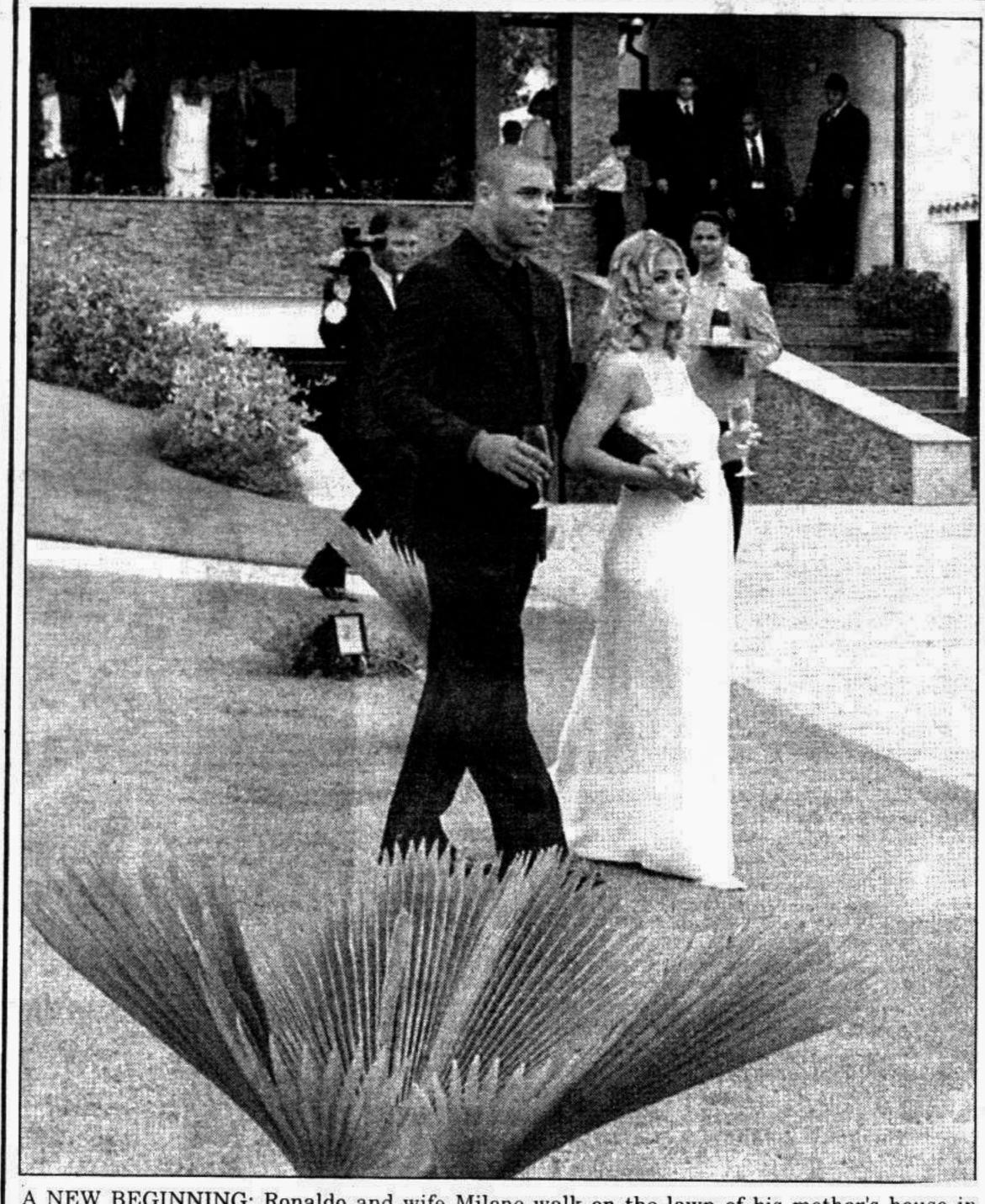
The visit, dubbed the "American horror tour" by local newspapers, was cut short by angry players who flew home after complaining of poor food

and sleeping arrangements. Tour sponsors L-Sporto had refused to pay the players their daily allowances and said FAZ was supposed to bear the cost.

Coaching staff had been given only \$500 for incidentals by the The Zambian soccer com-

mittee fell out of favour with the government following the team's dismal performance at the Africa Nations' Cup in Burkina Faso last year.

Newspaper reports earlier this week said that squad members had vowed not to report for training ahead of next month's tournament in Ghana and Nigeria unless they were paid outstanding allowances from five previous games.



A NEW BEGINNING: Ronaldo and wife Milene walk on the lawn of his mother's house in Rio de Janeiro on December 24 after their civil wedding ceremony. -AFP photo

Ronaldo bestows his hand upon Milene's

Dec 25: Brazilian striker Ronaldo on Friday married his fiancee Milene Domin-

gues, who is four-months pregnant, in a civil ceremony attended by 40 friends and relatives, reports AFP. The 30-minute ceremony presided over by a justice of the

peace was closed to the press and started two hours later Ronaldo and Milene allowed lives on Friday. themselves to be photographed

afterwards in the garden of the house of Dona Sonia, the player's mother, where the marriage took place. She lives in the Barra da Tijuca district in the west of Rio.

The groom wore a dark Giorgio Armani suit and was slightly limping because of a knee operation on November 30 in Paris. Smiling he wished everyone a merry christmas and a happy new year.

He made a toast to Milene, who was wearing a long pearl dress also designed by Armani. and added: "I hope everyone is as happy and Milene and I am at the moment.'

Childhood friends of Ronaldo were present but no footballer attended. The 23year-old player will have a church wedding in July 2000 while there will also be a Buddhist ceremony - his new wife is a Buddhist. .

Brazilian Football Confederation president Ricardo Texeira did attend after being invited by phone by the player on Thursday.

The couple met in a Sao Paulo pizzeria five months ago although Milene claims she had long been a fan of the player, who she saw for the first time in

They say they are planning a large family after the birth of their son who will be named Ronald and will be born in May. The Inter Milan star and his

wife will attend a Christmas meal Friday evening and will host a Christmas day barbeque with the friends of the player who grew up in the poor "favelas" of Rio. Some of the guests than the scheduled 1400GMT admitted they were wearing a dos Rois (150km from Rio).

starting time. They will see in the

> "We are not used to wearing them (ties). If it is too hot we will not be able to bear it," said 23-year-old Fabio Barata, one

On the menu for the guests was lobster, shrimps, red meat

of those childhood friends.

with mushrooms and salmon. Green salad and cheese were to follow with cakes and passion fruit as dessert. It was to be washed down with whisky and French champagne. With his right knee still in plaster Ronaldo will not be able

to go on honeymoon although the couple will spend the weekend in the Spa town of Angra They will see in the new Millennium in Rio before returning to Paris where the player will meet again with the surgeon Gerard Saillant who

operated on him in November.



The newly-wed couple kiss after exchanging their vows.

-AFP photo

Rivaldo clears the air



BARCELONA, Dec 25(Reuters/Internet): European footballer of the year Rivaldo insists he does not

want to leave Barcelona despite the run-in with coach Louis van Gaal that has left him on the sidleines at the Catalan club. Rivaldo's refusal to play on

the left side of the Barca attack led van Gaal to drop the Brazilian from his squad for Wednesday's Spanish league game against Rayo Vallecano.

Speculation is rife that Rivaldo is on his way out of the club and an Italian newspaper said on Wednesday that Lazio were prepared to pay a world record 62 million dollars to buy him.

Rivaldo, speaking on Spanish television on Wednesday. said he wanted to continue playing for Barcelona but reiterated that he wanted a more central role in the team.

"It's true I did say in the dressing-room that I don't want to play on the left any more." Rivaldo confirmed.

"I spoke with all due respect to my team mates and the coaching staff but I did it because it came from the

T've spent the two years I've been here playing stuck out on the left, sacrificing myself. "But now I'm 27 years old and I want to enjoy my game so that I can help Barcelona win the Champions

League, which is the principal objective. don't want to leave Barcelona. I'm very happy here and I want to stay on.'

Rivaldo revealed he made

the decision after Saturday's 2-1 victory over Atletico Madrid. when he was substituted in the second half to the jeers of the Nou Camp fans.

"That was a sad day for me and I had trouble sleeping," he said. "I did a lot of thinking and I took the decision, which had been in my mind for a long

The matter is now set to become a battle of wills between Rivaldo and van Gaal, who has never looked

kindly on any opposition to his authority. If Rivaldo, as he has done before, backs down and continues

playing on the left -- where he

has licence to

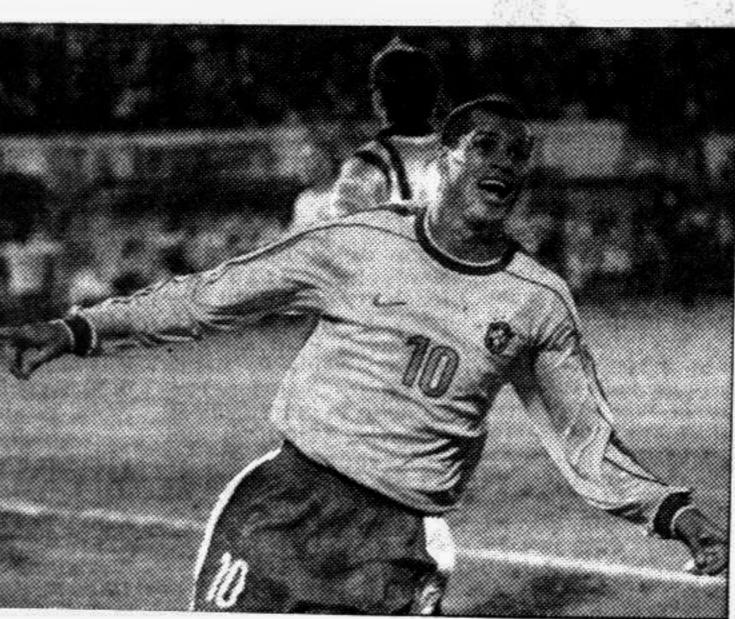
come inside -- there is no reason why he should not continue as a Barcelona player. But maintaining his posi-

tion could lead to him following the likes of Ronaldo and Diego Maradona in leaving Barcelona while at the peak of their form. Italy's Gazzetta dello Sport said on Wednesday that Lazio president Sergio Cragnotti had been trying for

two weeks to reach an agreement with Rivaldo and were ready to pay 62.5 million dollars to get him to Rome.

The current world record transfer fee is the 49.5 million dollars paid by Inter Milan to buy Italian striker

Christian Vieri from Lazio in June.



RIVALDO

Seedorf now an Inter man

MADRID. Dec 25(Reuters/Internet): Inter Milan clinched the signing of Dutch midfielder Clarence Seedorf from Real Madrid in a 24.35 million dollars deal on Friday, the Spanish club said.

"The signing is now official, subject to a medical," Real vicepresident Juan Onieva said on Spanish television after meetings with Inter officials and Seedorf's father, who acts as his representative.

"We've been negotiating for about a month with Inter over this deal."

Onieva, who is in charge of economic affairs at the Spanish club, had earlier said on Spanish radio: "This is a great deal from a financial point of view." Seedorf, still only 23, has

emerged during his 3-1/2 years at the club as one of Real's most bankable assets. A busy, attacking midfielder, he possesses a fierce shot and a coolness that doubt-

virtually everything in club soccer at such an early age. At Ajax Amsterdam, he won two league titles, a European Cup and a European Supercup, while at Madrid he added another European Cup and Super-cup, plus one Spanish league ti-

less come from having won

Seedorf, who played for Sampdoria for a season before moving to Spain in 1996, has been linked frequently with a move back to Italy.

He appeared to be on the brink of leaving the Bernabeu in the close season after a difficult 1998-1999 campaign at Real, when he struggled for form and was fine several times for disciplinary matters. But a return to the first team this season saw him pledge his future to the club last month.

"People can come knocking on my door, offering a lot of money, but I'm not moving," Seedorf was quoted then by Spanish sports daily Marca.

Cruz set to join Sporting Lisbon

LISBON, Dec 25: Brazil's Andre Cruz, currently with Torino, is set to sign a contract with Portugal's Sporting Lisbon, according to daily newspaper O Jogo here on Friday, reports

The 31-year-old former Napoli and AC Milan fullback, who has been in Italy since 1994, is expect to sign until the summer of 2002. The paper did not reveal a transfer fee.

Iran will play friendly in USA

TEHRAN, Dec 25: Iran said on Friday it had agreed to play a friendly soccer match in the United States after receiving assurances that players would not be fingerprinted upon arrival, a procedure Tehran has denounced as offensive, reports Reuters.

The match would mark the first time the US has played host to an Iranian sports team since the 1979 Islamic revolu-

Iran's official IRNA news agency quoted soccer federation head Mohsen Safaei-Farahani as saying that "American soccer federation officials have accepted all of the conditions requested by Iran ... and there is no problem for this trip to take Iran said last week it would

make the trip only if US officials waived the fingerprinting requirement. "We again informed them of

our conditions for ease in obtaining visas and the removal of the fingerprinting formality which the American officials have accepted," Safaei-Farahani told IRNA. He was speaking in Iran's

Gulf island of Kish, site of the Iranian team's training camp. Tehran has often protested to Washington over the photographing and fingerprinting of Iranian sportsmen and scholars travelling to the United States.

US officials say the procedure is standard for nationals of Iran, Sudan and other countries accused by Washington of links to Islamic guerrillas, charges which Iran denies.

The game, on January 16 at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California, would be a rematch of the 1998 World Cup encounter in France, won by Iran 2-1. . That politically-charged

match, for which both teams were later given the FIFA Fair Play Award, was the first toplevel sporting contact between the countries since they broke diplomatic ties after the revolution which toppled US-backed Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

Morocco 2006

Bid chief to drum up support in Nigeria

LAGOS, Dec 25: The man heading Morocco's bid for the 2006 World Cup arrives in Nigeria Sunday with a personal message from King Mohammed VI to President Olusegun Obasanjo, reports AFP.

Driss Benhima is leading a 10-man delegation on a two-day visit which is being used to advertise Morocco's efforts to host the event and to drum up support in Nigeria, South Africa, England and Germany are considered the

strongest contenders to succeed

Japan and South korea as

World Cup hosts, with Brazil and Morocco the outsiders. World governing body FIFA will decide on the destination of the 2006 competition at an ex-ecutive committee meeting in

Zurich next July.

England, France do it the hard way

Brazil re-affirm class



UNDATED. Dec 25(Reuters/Internet): Brazil banished memories of their 1998 World

Cup Final humil-

iation by France by successfully defending their Copa America title in Paraguay. In Europe controversy over the religious beliefs of Glenn Hoddle forced him to hand over

the reins of the England team to Kevin Keegan and the new man must have been convinced that he had been good in a former existence

as his team enjoyed a charmed

life and qualified for Euro 2000.

The other established giants of European football -France, Germany, Spain and Italy - also qualified, some more convinc-

new coach Daniel Passarella - Argentina's 1978 World Cup winning skipper - wanted to give youth a fling.

With Victor Pua taking charge and Passarella in a background role Uruguay showed true grit, winning their quarter- and semi-finals on penalties but were outclassed 3-

0 by Brazil in the final. Brazil failed to add the Confederations Cup, losing in the final to Mexico but Luxemburgo rested several senior players for

that tournament. When England coach Hoddle implied that disabled people were paying the price for sins

committed in a previous life he was in effect signing his resignation letter. When British Prime Minis-

needing a last-gasp Frank Leboeuf penalty to beat Andorra, officially the worst team in Europe.

But Zidane's return was just enough to see the French edge Ukraine to take the Group.

But coach Roger Lemerre lifted the lid on dressing room tensions between himself and senior players such as Didier Deschamps and Laurent Blanc during the campaign.

Italy too, after a brilliant start, stuttered badly and limped into Euro 2000 with the knives already out for coach Dino Zoff.

Germany had a mixed 1999. They were much-criticised at home after a series of poor results in friendlies and in the Confederations Cup with Scot-



SAMBA BACK ON TRACK: The victorious Brazilian team which clinched the Copa Amer ica trophy. -Star file photo

ingly than others. Brazil made their competitive debut under Wanderley Luxemburgo who was leading

the deposed world champions into a new era. He was replacing Mario Za gallo, who uniquely was associated with all four of Brazil's World Cup victories.

Luxemburgo immediately proved he was his own man by omitting the talented but troublesome strike duo of Edmundo and Romario. After initially naming his

squad Luxemburgo made further changes as he enhanced his disciplinarian reputation. Many predicted political turmoil in Paraguay after a chaotic year in which their vice-president was assassinated

but the tournament passed off peacefully. Brazil coasted through the early rounds with Ronaldo easing his way back to form after his World Cup

But the real star of the Brazilian effort was Barcelona midfielder Rivaldo. Unusually for Brazil the other player to catch the eve was

goalkeeper Dida, who made two

nightmare.

vital penalty saves as he cemented his hold on the jersey bequeathed by 1994 World Cup winner Claudio Taffarel.

Argentina performed dismally, though. They had already been thrashed 3-0 by a young Colombia team in a match where Argentinian striker Martin Palermo

The Boca Juniors forward became the first player to miss three penalties in a single match at international level and was widely

made an unwanted piece of his-

ridiculed. But Argentina blundered through to the last eight where they met Brazil. But they were sent home by their eternal rivals with Ronaldo's winning goal the difference. Roberto Ayala emulated Palermo by missing what would have been

an equalising penalty. It would prove to be an eventful journey home. Coach Marcelo Bielsa and striker Jose Luis Calderon traded insults at Asuncion airport and senior players Diego Sime-

one and Ayala had to intervene to prevent a public brawl. Brazil faced Uruguay in the final. The underdogs had omit-

ted most of their senior players for the Copa as

36 Ready

ACROSS,

member

26 Ordinary

writing

seuse's

31 Its motto

32 Witness

33 Staircase

adjunct

35 "My Heart

Will Go

workplace

30 Mas-

ter Tony Blair said that Hoddle should go it became clear he was fighting a losing battle and eventually he de-

Former Leeds coach Howard Wilkinson took over the interim role before handing it over to Keegan, who initially took it also on a short-term ba-

Finally Keegan decided to part company with his club side Fulham and take the job full-

But disappointing perfor-mances left England on the brink of exit in the qualifiers. But Sweden unexpectedly beat Poland to give England a play-off match with Scotland. Two goals from Paul Scholes

gave England a 2-0 first leg win

at Hampden Park but in the

second leg at Wembley Scotland won 1-0 with England hanging on at the end. But nonetheless they became the 16th and

final team to reach the Euro 2000 finals. But England were not the



MARTIN PALERMO

only established team to strug-

World champions France also had a rocky route to qualification although they did eventually win Group

Four. When they were deprived of the services of playmaker Zinedine Zidane through injury they stuttered badly,

By Eugene Sheffer

22 Insect

phoses

40 Foe of

Flash

41 Regimen

44 "Much -

About

45 Neighbor

46 Expert

Nothing'

of Mich.

DOWN

Solution time: 27 mins.

AGOMMAKEAWISH

Yesterday's answer

drawing at home to Ukraine, losing at home to Russia and

land and the USA among their conquerors. But in their qualifying group they shrugged off a defeat late 1998 by Turkey to ease through

into the final tournament. Spain also ended 1999 with things looking better than they had 12 months previously.

And the under-20 team gave Spain their first global title, clinching the World Cup for that age group in Nigeria. Under new coach Jose Antonio Camacho the senior side

also began to look the part

again and qualified with ease, rattling up more goals than any other of the finalists. But the best performance of all came from the Czech Republic. They won all 10 of their qualifiers but received the dubious reward of being drawn

Netherlands and Denmark in the final stages. Denmark had perhaps the most farcical route to Euro 2000. They won their play-off with Israel amid reports that the Israeli players had spent the eve of the first leg in the com-

alongside France, co-hosts The

pany of call girls.

Catalans beat Yugoslavia

Exhibition match

BARCELONA, Dec 25(Reuters/Internet): A goal from Valencia striker Oscar Garcia in first-half injury time saw a selection from the Spanish province of Catalonia beat the Yugoslavia national team 1-0 at Barcelona's Olympic stadium on Thursday.

Oscar, who was sold to Valencia from Barcelona over the summer, finished off a move involving his former Barca team mates Pep Guardiola and Albert Celades to give his side a deserved victory.

The Catalans, whose "national" team featured Manchester United's former Barcelona winger Jordi Cruyff, had earlier missed a dozen or more clear opportunities in a first half they dominated.

The second period was more even, with a host of substitutions disrupting the rhythm of the game, but Catalonia still had the majority of the chances and should have won by a more comfortable margin against a disappointing Yugoslav side.



39 "Metamor- V Z X Y A HDLJRQEYT

> SRPLDYC ODCDO ORQEYDGADO. G L J S D

> Yesterday's Cryptoquip: A WATCHMAKER IS CAREFUL TO TAKE TIME OFF WHEN HE FEELS

THE NEED TO UNWIND. Today's Cryptoquip clue: Z equals O

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

1 Tums for the 1 Bat 23"- 18th picking wood 5 Belea-37 Minima 2 Prompt Century 3 Nest egg Drawing 21 22 23 spacecraft 38 "- These Room" acct. 8 Some-4 Subtract 24 Boldnes thing 41 Brylcreem 5 Othello 26 Playto say dosage was one ground 42 Quite to a bar-6 Boniface's tender? 27 A-apple place 12 Confident 43 "Monop-7 Local connec-13 Indivisible 8 Christmas tion 14 Hinge (on) 28 Marquee buy door 38 39 40 15 Rashly 48 "Pet decoration 17 Facility Sematary" 29 Say it 9 Learn 18 Abbr. author ain't so 10 Differently 31 Small on old 49 Praiseful Mideast 11 Yeltsin's combo 50 Erstwhile 34 Coat maps refusal 19 Turkish Peruvian 16 Do B&B 51 Advanbrickwork flour 21 Piquant 20 Periodicals 35 Rubble tage **CRYPTOQUIP** 24 Castle 52 Acquired 21 Cummer- 37 Crony protection 53 Branch 38 Sushi bund ZXO HDVDYOT LGYDLPGQ 25 Family bar