2004 Nations Cup Egypt may

play hosts JOHANNESBURG, Jan 7: African Football Confederation officials must choose between Egypt and a joint bid from Benin and Togo when they meet in Ghana this month to decide the 2004 Nations Cup hosts, reports AFP.

Although Egypt have organised the biennial showcase of football in Africa on three occasions since its introduction in 1957, they again are rated favourites to become the first nation to play host a fourth

By 2002, West African countries will have staged three consecutive editions of the Nations Cup with 1998 hosts Burkina Faso followed by Ghana and Nigeria this year and Mali.

Egypt. the hosts in 1959. 1974 and 1986, boast international-class stadia, facilities and infrastructure while Benin and Togo would face costly expansion programmes if selected.

Burkina Faso and Togo have applied for the 2003 youth championships, but no offers have been made to stage the junior championships the same year. The 2000 women's championships will be played in South Africa.

## Moroccan pair give Coventry a boost

LONDON, Jan 7: Coventry City received a boost on Thursday when Moroccan stars Mustapha Hadji and Youssef Chippo were given permission to fly back from the national team's African Nations Cup preparations to play in the English Premiership match with Wimbledon on January 15, reports AFP.

The Sky Blues initially feared they would lose the services of Hadji and Chippo for five weeks after Saturday's FA Cup encounter with Burnley at Highfield Road.

But the Moroccan FA have given permission for the duo signed last summer by manager Gordon Strachan - to fly back from preparing for the Nations Cup to face the Dons.

Hadji and Chippo will join up with Morocco this Sunday and then train with their country for the week before rejoining Coventry for the home clash with Egil Olsen's side.

They will then leave England immediately after the game in time to play in Morocco's warmup international against Trinidad and Tobago on January 18 - four days before the Nations Cup gets underway.

Hadji and Chippo have been key performers in the Sky Blues' recent fine run, helping them take four points out of six from games against Arsenal and Chelsea over the Christmas holiday period.

## Carlos prefers the Brazilian colour

SAO PAULO, Brazil, Jan 7: Real Madrid's Brazilian international wingback Roberto Carlos said Thursday that the FIFA World Club Championship had its merits - but nothing could beat playing for Brazil, reports AFP.

Real are in line to lift the inaugural FIFA trophy after beating Asian representatives Al Nassr of Saudi Arabia 3-1 on Wednesday, during which much-maligned French international striker Nicolas Anelka finally scored his first goal for the club.

Roberto Carlos said that while it was an honour for him to be here with Real gunning for club glory, playing for Brazil was his ultimate buzz.

"Playing for Real Madrid, a team with so many stars recognised throughout the world is very important. But my greatest pride is to put on the green and yellow of Brazil," said the 26-year-old.

Roberto Carlos added that, as a Brazilian playing for a European side, he was determined to give a good impression of both European and South American football during the club tournament.

### PSV for European Super League

EINDHOVEN, Netherlands, Jan 7: Leading Dutch club PSV Eindhoven would be prepared to quit their domestic championships in 2002 and join a proposed European Super League, according to media reports on Friday, reports AFP.

PSV president Harry van Raaij said that PSV were hopeful that a league involving leading clubs from several European nations would be launched

in two years' time. "I am not a prophet, but I am a realist," van Raij said. "To survive economically and to re-

alise our sporting ambitions, PSV need to play at a higher level on a weekly basis." Several clubs, including Benfica and Porto (Portugal). Celtic and Rangers (Scotland). Panathinaikos (Greece), Anderlecht and FC Brugge (Belgium),

Rosenborg Trondheim (Norway) and Brondby (Denmark) have been mooted as being interested in such a league.

Van Raaij said in his New Year address that the other two leading Dutch clubs, Feyenoord and Ajax, had also indicated interest in participating.

Van Raaij concedes that the leagues in strong nations such as Italy, Spain, Germany and England would remain intact but that teams from leagues in which they are dominant forces would be keen to join the proposed new venture.



Vasco da Gama's Juninho and Felipe (white jerseys) threatening the South Melbourne goal during their World Club Championship clash in Rio de Janeiro on January 6. -AFP photo

# Vasco owe Filipe, Edmundo

FIFA CLUB WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP 2000

RIO DE JANEIRO, Jan 7 Brazil's Vasco da Gama defeated Oceanian representatives South Melbourne of Australia 2-0 here Thursday to take control of Pool B in FIFA's inaugural World Club Championships, reports AFP.

A 35-yard piledriver from Felipe broke the deadlock for the Rio de Janeiro outfit at the Maracana after 53 minutes before maverick Brazilian international striker Edmundo wrapped up the points four minutes from time with a fierce cross-shot.

Vasco da Gama, who fielded a three-pronged attack of Edmundo and Romario with Juninho playing behind the front two, now are in firm control of the group following the earlier 1-1 draw in the same stadium between England's Manchester United and Mexico's Necaxa.

By the time that Vasco took the field the crowd had swollen to a healthy 52,000 amid signs that the fledgling competition is beginning to capture the Brazilian public's imagination.

Vasco coach Antonio Lopes paid tribute to the Australian rank outsiders, saying: "We had enormous problems in the first half because South Melbourne had an excellent marking system. They were pressurising our strikers and for this we had

problems finding our forwards. "The Australian lads behaved very well and played very cleanly all the time. It is a technically limited team but with great tactical discipline and they gave 100 percent in a match where we got the result

with great difficulty. "If they play like this against Necaxa and Manchester it will

FIFA CLUB WORLD

CHAMPIONSHIP 2000

RIO DE JANEIRO, Jan 7: Eu-

ropean champions Manchester

United salvaged a 1-1 draw in

an incident-packed Group B

opener in Rio's legendary Mara-

cana Stadium against Nexaca of

Mexico in FIFA's inaugural

World Club Championship, re-

world champions by virtue of

their victory in the 1999 Inter-

counting the cost of a stormy

encounter which saw their

golden boy David Beckham sent

off and manager Sir Alex Fer-

guson banished from the touch-

maybe we deserved to win the

game actually, but when you

down you have to be happy with

Yorke struck the leveller after

82 minutes, deflecting home

Norwegian substitute Ole Gun-

nar Solskjaer's mis-hit shot. It

cancelled out a 14th-minute

free-kick opener from Cristian

Montecinos for the unheralded

after a foul by United's Dutch

defender Jaap Stam on Alex

seconds after he had squan-

dered a penalty during a furious

although Necaxa's otherwise

United second-half onslaught -

excellent Ecuadorian play-

maker Aguinaga also fluffed a

by United's Australian 'keeper

put Nexaca 2-0 ahead.

disappointing."

spot-kick, which was well saved

Mark Bosnich. That would have

satisfied with the team but cer-

tainly disappointed with the

game because we spent nearly

all the time reacting to what the

Ferguson railed: "The reaction

of the Mexican players got him

sent off. The referee reacted to

the Mexican players and that's

differed, saying: "Am I satis-

But Necaxa coach Raul Arias

Of Beckham's dismissal,

Necaxa players were doing."

Ferguson said: "I am very

The free-kick was awarded

Yorke's face-saver came just

Trinidadian striker Dwight

Ferguson said: "I think

continental Cup, were left

But United, also defending

ports AFP.

a point.

Mexicans.

Aguinaga.

be difficult for both of those lifestyle, brought out a superb teams to win because these Australians were very motivated.

South Melbourne coach Ange Postecoglu was equally complimentary about the Brazilians and said: "I am not disappointed by the defeat. On the contrary I am very proud of the guys. They played with a lot of dignity and gave everything

"Vasco's two goals showed what this game was all about They were world class goals, two jewels. There is no defensive system that can anticipate or prevent goals like that.

"The guys were at first a bit inhibited playing at the Maracana against Romario and Edmundo in front of so many people. But they slowly got their confidence and started play football. For all this I say I am proud of my team." South Melbourne, huge un-

derdogs before the match, were clearly intent on damage limitation as they looked to stifle the talented Brazilian frontline with the Australian side's skipper Paul Trimboli and Fausto De Amicis prominent in a determined rearguard. In the first-half the pairing

not appear to be paying divi--dends for the Brazilian side named after a legendary Portuguese explorer. Both players are huge stars of Brazilian football but are also notorious for their love of

of Edmundo and Romario did

Rio's riotous nightlife and fell out with eachother because a restaurant owned by Romario had an unflattering caricature of Edmundo on the toilet door. And both are currently out of favour with Brazil national

team boss Wanderley Luxemburgo, who is a stickler for discipline. But Edmundo, dubbed "the

animal" for his hedonistic

Beckham, Ferguson see red

Nexaca rattle United

fied? Yes. But it could have been

game and we did everything to

prepared than Manchester

United to deal with the heat and

I'm disappointed we didn't win.

miss his side's crunch match

with Vasco and could also be

ruled out of the game with

South Melbourne if his red card

thigh of Jose Milian - is deemed

to be violent conduct by Argen-

tinian referee Horacio Eli-

England's crucial 1998 World

Cup finals match against Ar-

gentina. That was seen as the

turning point in the match and

he was widely scapegoated by

England fans for his team's

est tournament - to attend this

inaugural tournament, the first

time clubs from all the world's

continents have been pitted

criticised in England - was

looking unwise as everything

that could have gone wrong did

world's richest club but the

Mexicans were the quicker to

settle and they took the lead af-

ter 14 minutes with a freekick,

superbly floated by Montecinos

with his left foot with Bosnich

two minutes from halftime it

was looking like a disastrous

night for United, who will have

to do without their most cre-

ative player for the match with

Vasco, which is likely to decide

the interval and Gary Neville

broke into the Necaxa box on

the right only for his centre to

Vasco da Gama (Bra)

Manchester Utd (Eng)

South Melbourne (Aus)

Necaxa (Mex)

But United battled back after

drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):

When Beckham was expelled

for United in the first period.

But that decision - widely

The English side may be the

United had pulled out of the

eventual defeat.

against eachother.

having no chance.

the pool.

for a foul with his studs on the

Beckham was also sent off in

"We should have won the

"We were better physically

Beckham will definitely

better.

zondo

have 10 men and you're 1-0 English FA Cup - football's old-

stop from South Melbourne goalkeeper Chris Jones after 24 minutes.

Romario, the inspiration behind Brazil's 1994 World Cup victory, was a more anonymous figure and squandered one good chance. The two seemed to be playing as individuals rather than a unit.

South Melbourne did occasionally threaten on the counterattack, though, and Robert Liparoti forced a brilliant save from Vasco goalkeeper Helton on one of those forays forward. The local fans were clearly getting nervous when Felipe

struck with what is undoubtedly the goal of this groundbreaking tournament so far. Receiving the ball in space the 26-year-old let fly from 35 yards and watched his shot sail

into the net. Still the Vasco fans were unimpressed, occasionally ironically cheering the Australian players but then Edmundo hit another superb goal with four minutes remaining.

Played in by Juninho he burst into the South Melbourne area before beating Jones with an angled drive.

As a result of this win Vasco know even a draw with Manchester United will see them take a giant stride towards the final to be held in the same Maracana arena. South Melbourne just

seemed delighted to have played on such a big stage and Trimboli echoed the pride of his coach when he said: "It was a marvellous experience for all of us to play in the Maracana against a team like Vasco da

In what could be seen as a dig at United he said: "What's more I think this was our hardest

run agonisingly across the

Necaxa still looked the likelier

to score and Bosnich made a

flying stop to deny Montecinos

the 57th minute Necaxa were

awarded a dubious penalty

ed's French defender Mickael

Silvestre had brought down

when Bosnich saved Aguinaga's

weak spot-kick and United's

Irish skipper Roy Keane, who

shrugged off a knee problem to

play, was on hand to complete

summed up when Ferguson was

ordered out of his technical

area for walking out of the area

to complain about a decision to

they never gave us a free-kick

for a challenge on Dwight

most of the creative input for

United but it was beginning to

look as though destiny was

against the English side with

all the decisions seeming to go

when Yorke missed his spot-

kick after perhaps being unset-

tled as Necaxa made a substitu-

tion before he could take the

But almost immediately

Yorke grabbed his precious goal

to leave United still in with a

chance of progressing from this

Nexaca proved themselves a

United clearly had problems

capable side with Aguinaga well

supported by Luis Perez and

adapting to the 37 degree celsius

heat in a match where the bulk

of the 26,000 fans, there to sup-

port Vasco da Gama in the later

match, were backing Necaxa.

It all looked a lost cause

Ryan Giggs was providing

"I threw my hands up when

the fourth official.

Nexaca's way.

Agustin Delgado.

penalty.

GROUP B TABLE

FIFA World Club Championships here Thursday (played, won,

Group B table after opening round of matches in inaugural

(Yorke)," he explained.

United's miserable night was

However justice was done

Montecinos in the box.

when Elizondo ruled that Unit-

Despite United's possession,

The drama continued and in

goalmouth.

from 25 yards out.

### Diego moved to sanatorium

PUNTA DEL ESTE, Uruguay, Jan 7: Uruguayan police on Thursday questioned the entourage of Argentinian football legend Diego Maradona after his latest brush with cocaine left him in an intensive care unit for an apparent overdose. reports AFP.

Maradona, initially admitted for hypertension and irregular heartbeat problems, left the private Cantegril Hospital intensive care unit Thursday afternoon.

He has been transferred to the hospital's sanatorium for intermediate care prior to rehabilitation at a clinic, hospital director Frank Torres said. 'We are looking at checking Maradona into a rehabilitation clinic," Torres told a press conference. He added Maradona

was making progress. Maradona's agent Guillermo Coppola was questioned earlier in the day as part of a judicial investigation into the affair, judicial sources told AFP.

Coppola arrived mid-morning at Maldonado near the spa town of Punta del Este as officials attempted to shed some light on the latest controversy to break over Argentina's 1986 World Cup-winning captain and was immediately engulfed by reporters.

"I am collaborating with the judicial authorities," said Coppola before holding some nine hours of talks with police and other officials.

Seven members of Maradona's entourage were being questioned in all - six Argentines and a Uruguayan doc-

Investigators also searched the home of Pablo Cosentino, agent of former Argentine international Claudio Caniggia, who now plays for Atalanta in

the Serie B in Italy. A first analysis of a urine sample provided by Maradona revealed traces of cocaine which police claimed had been taken in an excessive amount,

leading to an overdose. Maldonado district police chief Maximo Costa Rocha earlier said cocaine had been detected in Maradona's first sam-

He said: "This positive sample is due to an excessive consumption of cocaine.

#### Nigeria, Arsenal fight over Kanu LAGOS, Jan 7: African Foot-

baller of the Year Nwankwo Kanu has been ordered to report to Nigeria's African Nations Cup training camp by Friday at the latest despite his English club Arsenal insisting that he must play a cup game this weekend, reports AFP.

"Kanu's release is not negotiable," said the secretary-general of Nigeria Football Association (NFA), Tijjani Yusuf.

"Kanu as well as Celestine Babayaro of Chelsea have until Friday to join the Eagles in Spain. By that time we will be well within the FIFA rule that allows us to have the players 14 days before a major championship," he said.

"Arsene Wenger has held on to him for more than is necessary", said another Eagles coach Shuaibu Amodu.

Kanu himself told a local radio station monitored here that "as soon as Arsenal release me. I will join the team. Nigeria is my fatherland and I am always happy to play for the Eagles."

Nigeria has experienced difficulties getting its key players starring in top European teams in time for its build-up matches to the African Nations Cup, which it will co-host with Ghana from January 22.

It has asked both FIFA and the Confederation of African Football (CAF) to intervene.

Nigeria will name its final squad for the championship on Tuesday ahead of CAF's January 12 deadline for all the 16 teams to do so.

## Weah rebuffs Marseille approach

MARSEILLE, France, Jan 7 AC Milan's Liberian international striker George Weah has been approached by French First Division club Marseille -but the move is unlikely to go through, it was reported Thursday, reports AFP. Weah's enormous salary at

AC Milan was impossible for Marseille to match, the French club's sporting director Marcel Dib said, and the 33-year-old - a former FIFA World Player of the Year - is not likely to the French top flight where he played for Monaco and Paris St Germain.

Marseille badly need a striker after the departure over the winter break of Italian Fabrizio Ravanelli to Lazio, Kaba Diawara to Paris St Germain and Christophe Dugarry to Bor-

Their Cote d'Ivoire international Ibrahima Bakayoko will miss several weeks of French First Division action as he represents his country in the African Nations Cup.

With Weah staying put, Inter Milan's Uruguayan striker Alvaro Recoba is now the top target for Marseille, who are having a dismal season. Their coach Bernard Casoni says avoiding relegation is his only One possible deal, according

to Italian paper Gazzetta Dello Sport, could see Recoba go to the French side with one of Marseille's two midfield prospects Peter Luccin and Stephane Dalmat going to Inter at the end of the season. Roberto Baggio and Oliver Bierhoff are other high-profile

targets who have knocked back Marseille, according to sources at the French club. Marseille are also having problems unloading players such as Argentinian defender

Eduardo Berizzo.

Serie A

## Inzaghi makes the difference



MILAN, Jan 7: Jutheir mid-table opponents.

Parma stayed third (30pts) low cross from Diego Fuser.

tober. AS Roma, meanwhile, had

run down the left. Inzaghi's eighth goal of the

lowed by wins for all the other

major challengers - with Inter

Roma beating Bari 3-1' and

Parma and AC Milan both

Inzaghi, dubbed "Super-

Pippo" by the adoring Delle Alpi

stadium crowd, struck in the

47th minute, steering the ball

home from close-range after

Gianluca Zambrotta had shred-

ded the Verona defence with a

notching 1-0 victories.

Milan crushing Perugia 5-0.

despite a tough battle against area.

With Juventus top on 32 points and Lazio second on 31, this season's championship is

after beating Udinese. Marco Di Vaio got the winner soon after the re-start, knocking home a

kept both feet on the ground, despite his team's rise from third from bottom at the start of Oc-

hat-trick hero Vincenzo Montella to thank for their win over Bari. Montella poached two goals before converting a penalty after Bari's Moroccan

season enabled his team to defender Rachid Negrouz was leapfrog over Lazio in the table sent off for a hand-ball in the

Montella, was arrived during the summer, added: "I'd been

a few goals short since I joined Roma. But I'm alright now." Like Bari, AC Milan also had to play with 10 men at Pia-

The champions had midfielder Demetrio Albertini sent off for a second bookable offence in the 29th minute but it didn't stop his teammates taking the lead minutes later -Germany's Oliver Bierhoff catching the Piacenza defence napping as Brazilian Leonardo

Milan coach Alberto Zaccheroni said: "We suffered. We were playing for a lot of the game with 10 men against a Pi-

"But we showed great concentration and determination, qualities which at time we've lacked, and we're deservedly taking home three points.'

**Dutchman Clarence Seedorf** made a dream debut for Inter Milan little more than a week after they paid Real Madrid 24 million dollars for the midfielder.

Greek wingback Grigorios Georgatos smacked them into a 18th-minute lead with a 22metre shot after collecting a corner sent over by the Dutchman, who then went one better by scoring a superb goal in the 44th minute - beating two men before unleashing an angled

Christian Vieri, the world's most expensive footballer at nearly 50 million dollars. headed home a Georgatos cross, Vladimir Jugovic added a fourth and Perugia defender Paulino Hilario ended the rout with an own goal.

delighted with the result but made it clear his real aim was to get his side playing like this more often.

Fiorentina were held to a disappointing goalless draw at Lecce, while Reggina's Sierra Leone striker Mohammed Kallon, still only 20, scored both goals as they beat Torino 2-1, the second goal a 90thminute penalty.

Cagliari 1-0 in the night match, with Swedish giant Kennet Andersson getting the first-half match-winner.

## Beckham's 'bad boy' curse

48-148



Perugia forward Hidetoshi Nakata (L) and Inter Milan's

Vladimir Jugovic are locked in an aerial battle for the ball

during their Serie A fixture at Milan on January 6.

PARIS. Jan 7: The sending off and automatic suspension of David Beckham in Man-chester United's 1-1 draw with Mexico's Necaxa in the World Club Cham-pionship Thursday has seen another reversal of fortune in the high-profile life of the maverick golden boy of English football, reports AFP.

At the turn of the Millennium it seemed that Beckham had finally banished memories of a disastrous 1998 that had made him such a pariah at one point in football-loving England that he had to briefly leave

the country. A hugely successful 1999 had seen him finish as runner-up to Barcelona's Brazilian star Rivaldo in the vote for European player of the year and he is expected to dispute the title of FIFA World Player of the Year with the same player later this month although his red card in Rio de Janeiro's legendary Maracana arena may now give the Brazilian the edge.

But 2000 has started off with nothing but negative publicity both on and off the field for a man, who is arguably the biggest celebrity in Britain. It is a measure of Beckham's

huge media standing in his homeland that his wedding last year received much more attention than the nuptials of Prince Edward, Queen Elizabeth II's youngest son. And he enjoys treatment

worthy of a pop star abroad where his football achievements are as widely admired as they are at home but without the vitriolic abuse that has sometimes been directed against him by England's notoriously partisan football fans and equally uncharitable popu-He became a particular tar-

get for opposing supporters af ter another highly-publicised sending-off - this time in an England shirt - against Argentina in the 1998 World Cup. Beckham petulantly kicked out at Argentina's Diego Sime-

one right in front of the referee with the match finely balanced. That was seen as the turning point of the match and Beckham was scapegoated for Engabuse he got on his return home that he had to go to New York with his girlfriend to escape the

When the English season started he was allocated bodyguards and police escorts to escape the wrath of opposing sup-

But 1999 was Beckham's year of redemption as he inspired United - whose supporters had offered him warm support - to unprecedented success for an English team. By the end of the year the

world's richest football club had won the English Premiership. English FA Cup. European Cup and Intercontinental Cup. leaving them the first side from the country that invented the game to be crowned world champions. His wonderful year on the

field was mirrored by happiness in his personal life with the birth of his baby son Brooklyn and his no-expense-spared marriage to pop star Victoria Adams, of the Spice Girls who had supported him in New York in the heat of the media glare. But the first days of the year

2000 has seen the pendulum swing back against the talented midfielder, beloved in his adopted home of Manchester but reviled by many other English fans, influenced by a tabloid press that appears obsessed - and often hostile - to Britain's most famous celebrity

As he flew out to Rio Beckham was embarrassed by indiscrete remarks from his wife better known as Posh Spice who revealed that her husband enjoyed wearing her underwear in particular thongs.

That little gaffe from his spouse will ensure that Beckham will be the recipient of more vile verbal abuse from opposing supporters in England who traditionally delight in making life as uncomfortable as possible for opposing star

In Beckham's case hostile supporters have even composed obscene chants about his wife and child in a bid to provoke his volatile temper.

And his red card against Necaxa ensured he will miss the game with Rio outfit Vasco da Gama that will probably deter-

mine which Group B team qual-

The United fans, who have loyally backed their idol, are unlikely to scapegoat him in the same way that he was by fans of the national team after the World Cup sending off.

And Beckham can count on the support of United manager Sir Alex Ferguson, whose superb man management of his prodigy was credited by many for keeping the player in England instead of a lucrative move abroad to Spain or Italy - his wife has frequently said she would like to live in a summier climate.

Ferguson has handled Beckham with discretion, limiting his media interviews.

Beckham has also shown commendable loyalty to the club. Even though he was born in Leytonstone, London he turned down rival offers in the English capital to join the northern side he had supported

Typically after his red card in Rio. Ferguson fiercely defended Beckham, saying: "The reaction of the Mexican players got him sent off. The referee reacted to the Mexican players and that's disappointing. Beckham has also been

widely ridiculed for his high profile marriage and his sometimes idiosyncratic dress sense. Even before his wife's comments about his preference for her underwear he had been mocked for wearing a sarong in That was nothing compared

to the criticism of his lavish wedding in Dublin, derided as the height of bad taste by a media that was perhaps motivated by anger that they could get nowhere near the ceremony as the couple had sold exclusive rights to a magazine. But photographs of the

newly-weds sitting on purposebuilt thrones and naked reclining golden figurines of the couple and their baby son on the wedding cake gave ample ammunition to the popular press.

Beckham proved in 1999 that he can withstand the fiercest onslaught by Britain's notoriously predatory tabloid newspapers. It is an experience that will stand him in good stead for the media storm that will inevitably follow his latest indiscretions.



SAME OLD STORY: (Left side) David Beckham (No 7) has just fouled Jose Milian of Nexaca. (Right) The Manchester United midfielder being shown the red card by referee -AFP photos Horacio Elizonda.



fully living up to its billing of being the toughest-ever - with just six points separating the

Coach Alberto Malesani

floated in a free-kick. acenza side who never gave up.

Coach Marcello Lippi was

Bologna beat bottom club

# land's deleat. So bad was the

