

WC 2002 qualifying Euro Group Seven schedule decided

MADRID, Feb 2: The 2002 World Cup qualifying schedule for Group Seven was decided by a draw on Tuesday after Spain, Israel, Austria, Bosnia and Liechtenstein failed to reach agreement on the calendar, reports Reuters.

The result of the draw will see favourites Spain begin and end their World Cup qualifying campaign away from home with matches against Bosnia on September 2 this year and Liechtenstein on September 5, 2001.

But Spanish coach Jose Antonio Camacho was more concerned about a schedule that will see his side travel to Israel on June 6 next year.

"We didn't want to play against the stronger teams in September and June. The other teams didn't agree with that so we had a draw and that's that."

Austria, beaten 3-0 and 3-1 by Spain in Euro 2000 qualifying, will get the chance of revenge when they host Camacho's side on October 11, with the return September 1, 2001. Israel, who finished runners-up to Spain in qualifying for Belgium and the Netherlands, begin their campaign with a home game to Liechtenstein on September 3 and then travel to Spain on October 7.

FIXTURES:

- Sept 2 - Bosnia v Spain.
- Sept 3 - Israel v Liechtenstein.
- Oct 7 - Liechtenstein v Austria, Spain v Israel.
- Oct 11 - Israel v Bosnia, Austria v Spain.
- 2001
- March 24 - Bosnia v Austria, Spain v Liechtenstein.
- March 28 - Austria v Israel, Liechtenstein v Bosnia.
- June 2 - Liechtenstein v Israel, Spain v Bosnia.
- June 6 - Austria v Liechtenstein, Israel v Spain.
- Sept 1 - Bosnia v Israel, Spain v Austria.
- Sept 5 - Austria v Bosnia, Liechtenstein v Spain.
- Oct 7 - Israel v Austria, Bosnia v Liechtenstein.

Spanish Cup

Villarreal go down fighting

BARCELONA, Feb 2 (Reuters/Internet): Villarreal fell agonisingly short of a memorable Spanish Cup upset on Tuesday as they fought back from a seemingly insurmountable 3-0 deficit from the first leg only to go down on penalties to Compostela.

The all-second division tie had seemed to be a lost cause for Villarreal, who with more than an hour of the second leg gone were still three goals short of forcing extra time.

But a goal from Diego Cagna after 64 minutes led to an attack of the jitters in the Compostela defence and a penalty from Moises Garcia five minutes later -- which also saw Compostela defender Javier Bellido sent off -- set up a furious final 20 minutes.

With the seconds ticking away, Moises grabbed his second goal of the game to set up extra time and leave Villarreal favourites to complete an astonishing comeback.

Ten-man Compostela somehow held on for the extra 30 minutes, though, and with Villarreal's two-goal hero Moises missing the first penalty they went on to clinch a place in the quarter-finals by the skin of their teeth.

Compostela were joined in the last eight by Espanol, who won 1-0 at Celta Vigo to complete a 3-1 aggregate win.

Manuel Serrano scored the only goal of the game in the final minute, finishing off a breakaway move by rounding the keeper and crashing into the empty net.

Five more third round ties will be completed on Wednesday, with Real Madrid's game against Real Zaragoza held over until Thursday.

Vialli making a comeback?

LONDON, Feb 2 (AFP/Internet): Manager Gianluca Vialli may come out of retirement to help Chelsea's campaign in Europe, according to London football website Soccernet.

The former Italian international announced last May he had played his final game for the club against Derby in the Premiership but now he could be poised to make a dramatic comeback to be part of their Champions League squad.

Chelsea reportedly heard confirmation on Tuesday morning that his registration had reached UEFA before Monday's midnight deadline.

Clubs are allowed to make three new player additions to their squad for the next phase of the competition.

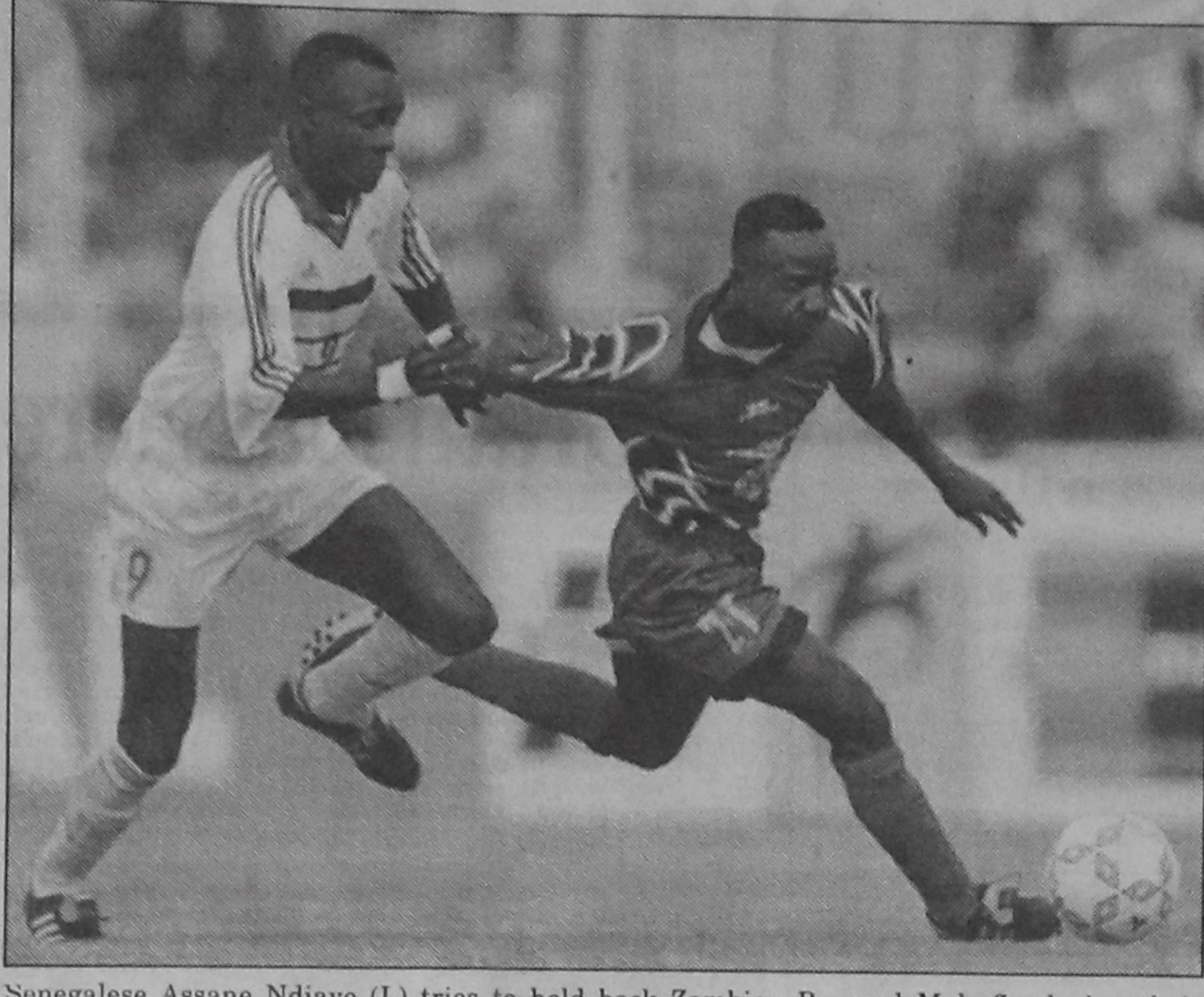
However, Vialli must still serve a one-match touchline ban in their next European match away to Marseille and cannot be named among the seven permitted substitutes for that game.

UEFA imposed the ban following his run-in with the fourth official during Chelsea's 0-0 draw in Rome against Lazio in December.

But once the Marseille game is over he can then be a substitute in the remaining three games of the second phase.

Vialli played in a Chelsea shirt for the first time in eight months at Kingstonsian on Monday, turning out for the reserve team which drew 2-2 with Leicester.

He played for the full 90 minutes and came close to scoring when he hit the bar with a furious drive from a cross by compatriot Gabriele Amrossetti.



Senegalese Assane Ndiaye (L) tries to hold back Zambian Bernard Makufin during their African Nations' Cup meeting on February 1. — AFP photo

African Nations' Cup Senegal in last eight

ACCRA, Feb 2: Senegal reached the African Nations Cup quarter-finals on Tuesday after a 2-2 draw with Zambia and a dramatic fightback by Egypt who came from two goals behind to beat Burkina Faso 4-2, reports Reuters.

Holders Egypt, who had not conceded a goal in the tournament and were already in the last eight, won with the help of a controversial twice-taken penalty from Hossam Hassan in Kano.

Hassan, joint top scorer when Burkina Faso hosted the last tournament in 1998, took his tally to three goals.

In Lagos, Zambia veteran Kalusha Bwalya, 36, hit his team's late equaliser in what he claimed would be his farewell Nations Cup appearance -- although he said the same thing two years ago.

Egypt finished with a maximum nine points in Group C, followed by Senegal on four, Zambia on two and Burkina one.

BURKINA FASO-EGYPT

Burkina, beaten in the semi-finals by Egypt two years ago, needed a good win against the Pharaohs, plus a win for Zambia in Lagos to go through.

They started spectacularly, breaching Egypt's seemingly impregnable defence twice in the first 23 minutes with goals by Ismail Koudou and Ousmane Sanou.

Egypt's fightback began when VfB Stuttgart striker Ahmed Salah Hosni scored in the 29th minute before they equalised midway through the second half.

Hassan saw his first effort disallowed for a Romario-style shuffle in the run-up but his second attempt was given, even though he did almost exactly the same thing.

Burkina kept attacking but had two penalty appeals turned down and were guilty of a couple of shocking misses.

Egypt finished their off with goals in the last 10 minutes by Kaiserslauten defender Hani Ramzi and Zamalek's Abdulhalim Ali, who scored two minutes after coming on as a substitute.

SENEGAL-ZAMBIA

Zambia, needing victory and a failure to win by Burkina, hit the bar with a rasping Andrew Sunba shot in the 11th minute, then had a penalty appeal rejected 10 minutes later when Dennis Lota was bundled down in the area by Senegal goalkeeper Oumar Diallo.

To prove it was not their day, Henri Camara followed up on a rebound to put Senegal ahead just after the break.

Zambia were level inside five minutes with a lob from defender Lauter Chibembi but their defence was caught out by Abdoulaye Mbaye with 10 minutes to go, the substitute out-sprinting two defenders and the goalkeeper to tap home.

But a late handball allowed Bwalya to equalise from the spot, the Mexico-based veteran bundling the ball over the line after his initial shot was saved.

Egypt will stay in Kano to play the runners-up in Group D, which contains Nigeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Congo. The pool will be decided on Thursday.

Senegal remain in Lagos to face the winners of the same group. Today's matches will decide Group B, with South Africa, already qualified, needing a draw against Algeria in Kumasi to finish top.

A draw will also send Liberia through, otherwise they could be overtaken on goal difference by Democratic Republic of Congo if they beat Gabon in Accra.



Burkina Faso's Kone Mamadou (L) is under pressure from Egyptian Khshaba Hady during their African Nations' Cup encounter in Kano on February 1. Egypt won 4-2. — AFP photo

STANDINGS

African Nations Cup standings after Tuesday's matches:

Group A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cameroon	3	1	1	1	4	2	4
Ghana	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Ivory Coast	3	1	1	1	3	4	4
Togo	3	1	1	1	2	3	4

Cameroon and Ghana qualify for quarter-finals.

Group B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Africa	2	2	0	0	4	1	6
Algeria	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
D R Congo	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Gabon	2	0	0	2	2	6	0

Remaining fixtures: Feb 2 — South Africa v Algeria, Gabon v Democratic Republic of Congo.

Group C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Egypt	3	3	0	0	7	2	9
Senegal	3	1	1	1	5	4	4
Zambia	3	0	2	1	3	5	2
Burkina Faso	3	0	1	2	4	8	1

Egypt and Senegal qualify for quarter-finals.

Group D	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nigeria	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
Morocco	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Congo	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Tunisia	2	0	1	1	2	4	1

Remaining fixtures: Feb 3 — Nigeria v Morocco, Tunisia v Congo.

Radebe's heart with Leeds

KUMASI, Ghana, Feb 2 (Reuters/Internet): Lucas Radebe had to sit through the disappointment of Leeds United's exit from the F.A. Cup in far-away Ghana. But the South African defender is still confident his English club will win the Premier League title.

Radebe, captain of both club and country, is playing for South Africa in the African Nations Cup finals in Ghana where they have already qualified for the weekend's quarter-finals.

The frustration of missing vital games for his club in both the league and the cup, where Leeds lost 3-2 to Aston Villa on Sunday, has been difficult for Radebe, restricted to watching his side's progress on television in Ghana.

"It's really unfair to players who have to make a choice between their clubs and playing for their country," he said.

"It's a great honour to play for your country in a big tournament like the Nations Cup. It is events like this where you get international exposure and it's a great feeling to captain your country."

"But I have a good contract with my club and I'm the one who is caught between the two," Radebe added.

"I just hope that the problems of the international calendar are going to be resolved soon."

Radebe has already missed two key games for Leeds and is likely to be away for at least another week, longer if South Africa progress past the quarter-finals on Sunday. But despite his absence he thinks his club are still well on

Ivoriens held in army camp?

ABIDJAN, Feb 2 (Reuters/Internet): Ivory Coast's national soccer team have been detained in a military camp since their return home from the African Nations Cup, a player close to the team said on Wednesday.

"They have been put there for their own security."

Ivorian-born French international Basile Boli told Reuters, quoting Youth and Sports Minister Colonel Major Matthias Doue.

The team, brought back from Ghana on a military plane on Monday evening following their first round exit, were being held at training centre at Zambakro about 20 km south of the inland capital Yamoussoukro.

The centre trains troops from around the region in peacekeeping.

The Elephants, as the team are known, finished third in Group A after beating hosts Ghana 2-0 on Monday but failing to score enough goals to qualify for the quarter-finals. They lost 3-0 to Cameroon and drew 1-1 with Togo. Cameroon and Ghana qualified for the last 16.

Ivory Coast's military rulers, who seized power in a December 24 coup, detained a string of politicians and soldiers for several weeks offering the same "own security" explanation.

Stoichkov's new job in Romania

BUCHAREST, Feb 2: Former Bulgarian national team star Hristo Stoichkov will coach Romania's Universitatea Craiova, a sports daily reported Wednesday, reports AP.

Romanian soccer agent Giovanni Becali, who brokered the deal, said Stoichkov will sign a contract for a year and a half for coaching the team in Craiova, some 180 kilometres (112 miles) west of Bucharest. He is to arrive Thursday, Gazeta sporturilor reported.

But other newspapers suggested the deal was not yet complete. Universitatea Craiova chairman George Ilina could not confirm Stoichkov's coming to coach his team, Pro Sport and Gazeta sporturilor dailies reported.

"We are still having only preliminary discussions," Ilina said.

Romanian soccer greats welcomed the idea of Stoichkov coaching in Romania.

"It's a great honor for Romanian soccer to have him. I still cannot believe it," said Gheorghe Hagi, a friend of Stoichkov's and Romanian national soccer team captain, as quoted by Gazeta sporturilor.

Hiddink takes over Betis

SEVILLE, Feb 2 (Reuters/Internet): Former Dutch national team coach Guus Hiddink took charge at Real Betis on a five-month contract on Tuesday.

Hiddink, who has been out of football since being sacked by Real Madrid 11 months ago, takes over from Argentina's Carlos Griguol, who became the fifth coaching casualty in the Spanish first division this term when he left the club on Monday.

With Betis lying in 16th place in the table, Hiddink's first target will be to steer the club clear of relegation, although he insisted on Tuesday he was setting his sights higher than that.

"Betis, in my opinion and in the opinion of everyone here, are far too low in the table," Hiddink said after presiding over his first training session.

"We could look below us and say that we'll try to avoid relegation but really we should be looking up to see what we can still achieve this season."

Hiddink has a wealth of experience of the Spanish league after spells at Valencia and Real Madrid either side of his four-year reign as Dutch coach.

In his first two years at Valencia he guided the side to fourth place in the table, with a still respectable seventh-place finish in his third season.

His tenure at Real Madrid was rather less successful as he was sacked in February 1999 just seven months after taking over from Jose Antonio Camacho.

French First Division Monaco going out of reach

PARIS, Feb 2: Monaco opened up a 10-point lead at the top of the French First Division on Tuesday with a 1-0 home win over rivals Paris St Germain who played the second half with 10 men in the top-of-the-table match, reports Reuters.

The result took Monaco to 52 points, 10 ahead of Auxerre who leaptfrogged into second place ahead of PSG thanks to a 1-0 win over French champions Girondins Bordeaux.

With only 10 matches in the season to go, Monaco look almost certain to clinch the title.

International striker David Trezeguet netted the winner six minutes from time to lift his season's tally to 15.

"We took one more step towards the title but it's only a step," said Monaco coach Claude Puel.

"We knew we needed to win tonight and we proved we can be patient," Puel said. "After our defeat in the League Cup we wanted to react and get back on the winning track."

The Parisians were hard to beat but we kept attacking in the second half and it paid off."

PSG, who are chasing their first league title since 1994, came close to opening the scoring when a volley by Jerome Leroy hit Fabien Barthez's post in the 25th minute.

Brazilian Christian, who netted four goals against Troyes last week, spoiled a good chance two minutes later when he headed wide.

The turning point came in the 45th minute when striker Laurent Robert was red carded for a second bookable offence.

Paris spent most of the second half defending but their hopes of denying Monaco victory ended when Trezeguet received a fine pass from Simone and beat Bernard Lama from close-range.

"The result is disappointing," Paris coach Philippe Bergeret said. "Now the gap is maybe too wide."

AJ Auxerre clinched a hard-earned win over title holders Girondins Bordeaux thanks to a goal in the dying minutes by French international Stephane Guivarch.

He netted the winner in the 86th but moments later was sent off for arguing with the referee after he awarded Bordeaux a penalty in injury time.

Girondins striker Sylvain Willord took the kick only to see it saved by the Auxerre keeper.

"We played a very good match tonight because we needed three points at home," Guivarch said. "We had to wait for the last five minutes to make it but I think we deserved it."



Monaco's Marcelo Gallardo (R) and Jimmy Algerino of Paris Saint Germain fight for possession during their French First Division fixture at Monaco on February 1. — Internet photo

Ronaldo now a UN ambassador

GENEVA, Feb 2 (AP/AFP): Brazilian soccer star Ronaldo became a United Nations goodwill ambassador on Tuesday and promised to use his popularity to highlight the plight of the poor.

The 23-year-old Inter Milan forward will represent the UN Development Programme in projects all over the world.

"I accepted this important appointment in my life because I have seen poverty firsthand," Ronaldo told a news conference at the UN European headquarters.

"I know what it is to experience hardship, and unfortunately hardship is the common lot in many countries."

Ronaldo, twice voted world player of the year, comes from a poor neighborhood on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro and began his soccer career playing barefoot in the streets.

He first became involved with the UN AIDS campaign in 1998. Last year he went to Kosovo for UNDP and made a donation to purchase materials for a school damaged by the fighting in the province.

He said his aim was to get many people involved in the struggle against abject poverty.

"It isn't the poor who are going to change the world. We need to try and mobilise people who have the financial means, and so help to end poverty," he said.

Danny Glover and South African novelist Nadine Gordimer.

Ronaldo said he was doing better after an operation on his right knee that has put him out of action since December.

Ronaldo, still convalescing after knee surgery last November said he was getting better although he admitted his career was going through a delicate patch.

"I am getting better. I'm recuperating," Ronaldo told reporters at a press conference to mark his appointment as a UN ambassador against poverty.

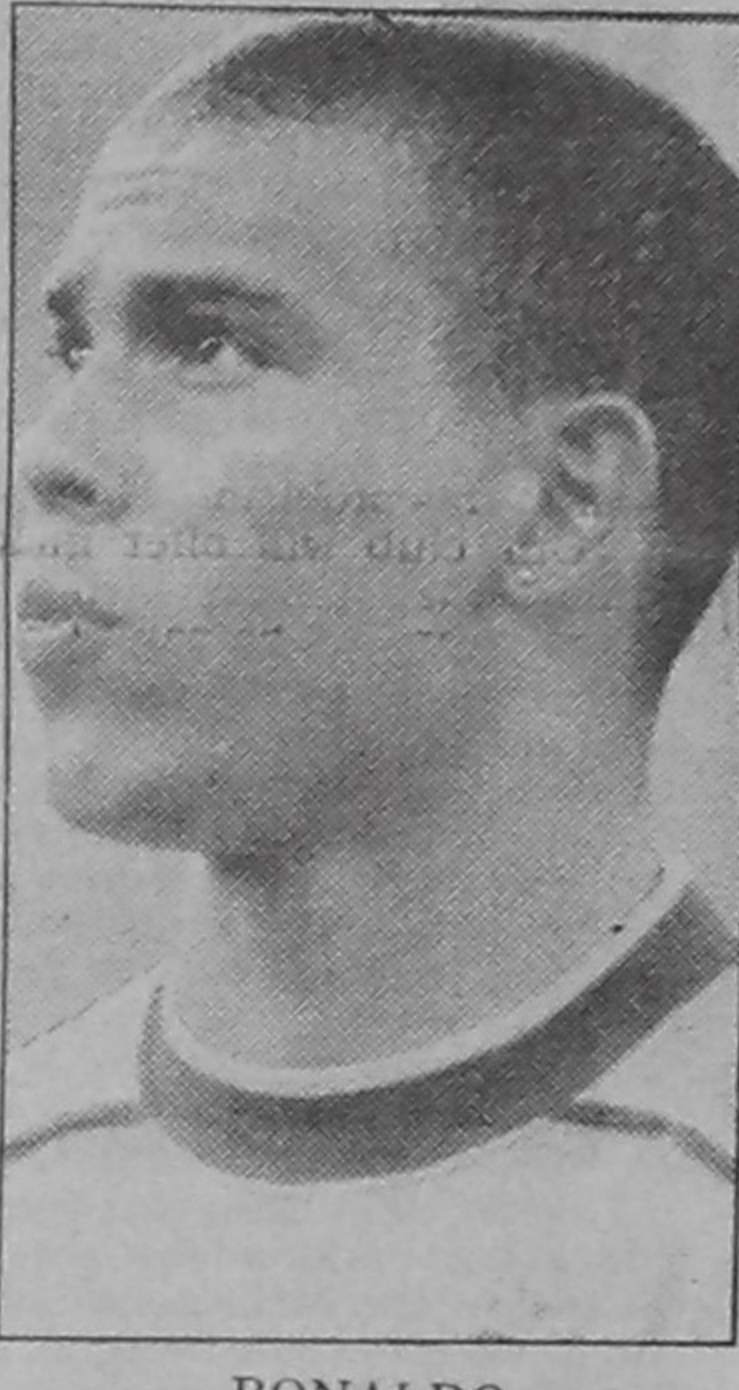
The former world player of the year is to have tests on his right knee in Paris on Friday after tearing tendons two months ago.

"Professionally I am going through a difficult patch in my career as a footballer," he admitted, noting that even the great Pele had had to overcome injuries before lifting Brazil's third World Cup in 1970.

"I am fighting to get back to physical fitness. Quitting the game has never crossed my mind. Football is my passion," said Ronaldo.

"I am going to do everything possible to get back to form and give joy to my fans," he insisted.

In his role as UN ambassador Ronaldo said he was to organise an all-stars friendly international with the receipts to go to charity.



RONALDO he also planned projects in Brazil and Africa. Other UNDP goodwill ambassadors include US actor

Anelka hoping for the best

MADRID, Feb 2 (Reuters/Internet): Real Madrid striker Nicolas Anelka, back in training after surgery on his right knee, has his sights set on a high profile return against arch-rivals Barcelona.

Anelka suffered knee ligament damage during the World Club Championship in Brazil and there had been fears that he could be out of action for as long as three months.

But the former Arsenal forward, who scored his first goals for Real in the Brazil tournament, is back running ahead of

schedule and is hoping to return in time for the crunch league clash with Barca on February 27.

"I'm not getting any more pain in my knee," Anelka told AS newspaper in an interview published on Wednesday.

"I'm running and cycling in the gym and my objective now is to be back for the Barcelona game."

The injury was a setback but better for it to happen in Brazil than later on in the season when everything is decided.

There are still games ahead in which to do great things, above all in the Champions League because that's the most

important."

Anelka, who says he feels more relaxed following his improved performances in Brazil, likened his situation to that of Davor Suker, the former Real Madrid striker who moved in the opposite direction at the start of the season.

"I'm a lot happier here now," he said. "I've got more confidence... and I'm under less pressure. I feel liberated."

"I still haven't done anything brilliant, though. I knew when I arrived that I'd need time to adapt -- the same thing happened at Arsenal."

"My situation could be compared to that of Davor Suker. When I left, Arsenal had Thierry Henry, whose style is similar to mine. He didn't have to change his philosophy of football."

Suker has been improving his game little by little, because he's been given time, and now the goals are there."

Anelka's target for the rest of the season is a simple one. To play, to play and score important goals and help the team win titles.

"To play in Euro 2000 I know I'll have to do very well at Real Madrid. A place in the national team is won with a lot of hard work and positive results."

FIFA takes action against Vasco

ZURICH, Feb 2: Vasco de Gama were hit with heavy fines and a ban on the son of one of their top officials on Tuesday for incidents after a match at the World Cup champion slip last month, reports Reuters.

The Brazilian club was fined 70,000 Swiss francs (42,500 dollars) and vice-president Eurico Miranda 50,000 Swiss francs (30,360 dollars) for his part in an ugly altercation with organisers and FIFA officials after their match with Mexican champions Necaxa in Rio de Janeiro on January 11.



Real Betis' new Dutch coach Guus Hiddink (R) giving instructions to his players during a practice session in Seville on February 1. — Internet photo