

Sport

South Africa 204 for 7

PORT ELIZABETH, South Africa, Feb 6: Jacques Kallis made 98 not out but the rest of South Africa's top order batting failed again as the host country struggled in their international triangular limited over series match against Zimbabwe at St George's Park here Sunday, reports AFP.

Needing a win in their last league match to make sure of qualifying for Saturday's final in Johannesburg, South Africa could score only 204 for seven on a slow pitch, despite a late assault by Kallis, who hit the last ball of the innings from Henry Olonga for a six over long-off.

A big total seemed in prospect when Herschelle Gibbs and Louis Koen started confidently after Hansie Cronje won his sixth successive toss.

But Gibbs, was run out for 11 in the sixth over and South Africa's innings followed a pattern which has become familiar during the series, with only Kallis surviving against steady Zimbabwe bowling and keen fielding.

The only partnership of note was 58 for the sixth wicket between Kallis and Lance Klusener but the runs were eked out off 109 balls against tight bowling by left arm spinner Grant Flower and medium-pacer Guy Whittall.

Klusener could not find his timing and failed to hit a boundary in a 53-ball innings. South Africa top the points against England in East London Friday but a three-way tie remains a possibility, which could see South Africa eliminated as they have the poorest net run rate of the three sides.

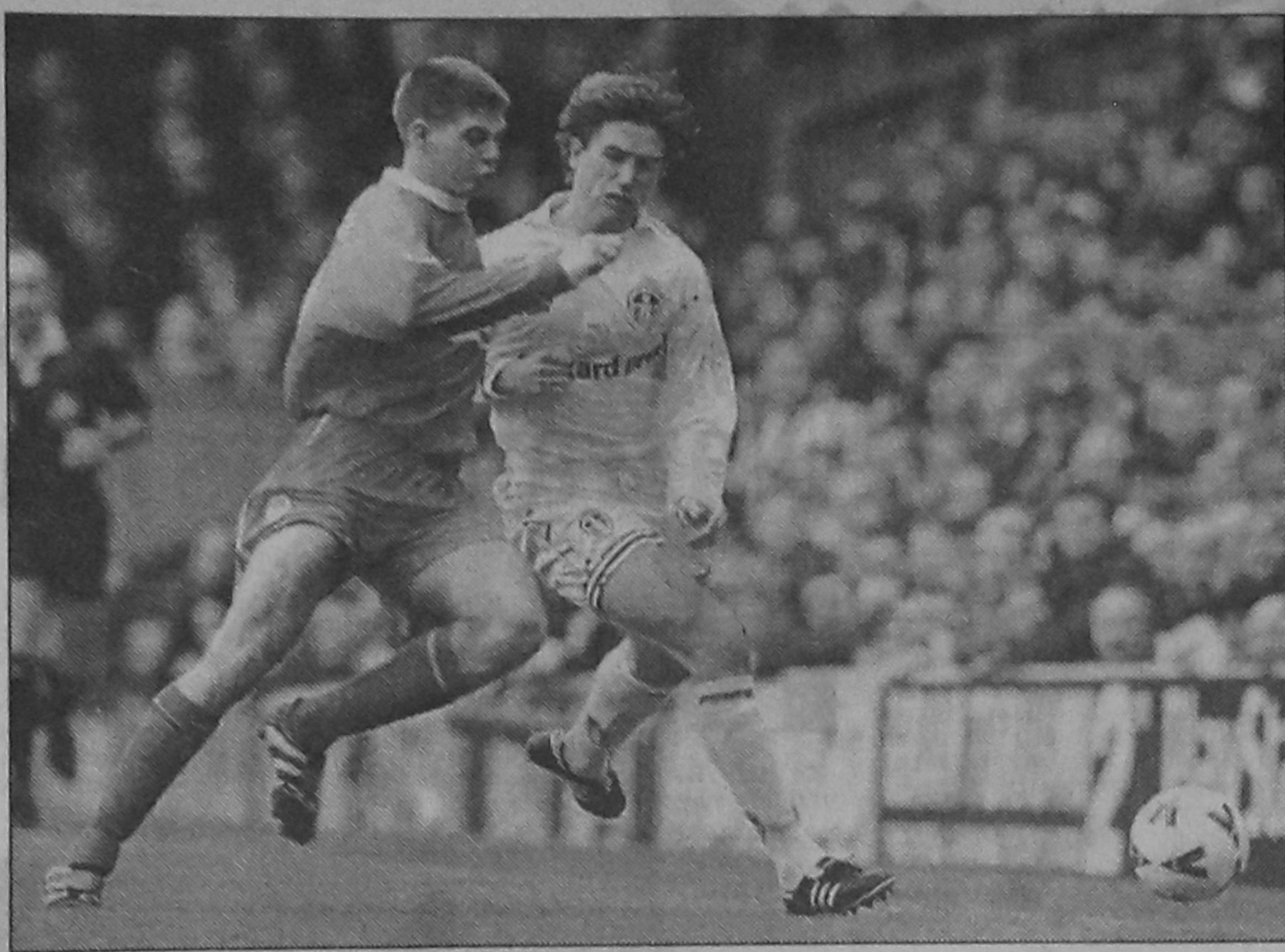
SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the South African innings in the triangular limited over series match against Zimbabwe at St. George's Park on Sunday:

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Lists bowlers like Kallis, Olonga, McKenzie, Cronje, Rhodes, Klusener, Pollock, Boucher, Extras, and total runs/wickets.

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Lists bowlers like Olonga, Johnson, Brent, Streak, Whittall, G Flower, and Did not bat.

ZIMBABWE: A Flower (captain), G Flower, N Johnson, A Campbell, M Goodwin, S Carlisle, C Wishart, G Whittall, H Streak, G Brent, H Olonga.



Leeds United's Australian international Harry Kewell and Liverpool defender Steven Gerrard battle for possession during their Premiership clash at Anfield on February 5. — AFP photo

Premiership

MU sail as rivals falter



LONDON, Feb 6: Manchester United moved six points clear at the top of the Premiership on Saturday after a 3-2 win at home to Coventry - but manager Sir Alex Ferguson was far from happy with his side's patchy performance.

United's closest rivals faltered to keep United in pole position with second-placed Leeds going down 3-1 at Liverpool while third-bottom Bradford upset the odds by beating Arsenal 2-1 at Valley Parade.

Ferguson, whose side have been unconvincing since returning from the World Cup Championship in Brazil, was disappointed with his team's display but thankful for results elsewhere.

"Well it's been a good day for us, although I can't say I'm enamoured by our performance," he said.

"I think we produced some fantastic moments of football, but they were sporadic. We could have ended up embarrassed today because Coventry worked really hard.

They kept going and when you've got that kind of appetite you deserve something from the game.

"I was surprised by the other results. You can expect things in football and Liverpool playing Leeds, that's a hard game.

"Most people thought Arsenal would win at Bradford, but when I've been to Bradford it's always been a tight ground and it can be a real cup-tie type situation.

"It's not an easy game, but everyone expected Arsenal to win today.

"Wins are really important for us now and what we've got to guard against now is complacency - you don't win anything with that."

Andy Cole netted cleverly in the 39th minute and doubled his tally in the 54th before Coventry, still without an away win, pulled one back through Belgian when Cedric Roussel netted.

But Paul Scholes, with a 77th minute effort from 25 yards, restored the two-goal advantage before Roussel netted again on the stroke of full-time to make it 3-2.

United top the Premiership on 53 points, six ahead of Leeds and nine ahead of Arsenal, who have played a game more.

Two stunning second-half goals by Czech Republic international Patrik Berger helped Gerrard Houllier's side to victory over Leeds and put the Merseysiders level on points with Arsene Wenger's side.

Unlike Ferguson, Houllier was in raptures with his team's performance after watching his side put a dent in Leeds' title aspirations.

He said: "It was a tremendous performance. We have beaten a side I always felt are real contenders. I felt that after we won there earlier in the season.

"But after United's win today I do feel they will run away

from the rest. They will stamp their quality on the Premiership now. They are clinical and are the best team.

"As for us, I still believe that Leeds, Chelsea, United and Arsenal are better than us. We have to stay humble and keep aiming for the target we have always had, and that is European soccer."

Meanwhile, Leeds boss David O'Leary refused to write off his team's title challenge after a devastating defeat.

He said: "I wouldn't write us off, not at all. We'll bounce back - it could be next week, but we can still do it.

"We set out this season to reach the Champions League and that is still very much our aim."

"I know United have gone six clear, but they are the best in the country, the world. Anybody who finishes above them will win the title.

"For us this was always going to be a transitional period and we are still second after 23 games. That's a great achievement. We are going to have dips, the side is so young, but we can bounce back."

But Arsenal boss Wenger believes his side's title dreams are over after Bradford's unlikely 2-1 win, with the Frenchman conceding the title race to reigning champions United.

"You can forget catching

Manchester United," said Wenger. "The championship is in England, not in dreamland. That's it for the title.

"We weren't good enough to win this game. Bradford played a great match and although we wanted to win, everything went against us.

"The only thing that I can promise to our fans is that we will fight in every game and for every point just like we always do.

Elsewhere, the 120th north-east derby proved a thriller with Sunderland fighting back from two down to draw 2-2 with Newcastle.

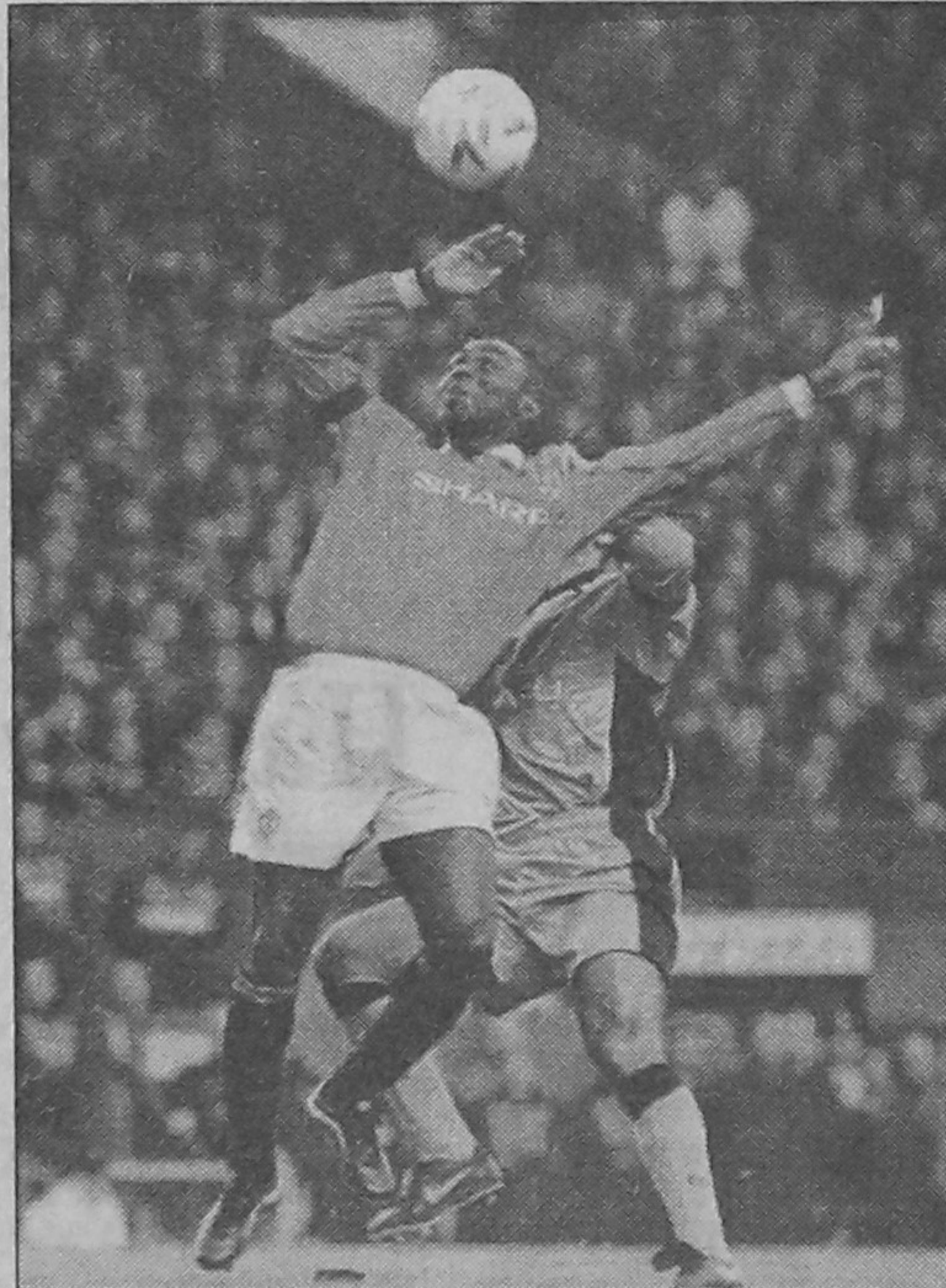
Derby came back from the dead to grab a point with two injury time goals in the 3-3 draw with Sheffield Wednesday.

Tottenham failed again against their bogey side Chelsea, going down 1-0 to a goal by Frenchman Bernard Lambourde after 52 minutes.

Aston Villa thrashed bottom side Watford 4-0, all the goals coming in the second half.

Middlesbrough's Keith O'Neill scored the fastest goal of the day, but his own goal after 67 seconds put Leicester on the way to a 2-1 victory.

And former England manager Glenn Hoddle got off to a winning start with his new club Southampton with a 2-1 victory at the Dell thanks to a late Gary Charles own goal.



Andy Cole, the Manchester United striker, trying to get the better of Coventry's Richard Shaw during their Premiership encounter at Old Trafford on February 5. — AFP photo

Hong Kong Cup

Hosts rattle Czech nerves



HONG KONG, Feb 6: An under-strength Czech Republic side scraped into the final of the four-team Hong Kong Cup here Saturday with a penalty shoot-out victory over a rag-tag team of journeyman professionals, reports AFP.

The Czechs - bereft of most of their top-notch stars - needed an equaliser two minutes from time to force a 2-2 draw and the spot-kick shoot-out against the Hong Kong select team.

"We were very fortunate in the penalty shoot-out. But I'm happy with the way my young side performed," said Czech coach Jozef Chovanec.

"By the time the final comes around, the team will have had time to acclimatise to the conditions and I promise they will be better prepared," he added.

The Czechs meet defending champions Mexico in the final on February 8. Mexico booked their berth with a 1-0 win over Japan in Saturday's earlier match.

Chovanec has brought along a young side to Hong Kong with most of the stars of their Euro 2000 qualification campaign - the Czechs finished with an impressive 10 wins out of 10 - missing this annual tournament held over the Chinese Lunar New Year holidays.

Missing are Liverpool duo Patrik Berger and Vladimir Smicer and a host of other European-based stars like Benfica winger Karel Poborsky, Lazio ace Pavel Nedved and Radek Bejbl of Atletico Madrid.

Their absence was felt as the Hong Kong League XI, a combination of expatriate players in the former British colony, took a shock 1-0 lead into the halftime break.

Bosnian Alen Bajkusa sent the home fans into raptures when he headed home in the 26th minute. Marek Jankulovski equalised from a defensive blunder early in the second half but Czech relief was shortlived when midway through the half Hong Kong skipper Ricky Cheng

scored, pouncing on a ricochet off a free kick to give the hosts the lead again.

Hong Kong held the lead until the dying moments, before Czech striker Marek Kincl showed why he is the leading goal-scorer in his country when he pivoted and struck the blow which kept his side in the lead.

Kincl followed up his strike by converting his penalty to keep his side on top midway through the shoot-out.

Hong Kong, who were on the back foot after captain Cheng had missed the first penalty, clawed back to level when English goalkeeper Peter Guthrie pulled off a superb save from Marek Jankulovski's attempt.

Unfortunately for Guthrie and screaming home fans in the 35,000 crowd at the Hong Kong Stadium, the trip from hero to zero was short. Guthrie picking himself up after his save, took Hong Kong's final penalty - and kicked it wide.

Asia XI v World XI

ICC panel to select teams

CALCUTTA, Feb 6: A panel of reputed former cricketers appointed by the International Cricket Council will select the teams for the Asia XI and Rest of the World XI one-day match which will be one of the highlights of the ICC's cricket week to be observed from April 2 to 9, reports PTI.

The Asia XI will comprise the best cricketers from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, while the Rest of the World will comprise their counterparts from the other Test playing nations. ICC President, Jagmohan Dalmiya, told a press conference here yesterday.

He said that the meeting of the selection panel is likely to be held in early March and the selection proceedings will be telecast during the cricket week so that the audiences were able to know the basis of selections.

The special day-night limited-overs match between Asia XI and World XI will be played at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka in April 8.

He said that another panel of selectors comprising reputed former cricketers will also select the all-time great team and the best current team one-day team. The All Time Great XI will comprise players who had played the game since the inaugural World Cup in 1975.

Dalmiya said that as part of ICC's "fast track" programme for the best associate member nations, a six-team event will be staged in Harare, Denmark, Holland, Scotland, Ireland and Kenya will be joined by the Zimbabwe 'A' 15-match series.

Serie A Udinese hold Juve

ROME, Feb 6: Juventus drew 1-1 at Udinese in an Italian league match on Saturday, the same score they managed last week at Cagliari, reports AFP.

Denmark's Martin Jorgensen opened the scoring for Udinese before Ciro Ferrara equalized in the second half.

Two goals from Daniele Berretta, in the 35th and 44th minutes, earned Cagliari a 2-1 win over Perugia in the night's other game.

Juventus, and especially their playmaker Zinedine Zidane, were not at their best.

Without Uruguay's central defender Paolo Montero, the "Old Lady of Turin", Juventus lacked authority in the back line.

Coming up against a solid, well organized and difficult to beat Udinese team, Juventus had problems imposing their game.

In foggy conditions, Udinese scored through Jorgensen, fed by Roberto Sosa, in the 37th minute.

Juventus hit back and gained a lot of possession but they had problems turing their superiority into goals.

They lost central defender Igor Tudor of Croatia, sent off for two yellow cards, but still managed to equalize through a Ferrara header in the 76th minute following a corner by Alessandro Del Piero.

Primera Liga Valencia down Betis

MADRID, Feb 6: Two goals in the last 10 minutes gave Valencia a 3-1 victory over Real Betis on Saturday, moving them up to fifth in the Spanish First Division, reports Reuters.

Late strikes by Gaizka Mendietta and Francisco Farinos meant it was an unhappy return to the Mestalla stadium for new Real Betis coach Guus Hiddink, who took over at the struggling club on Tuesday after the sacking of Carlos Griguol.

The former Dutch national team and Real Madrid coach was at the helm in Valencia for three seasons between 1991 and 1994.

Romanian international striker Adrian Ilie got the home side off to a good start after only 20 minutes, capitalising on Betis' defensive disarray to end a 10-week barren streak in the Spanish league.

Compatriot Iulian Filipescu equalised for Betis on the hour after his shot from the edge of the area spun out of the hands of Valencia goalkeeper Santiago Canizares and into the net.

Mendietta put Valencia back in front from the spot after 82 minutes, getting his ninth goal of the season.

One minute later a long-range effort by Farinos evaded Betis goalkeeper Toni Prats and secured three points for Valencia. Betis are 16th in the 20-strong league.

Bundesliga Beinlich stars in Leverkusen win

BERLIN, Feb 6: A double from German international midfielder Stefan Beinlich inspired Bayer Leverkusen to a 3-0 win over MSV Duisburg on Saturday and take a one point lead over Bayern Munich in the Bundesliga - Bayern can retake the lead if they don't lose to third placed Hamburg on Sunday, reports AFP.

However, Beinlich's double strike was the perfect morale booster ahead of Wednesday's crucial top of the table clash with Bayern Munich particularly as their leading striker Ulf Kirsten was out injured. Leverkusen, who have never won the championship and finished runners-up to Bayern last season, stormed out of the blocks with Bernd Schneider scoring in the third minute.

African Nations' Cup

Eagles' confidence sky high



LAGOS, Feb 6: Title favourites Nigeria meet surprise packets Senegal Monday in what appears the most one-sided quarter-final of the African Nations Cup, reports AFP.

While the Super Eagles lineup could be mistaken for the African All Stars, the Lions do not possess one footballer who would be immediately recognisable outside the West African country.

Defenders Taribo West and Celestine Babayaro, midfielders Tijani Babangida, Augustine 'Jay Jay' Okocha, Sunday Oliseh and Finidi George and African Footballer of the Year Nwankwo Kanu are revered from Cairo to Cape Town.

But mention goalkeeper Oumar Diallo, defender Pape Diop, midfielder Oumar Traore or striker Henri Camara beyond the borders of Senegal and the likeliest response would be a vacant stare.

"We are the best team in Africa," boasts Nigeria captain Mutiu Adegboju, who led the co-hosts to an impressive 2-0 vic-

tory over Morocco three days ago in the absence of Il Olis'h.

"Our performance against the Moroccans proved we are the best squad on the continent and while Senegal are worthy of respect, I cannot see them stopping us.

The triumph over Morocco was dedicated to our supporters, who filled the stadium despite our disappointing display against Congo in the previous game. Nothing can stop us now."

Dutch coach Jo Bonfrere, who inherited the Eagles from sacked compatriot Thijs Libregts barely seven weeks before the biennial African showcase kicked off, tread a more cautious path.

"We will continue to try and do our best. My ambition is to bring back the glory days to Nigerian football and that means lifting the African Nations Cup," he said.

Bonfrere has not been slow to make changes, axing former African Footballer of the Year Victor Ikpeba for the Morocco match and ushering teenage striker Julius Aghahowa into the cauldron of fire for the second half.

Aghahowa, who plays for Tunisian club giants Esperance, rewarded the faith shown in

him by controlling a lob from West and scoring the match-clinching second goal with 10 minutes left.

It was a fitting display by a youngster who faced a ban from international football by the national association last year after ignoring a call-up for an Olympics qualifier.

White-haired German coach Peter Schmittger is probably the best known member of the Senegal delegation as he has worked around the continent for more than three decades.

The former semi-professional footballer came closest to Nations Cup glory 30 years ago when he guided Cote d'Ivoire to the semi-finals, where they lost 2-1 to Ghana.

Schmittger says the absence of stars is an advantage as it has been easier to mould together players who proved in a narrow loss against holders Egypt that they are capable of holding their own at the highest level.

The Super Eagles beat hosts Senegal 2-1 in the opening match of the 1992 finals and the countries drew 1-1 in Dakar last year in a qualifier later scratched from the records when Nigeria replaced Zimbabwe as hosts.



Alessandro Del Piero (L), the Juventus star, being closely followed by two Udinese defenders during a Serie A game at Udine on February 5. — AFP photo

African Nations Cup

Ghana vow to deliver



KUMASI, Ghana, Feb 6: Coach Giuseppe Dossena says Ghana will bounce back from one of the darkest days in their football history and defeat South Africa Sunday in an African Nations Cup quarter-final, reports AFP.

The Italian gave his mentally and physically drained squad a day off after being outclassed by Cote d'Ivoire in a final-round Group A match they were lucky to lose by only two goals.

Ghana, co-hosts of the biennial African football showcase with Nigeria, have done little to justify the tag of second favourites behind the Super Eagles, squeezing into the knockout stages on goal difference.

"We have learnt from our mistakes and are ready for South Africa. The analysis of our loss to the Ivorians has been deep and difficult," he told reporters in the central Ghanaian city.

"I want the Black Stars to play like Africans when they have the ball and like Europeans when they do not have it. My players still think and act like individuals."

Dossena, a member of the Italy 1982 World Cup-winning

squad, believes the move from the capital city of Accra to Kumasi could play a crucial role in what is expected to be a tight and tense showdown.

"My players tell me the support for the Black Stars is greatest here. Our captain (Charles Akunnor) and our leading defender (Samuel Kuffour) were born and reared here and it means a lot to them."

Officials predict a capacity 50,000 crowd at the Asokwa Stadium, where few people turned up for matches in a mini-league won comfortably by South Africa, the 1996 champions.

Kuffour, who played for Bayern Munich of Germany against Manchester United of England last year in the dramatic European Champions League final, believes the crowd will be worth an extra player to Ghana.

"Supporters in Kumasi will cheer us until the final whistle. I am thrilled to be back home and gain strength from the fact that the whole of Ghana is willing us to win the Nations Cup."

Midfielder Akunnor, one of many big-name stars from Europe yet to excel at the cup, warned that Bafana Bafana (The Boys) deserve respect after reaching the last two finals.

"We will have to improve dramatically on our perfor-

mance against Cote d'Ivoire to have any chance. But every team has a bad match during a tournament - perhaps it is the turn of South Africa."

Bafana Bafana coach Trott Moloto begs to differ, saying many of his squad have not performed to their potential in victories over minnows Gabon and poorly-prepared Democratic Republic of Congo and a draw with emerging Algeria.

"I believe the win-or-die nature of the knockout stages will bring the best out of them. There is no greater motivation than being underdogs and playing against tough opposition," the media-shy coach said during a rare interview.

While refusing to name individuals who have disappointed, midfielder John 'Shoes' Moshoeu would top the Moloto list after a series of listless displays that suggest his sell-by date has expired.

"Football has changed and no team can rely on an individual," Moshoeu said in his defence. "This is a team game and bringing the cup home is all that matters."

Moshoeu has fond memories of the Black Stars, scoring twice as South Africa triumphed 3-0 in the 1996 semi-finals. The score promises to be much closer this time.



Alfonso Perez (L) of Real Betis and Valencia's Gerard Lopez locked in a tussle during their Primera Liga match at Valencia on February 5. — AFP photo