

## Sport

Where did  
Edmundo  
go?

SAO PABLO, Feb 6: Brazilian Edmundo, nicknamed the animal, hit the headlines once again on Saturday when he walked out on his team, Vasco Da Gama, just as they were about to play a match against Palmeiras, reports AFP.

Edmundo, his kit and left the stadium with his agent.

Club doctor Clovis Munhoz said he did not examine Edmundo and was told by a Palmeiras official for whom he played two years ago.

Edmundo was also seen talking to the Palmeiras coach Luiz Felipe Scolari before taking off his sports clothes and doing his disappearing act.

Vasco Da Gama official Isaias Tinoco said he could not confirm whether Edmundo was being sold or not. "We can only say he told us he was not fit enough to play. I don't know anything else."

After the match Scolari said Edmundo would be welcome at his club. "I must say Edmundo would be an excellent signing for Palmeiras. It would leave me very contented."

Palmeiras won this Rio-Sao Paulo tournament match 2-1 while Palmeiras fans were singing during the whole contest "welcome Edmundo."

Edmundo's personal style certainly gets him noticed.

When he re-signed for Vasco da Gama he negotiated a special clause that enabled him to visit nightclubs - unlike his teammates who were under curfew.

Among his other antics have been getting a chimpanzee drunk at his son's birthday party - a feat that angered Rio's animal rights lobby.

He was also the subject of a paternity suit from a leading Brazilian TV presenter. The player denied the charge but the medical tests proved he was the father of the child.

He has recently been out of favour with Brazil coach Wanderley Luxemburgo, who is a stickler for discipline.

Vasco's purse  
blocked by  
authorities

RIO DE JANEIRO, Feb 6: The 4.5 million dollars won by Brazil's Vasco Da Gama for their runner-up spot in the World Club Championship last month was frozen by authorities here on Saturday, reports AFP.

Judge Carlos Lugones said an ever increasing and unpaid tax bill by the club means their winnings will be frozen.

Vasco Da Gama president Eurico Miranda questioned the right of Lugones to prevent them being paid for their efforts on the pitch.

I think this gentleman (judge Lugones) likes to appear in newspapers. To block our prize money is going beyond his powers as Vasco Da Gama have a right to it because of their success in the World Club championship."

Miranda, who said they would be appealing the ruling, did admit they had tax debts of about 3.8 million dollars because of their high wage bill.

He added they were paying back part of the debts after a ruling last year that 15 percent of all their winnings in competitions would be used for that purpose.

Vasco Da Gama bought Romario just before the World Club Championship which certainly added to their wage bill. Vasco were beaten by rivals Corinthians in a penalty shoot-out in the final.

Miranda has also been fined 40,000 dollars by the sport's world governing body FIFA for his contentious comments after their World Club Championship match with Mexican club Necaxa.

Zitouni fancies  
Italy

KANO, Nigeria, Feb 6: Tunisia's star striker Zitouni Ali expressed his preference on Saturday to play in the Italian league rather than the poorer French championship after the African Nations Cup finishes later this month, reports AFP.

The 20-year-old, who plays for crack Tunisian club Esperance, claimed that he has received offers from mostly French clubs, but that he had also heard of interest from Serie A giants Juventus and minnows.

"I have been contacted by French clubs like Monaco, PSG, Nancy and Lens but my mind is with Juventus or Bari who have shown an interest in signing me," he said.

"I've told them to come down and watch me play live in the Nations Cup and if I am impressed with their offers, I will sign for any one of the Italian clubs."

Sauzee ready  
to call it a day

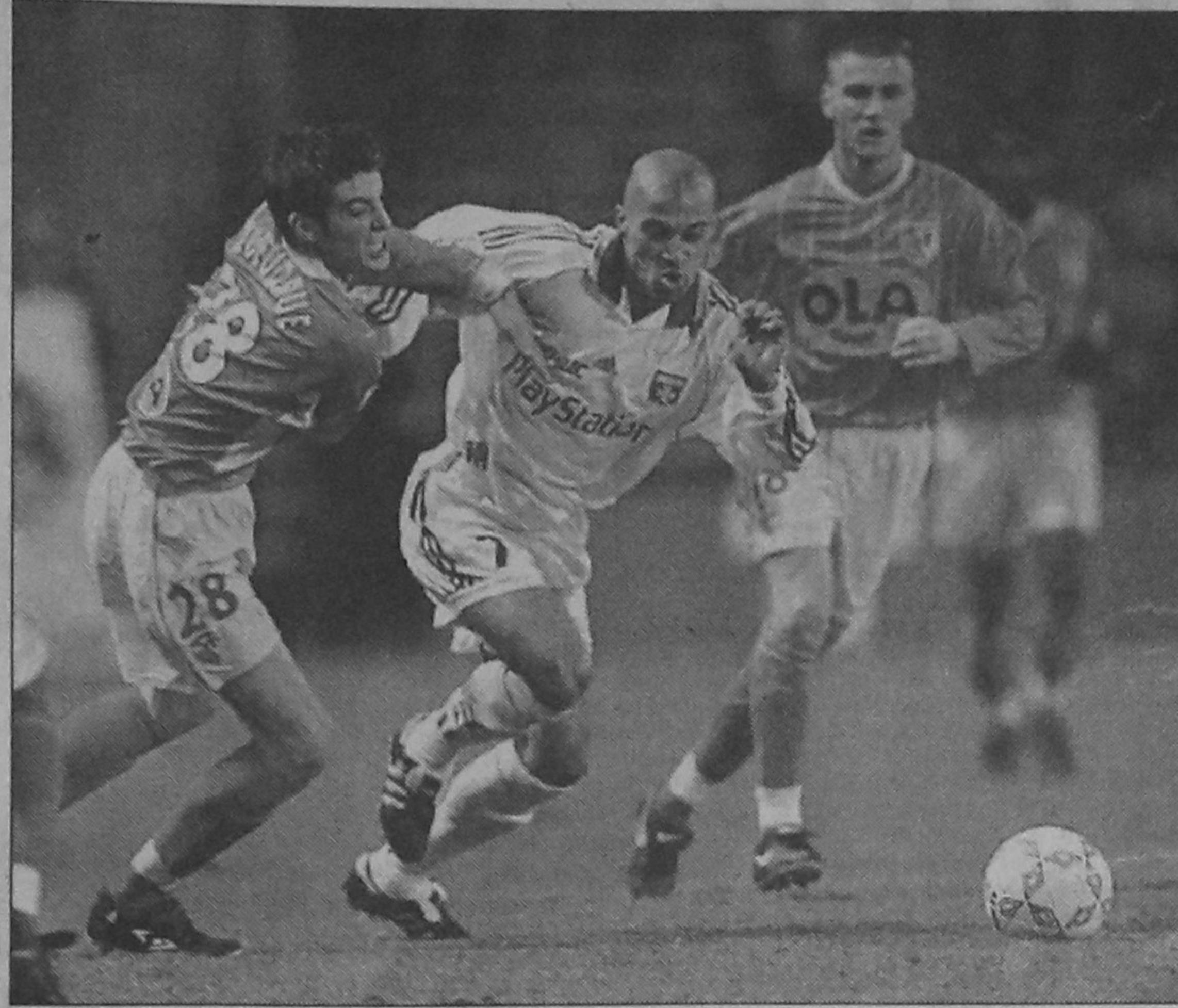
GLASGOW, Feb 6: Scottish Premiership side Hibernian's French midfielder Franck Sauzee said Sunday that he intends to retire this summer, reports AFP.

The 34-year-old midfielder said that not even a place in the UEFA Cup would persuade him to stay.

"I will end my career with Hibs and I'd like my last game to be the Scottish Cup final in May," Sauzee told the Scottish Sunday Express.

"I would not like my standards to drop. I have too much respect for the manager Alex McLeish, this club and the wonderful supporters for that to happen."

"When I am ready I will perhaps turn to coaching and I would also like to do some television work."



Lens defender Franck Queudrue (L) trying to hold back Steve Marlet (C) of Auxerre during their French First Division clash at Lens on February 5. — AFP photo

## French First Division

## Dacourt carries Lens



PARIS, Feb 6: A superb double strike by Olivier Dacourt inspired Lens to a 2-1 win over 10-man Auxerre. Lens' third successive win and Auxerre's first defeat in eight matches, on Saturday in the latest round of French League matches, reports AFP.

Leaders Monaco, who play at Lyon on Sunday, maintained their 10 point lead though Paris Saint Germain moved into second spot on goal difference ahead of Auxerre after a scoreless draw at home to relegation threatened Nantes.

Dacourt, who was an eight-million-dollar signing from Everton last summer, gave the 1998 champions the lead in the 44th minute going past two defenders and shooting into the net from two metres out.

However, Auxerre, who only escaped relegation last season on the final day, showed the resilience that had kept them unbeaten in the last seven matches by equalising in the 55th minute. Narcisse Kapo shooting home from just outside the area despite being surrounded by four Lens players.

Dacourt, though, restored Lens' lead with a superb free-kick out on the left and Auxerre lost all hope when they were reduced to 10 men minutes after Dacourt's second as defender Cyril Magnier was sent-off for a

dreadful tackle on Pascal Nouma.

Champions Bordeaux may have lost all hope of defending their title successfully but they recorded their first win since the winter break with a 3-0 thrashing of Strasbourg.

Stephane Ziani opened the scoring for Bordeaux having been set up by Sylvain Wiltord in the third minute.

Wiltord, who has failed to repeat his scoring exploits of last season, created the second 10 minutes before half-time sliding the pass to Johan Micoud through two Strasbourg players before Micoud beat one Strasbourg defender and shot home.

Wiltord's French international strike partner Lilian Laslandes added a third shortly before the full time whistle with a cheeky chip over the keeper Thierry Desbres.

Crisis-riven St Etienne slid further into the relegation battle as they were soundly wallop by Bastia, who preserved their unbeaten home record, 4-0.

Les Verts have garnered just one point from their last 18 and are only a point off the bottom three.

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second two years earlier when Navratilova outlasted her.

Kournikova's long quest for a title shows no immediate sign of ending as Davenport steamed past her in straight sets without undue difficulty in Melbourne and Hingis allowed her just two games this week in Tokyo.

Another late entry into the tournament is Spain's Magui Serna, who has broken into the top 50 and who replaces Australia's Barbara Schett.

As ever on home territory, a strong French contingent will be to the fore and ready to launch a strong challenge.

Tauzat will be looking to justify her sixth place on the computer but eighth-ranked Julie Haldar-Decugis has a burning desire to snatch a second victory in the event having beaten Croatia's Iva Majic in the 1996 final.

On that occasion, seeded third, the 18-year-old Williams let herself down with a rash of unforced errors with her serve and forehand particularly off colour.

True to form, she pinned the blame firmly on her own shoulders admitting afterwards: "I couldn't stop hitting errors, I just didn't do anything right."

Williams, who bagged five titles in 1999, one less than her sister, promised to get herself straight on the practice courts and will be keen to show that the Likhovtseva disaster was a one-off.

The powerful American will be the overwhelming favourite in the absence of the top three players in the WTA world rankings as Swiss Miss Martina Hingis will concentrate on preparing for Scottsdale, Arizona, in three weeks time.

That is also the next challenge for Australian Open champion Lindsay Davenport, assuming her current hamstring problems have cleared up by then.

Venus is similarly sitting out Paris so there will be no sibling rivalry to spur Serena on as she seeks to emulate Martina Navratilova in winning the tournament twice having seen off tough Frenchwoman Amelie Mauresmo in three sets last time out.

Barely half of the world's top 20 will be present with home hope Nathalie Tauzat the highest-ranked at sixth after Serena.

Tauzat distinguished herself in 1999 by becoming the oldest tournament winner of the season at the age of 32 and 21 days in Leipzig, Germany.

The public's — and, no doubt, the media's — interest in the event will be all the greater for the appearance of Russian pin-



International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Juan Antonio Samaranch at the inaugural ceremony of the Torino 2006 Winter Olympics Organising Committee which was held at Carignano Palace on February 5. — AFP photo

## Scottish Premiership

Hearts break  
Celtic's heart

GLASGOW, Feb 6: Celtic's hopes of winning the Scottish Premier League title suffered an enormous blow on Saturday when they let a two goal lead slip and lost 3-2 to Hearts giving bitter rivals Rangers the chance to take another stride towards the Premier League title, reports AFP.

Trailing 2-0 after half an hour, Hearts produced a thrilling recovery, culminating in a penalty winner from Colin Cameron, his second of the match, six minutes from time.

Celtic, nine points behind leaders Rangers at the start of play, could find themselves even further behind on Sunday if Dick Advocaat's side secure victory at Hibernian.

The hosts got off to a flying start when a brilliant long-range effort from Lubomir Moravcik put them ahead after 15 minutes and when Mark Viduka's 29th-minute header gave Celtic a two-goal cushion, John Barnes' side appeared to be cruising to victory.

But within three minutes Hearts halved the deficit through Cameron as the visitors, sensing panic in the Celtic defence, started playing with renewed confidence.

Gary Naysmith struck ten minutes after the break from Fitzroy Simpson's cross to level the scores and with four minutes to go Cameron completed the comeback to secure all three points.

Hearts were awarded a penalty when Darren Jackson was shoved inside the area by Tommy Johnson and Cameron stepped up to rifle the spot-kick beyond the reach of Jonathan Gould.

Elsewhere, Aberdeen won only their fourth game of the season by beating St Johnstone 2-1 at Pittodrie thanks to a Robbie Winters winner five minutes after half time.

John O'Neil had given the visitors the lead after 14 minutes but Arild Stavrum equalised from the spot six minutes later.

Winters' cool finish lifted Aberdeen off the foot of the Premier League for the first time this season.

A Hugh Robertson goal inspired Dundee to a convincing 3-0 win over Motherwell at Fir Park.

After a dull first half, the game exploded into action when Robertson put the visitors into a 49th-minute lead with a tremendous 35-yard shot.

Gavin Rae made it two on 65 minutes and substitute James Grady wrapped up the points from the penalty spot with a minute to go.

Matthaeus  
foresees  
farewell

BERLIN, Feb 6: Veteran libero Lothar Matthaeus says he may cry when he plays for Bayern Munich for the last time next month, reports Reuters.

"I am naturally aware that when the final whistle blows on the Champions League match against Real Madrid on March 8 a part of my life will end," the 36-year-old German international wrote in a column in Sunday newspaper Welt am Sonntag.

Matthaeus, who returned to Bayern in 1992 after a first spell with the Munich club from 1984 to 1988, will join US Major League Club New York-New Jersey MetroStars on March 10.

"Perhaps there will be a few tears," he said, looking ahead to his last match with Bayern.

Matthaeus, who captained Germany to victory in the 1990 World Cup and has won a world record equalising 143 caps, is expected to end his international career after this year's European championship finals in Belgium and the Netherlands.

He will be 39 in March and suggested he might retire after one season in the United States.

Williams beat four French women in a row on the way to glory last year and the host nation will have its fingers crossed that revenge is in sight — unless Likhovtseva should turn out to be the holder's bogey opponent.

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