

Sport

Barnes fired

GLASGOW, Feb 11: Glasgow Celtic sacked their coach John Barnes on Thursday after eight months in charge of the Scottish Premiership club, reports AFP.

Barnes, 36, a former Liverpool and England winger, paid the ultimate price for an embarrassing 3-1 home defeat to division One side Inverness Caledonian Thistle in the third round of the Scottish Cup on Tuesday night.

Director of Football Operations Kenny Dalglish will take temporary control of the club.

Celtic have also terminated the contract of Barnes' assistant Eric Black with immediate effect while Terry McDermott, also on the coaching staff, is leaving by mutual agreement.

Dalglish said: "It gives me no pleasure in any way shape or form to make this announcement. I think the three lads are tremendous fellows."

John Barnes is an admirable fellow and someone I think will go on in later years and establish himself as very successful in coaching or managing a football club.

In future years he will be successful. Unfortunately it won't be at Celtic Football Club.

Chilavert to make International return

ASUNCION, Feb 11: Paraguayan goalkeeper Jose Luis Chilavert will line up for the national squad against Hungary here on Sunday. It was confirmed on Thursday, reports AFP.

Voted the best goalkeeper during the 1998 World Cup, Chilavert missed the Copa America in his home country last year because of political disputes with the Paraguayan football Association.

Gremio play down Ronaldinho move

RIO DE JANEIRO, Feb 11: Porto Alegre-based Brazilian club Gremio denied Thursday that they had received any bid from Spanish giants Barcelona for their young strike prodigy Ronaldinho, reports AFP.

Ronaldinho - no relation to the Inter Milan star known by the same name in Brazil but as Ronaldinho to the rest of the world - has caught the eye of many foreign coaches since graduating to the Brazilian national team just before last summer's successful Copa America campaign.

"Gremio have received no offer from Barcelona at this moment of time," said the Brazilian club's president Jose Amorim.

Earlier Thursday Spanish sports paper AS said that Barca were interested in bringing Brazilian star striker Ronaldinho to the Primera Liga.

Ronaldinho - born Ronaldo de Assis Moreira - is known seriously as Ronaldinho Assis and Ronaldinho Gauchao to distinguish him from his more illustrious namesake.

The two players also resemble each other - both have crew-cuts, hairstyles and gap-toothed smiles although Ronaldinho is less musclebound than the Inter Milan star.

Barcelona's scouting team have been in Brazil watching the Latin American Olympic qualifying tournament and once more the Gremio forward caught the eye.

Since last summer he has been rumoured as a target for European clubs and Gremio officials have in the past slapped a hefty - some would say ridiculous - 72 million dollars price tag on his head. In the unlikely event of that price being met it would be a world record.

Italian Cup semis

Lazio just too strong

ROME, Feb 11: Local favourites Lazio hardly broke sweat here Thursday as they romped to a 5-0 victory in their Italian Cup semi-final first leg match with unfashionable Veneto, reports AFP.

The Roman outfit all but booked a place in the Final, probably against Inter Milan, who dispatched Cagliari 3-1 in their first leg match on Wednesday.

Lazio were formidable from the start even though they had rested several first team players, notably Chilean striker Marcelo Salas and Italian defender Alessandro Nesta.

It took 13 minutes for the floodgates to open when veteran striker Roberto Mancini, who has said he will quit playing at the end of the season, put the Biancocelesti ahead.

The same player struck again 10 minutes later and before the half hour mark Yuray Valdes, star Sinisa Mihajlovic, as the best freekick taker in the world, made it 3-0.

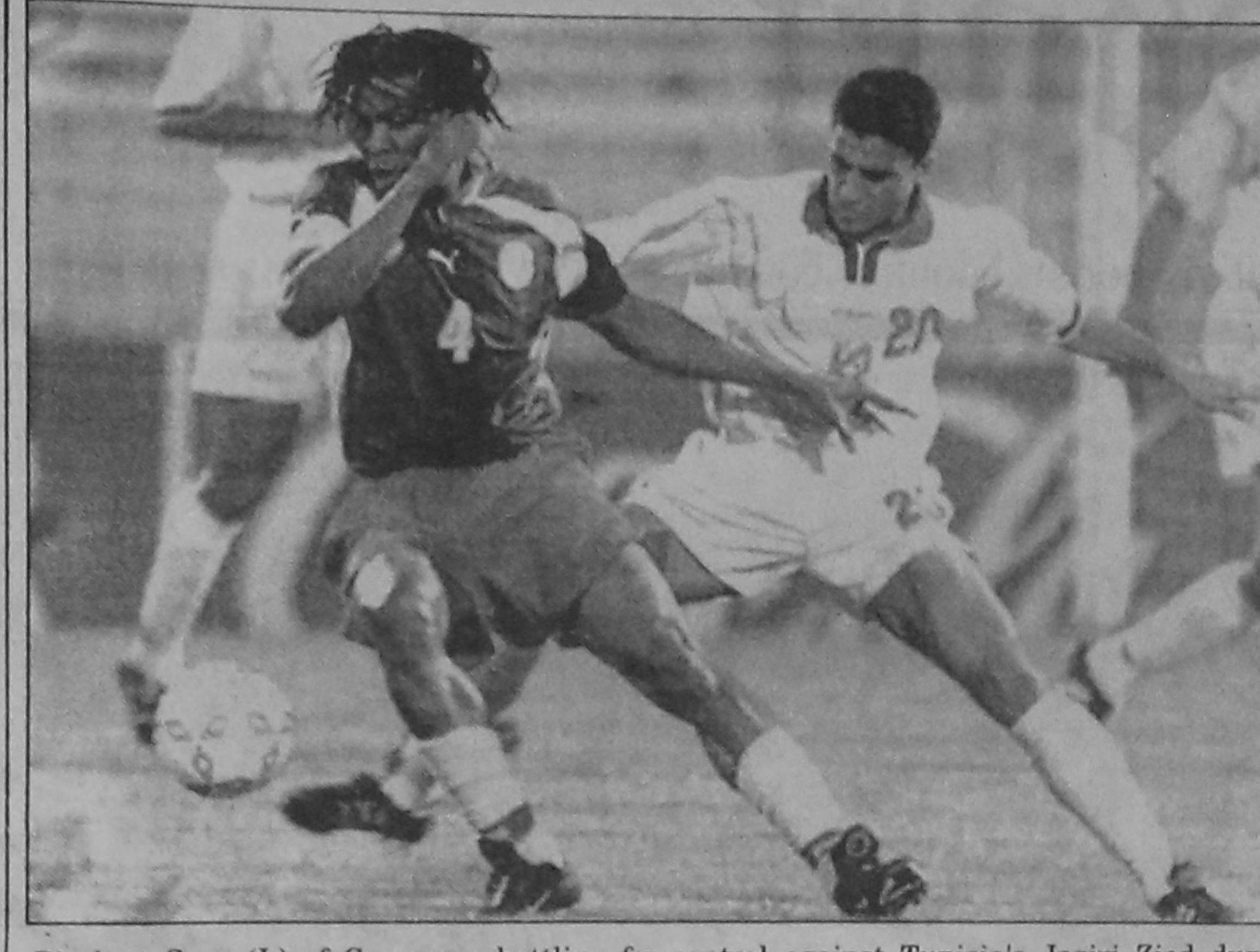
Fabrizio Ravanelli could even afford to squander a penalty at the end of the first period although Venezia goalkeeper Fabrizio Casazza deserved credit for the save.

The penalty had been awarded for a foul by Venezia's French defender Bruno Ngotty on Lazio's Czech star Pavel Nedved.

After 58 minutes Lazio were again awarded a spot kick and this time it was dead ball specialist Mihajlovic who volunteered for service and he showed Ravanelli how to do it with a perfect spot kick.

The lesson in finishing seemed to pay off as Ravanelli rounded off the scoring with his side's fifth with two minutes remaining.

Only 8,000 fans bothered to turn up at the Stadio Olimpico and in truth the Venezia players must have been bothered if the effort had been worth it.



Rigobert Song (L) of Cameroon battling for control against Tunisia's Jaziri Zied during their African Nations' Cup semifinal at Accra on February 10.

—AFP photo

African Nations' Cup

Lions set up final clash with Eagles



ACCRA, Feb 11: Cameroon and Nigeria, two of African soccer's most entertaining teams, cruised through their Nations' Cup semifinals on Thursday to set up an intriguing finale to the tournament, reports Reuters.

Cameroon overcame

Tunisia 3-0 in a match that produced the ultimate clash of styles. Italy-based Patrick Mboma getting on the score-sheet twice in Accra as the Indomitable Lions swept aside the rank outsiders in the second half.

Co-hosts Nigeria beat South Africa 2-0, playing in front of a packed 60,000 crowd in Lagos after the Confederation of African Football (CAF) backed down from their threat to make them play in an empty stadium.

The Super Eagles opened their box of tricks in the second half after Tijani Babangida scored in the first and 34th minutes to leave the Bafana Bafana down and out in Lagos before halftime.

Nigeria and Cameroon meet in Lagos on Sunday, while the losers contest the third-place match in Accra on Saturday.

CAMEROON-TUNISIA

The Accra match brought the attacking, skillful style of the Indomitable Lions face to face with the dour North Africans, whose inherently

rigid style has been made even more defensive by the influence of Italian coach Francesco Scoglio.

Scoglio's disciplined tactics had helped take Tunisia's limited squad further than expected, with the help of two 1-0 wins, a goalless draw and a 4-2 defeat by Nigeria.

Tunisia, beaten finalists in 1996, had the better of the first half hour, surprisingly taking the game to their opponents and carving out several clearcut chances which they were unable to convert.

They paid the price in the 49th minute when Mboma, who scorned several chances in previous games, fired Cameroon in front after the Tunisia defence failed to clear a long throw by Pierre Wome.

In the final 10 minutes the Cagliari striker set up the second for Real Madrid's Samuel Eto'o and then scored the third as both he and Eto'o took their tallies in the tournament to a small fine.

This was a tactical duel between two teams who coaches come from different schools of thinking," said Cameroon coach Pierre Lechante.

Cameroon returned to the final after a 12-year absence, having taken part in three successive finals between 1984 and 1988 when they won two and lost won.

Scoglio said: "We lost the match in the first half because

we missed too many chances."

NIGERIA-SOUTH AFRICA

In Lagos, Ajax striker Babangida gave Nigeria a dream start, scoring in less than one minute with a run and shot from the edge of the penalty area.

He then side-footed home a second half an hour later, leaving Nigeria to relax and play some classy soccer for the remainder of the match.

South Africa, winners at home in 1996 and runners-up in Burkina Faso two years ago, created several chances midway through the second half but wasted them all.

Nigeria fans were allowed to watch their side's triumph despite the pitch invasion which halted their team's quarterfinal against Senegal for 10 minutes in the same stadium on Monday.

After crowd threw bottles on to the pitch during a group match against Congo, CAF had warned that Nigeria could play behind closed doors if there was further trouble. However, they let the co-hosts off with a small fine.

Nigeria effectively reached their second consecutive final. After beating Zambia to win in 1994 they refused to play in South Africa two years later and were banned as a punishment from taking part in their quarterfinal clash, reports Reuters.

The Spanish league champions only exerted their superiority in the final 30 minutes and Osasuna, currently ninth in the Spanish Second Division, were their equal for the majority of the game.

Several chances went begging for Osasuna in the first half when only bad luck and poor finishing stopped them finding the net.

However the tide started to turn in Barcelona's favour with Luis Enrique Martinez's first goal after 36 minutes.

Luis Enrique drove forward to the edge of the box and found Rivaldo out wide on the left. The Spanish international midfielder then found space in front of the Osasuna goal and side-footed the Brazilian's cross into the net.

Barcelona's second goal also came from Luis Enrique just after the hour.

He chested down a long ball from the midfield and then volleyed past Osasuna goalkeeper Ricardo Sanz.

Dani Garcia struck a vicious swerving long-range shot after 74 minutes and Dutch international Patrick Kluivert completed the scoring with a goal in injury-time, when he finished off a Rivaldo pass.

REAL BETIS (17) v BARCELONA (3)

Dressing room disputes

challenge to disrupt Celta's title

ALAVES (5) v REAL OVIEDO (16)

Surprise package Alaves should be too well organised to allow Oviedo first away win of season. Alaves defenders Cosmin Contra and Antonio Ramona expected to return to the line-up.

REAL BETIS (17) v BARCELONA (3)

Barcelona, winners on their

last three league trips to Seville, bidding to re-start title

challenge after surprise 1-0 defeat by Alaves last Sunday.

Barcelona coach Luis van Gaal will keep Dutch compatriot Ruud Hesp in goal after a good display in Thursday's 4-0 Spanish Cup win over Osasuna.

REAL ZARAGOZA (2) v RAYO VALLECANO (9)

Zaragoza unbeaten at home this season. Rayo have lost six of their 11 away games.

Zaragoza, missing Brazilian striker Paulo Jammelli because of a hamstring injury, Rayo defender Carlos Llorens suspended.

RACING SANTANDER (18) v ATLETICO MADRID (13)

Racing's Salva Ballesta and Atletico's Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink, First Division's top two marksman, hoping to unravel two of the poorest defences.

Atletico's problems at the back aggravated by suspension of former Spain international Carlos Aguilera.

ESPANYOL (15) v SEVILLA (20)

Numancia central defender Ivan Rocha is injured and Goikoetxea is undecided about who will replace suspended first-choice goalkeeper Alvaro Nunez.

Other matches (league positions in parentheses; kickoff times 1600 GMT Sunday unless stated):

VALLADOLID (14) v VALENCIA (7) (Saturday, 1700)

Valladolid have lost once in their last 10 games. Valencia going for third consecutive league win despite suspension of impressive young striker Gerard Lopez, erratic form of goalkeeper Santiago Canizares and uncertainty over the future of top striker Claudio Lopez.

ATHLETIC BILBAO (6) v REAL MALLORCA (10) (Saturday, 2000)

Athletic's Spanish international winger Joseba Etxeberria faces late fitness test after suffering back problems. Mallorca have only won once in 13 league visits to the San Mamés stadium in nearly 40 years ago.

REAL MADRID (8) v MALAGA (12) (Saturday, 2000)

Real Madrid's key defender Michel Salgado suspended and striker Fernando Morientes

Czech star moves into restaurant business

PRAGUE, Feb 11: Former

Czech Republic star Radek Drulak has traded in his football boots for a smoking jacket and bow-tie as he moves into the restaurant business, the Czech daily Pravo announced Friday.

The 38-year-old Drulak, who was the 1995 Czech player of the year, has opened a restaurant bearing a football theme in the village of Trsice, which boasts a population of roughly 1000 inhabitants.

Drulak was instrumental in leading the Czech team to Euro 96 where they defeated France in the semi-finals before losing out on a golden goal against Germany in the final.

The balding marksman who averaged roughly a goal every two games over a 20-year career has decorated his new restaurant with football memorabilia, including a special hommage in honour of French legend Eric Cantona.

Barcelona's Dutch international striker Patrick Kluivert (R) being put under pressure by Osasuna defenders during their Spanish Cup semifinal first leg fixture at Pamplona on February 10.

—Internet photo

—Internet photo