

Sir Bobby for four-yearly World Cup

ASUNCION, Feb 11: England's 1966 World Cup winning hero Sir Bobby Charlton, who is leading his country's bid to stage the 2006 World Cup, told AFP Thursday that he remained in favour of the current system of playing a World Cup every four years, reports AFP.

Sir Bobby also said that he favoured the rotation of the biggest single sports event in the world on a continental base but thought Europe should still have extra weight in the bidding process.

Sir Bobby said that he would be discussing the mooted two-year World Cup, the brainchild of FIFA president Sepp Blatter, next week at a meeting of FIFA's Football Committee of which he is a member.

He said: "I have a meeting next week in Zurich with the Football Committee and this thing may well be discussed. Maybe one day we will change, but before you have to regulate the calendar so everyone will play in the same time."

"I don't want to diminish the tournaments, and if you have two quickly it becomes a little cheaper. I like four years, but I'm prepared to change, if the conditions are all right."

Sir Bobby said he agreed that all the world's continents should have the chance of staging the showpiece but believed that Europe - which along with South America is one of the two power bases of the world game and has far more economic clout than South America - should retain a natural advantage.

The former Manchester United star said: "I think that it will be silly that Europe should only have the World Cup once every 24 years because of the rotation. I agree that it should be rotation, but it has to be realistic rotation."

Sir Bobby is leading the English delegation to the 57th Congress of the South American Football Confederation (CSF) which has also invited the competing bids from South Africa, Germany, Morocco and Brazil to attend.

CSF president Nicolas Leoz told AFP, meanwhile, that he favoured a three-yearly World Cup.

Sir Bobby pointed out that England already had the necessary stadia to host the tournament with the exception of Wembley which is being rebuilt.

He also noted that West Germany staged the 1974 tournament while England had not hosted it since 1966.

Earlier Thursday Sir Bobby rolled back the years here to play a charity match with two children's teams in aid of the fire-ravaged Pelopincho community.

"It's an immense tragedy and I really thought this was the least I could do," said Charlton.

Tony Banks, the British government's special envoy for the 2006 bid, and the England campaign director Alec McGivern were also present as football boots, equipment and kit were handed out, donated by English Premiership sides Derby, Everton and Newcastle and manufacturers Umbro.

Blatter reaches Santa Cruz

LA PAZ, Feb 11: FIFA president Sepp Blatter arrived Thursday in the Bolivian city of Santa Cruz for a 48-hour trip which will see his hosts try to convince the head of world football's governing body that they should retain the right to play home matches at high altitude, reports AFP.

Bolivia are due to play their World Cup qualifiers in La Paz at 3,600m (11,811 feet) the highest capital city in the world - at their Stadio Hernando Siles fortress, affectionately known here as El Nido del Condor - "the Condor's Nest".

Bolivia are determined not to surrender the right to stage games at their base despite claims from some opposing teams that playing at such an altitude poses a health risk to their athletes.

FIFA, who are also examining Ecuador's case - they also play in the Andes at Quito, are scheduled to rule on the issue on March 23 just five days before Bolivia open their 2002 World Cup qualifying campaign although that first fixture will be an away tie with Uruguay in Montevideo.

Uruguay and Brazil are leading the campaign for Bolivia to be forced to play at a lower altitude.

Bolivia's President Hugo Banzer and his Government will lead the attempt to convince Blatter and FIFA, who have been monitoring the situation since 1996, that they should stay at their preferred base.

Banzer went as far as invoking the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in support of his country's cause.

In a joint statement with the Governor of La Paz Luis Alberto Valle, the head of state said: "The recognised human rights stemming from the Universal Declaration gives a natural and original right."

To be born in a certain place gives the right to exercise from that place the same (human) rights. To practice sport and football is, in this sense, an original prerogative of this right."

A measure of how seriously Bolivia take the threat of a venue change can be gauged by the fact that their diplomacy has even persuaded French President Jacques Chirac, a renowned football fanatic, to support their cause by attending a youth international between France and Bolivia in March 97 at "the Condor's Nest".

Certainly the red carpet has been rolled out for Blatter, who is being feted with the pomp and ceremony normally accorded to a Head of State.



England 2006 bid chief and football legend Sir Bobby Charlton showing skills to tiny tots at Asuncion on February 10.

—AFP photo

Premiership preview

Cole brushes aside rift



LONDON, Feb 11: Manchester United striker Andy Cole insists the bad blood between him and teammate Teddy Sheringham will not affect their performances on the pitch as the pair prepare for the trip to Newcastle on Saturday, reports AFP.

The duo led United's attack against Coventry last weekend and are expected to figure again at St James's Park - even though they are on speaking terms.

Cole revealed in his recent autobiography that he and Sheringham fell out two years ago and are still not talking, but insists any ill feeling is left behind when they step out onto the pitch for United.

"The situation is still the same between Teddy and I, but we are both adults and when we play for Manchester United we are professional enough to go and do the job for the club," he said.

"Away from the park we don't socialise and we don't talk, but that has got nothing to do with what we do on the park for United."

Newspapers have been trying to say that if I get the ball, I won't pass to him and if he gets it he won't pass to me."

"That's childish and you did those kind of things in the school playground."

"If Teddy is in a better position than me then I'll give him the ball and I have no doubt he'd do the same for me."

"At the end of the day we're all striving for the same thing come May."

United have won three of their last four visits to the New Castle, but under Bobby Robson's guidance the hosts have improved steadily and are unbeaten at home since the former Barcelona and England boss took charge.

In-form strikers Alan Shearer and Duncan Ferguson both look likely to start despite

missing training earlier in the week through injury.

Ferguson has a slight hamstring problem while Shearer has been suffering with a mild form of tonsillitis.

"We will need both for this is as formidable a match as I have had since taking over here," admitted Robson.

"Manchester United are the best team in the country, we face a stern test, there is no doubt about that, but we will not shrink the issue."

Second-placed Leeds, six points behind United on 47, will be looking for victory at home to Tottenham to keep the pressure on the leaders.

David O'Leary's young guns have taken just one point out of the last 12, and with Manchester United the next team to up.

Wenger also has Davor Suker available and the Croatian international could resume his partnership with Frenchman Thierry Henry up front.

However, Wenger is still without Nwankwo Kanu, on African Nations Cup duty with Nigeria and Marc Overmars still remains doubtful with an ankle injury.

Liverpool, who have conceded just 21 goals in 24 matches, will take heart from their impressive record against Arsenal's Wenger's side, with only one defeat in the last 16 league and cup meetings.

Gerard Houllier is expected to name an unchanged side from the one which won so impressively at home to Leeds last Saturday, with Czech Republic striker Patrik Berger leading the front line in the absence of injured duo Michael Owen and Robbie Fowler.

English Premiership weekend matches (kick-off 1500GMT unless stated):

Saturday: Chelsea v Wimbledon, Coventry v Sunderland, Everton v Derby County, Leeds United v Tottenham, Newcastle United v Manchester United, Sheffield Wednesday v Southampton, Watford v Leicester City, West Ham United v Bradford City

Sunday: Arsenal v Liverpool (k/o 1600)

Monday: Middlesbrough v Aston Villa (k/o 2000)

ANDY COLE

visit the Yorkshire club, Leeds can ill afford any more slip-ups with only 15 games to play.

Third take on fourth when Arsenal host Liverpool at Highbury with both teams level on points (44) but having played a game more than United and Leeds.

Top seed Yevgeny Kafelnikov was beaten in the second round of the Marseille Open by Croatian Ivan Ljubicic on Thursday, reports Reuters.

He lost 7-6, 6-3 to Ljubicic who eliminated Kafelnikov at the same stage of the Monte Carlo Open last year.

Ljubicic was quicker and sharper than Kafelnikov, who has struggled to adapt to the conditions in Marseille after helping Russia beat Belgium in their Davis Cup world group first round tie in Moscow at the weekend.

Kafelnikov had trouble with his first serve, managing only five aces to his opponent's 20.

"I succeeded in putting him (Kafelnikov) under pressure," Ljubicic said.

"I expected to be outpaced by his baseline game. That's what he does when he's playing at his best."

Sixth seed Fabrice Santoro of France, winner in Qatar last month, is now favourite to retain his Marseille title after reaching the quarterfinals with a 6-4, 1-6, 6-2 win over Dutchman Jan Siemers.

Seventh seeded Swede Thomas Johansson joined the big-name casualties, losing 6-3, 6-2 to Roger Federer of Switzerland.

Rebrov was often underestimated as he played in the shadow of another Dynamo star striker Andriy Shevchenko who has moved on to Serie A giants AC Milan. But Ukrainian football specialists, who saw Rebrov almost every day, valued him more than his former teammate.

He is also the only Dynamo player to have played in every side that won the seven titles Ukraine have picked up since the formation of the Ukraine league. And few people doubt that he will soon earn his eighth after the country's league restart after the winter break.

Despite the fact that Dynamo's Champions' League campaign ended disappointingly especially after last year's semi-final appearance, Rebrov's scoring abilities remain unparallelled.

He scored 25 goals, including seven this season, in 55 European Cup matches all in the colours of Kyiv.

Rebrov shrugs off rumours about his upcoming departure to Europe. But he added he would like to play in Spain or England.

"Of course, if I get a serious proposal from Italy, I would never refuse. But I think the style of the Spanish league or English Premier League would fit my style better," he said.

After undergoing surgery in Kyiv and rehabilitation in Germany, Rebrov said he hopes he never experiences such injuries again.

Rebrov was born in June 1974 in a small Ukrainian mining town called Gorlovka in Ukraine's eastern mining region.

In his youth, after being school, Rebrov married a year ago and has a three-month-old son, Dmitry, who has made him more serious, despite his recent heady success within the cauldron of European football.

In his youth, after being school, Rebrov married a year ago and has a three-month-old son, Dmitry, who has made him more serious, despite his recent heady success within the cauldron of European football.

Rebrov has received several proposals from top-flight European sides to obtain the services of Rebrov.

However, he is still a Dynamo player, at least until the end of this season. The decision on whether to sell him or not will not be considered until the end of the current campaign."

Chelsea and Arsenal are in the race to sign Rebrov although Scotland's Glasgow Rangers on Thursday said they would not sign the hitman despite earlier reports that a deal had been agreed.

Rebrov, who was voted

Ukrainian Player of the Year

three times in 1996, 1998 and 1999, has scored an impressive 97 goals in 199 matches for Dynamo's first team.

Dynamo have received several proposals from top-flight European sides to obtain the services of Rebrov.

However, he is still a Dynamo

player, at least until the end of this season. The decision on whether to sell him or not will not be considered until the end of the current campaign."

Chelsea closing in on Van Nistelrooy

LONDON, Feb 11: English

Premiership side Chelsea con-

tinued Friday they were in the

hunt to sign Dutch striker Ruud

Van Nistelrooy who could cost a

British record fee of 20 million pounds (30m dollars), reports AFP.

Rebrov has received several

proposals from top-flight

European sides to obtain the

services of Rebrov.

However, he is still a Dynamo

player, at least until the end of

this season. The decision on

whether to sell him or not will

not be considered until the end

of the current campaign."

Rebrov has received several

proposals from top-flight

European sides to obtain the

services of Rebrov.

However, he is still a Dynamo

player, at least until the end of

this season. The decision on

whether to sell him or not will

not be considered until the end

of the current campaign."

Rebrov has received several

proposals from top-flight

European sides to obtain the

services of Rebrov.

However, he is still a Dynamo

player, at least until the end of

this season. The decision on

whether to sell him or not will

not be considered until the end

of the current campaign."

Rebrov has received several

proposals from top-flight

European sides to obtain the

services of Rebrov.

However, he is still a Dynamo

player, at least until the end of

this season. The decision on

whether to sell him or not will

not be considered until the end