

Sport

Espionage in real life

Berlin, March 21: The Stasi, former East Germany's secret police, deployed some 50 agents to spy on a former Dynamo Berlin star who emigrated to the West...

Lutz Eigendorf, a former East German international, and his family were kept under strict surveillance after fleeing the communist state in 1979...

Eigendorf was a privileged individual in the socialist regime. When he turned his back on the East German state that constituted a slap in the face for Mielke...

Farina calls up Europeans

Sydney, March 21: Australian coach Frank Farina has challenged some of Europe's biggest clubs by naming a near full-strength squad to play the Czech Republic in a football international next week...

Mark Bosnich, Mark Viduka, Harry Kewell and captain Paul Okon are all included for the match in Teplice on March 29 with the notable absentee injured Glasgow Rangers defender Tony Vidmar.

Farina said the players were committed to the Soccerco case but were under pressure from their clubs.



MARK BOSNICH

Manchester United's Bosnich and Leeds United's Kewell are involved in championship-chasing teams in the English Premier League while in Scotland Craig Moore is the mainstay in defence of league leader Glasgow Rangers and Viduka is Celtic's top scorer.

Sydney Northern Spirit defender Luke Casserly is the only home-based player in the 18-man squad and he is involved in contract talks with Swedish club AIK Solna.

The clubs have expressed to me that they would rather not have these players released, it's the teams looking at promotion or relegation, that's where the problems are coming from.

Farina said the Czech Republic, ranked second in the world, would pose a new level of challenge for the 84th-ranked Soccerco.

On paper they are a top team, their record shows that they never lost a game in the Euro 2000 qualifiers and we will have to take a step up for this, it's going to be a real test,

SQUAD

Mark Bosnich (Manchester United), Kevin Muscat (Wolverhampton Wanderers), Craig Moore (Glasgow Rangers), Paul Okon, (Fiorentina, cpt), Tony Popovic (Sanfrecce Hiroshima), Josip Skoko (Racing Genk), Richard Johnson (Watford), Stan Lazaridis (Birmingham City), Mark Viduka (Glasgow Celtic), Harry Kewell (Leeds United), Paul Agostino (1860 Munich), Jason van Blerk (West Bromwich Albion), Craig Foster (Crystal Palace), Steve Corica (Sanfrecce Hiroshima), Shaun Murphy (Sheffield United), Danny Tiatto (Manchester City), Luke Casserly (Northern Spirit), Zeljko Kalac (Roda JC).

Latin WC qualifiers

FIFA reduces period for releasing players

PARIS, March 21: FIFA, football's world governing body, decided on Friday to reduce from five to four the number of days that clubs must release players for World Cup 2002 qualifiers in South America on March 28 and 29, reports AFP.

Serie A Juve's for the taking

MILAN, March 21: Lazio were the experts' choice and AC Milan were the reigning champions, but it's Juventus who look set to lead Italy into the European Champions League next season, reports AFP.

Juventus, revered as 'The Old Lady' of Italian soccer, have a battery of statistics to say they will finish top when the season ends on May 14 - despite three tough matches ahead against Milan, Lazio and Inter.

Beaten only once all season, Juventus have a nine-point cushion with eight games to play, just as they did when they won the league in 1995.

A devil's advocate might say that Carlo Ancelotti's men could lose all three of those big games, throwing the championship wide open again.



FILIPPO INZAGHI

However, the form book tells a different story.

Juventus are at their best in do-or-die situations. In their five games so far against title rivals, they have won four and drawn one - dominating Lazio in a 0-0 stalemate at a hostile Olympic stadium.

That ability to rise to the occasion is just one of several reasons why Juventus have done so well after 1998-99, one of their worst seasons on record.

And it's the past, as much as the present, which holds the key to Juventus' success this season.

Ancelotti inherited what's been the best squad in Italian football since 1996-97, built around the strike trio of France's Zinedine Zidane, Alessandro Del Piero and, since 1997, Filippo Inzaghi.

Juventus won the league in 1997, 1998 and were top in November of the 1999 season when Del Piero tore his cruciate ligaments and was ruled out for nearly 10 months. Had he not fallen awkwardly at Udine, Juventus might have been champions again.

In the event, there was a sudden collapse and the resignation of coach Marcello Lippi. They finished in the Intertoto tournament, a humbling experience for the Turin giants.

While AC Milan were holidaying in the sunshine, Juventus were busy on the playing fields of eastern Europe.

However, as Inzaghi has since admitted, it probably did them good to be taken down a peg or two. And it certainly helped to build team spirit and a fervent desire to come back.

Another help was the club's approach to major moves on the transfer market.

They didn't make any. Provided Del Piero, Zidane and Inzaghi played to their true abilities, Juventus didn't need another big name up front.

They bought Yugoslav Darko Kovacevic from Real Sociedad as a reserve - a shrewd buy re-



ZIDANE

by Lippi, stripped of the captaincy and consequently passed over by the national side, Conte's career looked to be on the wane.

Under Ancelotti, the midfielder has played himself back into both squads and scored some vital goals, including the first in a 3-1 victory over Milan and matchwinners against Cagliari and Venezia.

The defence marshalled by Ciro Ferrara and Uruguayan hardman Paolo Montero has a record that's the envy of the Serie A - just 13 goals conceded in 26 matches.

However, Juventus have one more advantage. Their rivals have made transfer splashes of up to 50 million dollars a time, have chopped and changed coaches, switched systems of play, played with up to 10 foreigners in a team and insisted on a reg-



DEL PIERO

ular turnover.

Juventus have done the opposite. The same players have been in place for three, five or more years. Week in, week out, the team sheet stays the same and most of the names on it are Italian.

Juventus have used fewer players than any other club this season and the appearances in 26 games is revealing - Van Der Sar (24), Ferrara (24), Montero (21), Juliano (24), Conte (21), Tacchinardi (23), Zambrotta (19), Davids (19), Zidane (25), Del Piero (26), Inzaghi (25).

Everyone knows where they're supposed to be and what they're supposed to be doing. And the results are there for all to see. Sunday's win over Torino was Juventus' sixth on the trot - a feat managed by no other club this season.

Can they continue? Ancelotti said: 'We'll try to have the right level of concentration in all our remaining matches. That's a difficult thing to achieve.'

'But not for this team.'

Ancelotti's fingers crossed

TURIN, Italy, March 21: Juventus coach Carlo Ancelotti believes that the Italian league title could be decided by the end of next week, after their team have played AC Milan and Lazio, reports AFP.

Ancelotti has only limited faith in Juventus' nine-point lead at the top of the Serie A.

But he reckons that Friday night's battle with the reigning champions at San Siro and the home match with second placed Lazio hold the key to winning the club's 26th league title.

'The end of the race is near, but we're not there yet,' he said. 'Everyone talks as if it's all been decided. Unfortunately, that's not the case. Clearly, we have a big lead in the table, but we also know that dangers exist,' he told reporters here.

Looking ahead to the next two games, which follow after

six consecutive wins, he said: 'They will be decisive. But with the enthusiasm and the level of morale that's in the team now, we can keep it going.'

Critics have been struggling to find fault with a team that has lost only once all season.

The one legitimate target is the entertainment value of the team's football, which has often been dismal. And seven of their 17 wins have been 1-0.

Ancelotti accepted the criticism, saying: 'I think this team has a good chance of improving in terms of entertaining football. It's an objective which we have to aim for.'

But he added: 'I don't want to lose sight of the main objective.' The Gazzetta dello Sport added a playful translation: 'That means we'll think about the entertaining stuff next season.'

However much fun they are to watch, next season should

certainly see a bigger Juventus squad than the current one. Ancelotti has so far been able to pick the same team each weekend, making changes only for the UEFA Cup.

In 2000/2001, though, they will almost certainly be looking for a long campaign in the far more demanding European Champions League.

And as Lazio have found out, it is extremely difficult to juggle the Serie A with a serious bid to win the European Cup. They have also gone all the way in the Italian Cup, reaching the forthcoming final with Inter Milan.

Ancelotti said: 'Lazio have been forced into a regular turnover of players because they have so many commitments. As far as we're concerned, it's a much more problem for next season.'

'It just won't be possible to field the same team in the Champions League as we do in the Serie A,' he said.

AFP FOOTBALL BRIEFS

BERLIN, March 21: Brazilian international Ze Roberto of German championship contenders Bayer Leverkusen told German football magazine Kicker Monday that he would like to play in Italy.

'I have a lot of friends in Italy with whom I am constantly in contact,' said the player whose full name is Jose

second on goal difference behind defending champions Bayern Munich.

His compatriot and teammate Emerson is already set to leave the Bundesliga at the end of the season and join AS Roma, one of the Italian clubs who crashed out of the UEFA Cup when they lost to English Premiership side Leeds.

SCHMEICHEL PLANS FOR 2002

COPENHAGEN: Danish national goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel said Monday that he would love to play in the 2002 World Cup in Japan and South Korea should Denmark qualify.

In an interview in the Danish daily Politiken, Schmeichel said he was keen to play under Denmark's future regime which will see Morten Olsen take over as coach after Euro 2000 with former Danish great Michael Laudrup as his assistant.

'I would love to play for them, it would inspire me and give me the desire to continue playing at international level,' said Schmeichel, who was a strong supporter of Olsen, replacing Sweden's Bo Johansson who steps down after the Euro 2000 tournament on July 2.

'I am ready to continue playing in the Danish goal after Euro 2000,' said 36-year-old Schmeichel, capped 118 times for the national side.

Schmeichel, in his prime widely considered the best goalkeeper in the world, is arguably the most famous Danish

footballer in history having kept goal when the national team won the 1992 European Championships.

The former Manchester United keeper, who was a key member of last season's Treble winning side, is currently playing with Portuguese side Sporting Lisbon.

Schmeichel said he has no



PETER SCHMEICHEL

regrets about leaving the star-studded United set-up: 'I loved the past years with United but I became tired at the end physically and mentally with the heavy schedule we had.'

'That's why I chose Portugal, because we normally only play one game a week and I can train properly between matches. I'm a big guy and I need to train regularly.'

Anelka's solace in Ferrari!

PARIS, March 21: Troubled French international striker Nicolas Anelka on Monday consoled himself by going for a spin in his Ferrari after learning he will not be considered for selection by France until his 45-day suspension with Spanish side Real Madrid ends, reports AFP.

Bystanders said they saw Anelka at the wheel with a television cameraman on board.

The vehicle was registered in Anelka's home region of Yvelines.

French Football Federation (FFF) president Claude Simonet said earlier Monday that he had discussed the player's situation with French coach Roger Lemerre and they both supported Real's 45-day suspension of Anelka for missing three days' training without permission.

There's no doubt about his talent, but his behaviour is not a good example for young people. While he is not in the Real team, he can't play for France,' Simonet told French television.

His words were a further blow to the Euro 2000 hopes of 21-year-old Anelka, one of six players omitted by Lemerre's predecessor Aimé Jacquet for the final 22-man squad for the successful 1998 World Cup campaign.

Anelka, who said at the weekend he wanted to be alone, is reputed to be spending a few days out of the limelight at home at Trappes, an outer suburb of Paris, as he endures the 45-day suspension without pay for refusing to train for three days a week ago.

He is scheduled to return to Spain later this week to resume training.

Shoji Jo out for five months

VALLADOLID, Spain, March 21: Japanese striker Shoji Jo of Spanish First Division side Real Valladolid will be out of action for at least five months after rupturing an anterior ligament in his right knee in the friendly international against



SHOJI JO

China last Wednesday, club's doctors announced Monday, reports AFP.

According to the club, the player will undergo an operation either in Spain or Japan after a delay of one or two weeks to allow the knee to improve to a 'better condition'.

It is a blow to both the Japanese national team and Valladolid who are mid-table but still in the hunt for a UEFA Cup place next season.

He is the first Japanese player to play in the Primera Liga and has scored three goals this season including a brace against Oviedo on February 27 since joining Valladolid in January.

Babayaro going too far

LONDON, March 21: Chelsea's Nigerian defender Celestine Babayaro is set to push the club's patience to the limit as he prepares to return to Africa just a month after going absent without leave following the African Nations Cup, reports AFP.

Babayaro has been chosen to captain his country's under-23 team in an Olympic qualifier in Zimbabwe on Saturday, meaning he will miss Saturday's home clash with Southampton.

Chelsea have already had to put up with losing the services of 21-year-old Babayaro for 10 games because of the African Nations Cup.

He was released to prepare for the competition in early January and returned, later than planned, towards the end of February.

Babayaro had been expected back in London to prepare for Chelsea's FA Cup fifth-round tie against Gillingham, a week after Nigeria had lost the final of the African Nations Cup on February 13 in a penalty shootout to Cameroon.

He failed to appear, however, and his absence was surrounded by reports from his homeland hinting that civil unrest had prevented players leaving the country.

Other reports said Babayaro was suffering from malaria, but Chelsea were annoyed not to receive any explanation from the player or his representatives.

Babayaro apologised to Chelsea fans for his late return and pledged his commitment to the club.

He said: 'I want you to all know that I care a lot about Chelsea and its future and that it is my aim to serve this club with all my strength. There was a misunderstanding about the African Nations Cup about what I was supposed to do.'

Real's time to pray

PARIS, March 21: The early birds have already put their names in the Champions League quarter-final hat but there will be much nailbiting in Spain, Ukraine, Italy and the Netherlands on Wednesday evening, when the final two qualifiers will emerge, reports AFP.

After such a marathon the prize will be well deserved - but in the case of seven-times champions Real Madrid failure to progress would be disastrous as the 'merengues' fight to keep up with glitzy rivals Barcelona.

Barca have swept through Group A but Real have to get a result at Rosenborg Trondheim in Norway and also sweat on the outcome of Dynamo Kyiv's match at home to Group C winners Bayern Munich.

Real were on the brink of elimination a week ago when they were 2-1 behind at home to Kyiv - having won by the same score in Ukraine at the start of the second phase.

Perversely, Real are, despite the Nicolas Anelka shenanigans, in less of a jittery state than that 'crisis' might suggest because the Spaniards have functioned far better as a unit without the moody Frenchman.

Far more important for Vicente del Bosque's side is booking their passage by doing rather better than on their last visit to Rosenborg - where they lost another group game two seasons ago.

Ironically, that result didn't matter because Real not only survived that setback but went on to lift the trophy.

A reverse this time would prove more expensive as Dynamo would then go through in Real's place - provided the Ukrainians at least draw at home to group winners Bayern.

Real midfielder Michel Salgado gave a blunt assessment Monday as Real headed off towards the Arctic circle - where a snow-covered Lerkendal stadium awaited them.

'It's really a life or death situation. We'll be going for the win and if we get it we'll be through. If we lose we're out. But we're calm and confident in ourselves,' Salgado insisted.

Wingback Roberto Carlos, who saved Real's bacon with a brilliant equaliser against Dynamo last week, echoed that sentiment - but added he'd be wrapping up warm for the encounter.

'It's going to be cold in Rosenborg but we must win, with coats and trousers, per-

haps, but we must win. We know what we have to do and we're up for it,' said the Brazilian star.

If Real and Dynamo finish level on points Real will advance thanks to their superior head-to-head record against their rivals.

Dynamo received a boost Saturday when they beat neighbours CSKA 3-1 as the league resumed after the winter break.

Last year's Champions League semi-finalists led the table by 12 points ahead of closest rivals Kryvbas Kryvyi Rih, Georgia.

International midfielder Kaha Kaladze is available for the Bayern match after serving a one-match suspension.

'We should win the match against Bayern even if we finally miss our quarter-final chances,' said Dynamo head coach Valery Lobanovsky, recently appointed as Ukraine's

own hands. They just have to win in Trondheim,' said Hitzfeld, who coached Borussia Dortmund to victory in this event in 1997.

In Group D, Chelsea received a boost ahead of their home match against Lazio with the news that the Italian's captain Alessandro Nesta will miss his side's trip to Stamford Bridge.

The international stopper pulled a right leg muscle in the surprise 1-0 defeat at Verona at the weekend.

The Rome side, coached by Swede Sven-Goran Eriksson, currently lie two points behind Chelsea in Group D but are only a point ahead of Dutch champions Feyenoord, who face tallenders Marseille in France.

Cosmopolitan Chelsea, coached by Gianluca Vialli, only need a draw to ensure they finish top to secure an easier draw in the last eight - and avoid a meeting with compatriots Manchester United.

Lazio, on the other hand, are condemned to go for the win as Feyenoord are more than capable of winning at a Marseille whose interest in the tournament is now academic. Avoiding relegation is now the club's priority.

In addition, Lazio will be keen to fly an Italian flag which has been flying at half mast after a shoal of poor recent performances in Europe by Serie A sides.

Chelsea's main worry ahead of the game were the ripples caused by the news that the Nigerian Football Association wants the club to release defender Celestine Babayaro for Saturday's Under-23 Olympic qualifier against Zimbabwe in Lagos.

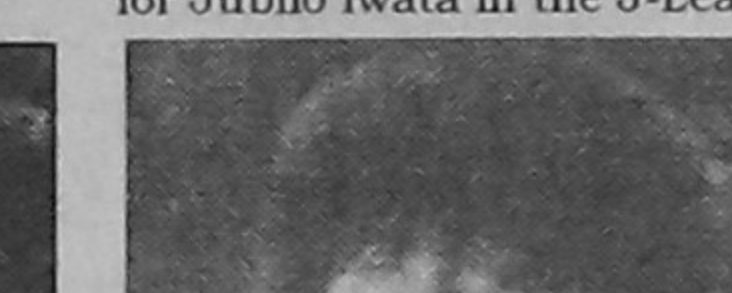
That call-up could rule Babayaro out of the Lazio game but Chelsea's assistant manager Gwyn Williams said: 'This is an under-23 game and not a full international and so we've written to them asking if it's possible for him not to be released.'

But reigning Olympic champions Nigeria may insist on his availability and FIFA has confirmed the qualifier commands international status so that the five-day release rule applies.

Strikers Paulo Sergio and Carsten Jancker are ill and will not be risked ahead of Saturday's Bundesliga crucial meeting with Kaiserslautern.

Hitzfeld insisted his selection was not designed to make things easier for Kyiv - or harder for Real.

'Real have their fate in their



ROBERTO CARLOS

new national coach. 'Our fans are waiting for us to do our best to qualify to the next stage - and we have no right to upset them,' he added.

Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld will give his fringe players a run out with Mehmet Scholl suspended while skipper Stefan Effenberg, goalkeeper Oliver Kahn, Brazilian striker Giovane Elber and French full-back Bixente Lizarazu will be rested.

It's said Nakayama, who plays for Jublo Iwata in the J-League,

Asian Player of the Year

Sun first female nominee

KUALA LUMPUR, March 21: China's Sun Wen has become the first woman to be nominated for Asian Player of the Year in the Asian Football Confederation's annual awards, reports AFP.

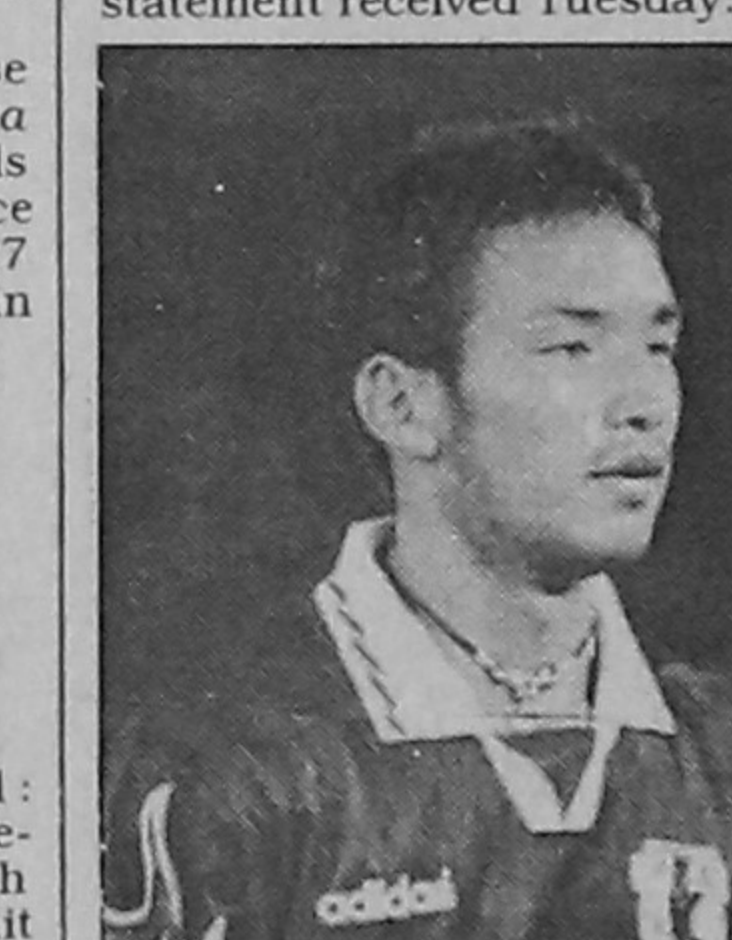
Sun was the best player at the Women's World Cup in the United States last year and winner of the 'Golden Shoe' as top scorer in the tournament, the confederation said in a statement received Tuesday.

the Asian Player of the Year Award in 1997 and 1998, the statement said.

He has established himself as one of the finest midfielders in Italy's Serie A. AS Roma paid Perugia 17 million dollars in January for his services.

All Daei's goals in the European Champions' League for Hertha Berlin against Chelsea and AC Milan are unrivalled in the history of Asian footballers, the confederation said.

It said Nakayama, who plays for Jublo Iwata in the J-League,



HIDETOSHI NAKATA

She joins Iran's Ali Daei, Masashi Nakayama of Japan, Hwang Sun-Hong of South Korea, Kuwait's Bashar Abdullah and Hidetoshi Nakata in the list of nominees for the 1999 awards to be announced in Beirut on April 6.

The confederation said Sun 'truly sparkled' as captain of the Chinese women's team. It was beaten in a penalty shootout by the US in the final amid huge media interest.

Nakata is aiming for a hat-trick in Beirut after having won



ALI DAEI

had good performances in the Asian Club Championship and the Asian Super Cup.

Hwang finished 1999 as the J-League's top scorer with 23 goals while Bashar Abdullah was a key figure in Kuwait's successful Olympic soccer campaign.

The Chinese women's World Cup team also received nominations for the Asian Team of the Year and the Asian Women's Team of the Year awards.

Also nominated for the Asian Team of the Year are

Kuwait's Olympic side.

Other nominations are for the Japan Under-20's team, which against all expectations reached the final of the FIFA World Youth Championship, and the Uzbekistan national side which finished last year unbeaten.

China and Taiwan are the two nominees for the Asian Women's team of the Year Award. Taiwan finished runner-up to China in the Asian Women's Championship.



NAKAYAMA

Nominees for Asian Coach of the Year are the late Mahmood Rakhimov of the Uzbekistan national side, Japan's Jublo Iwata coach Takeshi Kuwahara, Radjko Avramovic who led the Kuwait team to victory in the Olympic qualifying round and Philippe Troussier who was coach of the Japanese Under-20 team in the World Youth Championships in Nigeria.

Also winning a nomination is China's women's World Cup coach Ma Yunan.

Euro2000

Antwerp to set up surveillance cameras

BRUSSELS, March 21: The Belgian city of Antwerp plan to install 30 surveillance cameras in the city centre region to help with security during the Euro2000 football tournament, the Belgian newspaper Gazet van Antwerpen reported Tuesday, reports AFP.

Antwerp's mayor Leona Detiege confirmed that the cameras will be situated in 'sensitive' areas where large crowds of travellers and supporters are expected to help with the potential threat of trouble or violence.

There are no matches scheduled to be played in Antwerp but the city is near the Belgian-Holland border making it a likely transit point for the thousands of supporters expected for the football festival which kicks off June 10



Malleorca's Argentine goalkeeper 'Mono' Burgos gestures as he arrives at San Moix Stadium yesterday for training ahead of the UEFA Cup encounter against Galatasaray. - AFP photo