

Wembley towers shifting to new museum

LONDON, Apr 27: Wembley Stadium's famous twin towers, due to be demolished to make way for a new national stadium, are to be moved 200 miles (320 kilometres) to a new museum, it was announced on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Hilton Borough Council said it will re-build the historic white towers in Widnes, in the north western county of Cheshire, as part of a 5-million-pound (8-million-dollar) bid to house the new National Rugby League Museum.

Council officials negotiated for the nine-storey towers to be gifted to the borough and have been given until December to remove them.

The council is still in negotiations with the Rugby League over the new museum, but separately won the right to transfer the twin towers to Widnes.

Although Wembley is usually associated with football, the Rugby League cup final has been staged there for many years.

A team of architects will now begin a one-million-pound (1.6-million-dollar) operation to move the structures from their north London home to a plot of derelict land on the banks of the Mersey river near Liverpool.

Borg will be there

LONDON, Apr 27: Five-times champion Bjorn Borg will return to the Wimbledon tennis championships in July for the first time since his dramatic defeat by John McEnroe in the 1981 final – not as a player but for a parade of champions, reports Reuters.

Sixty-seven players, who were either former champions or finalists in the men's and women's singles, will gather on Centre Court on July 1 for a ceremony marking the new millennium.

Four women's singles champions are unable to attend, but only one men's champion, American Jimmy Connors, will be missing.

Organisers did not know why Connors had turned down the offer.

Ivan Lendl, who qualified as a two-times losing finalist, is also not able to attend because of his golfing commitments.

To qualify for the parade players had to have won a singles title or a doubles or mixed doubles title four times or more, or have lost in at least two singles finals.

European Cup sent to Paris

PARIS, Apr 27: Sir Bobby Charlton handed the European Cup over to the safekeeping of the city of Paris on Wednesday where this year's Champions' League final will be played at the Stade de France on May 24, reports Reuters.

Sir Bobby presented the trophy to Paris mayor Jean Tiberi and Patrick Braouesec, mayor of the suburb of St Denis where the stadium is located.

Anglo, German fans' noble gesture

LONDON, Apr 27: English and German football supporters will unite in Charleroi next week ahead of this summer's Euro 2000 clash, the Belgian city, the England Members' Club said on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Representatives of the club will undertake their latest goodwill mission accompanied by ex-England international stars Gary Lineker, Tony Woodcock and Trevor Steven.

The party will meet their German counterparts before visiting a children's hospital and will then hold a coaching session at a local school.

Woodcock said: "It's a great to see supporters coming up for these initiatives. I've played the game in both countries and realise that the vast majority of fans want to follow football in a friendly, safe environment."

Bangladesh open

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at 5 pm on Sunday while Bangladesh will play India at 10:20 am on Monday.

On completion of double league basis matches, two top teams of each men's and women's groups will play the finals.

The women's final will commence at 3 pm while the men's final is scheduled for 4:15 pm on May 2.

In the first meet which was held in 1996 Bangladesh were placed third among four teams in the men's group and finished second among three in the women's.

Bangladesh Television will telecast the finals and the closing function live on May 2.

Pakistan's lone

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Saqain, Mushtaq, Arshad Khan, Wahajuddin Wasti, Mohammed Wasim, Mohammed Akram.

WEST INDIES UNDER-23 (from): Darren Ganga (captain), Azeemul Haniff, Sylvester Joseph, Ryan Hinds, Runako Morton, Marlon Samuels, Camillus Alexander, Pedro Collins, Jermaine Lawson, Kerry Jermaine, Wayne Phillips, Ryan Cunningham.

Brazil toil, Argentina amble

UNDATED, Apr 27: Brazil recovered from an almighty fright as they came from behind to beat Ecuador 3-2 in a World Cup qualifier on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

Argentina continued their impressive start to the World Cup qualifiers on Wednesday by mercilessly hammering minnows Venezuela 4-0 away from home.

Trouble erupted in La Paz where a linesman was struck by a bottle thrown from the crowd during Bolivia's 1-1 draw with Colombia, and there was controversy when Colombia coach Luis Augusto Garcia later complained that playing at mid-day and at 3,600 metres above sea level was "inhuman".

BRAZIL-ECUADOR

Modest Ecuador stunned the four-times world champions by taking an early lead with a magnificent goal by Alex Aguinaga in Sao Paulo.

Brazil turned the game around with two close range goals by Rivaldo and one by defender Antonio Carlos, but the gallant Ecuadorians gave them an uncomfortable finish when Ulises de la Cruz pulled a goal back late in the game.

The result left Brazil with four points from two games in the South American qualifying group, one more than Ecuador. But despite impressive performances from midfielders Vampeta and Rivaldo, the Brazilians never fully got into gear.

Ecuador, who have never beaten Brazil, never qualified for the World Cup and lost the last meeting between the teams 5-1, had been regarded as little more than cannon fodder for the goal-hungry Brazilians.

Aguinaga, returning to the country where he performed superbly for Mexico's Necaxa in the World Club Championship earlier this year, had other ideas.

He stunned the Morumbi stadium when he clipped goalkeeper Dida from 25 metres to put Ecuador ahead in the 12th minute.

The fickle crowd quickly began to jeer their team until Rivaldo equalised five minutes later with a shot on the turn from close range.

Ecuador offered a bitter blow in the 38th minute, when the inspirational Aguinaga limped off after twisting his knee.

Brazil went ahead two minutes after halftime, when Antonio Carlos, who had stayed up after a corner, scored from close range.

The Brazilians then appeared to be cruising when Rivaldo scored again in the 52nd minute from a rebound, after Ecuador's Francisco Cevallos failed to hold a header by Amoroso.

But Ecuador refused to capitulate and 14 minutes from time were under pressure again when de la Cruz cut inside his marker and scored with a dipping left foot shot into the top corner.

Vampeta, not for the first time, marred his performance with a vicious tackle on de la Cruz for which he was enormously lucky to escape with only a yellow card.

ARGENTINA-VENEZUELA

Two goals from Ariel Ortega and one apiece from Roberto Ayala and Hernan Crespo gave Argentina a maximum six

points from their two games with an impressive eight goals scored.

The two-time champions had earlier beaten Chile 4-1.

The visitors made light of a bumpy pitch and blustery conditions in the oil city of Maracaibo.

Ayala quickly shattered Venezuelan hopes of an upset when he rose at the far post to head in a corner taken by captain Juan Sebastian Veron in the eighth minute.

Venezuela created three good chances to equalise but were sunk when Ortega scored with a diving header at the far post after two defenders both failed to cut out Veron's cross from the right.



Brazil's Alex (L) and Agustin Porosio of Ecuador fight for possession during their World Cup qualifier in Sao Paulo on April 26.

Ortega added the third in the 77th minute, scoring at the far post from a chance created by Crespo.

Crespo was rewarded for a fine performance in the 81st minute when he finished the scoring with an individual goal. He cut inside one defender,

powerful long-range drive in the 38th minute to silence a 55,000 crowd at the National Stadium, his shot appearing to catch goalkeeper Nelson Tapia off his line.

Chile equalised three minutes later when defender Javier Margas, who plays his club football in England with West Ham, scored with a low shot from outside the penalty after a free kick was tapped to him.

Peru's away point partially avenged their 4-1 defeat in Santiago in the qualifying competition for the 1998 World Cup. That result had proved critical as Chile eventually piped Peru on goal difference for the last South American place at the World Cup.

In contrast, Wednesday's result was a severe setback for Chile, who are poor travellers and are looking to good performances at home to qualify.

Paraguay claimed their first victory of the World Cup qualifying campaign beating Uruguay by a single goal.

STANDINGS

Argentina	2	2	0	0	8	1	6
Peru	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Brazil	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Ecuador	2	1	0	1	4	3	3
Uruguay	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Paraguay	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
Colombia	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Bolivia	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Chile	2	0	1	1	2	5	1
Venezuela	2	0	0	2	0	6	0

Italy leave it late

REGGIO CALABRIA, Italy, Apr 27: Italy gave their morale a much-needed boost before Euro 2000 here on Wednesday night, beating Portugal 2-0 in an international friendly, reports AFP.

Italy, who had only won one of their previous five matches, broke the deadlock in the 75th minute with defender Mark Luano and secured the win with a first strike by substitute Francesco Totti in the 88th.

Portugal meanwhile showed plenty of class moving forward, with Luis Figo and Manuel Rui Costa both on superb form, but the visitors were badly let down by their finishing in front of goal.

Italy applied the early pressure but it was Lazio's Portuguese winger Sergio Conceicao who should have opened the scoring in the seventh minute breaking through the Italian defence but he saw his first shot blocked by keeper Francesco Toldo before the rebound was just cleared.

Italy hit back immediately and midfielder Stefano Fiore was just a whisker wide when he steamed in to meet Gianluca Zambrotta's cross with a low first-time shot.

But Rui Bento's barrelling drive was a lot more dangerous in the 19th minute, forcing Toldo to punch the ball away for a corner at full stretch.

Italy, inspired by Fiore's ball skills and vision, kept pushing forward and came close in the 24th minute.

Antonio Conte, one of five Juventus players turning out for Italy, chipped the ball forward for club teammate Filippo Inzaghi, whose header flashed just past the right-hand post.

Inzaghi steered another one wide shortly afterwards while Demetrio Albertini raked a low drive only just wide from 22 metres after the Portuguese keeper had been caught out of position by a goalmouth scramble.

Paleta fared no better for Portugal in the 44th minute, hooking his shot just over the crossbar from the edge of the penalty area.

Italy's Francesco Totti jubilates after scoring against Portugal in their friendly match in Italy on April 26.

fooled Dudamel with a clever dummy and then scored into an empty net.

Parma striker Crespo, standing in for the injured Gabriel Batistuta, was eager to create a good impression up front but had seemed destined not to get on the scoresheet.

He saw one effort header off the line in the first half and was twice denied by Venezuela goalkeeper Rafael Dudamel in the second.

Peru claimed a valuable away World Cup qualifying point as they held Chile to a 1-1 draw in a typically tense meeting between the two South American neighbours.

Peru midfielder Juan Jayo fired the visitors ahead with a

Sukur's sigh of relief

ANKARA, Apr 27: Turkish international Hakan Sukur admitted that he burst into tears after witnessing the birth of his daughter a few days before the controversial UEFA Cup game with Britain's Leeds United, reports AFP.

"I started crying after the birth because I dreamed for many years of becoming a father," Sukur, known as the Bull of the Bosphorus, said in an interview with the mass-circulation Sabah daily Thursday.

The star striker for top Turkish outfit Galatasaray was present on April 15 when his second wife, Beyda, gave birth to their first child, Zeynep Sude.

"(Doctors) told me I would not be able to stand the operation because a Caesarian birth is bloody, but I watched it with strength," the 28-year-old Sukur told Sabah.

"It is an incredible event. Suddenly, you see yourself. A copy of yourself with very small eyes, ears and a nose emerges," he said.

The birth came just five days before the UEFA Cup semi-final second leg game from which Turkish spectators were barred following the murder of two British fans in Istanbul before the first leg game.

Galatasaray advanced on to the final on a 4-2 aggregate after drawing 2-2 with the British club in the highly-tense game in Leeds. The Istanbul club had won the first leg 2-0.

Galatasaray is to meet Arsenal in the May 17 final in Copenhagen.

2002 WC Africans' fate hangs in the balance

JOHANNESBURG, Apr 27: The 25 African World Cup survivors will be divided into five groups Friday when a draw is made at the Zurich offices of international controlling body FIFA, reports AFP.

African Football Confederation (CAF) spokesman Dr Viken Djizmedjian told AFP the countries would be selected based on 1998 World Cup and 1998 and 2000 African Nations Cup results.

Djizmedjian said geography would not be considered when the draw begins at 1330 GMT because FIFA wanted the best five African teams at the 2002 finals in Japan and South Korea.

Most CAF competition draws are geographically based to cut costs and travel time on a continent where football funds are limited and direct air links even scarcer.

Verde reportedly changed flights five times last week en route to Algeria for a World Cup preliminary-round match and it is not unusual for teams to travel via Europe.

Cameroon, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa and Tunisia represented Africa at the 1998 finals in France and all safely cleared their first obstacles last weekend.

African champions Cameroon defeated Somalia 6-0 on aggregate, Tunisia beat Mauritania 5-1, Nigeria overcame

Enitrea 4-0, Morocco eliminated Gambia 3-0 and South Africa won by a similar score against Lesotho.

Other qualifiers are Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Congo, DR Congo, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Namibia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Togo, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Algeria, DR Congo (formerly Zaire) and Egypt have also represented Africa at the quadrennial showpiece of international football with the 1990 qualification of Cameroon for the quarter-finals the finest showing.

The mini-league programme begins over the weekend of June 16-18 and ends on July 29 2001 with the five group winners advancing to the first World Cup staged in Asia and the first to be co-hosted.

Espanyol in Spanish Cup final

BARCELONA, Apr 27: Espanyol earned a place in the Spanish Cup final here on Wednesday night when they beat Real Madrid 1-0 in their second leg match, reports AFP.

Espanyol's opponents in the final have yet to be confirmed after their local rivals Barcelona refused to play their second leg tie against Atletico Madrid on Monday.

Following the goalless first leg in the Spanish capital the decisive goal came from Argentine striker Martin Posse in the 29th minute giving Espanyol a 1-0 win on aggregate.

It was third time lucky for the Barcelona side who could have been two up but for good work by Real goalkeeper Iker Casillas, who deflected strikes from Sergio in the 12th and Artega in the 20th.

The Spanish Cup final will be played on May 27 at a venue to be decided with the Spanish football federation conducting a hearing into Barcelona's refusal to play Monday.

The high-flying Primera Liga side turned up for their match against Atletico Madrid but refused to play after the Spanish Federation refused to change the date of the game.

France owe Trezeguet one



France's Didier Deschamps (L) tries to hold Slovenian Udovic back during their friendly fixture in France on April 26.

Two Slovenian goals in the opening 10 minutes stunned the French crowd but the 200-1 outsiders to win Euro 2000 couldn't hold on as France showed their pedigree by coming back with three second-half goals to send the French supporters home happy.

The crowd at the magnificent Stade de France which included amateur side Calais, who have remarkably reached the French Cup final next month, barely had time to settle into their seats before French keeper Fabien Barthez was picking the ball out of the net.

Some scrappy play along the right resulted in a stray shot which cut across the face of the goal. Saso Udovic who had an empty goal in front on him should have buried the loose ball when it seemed easier to score than miss.

However his weak shot came back off the post where defender Zeljko Milinovic gleefully knocked in his first international goal.

The evening worsened for France just six minutes later when Milinovic who plays his club football in Austria for Lask Linz teamed up with his club and international teammate Udovic to create Slovenia's second.

Milnovic found some space down the right and his perfect cross into the box found the

French defense nowhere and Udovic drove in a powerful header which gave Barthez no chance.

The two goals seemed to wake up the world champions as they started to come back into the game led by their mercurial leader Zinedine Zidane.

It was the World Cup hero who nearly pulled one back after 18 minutes when a ball over the top put Zidane one on one with the Slovenian keeper Miladen Dabanovic but the French number 10 hooked his shot wide.

Another good chance came France's way 10 minutes later when Marseille's Robert Pires set up captain Didier Deschamps at the top of the box but the Chelsea midfielder put his shot just over the bar.

Zidane who was easily France's best player of the first 45 minutes should have pulled one back on the half hour mark when some fine work from Thierry Henry set Zidane up at the far post but just as it looked like being 2-1, Zidane slipped and the chance went beckoning.

It was the Juventus man again in the 37th minute when he won a free-kick 10 metres outside the area but his free-kick hit the post with Patrick Viera blasting the rebound over the bar.

It was a different French side that came out for the second-half as it was all one-way traffic. Lemerre brought on David Trezeguet for the ineffective Christophe Dugary and the move paid off handsomely as the Monaco marksman knocked in two goals including the winner.

The turning point came in the 63rd minute as Slovenian keeper Dabanovic made a terrible blunder when he couldn't hold onto Zidane's free-kick and Trezeguet blasted in the rebound to give the French a lifeline.

Less than 14 minutes later and the teams were all level. An outstanding corner from substitute Emmanuel Petit of Arsenal was headed in off the post by veteran defender Laurent Blanc for his 15th international goal.

Just when it looked as if the Slovenian would hang on for a famous draw, up popped Trezeguet again to snatch the winner in the 90th minute.

Blanc and Zidane combined on the edge of the box to free Trezeguet who made no mistake from 10 metres to break The Slovenian's hearts with virtually the last kick off the game.

Kirsten saves German blushes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany, Apr 27: A controversial late goal from substitute Ulf Kirsten handed Germany a lucky 1-1 draw with Switzerland in a dull Euro 2000 warm-up on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

Kirsten's effort from close range six minutes from time, which appeared to follow a foul by Michael Ballack on Switzerland goalkeeper Pascal Zuberbuehler, did nothing to lift the gloom surrounding the European champions, who failed to beat their neighbours for the first time since a goalless draw in 1968.

Germany threatened after two minutes when Mehmet Scholl escaped down the left wing and sent a perfect cross to Christian Ziege, whose diving header failed to surprise Zuberbuehler.

One minute later, Ziege earned another chance, also from a Scholl cross, but the Middlesbrough midfielder's header went just wide.

Ziege and Scholl, who had helped the Germans to such a promising start, then both had to be substituted because of injuries and the home side started struggling.

Switzerland, who had looked sluggish in the opening stages, gained confidence and opened the scoring in the 33rd minute through Hakan Yakin, helped by an embarrassing blunder from Jens Lehmann.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

France 3	Slovenia 2
Germany 1	Switzerland 1
Andorra 2	Belarus 0
Italy 2	Portugal 0
N Ireland 0	Hungary 1
Czech Rep 4	Israel 1
Austria 1	Croatia 2
Luxembourg 1	Estonia 1
Rep of Ireland 0	Greece 1
Netherlands 0	Finland 0
Poland 0	Scotland 0
Norway 0	Belgium 2
Denmark 0	Sweden 1
Romania 2	Cyprus 0
Bulgaria 0	Ukraine 1
Armenia 0	Georgia 0

Zoff has every reason to smile

REGGIO CALABRIA, Italy, Apr 27 (AFP): Italy's 2-0 friendly win over Portugal has put a rare smile on the face of national coach Dino Zoff as he prepares his squad for Euro 2000.

Italy's victory here on Wednesday night, secured with Mark Luano and Francesco Totti's first goals for their country, was just what the doctor ordered after a disappointing eighth month.

Zoff's team had lost three and drawn one of their previous five matches, raising a chorus of press criticism about the quality of the national side.

But a grinning coach told reporters afterwards: "We've taken a step forward, there's no doubt about it. In the first half, the team were trying too hard and left themselves open to a dangerous counter-attack."

"But it's better to make mistakes because you're trying to do too much, than because there's something missing... I think this was Italy's best performance of the season."

Zoff paid tribute to his three

best players on the night - creative midfielder Stefano Fiore, right-winger Gianluca Zambrotta and substitute Totti.

And he also spared a thought for injured centre-forward Christian Vieri. Italy's five-goal hero of the 1998 World Cup finals.

"I still consider him an important player for us and obviously I hope to take him with us to Belgium," Zoff said. "But even without him, we were able to develop a good attacking game."

Vieri and Alessandro Del Piero, also currently injured, are guaranteed a place in Zoff's squad along with Filippo Inzaghi, whose goal-bound shot was hooked over the line here by Juventus teammate Luano.

Of the two remaining places up front, one now looks destined for Totti with the other set for either Marco Delvecchio, who was again disappointing on Wednesday night, AS Roma teammate Vincenzo Montella or Inzaghi's younger brother Simone.

Italy will play Norway in Oslo on June 3 just before leaving for Euro 2000, where their campaign in Group B starts on June 11 against Turkey.

Salinas plans to retire

VITORIA, Spain, Apr 27: Veteran Spanish striker Julio Salinas will retire at the end of the season after 20 years in the top flight, the player announced during a press conference here Wednesday, reports AFP.

The lanky former international, who was capped 56 times for the national side, and now plays for Primera Liga outfit Alaves said that at 37 years he felt it was time to hang up his boots.

"Everything has a beginning and an end and you know that one day it has to end," said Salinas, who during his career played in three World Cups and was Spain's fourth top striker ever with 22 international goals.

In the Liga Salinas scored 150 goals in over 400 matches. A member of the Spanish under-21 side that reached the final of the 1984 European Championship, Salinas joined Atletico Bilbao in 1980 moving on to Atletico Madrid in 1988 and two years later joined Barcelona.

This was followed by stints at Deportivo La Coruna and Sporting Gijon, before he headed for Japanese League where he played for Yokohama Marinos in 1997.

Salinas returned to Spain in 1999 to try to revive flagging Spanish side Alaves. This season he has been used mainly as a substitute in the team which is currently fifth in the league.