

Kaiserslautern buy Czech mates

COLOGNE, Germany, May 22: The 1998 Bundesliga champions Kaiserslautern swooped to sign Czech international duo Petr Gabriel and Vratislav Lokvenc from Sparta Prague on Sunday just a day after the end of their domestic campaign, reports AFP.

Kaiserslautern, known as the Red Devils and whose fifth place finish guaranteed them a place in next season's UEFA Cup, signed the pair on four-year contracts for a combined fee of 9.3 million marks (4.3 million dollars).

The 27-year-old Gabriel, a defender, has 11 caps to his name while Lokvenc, a 26-year-old forward, has played three times for the national team.

Their signings will counter-balance the probable departure of 30-year-old Swiss playmaker Ciriaco Sforza to champions Bayern Munich.

French rookie moving to Bayern

MUNICH, May 22: French youth international Willy Sagnol will undergo a medical with German champions Bayern Munich Monday as part of the final stages of his transfer from French champions Monaco, the German outlet's manager Uli Hoeness revealed, reports AFP.

"We have reached agreement with Monaco," Hoeness told, DSF television.

Bayern are believed to be ready to shell out 6.8 million dollars for the 22-year-old Monaco defender, who arrived in the Bavarian capital on Monday to undergo tests and finalize the deal.

Bayern Munich president Franz Beckenbauer has been keen to sign the young French player. "He's a player that we like a lot," he said recently.

Indonesia to host 2002 Tiger Cup

HONG KONG, May 22: Indonesia have been awarded the right to hold the 2002 Tiger Cup by the Asian Football Federation four years after civil unrest forced the nation to relinquish hosting the event, reports Reuters.

The regional body said Indonesia would stage the Cup, subject to meeting the required standards. Cambodia were named as hosts for the competition in 2004.

Meanwhile, the AFF have finalised the 'dates' for this year's Tiger Cup, to be played in Thailand in November.

The competition, featuring the 10 member nations of the Association of South East Asian Nations, will kick-off on November 4 with the final to be held on November 18 in Bangkok's Rajamangala Stadium.

Singapore are reigning Tiger Cup champions after they defeated Vietnam 1-0 in the final in Hanoi in September 1998. The draw for this year's competition is in Bangkok on July 10.

Olympiakos Greek champions

ATHENS, May 22: Olympiakos won the Greek league title here Sunday when they secured a 1-0 away win to Xanthi, reports AFP.

The reigning champions had a four-point advantage over second-placed Panathinaikos. It was the fourth consecutive Greek First Division league title for Olympiakos with one game remaining.

PM opens

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corded a hearty reception by some 20 schoolgirls. Clad in their sky-blue and yellow dresses, the girls danced and sang to welcome the PM.

Earlier, Sheikh Hasina unveiled a mural of Sultana Kamal at the front of the Sports Complex. Sultana Kamal, the slain wife of Sheikh Kamal, was the first 'Women Blue' of Dhaka University.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Obaidul Quader, president of Women's Sports Association Rafia Akhter Doly and general secretary Sultana Ferdous Ara also addressed the function, attended by more than 3000 sportsmen, organisers and sports-lovers from all over the country.

In his address Obaidul Quader said that money was not at all a problem for the development of sports and for the training of the sportsmen.

He disclosed that Bangladesh would take part in the next women's cricket and football World Cups.

D'pur, Chuadanga

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the meet.

Gazipur beat Dhaka 3-0 in Narsingdi. Kustia beat Rajbari 2-1 and Jhenidah defeated hosts Gopalganj 3-2 in Gopalganj, hosts Moulvibazar beat Habiganj 2-0 in Moulvibazar and Bogra defeated Chapinawabganj 2-1 in Naogaon.

Besides, Gaibandha drew 3-3 with Natore while the other match of the zone between Rajshahi and Sirajganj was abandoned due to rain.

At Jamalpur, Sherpur played to a one-all draw with Netrokona.



England defender Kieron Dyer (L) trying to keep striker Alan Shearer at bay during a training session of the national squad at Bisham Abbey yesterday. — AFP photo

Keegan worried about Owen

Barry gets surprise call up



LONDON, May 22: Aston Villa defender Gareth Barry was called up to the senior England squad ahead of the Euro 2000 finals being co-hosted by the Netherlands and Belgium next month, the Press Association reported Monday, reports AFP.

Barry, 19, was due to report for duty Monday night along with the three other squad members who appeared in the FA Cup final - club team-mates defender Gareth Southgate and goalkeeper David James, as well as Chelsea midfielder Dennis Wise.

The left-sided centre-back had been placed on standby along with midfielder Frank Lampard last week when coach Kevin Keegan announced his provisional 28-man squad for the tournament.

Barry had been due to join the England under-21 squad leaving for their own European Championships in Slovakia later this week until he received the late call-up from the senior

party. It will provide the perfect tonic after Villa's defeat to Chelsea at Wembley on Sunday where they lost 1-0.

The reasons behind Barry's inclusion were not immediately clear but Leeds left-winger Jason Wilcox was not involved in



MICHAEL OWEN

England's training session on Monday morning. With the squad already having a lack of naturally left-sided players it may be Keegan is looking to the Villa man as cover for Wilcox.

Other reasons for the call-up may be linked to the recent concerns over the fitness of Jamie Redknapp, Steven Gerrard, Gary Neville and Tony Adams.

Keegan was meanwhile also assessing the fitness of strikers Michael Owen and Robbie Fowler after they received a boost with their involvement in a friendly with Liverpool against Irish XI on Sunday.

Liverpool lost 4-2 but their goals were scored by England internationals Owen and Emile Heskey, while Fowler not only made the opening for Heskey but also played for 63 minutes.

Fowler has not played a full senior match with his club Liverpool since September due to an ankle injury, and Owen has admitted to worries over his recurring hamstring problems.

"I will sit down with Michael and ask him truthfully what he thinks about his fitness, I'll do the same with Robbie and if I feel either of them aren't right then I wouldn't hesitate in telling them to aim for the 2002 World Cup qualifying campaign," Keegan said.

Friendly against Brazil

Giggs relishing the prospect



CARDIFF, May 22: Welsh winger Ryan Giggs is relishing the prospect of coming face to face

with the four-time world champions when Brazil bring their illustrious samba-style here tomorrow, reports AFP.

The Manchester United hero prepares to take on the world's number one side in front of 72,500 fans for a friendly at the Millennium Stadium knowing he is probably Wales' best hope of a miracle to set alongside the one they achieved at Cardiff back in 1991.

Day Welshmen will forget that few when a Dean Saunders strike gave them an incredible 1-0 win over the South Americans.

Giggs may have six championship medals and a European Cup triumph among 12 major honours in his stunning career, but the chance to play against his boyhood heroes still brings a twinkle to his eyes.

And with it the revelation of where those high speed Giggs skills really came from.

Giggs told the Press Association: "Brazil were my heroes as a boy. My first memories of

them were watching their 1982 World Cup side. I saw them on TV and just remember thinking how wonderful they were.

"They had one player, Eder, who played on the left and was left footed like me. He stood out for me because he was in my position. His skill was wonderful. I used to try to do the things he did, and from then on I was hooked on Brazil."

"Their skill on the ball, how they took players on. It's something you don't forget and I feel that they've influenced millions of boys the world over for many, many years. You don't forget them."

Welsh coach Mark Hughes will certainly need the talents of Giggs as the world's 101st rated country takes on the best.

Giggs added: "You can't get any bigger than playing against Brazil in front of 72,000. It won't be the biggest game I have ever played in, but certainly it will be right up there with the best, even if it is a friendly international."

Playing against top Brazilians for United, Roberto Carlos against Real Madrid, who unfortunately won't be here because of the European Cup Final, Rivaldo for

Barcelona and Romario when we played Vasco da Gama in the World Club Championship this season.

"But this is the first time I've played against their national team, and I'm looking forward to it immensely."

"It will be a privilege to face Brazil in Cardiff, and I know all the team are looking forward to it. It will be great for the fans, and great for us players, too."

Brazil coach Wanderley Luxemburgo has recalled 34 year-old Romario to the squad which will also take on England at Wembley on Saturday.

Romario has been in irresistible form for his club side Vasco da Gama this season, finding the net an incredible 36 times in 31 matches — an extraordinary statistic even by his standards.

But defender Roberto Carlos will be absent because he is representing Real Madrid in the Champions League final on Wednesday while attacking left back Athirson, talented midfielder Alex and striker Ronaldo Gaucha are all omitted at the request of their busy clubs.

Valderrama to finish in the MLS



EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey, May 22: Colombia's Carlos Valderrama, hampered by time

passing by and the dimming of the spotlight, vows to finish his career with Major League Soccer's Tampa Bay Mutiny, reports AFP.

"I would like to stay," Valderrama said. "I feel good here. My family likes it and I love the people. This will be the end of the road for me."

The creative 38-year-old midfielder, whose contract expires at the end of the season, gave no indication on when he will retire.

"I don't know what to expect. I would like to re-sign but I can't get into that right now," Valderrama said. "I don't know how many years I still want to compete. I can't think about this right now. I want to focus on the team."

assists and recorded his 100th point Saturday in Tampa Bay's 3-2 overtime loss to the MetroStars.

"It is a great feeling to score 100 points but more importantly I want my team to be successful," he said.

"The Kid" who has been playing in the MLS since its formation in 1996, said the competition had enjoyed an increased

level of play on the field.

"The players are more technical than they used to be," he said. "The youngsters are being trained very well. If they continue their progression and keep their young players, the United States will have a very talented group very soon. I think they already do."

Valderrama, a three-time World Cup veteran and former captain of Colombia's national team, began his career in 1981 with Union Magdalena of Colombia's First Division.

Three years later he was transferred to Millonarios then to Deportivo Cali.

In 1988, he was dealt to French First Division club Montpellier for 1.5 million dollars. He won the French Cup in 1990 and helped the club reach the quarterfinals of the UEFA Cup two years in a row.

The two-time South American player of the year and three-time Colombian player of the year also played for Real Valladolid, Deportivo Independiente Medellin and Atletico Junior before joining the MLS.

CARLOS VALDERRAMA

Kewell to give internationals a miss

SYDNEY, May 22: Acclaimed Leeds United midfielder Harry Kewell will not play for Australia in next month's football internationals against Paraguay following a rift with tournament organisers, reports AFP.

His Australian manager Bernie Maudie told Australian Press Monday from Zagreb that Kewell would not be playing in any internationals run by the International Entertainment Corporation.

Kewell is apparently upset over alleged comments by IEC director Dominic Galati on Australian television that some of Australia's top players had demanded 150,000 dollars (87,000 US) in appearance fees to play against Manchester United here last July. Maudie said Kewell believed the inference was that he was one of those players.

"Because of that he won't play in any games run by the IEC until he gets an apology," Maudie said.

An IEC spokesman refused to be drawn on the conflict, saying Kewell's availability was an issue that had to be resolved between the player and Soccer Australia.

Maudie, who also manages Australia's Glasgow Celtic striker Mark Viduka, said Scotland's leading goalscorer would also miss the three matches in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne because he was still recovering from an ankle injury.

Socceroo coach Frank Farina will use the matches in Sydney on June 9, in Brisbane three days later and in Melbourne on June 15 as a build-up to a tournament in Tahiti.

The squad will fly to Tahiti after the Paraguay games to play in the Oceania series, with the winner of that tournament qualifying for the lucrative Confederations Cup.

World Cup qualifier Argentina's 20 against bolivia

BUENOS AIRES, May 22(AFP): The Argentine squad named Sunday by coach Marcelo Bielsa for the South American World Cup qualifier against Bolivia on June 4:

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Pablo Cavallero (Espanol/Spa), German Burgos (Mallorca/Spa), Roberto Bonano (River Plate)

Defenders: Roberto Sensi (Lazio/Ita), Mauricio Pochettino (Espanol/Spa), Juan Pablo Sorin (Cruzeiro/Bra), Roberto Ayala (AC Milan/Ita), Nelson Vivas (Celta Vigo/Spa), Walter Samuel (Boca Juniors)

Midfielders: Javier Zanetti (Inter Milan/Ita), Matias Almeyda, Juan Sebastian Veron and Diego Simeone (Lazio/Ita), Christian Gonzalez (Valencia/Spa), Gustavo Lopez (Celta Vigo/Spa), Pablo Aimar (River Plate)

Strikers: Hernan Crespo (Parma/Ita), Ariel Ortega (Parma/Ita), Claudio Lopez (Valencia/Spa), Gabriel Batistuta (Fiorentina/Ita).

Scottish Premiership Hearts ensure UEFA Cup spot

EDINBURGH, May 22: Hearts booked their place in next season's UEFA Cup on Sunday after a scrappy 2-1 win over Edinburgh rivals Hibernian at Tynecastle in the final Scottish Premiership game of the season, reports AFP.

Goals from Spaniard Juanjo and Gary McSwegan, either side of a Miku Paatelainen strike for Hibs, ensured that Jim Jefferies side held off the challenge of Motherwell for third place.

After two defeats and a draw this season, it also ensured that Hearts did not go through the campaign without a win over their local rivals.

Motherwell inflicted Rangers' first away league defeat of the season on the campaign's final day with a 2-0 victory.

The home side were much the sharper from the outset, but did not move ahead until substitute Kevin Twaddle broke the deadlock after 67 minutes having only been on the field for five minutes.

Motherwell doubled their advantage five minutes later with former Rangers forward John Spencer's individual effort consigning Dick Advocaat's team to their first defeat since the winter break.

Henrik Larsson returned to the Celtic side which won 2-0 at home to Dundee United.

The Swedish international had begged coach Kenny Dalglish to give him a run-out in the final game of the season to prove his fitness to his international bosses ahead of Euro 2000.

Larsson played just 25 minutes but showed no visible signs of after-effects following his recovery from a broken leg. He shared centre stage with six young players in the 2-0 win.

Jim Goodwin, Brian McColligan and Ryan McCann made their debuts while John Kennedy, Mark Forster and Simon Lynch got their first starts.

Lynch celebrated with a 52nd-minute goal before Mark Burchill added a second in the 65th, with Eyal Berkovic missing a first-half penalty.

Elsewhere Scottish Cup finalists Aberdeen won 2-0 at Dundee while Kilmarnock beat St Johnstone 3-2.

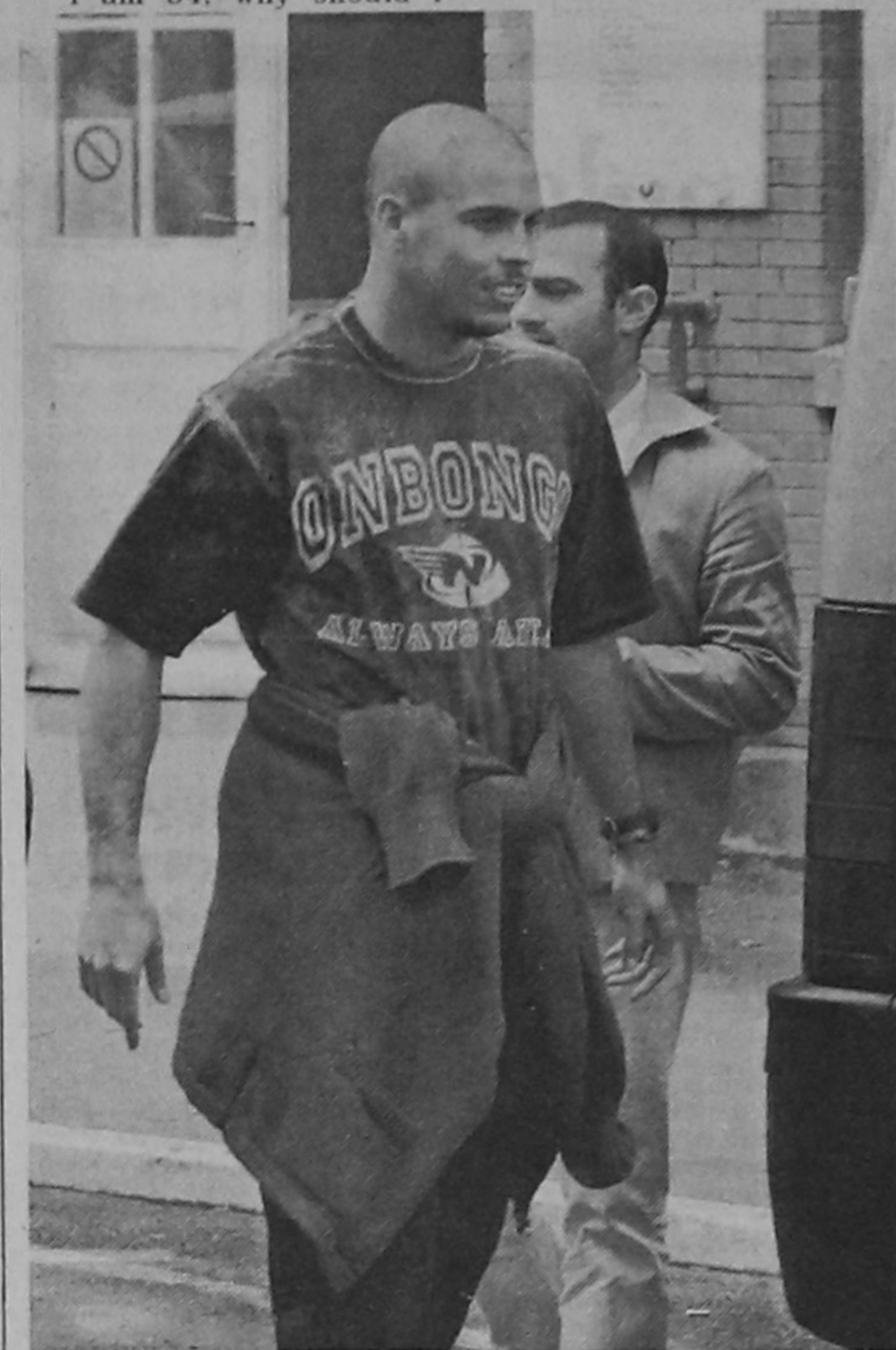
AFP FOOTBALL BRIEFS

COLOGNE, Germany, May 22: Striker Ulf Kirsten has extended his contract with Bundesliga club Bayer Leverkusen by 12 months, the player revealed on Monday.

"I am 34, why should I

change? Leverkusen is my life," Kirsten said, after agreeing a deal which will keep him with the club until June 2002.

In two years time Kirsten plans to end his professional career in the United States.



Superstar Ronaldo leaving the Pitie-Salpetriere Hospital in Paris after a check-up yesterday. — AFP photo

preferably with a warm-weather club in either Florida or California.

After that he would like to return to Germany and take up a long-standing offer to become a juniors coach at Leverkusen.

Kirsten switched to Leverkusen in 1990, one of the first East German footballers to move to the west after the fall of the Berlin Wall ended their Cold War isolation.

RONALDO IN PARIS FOR CHECKUP

PARIS: Brazilian star striker Ronaldo of Italian Serie A giants Inter Milan on Monday returned for checkup tests on his injured knee to the Pitie Salpetriere hospital where he underwent surgery last month.

The 23-year-old tore a tendon in his right knee just minutes after his return to action after a long lay-off in last month's Italian Cup final first-leg against Lazio which Inter went on to lose 2-1.

Professor Gerard Sailland, who operated on the star striker, has prepared a rehabilitation programme for the first four months for Ronaldo who is being treated in Milan by Inter's physiotherapists for the next few weeks before continuing his recovery in Brazil.

BLANC TO STAY AT INTER

MILAN: Inter Milan's veteran French central defender Laurent Blanc will stay at the Italian Serie A club next season, the Italian club said Monday.

The 35-year-old World Cup winning Blanc signed a two year contract with the Italian side in a move from French First Division side Marseille, which expires on June 30 2001.

"He will stay with us next season because he is still has a year left on his contract, and we are very happy with him," Inter Milan spokesperson Sandro Sabatini told AFP.

King Hassan Cup

Troussier turns to 'King Kazu'



TOKYO, May 22: Japan's beleaguered coach Philippe Troussier called up a trio of Europe-based players and veteran striker Kazuyoshi Miura Monday for

Japan's World Cup finals debut in 1998 -- also earned a quick recall.

The Kyoto Purple Sanga forward, the only Japanese who has ever played in both the Brazilian and Italian premier leagues, came back into the news with his 100th career goal nine days ago.

Miura's experience and dynamic enthusiasm are respected by other players and he always gives his best for Japan, Troussier said.

Troussier, whose straight-talking has earned him enemies among the country's football administrators, is hoping

to be granted a contract extension to lead the country to the 2002 World Cup.

His present contract runs out after October's Asian Cup finals and dumping him before the event would leave the association out of pocket to the tune of 26 million yen (245,000 dollars).

Miura, 33, known to his fans as "King Kazu" -- although his golden days apparently ended when he was dumped from

Japan's last international-A match in which they lost 1-0 to South Korea in Seoul last month, a defeat which proved their lack of firepower and all but cost Troussier's job.

But the Japanese Football Association deferred a decision on the Frenchman until after the two international tournaments in June.

In the King Hassan Cup, Japan will play World Cup holders France on June 4 and then face either Jamaica or Morocco two days later before returning home for the Kirin Cup from June 11-18.

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Final German, Turkish squads



GERMANY

BERLIN, May 22 (AFP): German squad announced Monday by coach Erich Ribbeck for Euro 2000, which runs from June 10 to July 2 in Belgium and the Netherlands.

Goalkeepers: Oliver Kahn (Bayern Munich), Jens Lehmann (Borussia Dortmund), Hans Jorg Butt (SV Hamburg).

Defenders: Markus Babel (Bayern Munich), Thomas Linke (Bayern Munich), Lothar Matthaus (New York New Jersey MetroStars/USA), Jens Nowotny (Bayer Leverkusen), Marko Rehmer (Hertha Berlin).

Midfielder: Michael Ballack (Bayer Leverkusen), Sebastian Deisler (Hertha Berlin), Thomas Hassler (Munich 1860), Dietmar Hamann (Liverpool/Eng.), Jens Jeremies (Bayern Munich), Carsten Ramelow (Bayer Leverkusen), Mehmet Scholl (Bayern Munich), Dariusz Wozz (Hertha Berlin), Christian Ziege (Middlesbrough/Eng.).

Strikers: Oliver Bierhoff (AC Milan/Ita), Marco Bode (Werder Bremen), Carsten Jancker (Bayern Munich), Ulf Kirsten (Bayer Leverkusen), Paulo Rink (Bayer Leverkusen).

Stand by: Stefan Beinlich (Bayer Leverkusen), Mustafa Dogan (Fenerbahce/Tur), Mar-



HASSLER ... recalled