Moller eying rejuvenation

COLOGNE, Germany, May 29: Former German international Andreas Moller faces a wall of protest from Schalke 04 fans who don't want him in their club but it is precisely this atmosphere of aggression and rejection that he wants to use to rectify his tarnished public image, reports AFP.

Moller has been dismissed by ex teammates as "weak" and a "whiner" and despite his 85 caps for Germany but despite his talent he never quite managed to break through as a great player

Instead he has become known as a choker in big games, as someone who always falls at the final hurdle.

Signing for Schalke last week the 32-year-old Moller admitted to journalists it would be "damn hard" to overcome the prejudices against him.

As manager Rudi Assauer presented Moller to the media last week supporters gathered outside and were shocked to hear the news.

So far more than 80 percent of Schalke fans contributing to an internet questionnaire have said they don't want Moller in their club's b'ue shirt with some hard cases sa ing they will actually boycott going to games.

"The challenge at Schalke fascinates me which is why will fight to the bitter end. Moller said.

"The most important thing is that I play good football again. I want to prove it to myself. As far as I am concerned the new season could start up tomorrow," he added.

Moller, because of his image as a temperamental and spoilt star, would be a controversial character at Schalke regardless of his origins.

That his former club was hated rivals Borussia Dortmund just stirs up the Schalke hornets nest even more. "I just had to get out of Dort-

mund. I wanted a fresh start, fresh faces, a fresh sporting challenge, he added. "Compared to my contract

with Dortmund I even took a cut in money," Moller said in response to reports that his decision was purely financial.

"If it had only been about money I would have gone abroad, signed a retirement contract and laid in the sun."

At the time Moller was deep in negotiations with Dortmund to extend his contract and only needed to work out a few final details before he had a sudden change of heart and switched allegiances.

Moller then signed a two year contract at Schalke with an option for one more year. He was out of contract at Dortmund and moved free of charge.

Baumann to fight against

BERLIN, May 29: Former Olympic champion Dieter Baumann, who has tested positive for nandrolone, has said he would take legal action if he were given a two-year ban by German athletics officials, reports Reuters.

Baumann has been suspended since last November after random tests showed he had levels of nandrolone 10 times over the accepted limit. He faces a two-year suspension but the legal committee of the German Athletics Federation (DLV) has yet to reach a final verdict.

"I would have the possibility (in case of a two-year ban) to go either before the court of arbitration of the German Sports Federation or a normal court, Baumann told Sunday newspaper Welt am Sonntag.

The 5,000 metres gold medallist from the 1992 Barcelona Olympics said he would opt for a traditional court because it could order the ongoing proceedings to be delayed, which would allow him to resume competing. "Only a normal court can

deliver a temporary injunction and I need one to be able to compete," he said. Baumann has a eady ap-

pealed after a court an ned down his initial request to resume competing while waiting for athletics officials to make a final decision on his case. His appeal was turned down earlier this month.

The German athlete wants to compete to reach the Olympic qualifying standard, hoping he would then be cleared by the DLV and could go to this year's Sydney Games.

Haile meeting called off

HENGELO, Netherlands, May 29: An athletics meeting which was to have seen Haile Gebrselassie's return to action after missing the indoor season due to an ankle injury was called off on Sunday because of gale-force winds, reports

Reuters. The meet had almost been cancelled last week after the fireworks warehouse explosion which devastated the town of Enschede.

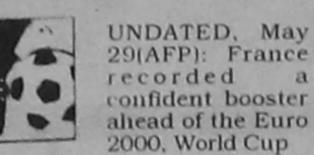
But organisers decided to hold the meeting minus the usual festivities, only to be foiled on Sunday by the

weather. Gebrselassie would have been having his first race since the Seville World Championships last August when he collected his fourth consecutive

10,000 metres title. Other athletes scheduled to appear on Sunday included women's world 10,000 metres champion Gete Warmi and world steeplechase record holder Bernard Barmasai of Kenya.

International friendlies

World champs turn on the style



2002 co-hosts South Korea held European Championship ers and substitute defender finalists Yugoslavia to a surprise draw, while South Africa won against Malta in for the stadium. International friendlies across the globe on Sunday.

FRANCE-2, CROATIA-0

ZAGREB: France's Robert Pires and David Trezeguet both scored in a 2-0 victory over Croatia here for their seventh consecutive win following this Euro2000 warm-up match.

World champions France, who also earned their 10th match without defeat, gave a footballing lession to the aging formation of coach Miroslav Blazevic at the Maksimir stadium.

French coach Roger Lemerre said afterwards: "A team takes sustenance from victories. Taking into account our qualification for Euro 2000, we needed to prepare well for these matches which was perhaps a handicap for the Croatian team."

France dominated the midfield, with Zinedine Zidane in top form, and had a lively and inspired striker in Thierry Henry. This third win in three meet-

ings for France against Croatia was a repeat of the 1998 World Cup semi-final when defender Lilian Thuram scored twice in a

Croatia's recent draws against Spain and Germany make this an even more impressive result for France.

Pires scored in the 23rd minute, after panic in the Croatian defence, for a deserved lead. Henry, preferred to Real Madrid's Nicolas Anelka, upstaged his Arsenal teammate Davor Suker and had a lot of chances.

In the second half, the assured world champions went on the attack and even played a quarter hour with three strikers and two other offensive players.

The 70th minute goal of Trezeguet, set up by Sylvian Wiltord, reflected France's authority on the match and their good form just two weeks before Euro2000.

SOUTH AFRICA-1, MALTA-0

VALLETTA: Thabo Mngomeni scored with one minute of normal time left to give South Africa a 1-0 friendly victory over Malta, their first success in Europe.

The slim, dreadlocked captain of Bafana Bafana (The Boys) won possession near the touchline, moved inside and unleashed a 35-metre drive that gave goalkeeper Ernest Barry no chance.

It was a wonderful end to a largely disappointing display by a makeshift South African side, who wasted several good chances before a small crowd at Ta'Qali Stadium.

Delron Buckey spurned the best opening six minutes into the second half when he sprang the offside trap only to be foiled by a superb Luke Dimench tackle inside the penalty area.

Barry displayed his agility midway through the second half by turning a sizzling Dumisa Ngobe drive round the post as South Africa tried to turn overwhelming territorial superiority into goals.

Bafana Bafana also had the better of a tame first half in warm, cloudless conditions on the tiny Mediterranean island with a Patrick Mayo header rebounding off the crossbar.

Mngomeni, leading his country for the third time in the absence of injured defender Lucas Radebe from English Premiership club Leeds United, was unlucky on the stroke of halftime with a chip that went millimetres wide.

Malta defended well but never tested goalkeeper Andre Arendse, returning to the South African team for his first match since it finished third at the African Nations Cup last

February. Bafana Bafana had lost to world champions France (twice), Germany and England and drawn with Denmark

Barca about

to rope in

Dutruel

French goalkeeper Richard

Dutruel passed a medical on

Friday and is set to sign a con-

tract with Primera Liga rivals

The length of the contract

has not been revealed but

Dutruel says he has been

promised a place in the starting

line-up with Dutch keeper Ruud

Hesp set to leave the Nou Camp

and despite the return from a

loan spell with FC Porto of

Barcelona's Portuguese keeper

understudy of Bernard Lama at

Paris St Germain. He never

started a first-team game in

France's top flight but played

for Second Division outfit

But he has impressed in

Spain although because of a

contractual dispute he has re-

cently been overlooked in

favour of Vigo's promising

young Jose Manuel Pinto.

Dutruel, 28, was a long-time

Barcelona, reports AFP.

Vito Baia.

Caen.

PARIS, May 28: Celta Vigo's

UNDATED, May (twice) and Iceland in previous 29(AFP): France visits to Europe since being a readmitted to international confident booster football eight years ago.

Domestic and European club commitments and injuries left South Africa with only 14 play-Pierre Issa arrived from France 10 minutes before the squad left chances.

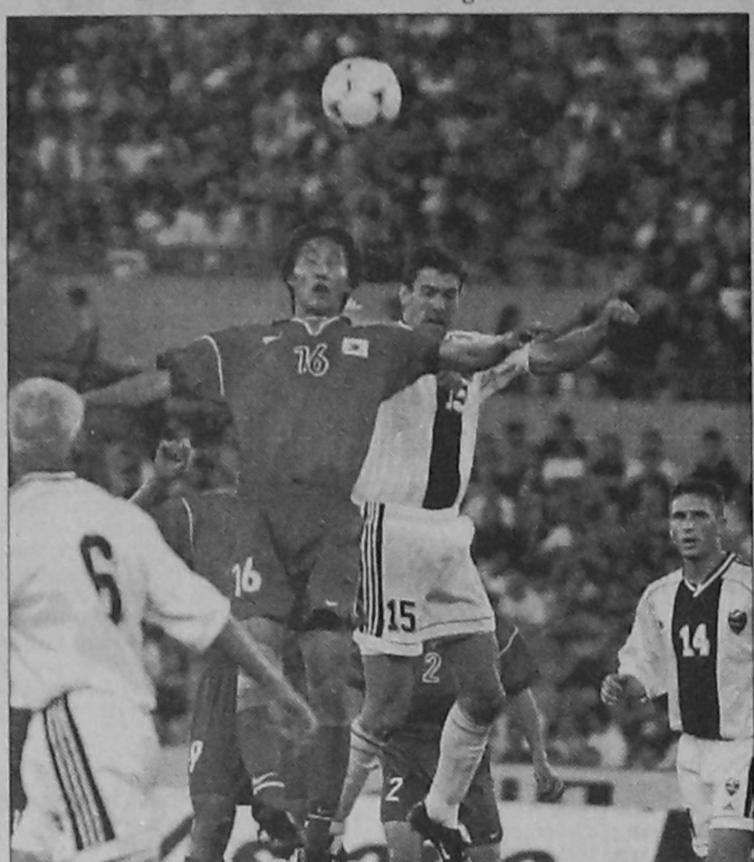
SOUTH KOREA-0, YUGOSLAVIA-0

SEOUL: Midfielder Lee Young-Pyo made two decisive saves to help South Korea score

high spirits three minutes into the second half when Yogoslav goalkeeper narrowly beat a powerful grounder by Lee Chun-Soo in the middle of the penalty

But the challenge from South Koreans faded quickly after they missed follow-up

Real Zaragoza's Savo Milosevic, who replaced injurystricken striker Predrag Mijatovic at half-time, pounced on South Korea's defense upfront and his colleagues regained control of the midfield. Yugoslavia continued their



An aerial tussle between Yugoslavia's Mladen Krestajic (R) and South Korean Kim Sang-Sik during their international friendly at Seoul on May 28. - AFP photo

a well-deserved 0-0 draw dominance afterwards, forcing Chamshil Olympic Stadium. Lee was instrumental in

South Korea's defense, cutting out Yugoslavia's offensive before a crowd of 35,500. He blocked a decisive shot

from defender Nisa Saveljic that went out of the hands of goalkeeper Kim Yong-Dae straight into the left corner in the 56th minute, and another from midfielder Slaviaa Jokanovic in the 71st minute. The Yugoslavs exposed some sloppy defending in early exchanges, as South Korea, led by

midfielder Ko Jong-Su and forward Seol Ki-Hyeon, started aggressively and outpaced the vis-

The South Koreans got in to play again on Tuesday.

against Yugoslavia in at Seoul's a series of corners, but failed to find the net.

"I'm satisfied with my kids who played well in the midfield. making several good chances." South Korean coach Huh Jung-Moos said. "Yugoslavia underestimated

the strength of my team," Huh said. conceding South Korea needs more training to refine their play in the penalty box.

Yugoslav coach Muyjadin Boskov said: "Leed and some other Korean players were outstanding. Today I tested the system of my team. We will come back with new strategies in the next game," he said.

The two sides are scheduled



French midfielder Johan Micoud (L) is under pressure from Croatian Krunoslav Jurcic during their friendly - AFP photo international in Zagreb on May 28.

Espanyol players celebrate after clinching the Spanish Cup title on May 28. - AFP photo

Giggs out of action

LONDON, May 29: Ryan Giggs has been ruled out of Wales' trip to Portugal next week following a scan on a thigh injury, reports AFP.

The Manchester United winger damaged his leg during shooting practice in training last Sunday as Wales prepared for their clash with Brazil in Cardiff.

Giggs watched the 3-0 defeat on Tuesday from the dug-out before returning to Old Trafford for treatment.

He travelled to watch the Champions League Cup final in Paris on Wednesday and then moved on to Monte Carlo, along with Sir Alex Ferguson and team-mate Ronny Johnsen, where the trio picked up the world team of the year prize at the inaugural Laureus Sports Awards ceremony.

Giggs had a scan on the injury on Friday before Wales boss Mark Hughes was given the news he had no doubt been expecting.

Hughes said: "I talked to Manchester United's doctor and he has confirmed that the scan shows Ryan has a torn thigh muscle that will take three to four weeks to heal properly.

"I had hoped that the injury would turn out to be no more than muscle spasms.

"He did the damage right at Sunday. We pulled him out of training immediately and tried to cheer him up by saying that it would be okay, but deep down I think he knew it was going to be a problem.

"You have to realise that injuries are one of those things. You hold your hands up and accept them and then get on with the job.

Wales, who are expected to call up Tottenham midfielder Simon Davies from the under-21 squad, have already lost Robbie Savage, Chris Coleman, Mark Pembridge and John Hartson from their original

Hughes will be hoping Barnsley's Darren Barnard comes through tomorrow's First Division play-off final against Ipswich unscathed and is able to join up with the squad that flies to Oporto on Wednes-

The under-21s travel to Northern Ireland this week for a triangular tournament that also includes Scotland. They play the Scots at Newry on Wednesday and the Irish at Dungannon on Friday.

Diego wants to replace Van Gaal!

MADRID. May 29: Diego Maradona says his big dream now is to coach FC Barcelona, reports AP

"My great dream is to manage Barcelona, and more so now given that (chairman Josep Lluis) Nunez is gone," the Argentine soccer legend told Spain's Marca sports paper in an interview in Munich, Ger-"I know that I have just one

chance and 99 against. But if I get the opportunity I'll grab it and won't let go," the 39-yearold Maradona said. Maradona played for

Barcelona from 1982-84 after leaving Argentina's Boca Juniors and before joining Italy's Naples. Barcelona is currently with

out a fixed coach following the resignation earlier this month of Dutchman Louis van Gaal. Van Gaal quit after Nunez announced he was stepping down ending 22 years as club chair-

Villarreal earns promotion to Primera Liga

MADRID, May 29: Villarreal on Sunday assured their place in Spain's top flight next season thanks to their 1-1 draw against leaders Las Palmas on the penultimate day of the Second Division championship. reports AFP.

Las Palmas, already certain to go up, thereby earned the divisional title.

Osasuna, Salamanca and Merida are all in the fight for the third and final promotion spot.

Owen aims for the top



LONDON . May 29(AFP): Michael Owen has set his sights on becoming the best striker in the world - and he has rubbished claims that he and England skipper Alan Shearer are too similar to become an effective partnership.

Owen's knack of scoring against the cream of the footballing talent surfaced again when he was on target in Saturday's confidence-boosting draw with Brazil at Wembley. It was just the tonic needed

after an injury-hit season by Owen who shot to prominence two years ago with his wonder goal against Argentina in the 1998 World Cup finals. And in terms of Euro 2000

there were encouraging signs that Owen and Shearer, who has expressed his liking for playing alongside Emile Heskey, can operate as a pairing. Owen said: "Some people say I only score against Luxembourg

which is a bit off-putting the end of shooting practice last | considering that I have scored against some of the best teams in the world! "It's great to score against such opposition. I scored that goal against Argentina but I

> this level and scoring against Brazil is great for the confi-"I have never doubted my own ability. I've done the business at the top level before and

to do well against the best team

in the world is very pleasing.

know I need to reproduce it at

normal professional. I want to play my normal game. reach the top and you've got to

"I am so keen to improve and learn and playing teams like Brazil can only help me learn. But then as a 20-year-old playing against Brazil you have got to learn quickly or you are go-

ing to get battered. Owen admitted: "It's been a bit stop-start for me with a few ups and downs this year but hopefully I am going to peak at just the right time for Euro

"I felt it was an important match for me because people were saying 'you shouldn't be



MICHAEL OWEN

playing or you should be playing - and every time you pull on an England or Liverpool shirt you want to prove people wrong.

"People keep on about the hamstring but I played the last lew games of the season and then completed nearly 90 minutes at Wembley, which is probably the most tiring pitch you will ever play on, with no prob-

"The manager (Kevin Keegan) said to me before the game that I've not got to prove anything to "I don't want to be just a anyone and to just to go out and

Owen's partnership with

But Owen is confident that

the combination can work - and he is keen to make sure that he will be lining up alongside Shearer when England face Portugal in the Euro 2000 opener on June 12.

He said: "I think we did well and I think we can work together. If I was playing with someone of the same height and physique then people would be saving we are too similar.

"But we've got no excuses about this partnership. Alan is about three stone heavier than me and a few inches taller as

"He's more of a target man and I'm more someone who gets in behind defenders and tries to use pace. Alan played very well against Brazil but he is a totally different player to me."

Owen echoed the sentiments of Shearer that it was the best they had played together since France '98 - but he claims the important factor is getting the kind of quality service as delivered by David Beckham on Saturday.

He said: "I think you should judge a striker when your teammates are getting the ball to you and some of the quality crossing delivered by David Beckham as against Brazil re-

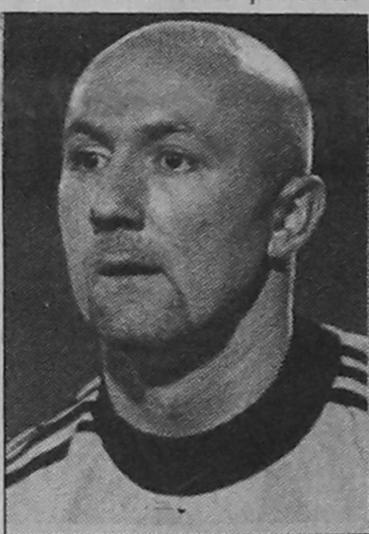
casions and neither was Alan.

"Sometimes you can play

AFP EURO 2000 BRIEFS



ZAGREB, May 29: France's World Cup winning goalkeeper Fabien Barthez left the national squad here early Monday to "sort out his future" French



BARTHEZ

(FFF) Claude Simonet said. that Barthez is ready to quit French champions Monaco

said to be after his signature. "The transfer market is very busy right now and we have asked Doctor Campora (Monaco

president) to take full responsibility for the player," said Simonet without revealing Barthez's next destination. The French team are coming off an impressive 2-0 win over Croatia Sunday and played a

Croatian second division side Monday without Barthez as the World Champions prepare for Euro 2000 which kicks off June 10 in Brussels.

Barthez recently denied reports linking him with English Premiership champions Manchester United and said he intends to stay with Monaco and see out his contract.

FRANCE COUNT ON LUCKY NUMBERS

PARIS: World champions France have proved the old adage that footballers are a superstitious breed by keeping their France 98 squad numbers for Euro 2000, to be co-staged by Holland and Belgium between June 10 and July 2, L'Equipe reported Sunday.

Aime Jacquet's World Cup winning squad will all wear the same numbers they were allocated for that successful cam- (Arsenal/Eng - 12). David

Goalkeepers: Fabien Barthez (Monaco - 16), Bernard Lama (Paris SG - 1), Ulrich Rame (Bordeaux + 22)

firm his squad on June 1

Defenders: Laurent Blanc (Inter Milan/Ita +, 5). Bixente Lizarazu (Bayern Munich/Ger -3), Marcel Desailly (Chelsea/Eng - 8). Frank Leboeuf (Chelsea/Eng - 18). Vincent Candela (Roma/Ita - 2), Lilian Thuram (Parma/Ita - 15)

Midfielders: Zinedine Zidane (Juventus/Ita - 10), Youri Djorkaeff (Kaiserlautern/Ger -Didier Deschamps (Chelsea/Eng - 7). Patrick Vieira (Arsenal/Eng - 4). Emmanuel Petit (Arsenal/Eng -17), Robert Pires (Marseille -The 18 surviving members of 11), Johan Micoud (Bordeaux -14), Christian Karembeu (Real Madrid/Spa - 19)

Forwards: Thierry Henry Trezeguet (Monaco - 20), Syl-The four newcomers will all vain Wiltord (Bordeaux - 13). take the jerseys vacated by the Christophe Dugarry (Bordeaux -France 98 quartet not selected 21), Nicolas Anelka (Real by Jacquet's successor Roger Madrid/Spa - 9)

The press agreed that Mi-

lutinovic would be under pres-

sure to produce results at the

Asian Cup in Lebanon next Oc-

drawn in a tough group with

Asian powerhouses South Ko-

Milutinovic has insisted the

big test will come in next year's

Hertha after

rookie Aussie

German First Division side

Hertha Berlin is reportedly at

the front of a queue of European

clubs keen to sign Yugoslav-

born Ivan Ergic, rated the most

exciting young talent in Aus-

was in Perth at the weekend to

see Ergic, 19, a dazzling mid-

fielder, figure in a match-win-

ning performance as Western

Australian side Perth Glory de-

feated the New South Wales

team, Wollongong Wolves, 2-0

to the grand final of the Aus-

tralian National Soccer league.

scored the second to help his

lieved Rober spoke to the

the former East German na-

tional coach -- admitted it

would be difficult to prevent Er-

team to win the two-leg tie 2-1.

Their victory takes the Glory

Ergic set up the first goal and

Reports here say it is be-

youngster's parents immedi-

Glory coach Bernd Stange --

in a crucial semi-final.

Hertha's coach Jurgen Rober

tralian soccer, reports AFP.

PERTH, Australia, May 29:

rea and Kuwait.

World Cup qualifiers.

Milutinovic hears the music



BEIJING, May 29 China's state media has ripped into the national team's renowned

coach Bora Mi lutinovic, castigating him for making "unbelievable" decisions following a friendly defeat by Yugoslavia, reports

The English-language China Daily said Milutinovic was following in the same mistaken steps as his predecessors --German Klaus Schlappner and Englishman Bobby Houghton. Reacting to last week's 2-0

loss to Yugoslavia in Beijing.

the paper questioned his team

selection and said he was wast-

ing too much time searching for his own players instead of taking advice. "All the unbelievable decisions made by the internationally well-known magic coach arouses people's memory about

his precedents," said the paper.

Chinese Football Association

"Despite advice from the

coaches would rather believe in their own judgement. The paper was particularly critical of his choice of reserve goalkeeper Li Wei, saying he had been selected on the basis of one club match where Milutinovic had left just before he

It noted that Yugoslavia's second goal -- a powerful drive by Darko Kovacevic who plays for Italian giants Juventus -came just two minutes after Li joined the fray. The paper said: "Milutinovic cannot even identify the na-

tional team members by their

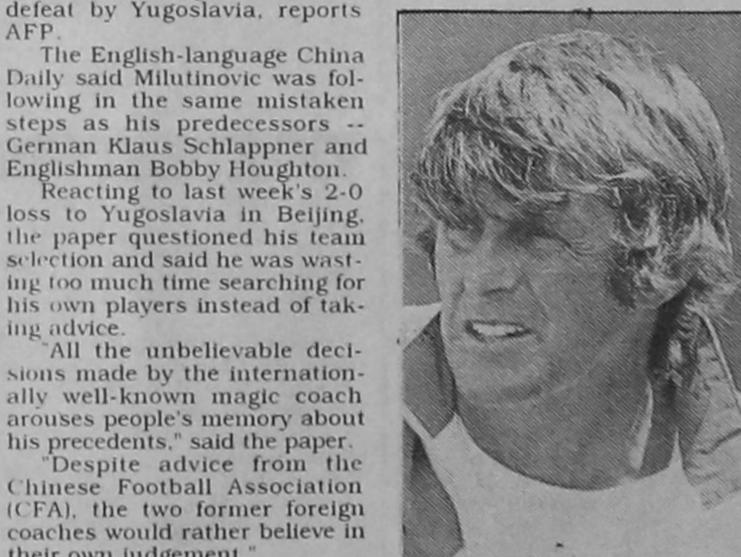
made a schoolboy error.

full names after nearly five months since his arrival." "Right now China is in desperate demand for nothing other than victories over South Korea and Japan to boost their low morale," it added.

Yugoslav Milutinovic is the only man to coach four different teams at the World Cup fi-

nals, and China is desperate to said the paper. seal one of the Asian berths when the championships are held in South Korea and Japan

in 2002. Despite a lively performance tober, even though China is against a powerful Yugoslav side, Milutinovic faced a tough inquisition.



MILUTINUVIC

But he insisted he was happy with the progress the side was making.

"When I first took on the Chinese team I was optimistic, after watching this match I'm more optimistic. You can't be unhappy just because you lose a match, but you must see how the match was lost," he said, pointing out his team created a hatful of chances. But the China Sports Daily

was also scathing in its judgement of the Chinese team, saying it was overwhelmed by the Yugoslavs' simple gameplan and technique. "Chinese soccer should learn

gic him going to Europe. "I know there are a lot of people with thick cheque books from overseas," he said. Stange said Ergic's performance in the crucial game had been fantastic.

ately after the match.

from the simplicity in which "It was amazing what he did." he said. "He was a matchthe Yugoslavs played. Chinese soccer is becoming too compliwinner, for sure, but he is just a cated in all aspects of the game," kid, don't forget it.

Shearer has been under microplay well against the best teams scope and has struggled to live in the world to do that. up to the expectations forged "Would I like to be known as over the performance against the world's best goalscorer? I the Argentinians in St Etienne wouldn't mind. Everybody does but I believe I can be.

during France '98.

well.

ally helps. "We had chances - but it's hard to judge a striker on games like England v Scotland or England v Sweden because I wasn't in the game much on those oc-

someone like Sweden away from home and get three kicks in the game and then it's hard to do anything as a striker. It's about getting quality service into the front players.

to Jacquet during the World

who takes the number nine jer-

sey from Stephane Guivarc'h.

Ulrich Rame (no 22 from Lionel

Charbonnier), Johan Micoud

ino 14 from injured Alain

Boghossian) and Sylvain

Wiltord (no 13 from Bernard

Lemerre will officially con-

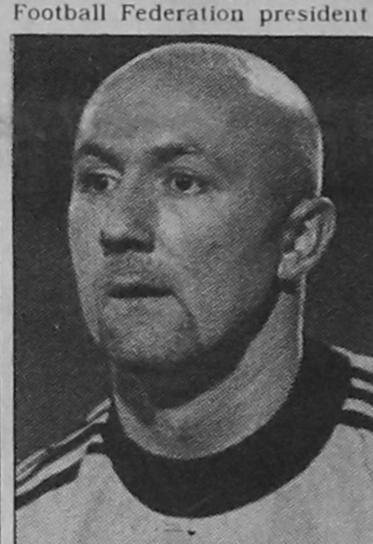
SQUAD(Jersy numbers in

Diomede).

These are Nicolas Anelka,

Lemerre, who was number two with English and Spanish clubs





Rumours have been swirling