

US Cup

Hosts wallop South Africa

WASHINGTON, June 4: Cobi Jones snapped out of a scoring slump with two first-half goals and the United States defeated South Africa 4-0 here Saturday in the opening match of the seventh US Cup football tournament.

The dreadlocked dynamo for the Los Angeles Galaxy has not scored in 10 Major League Soccer matches over the past two months. Before this year, he had not scored for the US team since 1996 but this year has five goals in six starts.

"He definitely played out of his skin. He had a point to prove," said South African forward Shaun Bartlett. "He played beyond his capabilities and we didn't play up to ours."

Jones scored in the 36th and 43rd minutes of his 127th cap, one shy of Marcelo Balboa's US record. Jones, who turns 30 in two weeks, was the youngest man in global football to reach 100 caps, doing so at age 27 in 1998.

Both goals came on left-footed efforts by the right-footed striker.

"Over the years you learn to use either foot," Jones said. "I've been doing the same things, trying to work hard up front. The first one opened up their defense a little bit. The second one broke their back."

The margin matched the largest rout in US Cup history, a 4-0 US triumph over Mexico in 1995.

"They really gave us a wake-up call," South Africa coach Trott Moloto said. "We really have to pick up from this."

To open the scoring, Jones dribbled left to the top of the penalty area and blasted a shot past South African goalkeeper Andre Arendse into the upper left corner of the net.

"The player marking me was telling me, 'Shoot it. Shoot it.' So I did," Jones said. "I think he was a little shocked after the fact."

Seven minutes later, an unguarded Jones took a pass from US captain Claudio Reyna and slammed a shot that deflected in off the outstretched fingertips of Arendse's right hand.

Reyna added a goal in the 65th minute off a centering pass from Jones, who also set up Earnie Stewart's goal in the 68th.

"He has been a good performer," US coach Bruce Arena said. "When he has Earnie and Claudio out there, he is a lot more comfortable. He knocked in two great balls with his left foot. What can you say? It was one of those days."

South Africa fell to 8-2 with one drawn this year. The US team rose to 4-1 with three drawn in its first triumph since February 1996, its first meeting with South Africa.

Three-time defending champion Mexico and Ireland meet Sunday in Chicago in the next match of the World Cup qualifying tuneup.

Other matches include US-Ireland on Tuesday in Foxboro, Massachusetts; Mexico-South Africa on Wednesday in Dallas and a US-Mexico and Ireland-South Africa doubleheader on June 11 at East Rutherford, New Jersey.

Hewitt being realistic

PARIS, June 4 (AFP): Australian teenage sensation Lleyton Hewitt may have reached the last 16 of the French Open - but he still doesn't give himself any chance of lifting the trophy next Sunday.

Hewitt, 19 and the winner of three tournaments already this year, believes he is still too inexperienced on clay to be considered as a realistic title contender.

No Australian has won the men's title here since Rod Laver in 1969.

"There is still a lot of learning to do and a lot more experience I can get out of this surface," Hewitt said after his emphatic 6-1, 6-4, 6-0 third-round win over Hungarian qualifier Attila Savolt.

"The big thing we are working on is hopefully two, three, four years down the track that someday I'll be holding up the trophy here."

"No matter what happens in the next week or so, this has been a great learning experience. I've learned a lot playing on these courts, the movement and being a lot more patient on it."

Hewitt, who is seeded in a Grand Slam for the first time, said he feels the tournament has already been a success for him.

"It is an unbelievable feeling to be through to the fourth round and whatever comes from now is a bonus," he said. He also made the last 16 at the Australian Open in January, but that was more expected on his favourite Rebound Ace surface.

"It is a little bit special to come here at such a young age and be in the fourth round," he said.

Hewitt, a feisty competitor, is a player who thrives on the big stage when the pressure is on. He played a key role in Australia's Davis Cup triumph last year.

"I don't have a lot of trouble motivating myself," he said. "Just three or four years ago I was at home watching these events on television. Sitting up late at night watching guys play here."

"I enjoy being out there, the centre of attention. I suppose, in a big arena, I'm not afraid of it all. I have very little fear when I go out there."



Jiri Nemec (R), the Czech Republic defender, tackling Germany's veteran play-maker Thomas Haessler during their Euro 2000 warm-up on June 3. —AFP photo

Warm-up

Czechs revisit 'Bearhoff nightmare'



NUREMBERG, Germany. June 4: Out of form Germany captain Oliver Bierhoff finally broke his goal drought Saturday evening and scored the winning goal in injury time as the host nation defeated the Czech Republic 3-2 in a Euro 2000 warm-up friendly, reports AFP.

Like four years ago in the final of the 1996 European championships, Oliver Bierhoff shattered the Czechs' hopes. At Euro 96, as a late substitute, he scored both of Germany's, including an extra time golden goal, to give Germany a 2-1 win at Wembley.

On Saturday too he entered the game from the bench and headed the winner from a Christian Ziege cross in the 90th minute.

Bierhoff, who broke his 543 minute dry spell on 62 minutes with a converted penalty, was demoted in favour of Bayern Munich striker Carsten Jancker who teamed up with Bayer Leverkusen's Paulo Rink.

Jancker opened the scoring

when accepted a lovely pass from defender Jens Nowotny in the 36th minute and then, back to the net, muscled off Czech defender Milan Fukal with a quick spin and shot.

The Czechs had no reason to hang their heads though and bounced back after the break. Jan Koller invited a Pavel Kuka run with a headed through-ball. Kuka, formerly of Kaiserslautern, slammed the bouncing ball powerfully to keeper Kahn's right from 16 metres.

Kuka's 54th minute equaliser prompted German coach Erich Ribbeck to make changes with goal scorer Jancker coming off for Bierhoff. A few minutes later Marco Bode was pulled to the ground. Starnes twin style by an overzealous Jiri Nemec. Knowing he had to make his mark or lose his place permanently Bierhoff scooped up the ball and marched to the penalty spot.

"We hadn't worked out beforehand who should take the penalties because we haven't had one for two years," the AC Milan striker said.

"I just grabbed the ball and said to myself, make or break. If I miss the press will tear me apart. If I put it in it will do me some good."

It's never nice to sit on the bench. Everyone wants to be in the starting line up. But, for the team's benefit, I have to accept

the decision, even if I don't like it."

The Czechs boldly struck back in the 80th minute through a 2-2 equaliser by Patrik Berger. Seconds after joining the fray the Liverpool midfielder converted a free kick which deflected off Michael Ballack's back in the German wall.

"In the end we were lucky to win but we still deserved to," Germany coach Ribbeck said, adding that he was especially delighted at Bierhoff's two goals.

"We have been under constant pressure. The players have just one goal though, to go as far as possible at the European championships. Our morale is good and we were the better side over long periods of time. When we get a 1-0 lead though we have to work more on holding that advantage and winning."

Germany can feel happy with Saturday's win after a lot of uninspired football in the last few years. They will complete their European championships warm up against tiny Liechtenstein in Freiburg on Wednesday before opening their Euro 2000 campaign against Rumania on June 12th.

The Czech Republic, who won all 10 of their Euro 2000 qualifying matches, will meet Holland on June 11th in their first championship game.

Emerson Germany's player of the year

BERLIN, June 4: Brazilian midfielder Emerson of Bundesliga runners-up Bayer Leverkusen was named German player of the year Sunday by a jury put together by the German daily paper Die Welt, reports AFP.

The jury which consisted of the 18 Bundesliga captains as well as national coach Erich Ribbeck gave Emerson a large majority ahead of teammate Jens Nowotny and goalkeeper Oliver Kahn of champions Bayern Munich.

The 24-year-old Emerson arrived at Leverkusen in 1997 from Brazilian First Division outfit Gremio Porto Alegre but has recently hinted that he wants to find a new club for next season.

Leverkusen are demanding between 22 and 27 million dollars for their midfield ace who is under contract until 2002 but Italian giants AS Roma are the player's preferred choice.

Roma who recently signed flamboyant Argentinian striker Gabriel Batistuta for 33.6 million dollars from rivals Fiorentina making him the second highest transfer ever are reluctant to meet Leverkusen's demands.

EURO 2000 WARM-UPS

UNDATED, June 4 (AFP): Sweden drew with Spain, Denmark also escaped with a tie against Belgium in warm-up matches between fellow qualifiers of the European Championship while another qualifier Slovenia did their reputation no harm by beating Saudi Arabia in friendlies across Europe on Saturday.

SWEDEN-1, SPAIN-1

GOTHENBURG: A penalty apiece separated Sweden and Spain in their warm-up for Euro 2000 here.

Spain had to make do without Raul, nursing an injured thigh, with Spanish coach Jose Antonio Camacho calling up Real Betis' Alfonso Perez to stand in for the Real Madrid striker.



But it was Josep Guardiola of Barcelona who got Spain's only goal, a penalty in the 43rd minute.

The Iberian visitors held the advantage until Real's 19-year-old Iker Casillas, making his international debut, fouled Yksel Osmanovski in the 75th minute with Sweden's equaliser coming from the penalty converted by Celtic's Henrik Larsson, who was returning to the national side after a nine month absence.

DENMARK-2, BELGIUM-2

COPENHAGEN: Legendary Danish goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel got on the score sheet here as Denmark and Belgium shared a 2-2 draw as both teams prepare for Euro 2000, which begins next week.

Schmeichel, a survivor of the Denmark team that astonished the football world by lifting the 1992 European title after getting a late invitation to replace sanctioned-hit Yugoslavia, converted on the hour mark after Danish defender Martin Larsen, who plays for Italian outfit Verona, had been fouled by Joos Valgaeren.

That put the Danes 2-1 ahead but veteran Belgian Marc Wilmots ensured the spoils were shared by putting a shot through Schmeichel's legs just 11 minutes later after superb work from Luc Nilis.

It was the second time Euro 2000 co-hosts Belgium had fought back. Lorenzo Staelens had earlier converted a 51st-minute penalty.

Staelens netted after a foul by Jesper Gronkjaer on Gert Verheyen to square the match after Jon Dahl Tomasson, set up by Gronkjaer, had put the Danes ahead after 37 minutes, beating Belgian goalkeeper Gert De Vlieger.

De Vlieger had replaced Filip De Wilde after 28 minutes in the Belgian goal.

Tomasson had earlier had a sixth-minute goal chalked off for offside.

Denmark dominated the early stages but then Emile Mpenza headed the ball against a bar before Branko Strupar hit the post in some hectic action for Belgium after 21 minutes.

SLOVENIA-2, SAUDI ARABIA-0

LJUBLJANA: Slovenia had little difficulty in passing their last test before Euro 2000, beating Saudi Arabia 2-0 in a football friendly here.

As they already demonstrated in a recent friendly against Hungary, the Saudis were fast in attack but weak in defence.

In the 16th minute Sulaiman fluffed a back pass to his goalkeeper and paid the price with Slovenia's Zlatko Zahovic pouncing on the mistake to open the scoring.

A minute after the break Zahovic passed to Acimovic, who netted from the edge of the box.

Slovenia's coach Srecko Katancic was more than satisfied with the performance of his players, many of whom looking tired from rather exhausting preparations for Euro 2000.

"Our rivals were quick, with good technique. We were better in the second half, especially in defence."



END OF A DREAM: Gianluigi Buffon (C), the Italian custodian, being examined by team doctor Andrea Ferretti (R) after injuring his left hand during a Euro 2000 warm-up match against Norway at Oslo on June 3. Buffon was later declared unfit for the championship which begins on June 10. —AFP photo

Warm-up

Carew exposes Italy



Ferretti declared the Parma custodian unfit for the Euro Championship.

"Buffon is suffering from a fracture to the third metacarpal bone in the left hand," said Ferretti. "This injury will need at least a month's rest, that's why we have been forced to stop him (going to Euro)."

Buffon, replaced by Fiorentina's Francesco Toldo was sent to hospital in Oslo for an examination with Zoff initially playing down the injury.

Zoff's initial confidence was premature and x-rays taken in an Oslo clinic showed up the fracture.

AC Milan goalkeeper Christian Abbiati will now join Fiorentina's Francesco Toldo and Roma's Francesco Antonioli in the 22-man squad of the tournament in Holland and Belgium - Euro 2000 rules allow for an addition to the named squad when an injury can be certified medically.

"We have already warned UEFA to amend the list of 22 squad members as is provided for in the rules in the case of injury," Italian spokesman Antonello Valentini said after Ferretti's diagnosis.

Carew's strike was more

than the giant forward had deserved after terrorising even experienced defenders such as Paolo Maldini with Chelsea striker Tore Andre Flo also providing an aerial threat for the Scandinavians.

The other hero of Norway's victory was Leeds United midfielder Eirik Bakke, whose industrious display was marred only by a booking after 15 minutes.

Zoff had reverted to a 4-4-2 system after recent experiments with a three-pronged attack.

Stefano Fiore, however, failed to seize the chance to impress and was replaced in the second half by Alessandro Del Piero of Juventus who then joined Francesco Totti and Filippo Inzaghi up front as Zoff again reverted to 4-3-3.

Fiore's only real intervention was a 40-year-old freekick which was easily held by Norway keeper Thomas Myhre, tipped to pip Frode Olsen to the goalkeeping spot in Euro.

Totti had an impressive game for Italy who otherwise lacked any real threat.

Italy play alongside co-hosts Belgium, Sweden and Turkey in Group B in Euro 2000 while Norway are joined by Spain, Yugoslavia and Slovenia in Group C.

Warm-up

England survive Malta scare



from the spot. But Brasci insisted the penalty must be retaken. This time Carabott's shot came back off the woodwork but went in off Wright, who last week scored an own goal for club side Ipswich at Wembley.

But Carabott claimed the goal, a first for a Maltese player against England.

Napoli back in Serie A

ROME, June 4: Former Serie A champions Napoli returned to the top flight on Sunday when they beat Pistoia 1-0 in the penultimate match in Serie B clinching automatic promotion, reports AFP.

Led by Argentine legend Diego Maradona, Napoli lifted the Italian title in 1987 and 1990 but have spent the last two seasons in Serie B.

A goal from centre-forward Stefan Schwoch in the 25th minute guaranteed a party in the southern Italian city as well as in Pistoia where thousands of Neapolitans made the trip to support their heroes.

A pitch invasion just 12 minutes from time delayed the festivities but club president Corrado Ferlaino appealed for calm and Napoli held on for their famous victory.

In the second half it was Liverpool striker Emile Heskey who came up with the vital winner, netting from point-blank range after good work from Everton's Nick Bamby, who was a revelation in the left flank role that has been something of a problem for England.

Many expected Steve McManaman of Real Madrid to fill that berth but Bamby's performance Saturday could provide another option.

Alan Shearer, Paul Scholes and Robbie Fowler had all squandered gilt-edged chances for England.

Carabott could have levelled the match for Malta three minutes from time when the islanders were awarded a second spot kick, again with Wright the culprit.

But this time the young custodian redeemed himself with a save.

It was enough to ensure England, drawn in Euro 2000 Group A alongside Germany, Portugal and Romania, can travel to Holland and Belgium without embarrassment.

"People will say if we play like that we can't win Euro 2000 and that's right. We are better than that. It was just a little stutter hopefully. We are a better team than Malta," said England coach Kevin Keegan.

"It was disappointing but it's not the end of the world."

South American qualifiers

Paraguay, Uruguay sail



MONTEVIDEO, June 4: Home victories for Paraguay and Uruguay in South American World Cup 2002 qualifiers have created a log jam at the top of the group standings ahead of key games Sunday featuring Argentina at home to Bolivia and Brazil away to Peru, reports AFP.

Paraguay had little trouble taming Ecuador in Asuncion, opening the scoring through Delio Toledo after just 10 minutes before two goals either side of half-time from Hugo Brizuela gave the Paraguayans a comfortable 3-0 lead.

Ecuador pulled a goal back when substitute Ariel Graziani found the mark with five minutes remaining but it wasn't enough to stop Paraguay picking up their second consecutive victory after an opening round 2-0 defeat against Peru.

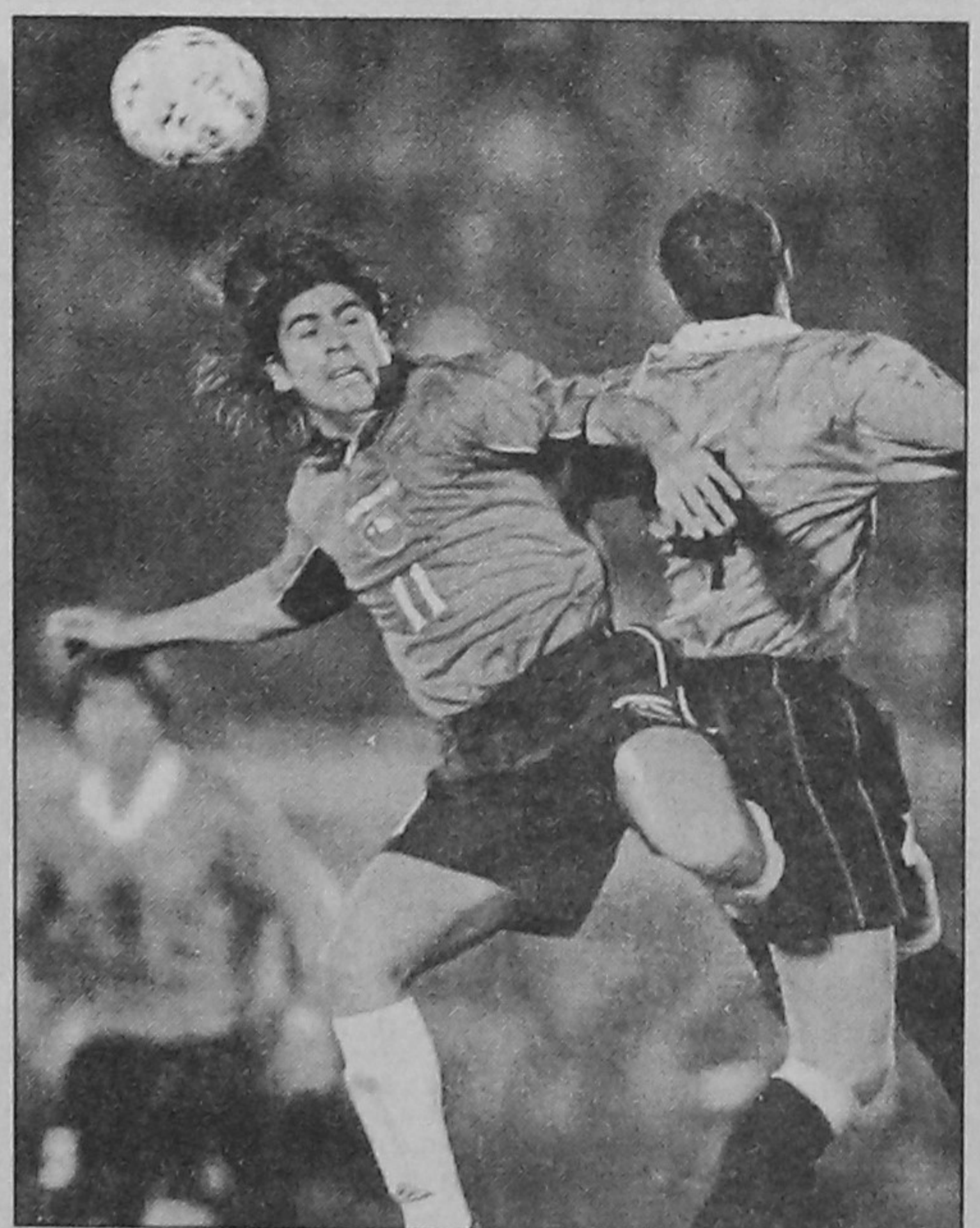
In Montevideo, Uruguay joined Paraguay and Argentina at the top of the group with a hard fought 2-1 victory over Chile which left the beaten visitors on one point.

It will be an uphill task now for Chile to qualify for football's biggest extravaganza in Japan and South Korea when the World Cup kicks off in two years time.

A tense opening half-hour suddenly saw the game burst into life with three goals in six minutes.

Dario Silva opened the scoring for Uruguay in the 35th minute before Chilean star Ivan Zamorano equalised from the penalty spot four minutes later.

Chile were hoping to get to the locker-room on even terms but Paolo Montero buried



Chilean superstar Marcelo Salas (L) locked in an aerial tussle with Uruguay's Gustavo Mendez during their World Cup 2002 qualifier at Montevideo on June 3. —AFP photo



Peter Schmeichel (C), the champion Danish goalkeeper, being congratulated by teammates after scoring from the penalty spot against Belgium during a Euro 2000 warm-up match at Copenhagen on June 3. —AFP photo