



EUROPEAN FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP 2000



Carry-on incentive for Shearer

CHARLEROI, Belgium, June 18: England coach Kevin Keegan watched Alan Shearer's match-winning performance against Germany at Euro 2000 Saturday and promptly offered him the captaincy for their 2002 World Cup campaign, reports AFP.

Shearer has said that he will retire from international soccer after this tournament - but England coach Kevin Keegan made it clear here on Saturday night that he wanted the centre-forward to re-think his decision.

The Newcastle idol, top scorer at Euro 96, came in for heavy criticism during England's protracted campaign to qualify for these finals.

But Keegan took the opportunity to strike back at his skipper's tormentors during the post-match press conference - and also put a question mark over his skipper's decision to quit.

"Alan Shearer has answered his critics again, just give him two or three days before you start on him again in the English press, will you?" Keegan said, warming up to his theme.

"You've knocked him, you've pummelled him, you've questioned his right to be in the side, you've questioned his right to be captain. He's never ever given anything but 100 percent when he's pulled on that shirt."

"He did it again tonight. He got his goal and tried to prove a lot of people wrong."

"And when you look back at some of the pieces that the English journalists have written over the last year, you people are responsible for Alan Shearer retiring from international football."

"Not Alan, not me. You people are. Because nobody can take a pummelling like that and keep coming back for more. I don't care if he's the greatest boxer in the world, you haven't given him a chance some of you people."

"But he's never complained. I'm saying that for him. He'll come in here and say totally the opposite, because I think he's a man among men. And that's why he captains my England side."

"And if he changed his mind, he would captain my England side - if I'm still manager - when we start our campaign in the World Cup qualifying."

Shearer, still only 29, has no plans to retire from club football.

Once the most expensive player in the world after a 15 million pounds (23 million dollar) move from Blackburn Rovers to his home town club Newcastle he is still one of the top scorers in English football.

Trap eying Ribbeck's job

BERLIN, June 18: Former Bayern Munich coach Giovanni Trapattoni has said he would be interested in succeeding Erich Ribbeck if he is fired as Germany's manager after the Euro 2000 finals, reports AFP.

The 0-1 loss to England on Saturday has left the Germans only a slender lifeline in the finals, and Ribbeck had already come under withering criticism from the press in the buildup to the tournament.

"It would be a great honour for me, if the German football Federation were to ask me" the 61-year-old Trapattoni told Welt am Sonntag.

Trapattoni also said he would be interested in taking over the Italian team, but he pointed out that Dino Zoff was under contract until 2002.

"I am not finished yet. The fire is still within me. Getting out there on the training field still gives me great pleasure," he said.

Posh wants David to quit!

LONDON, June 18: England star David Beckham is under pressure from his Spice Girl wife Victoria to quit from football so as to spare the family the abuse and threats that have been heaped on them, the Sunday Mirror reported, reports AFP.

Citing a friend of Britain's most glamorous couple, the Mirror said Victoria Beckham, otherwise known as Posh Spice, was shaken by the treatment meted out to both her and Beckham after England's defeat against Portugal last Monday.

David Beckham was subjected to taunts from the crowd, and responded with a one-finger salute. His wife meanwhile was confronted by a drunken mob at the ground in Eindhoven, the Mirror reported.

"She and David have had so many problems with taunts and stalkers, it was all too much for her," the Mirror cited the family friend as saying. "She knows how much David loves his football but she wonders whether it is all worth it."

The family have previously been targeted by death threats.



SUPER-SUB: Costinha (L) of Portugal, who came in as a substitute against Romania, is ecstatic after scoring the match-winner in injury time on June 17. Teammate Gorge Costa joins in the celebration.

— AFP photo

Portugal leave it very late

ARNHEM, Netherlands, June 18: Portugal booked a place in the quarter-finals of Euro 2000 when substitute Costinha grabbed an injury-time goal to defeat Group A rivals Romania 1-0 here Saturday, reports AFP.

After a dire match where there seemed little prospect of a goal for either side Portugal won a late freekick in the fourth minute of injury time.

Luis Figo floated the ball into the Romanian penalty area and Costinha's header found the back of the net with Romania goalkeeper Bogdan Stelea stranded.

Costinha's strike was greeted with jubilation on the Portuguese bench and came as time had virtually run out - the fourth official had signalled for four minutes of injury time.

Romania only just had time to kick off before French referee Gilles Veissiere blew for time and now the Romanians need to beat England and hope Group A winners Portugal see off the German challenge if they are to progress.

Portugal join Italy, France and Holland in the quarter-finals.

"It's a great joy to have given my team and my country a victory which takes them to the quarter-finals. It's fantastic. My header? I can't say anything in particular. I saw the ball coming and I just headed it with all the power I could muster," said Costinha.

Portugal's coach Humberto

Coelho said: "It was a very tough match for us. We had a lot of luck to score the goal in the last minute and to win the game."

"Our victory against England raised great expectations. Today's was a totally different match, however."

His Romanian opposite number Emerich Jenei said: "It

was a match with two very evenly-matched teams. It was not much of a spectacle but it was interesting."

"Unfortunately we lost it in the last minute, in fact practically in the last seconds."

Goalmouth incidents were hard to come by in a match that was set to vie with the Turkey v Sweden 0-0 draw in Group B for the dubious accolade of most boring match of the tournament until Costinha's late strike.

The breathtaking Portuguese football that had defeated England 3-2 in their Group A opener was noticeable only by its absence and after 57 minutes Coelho made a double substitution with Ricardo Sa Pinto and Sergio Conceicao replacing Nuno Gomes and Joao Pinto.

His later replacement - withdrawing Manuel Rui Costa for Costinha - proved decisive although the goal came from route one rather than the fluent football that marked the England win.

Minutes before the goal Romania coach Emerich Jenei also made changes with Florentin Petre and Ionel Ganea replacing Dan Petrescu and Moldovan and Dumitru Rosu stepping in for Andrew Ilie.

Hagi will be ruled out of the must-win fixture with England after picking up his second yellow card of the tournament and this match may well be the last of his illustrious career for the national team - he has said he will quit the Romanian team after Euro 2000.

Portugal had shaded the first half with Nuno Gomes firing an early shot wide after being set up by Figo.

In the second period Portugal fared less well and threatened rarely.

Fernando Couto set up a good opportunity for Sa Pinto but the striker headed straight at Steleia who had another poor game in the Romanian goal and whose positioning was questionable for Costinha's strike.

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