

## Deschamps not retiring

PARIS, July 4: France captain Didier Deschamps was prevented from announcing his retirement from international football immediately after the Euro 2000 Final 2-1 victory over Italy by an impassioned plea from coach Roger Lemerre, reports AFP.

Deschamps and Lemerre were filmed having a long and animated conversation in the middle of the pitch at Rotterdam's De Kuip Stadium just after the presentation of the trophy and LCI TV channel employed a lip-reader to decipher the conversation.

The lip-reader said that Lemerre told Deschamps not to make his planned announcement after the match and instead begged him to take time to reflect.

Deschamps has apparently heeded the advice - he has not yet made any pronouncement on his future.

Later at the post-match press conference Lemerre made a public plea for his captain not to follow defender Laurent Blanc into retirement.

Lemerre seemed to be pleading with his captain and he said later: "A team needs a great general. Deschamps was a great general Sunday evening and I hope he will stay on for a long time."

It was indeed an impressive performance by Deschamps who is the most honoured French footballer in history.

As well as a Euro 2000 medal, he skipped the World Cup winning side and has won the European Cup with both Marseille and Juventus.

He has also won a galaxy of domestic titles with Marseille and Juventus and in May added an English FA Cup winners medal with Chelsea. In the semi-final with Portugal he became the first Frenchman to win 100 caps.

## Double delight for Petit

PARIS, July 4: France midfielder Emmanuel Petit will marry actress Agathe de la Fontaine at 5:00 p.m. (1500 GMT), his future wife announced Monday - insisting she was not joking, reports AFP.

Less than an hour before the announced time of the wedding Petit was still lapping up the applause of the crowd in the Place de la Concorde following the French team's return from its victorious Euro 2000 campaign.

de la Fontaine was speaking to TF1 TV channel on the balcony of the Hotel Crillon in the Place de la Concorde where the France team were being greeted by their fans after their arrival from Rotterdam.

Asked if she was joking she said: "No, no!"

But the actress would not reveal where the civil wedding would take place.

## Mandela doing his bit

JOHANNESBURG, July 4: Former South African President Nelson Mandela said Tuesday he would be contacting two countries whose votes were crucial for South Africa's bid to stage the 2006 World Cup, reports AFP.

"I don't think we should exaggerate our position because there are 25 countries that are going to vote and I think we are only sure of about 12," said Mandela.

"If we are able to get one more, then we can say confidently that we will win, but it is not clear."

"There is still this hurdle that we have to overcome to be sure that we'll be able to get at least 13 of the members of the committee who are going to vote."

"These two days are going to be crucial to try and get that 13 number," said Mandela, with the final decision being taken by FIFA's 24-man executive board meets on Thursday in Zurich.

"I have been asked both by the minister of sports as well as by Danny Jordaan (South Africa World Cup bid chief executive) to phone two countries which I'm busy with."

"But it may be better for us not to talk about and identify the countries in public, but we'll be speaking to them," he said.

Mandela said the World Cup would be a huge boost to South Africa's economy and create much-needed jobs in a country struggling with a jobless rate nearing 40 percent.

"It will lead to the uplifting of not only of our people but will also contribute to the growth of our economy," Mandela added.



SHOWING OFF THE SILVERWARE: French skipper Didier Deschamps (C) holds aloft the European Cup while his teammates acknowledge the applause from fans at the Place de la Concorde in Paris on July 3.

# Smashing welcome for conquerors of Europe



PARIS, July 4: France's footballers were given a rapturous reception here on Monday as they showed off the latest addition to their trophy cabinet, reports AFP.

More than 35,000 people packed into the central Place de la Concorde desperate to catch a glimpse of the Henri Delaunay cup, which the Euro 2000 champions showed off from the balcony of the five-star Hotel Crillon on the Place de la Concorde.

The balcony was draped for the occasion with a giant blue football shirt, which fluttered in the breeze as midfielder Youri Djorkaeff was the first to raise the cup above his head.

The players, looking relaxed in T-shirts with their winners' medals hanging around their necks, took it in turns to display the cup, their reward for the dramatic 2-1 victory over Italy in Sunday night's final in Rotterdam.

Then it was the turn of the wives to get in on the act and one of the biggest cheers was reserved for blonde supermodel Adriana Karenbeu, wife of Middlesbrough midfielder, Christian.

Zinedine Zidane, the team's inspiration throughout the tournament, appeared on the balcony with a new look, having shaved his already balding head overnight, leaving only a grey shadow of hair on his scalp.

One man who will have even greater cause to remember the day is Emmanuel Petit, even though he had missed the final.

Petit slipped away from the celebrations early with his fiancée Agathe de la Fontaine, as they had a prior engagement - they were getting married.

Steady rain which had threat-

ened to dampen the celebrations cleared and by the time the players appeared on the balcony they were greeted by bright sunlight and loud cheers.

Even so, the scenes of jubilation were more muted than the celebrations which greeted the World Cup final victory over Brazil in July 1998, when the team paraded the trophy along the Champs Elysees.

The country woke up with a collective hangover on Monday morning after the all-night revelry which greeted the historic triumph in Rotterdam on Sunday night.

The celebrations were triggered when David Trezeguet's Golden Goal gave France the unique honour of being the first nation to add the European Cup to the World Cup.

The Champs Elysees was packed to bursting point with an estimated 400,000 people singing and dancing the night away, scenes repeated in major cities up and down the country.

The festival was marred by a small minority of fans who clashed with riot police, smashed shop windows, wrecked parked cars and hurled bottles into the crowd.

Police had to use tear gas to quell the growing riot and disperse a mob of around 400 youths.

More than 50 policemen suffered minor injuries during the clashes, and one officer was treated in hospital for serious head wounds after being hit by flying bottles. About 30 people were arrested.

Elsewhere, in the southern city of Marseille, several people were injured and a number arrested after the celebrations around the Old Port turned sour and fighting broke out.

The live broadcast of the match on French TV station TF1 drew a record audience of more than 21 million, rising to 24.8 million at the peak of the action, bigger even than the World Cup.

That curious statistic can be partially explained by the fact that the World Cup final was in the middle of the annual holiday period in France, which is only just beginning this year.

French President Jacques Chirac, who was in the stands for the game and professed himself 'proud of France, for the French people' afterwards, will host a dinner for the victorious squad at the Elysee Palace on August 31, after the summer holidays, his office announced on Monday.

The French press reflected the general mood of euphoria in the country with screaming headlines in praise of the conquering heroes.

Le Parisien summed up the achievement with the single word 'Invincible!', while France-Soir went even further into the realms of hyperbole when it dubbed the team 'Champions of the Universe'.

THEY ARE THAT BIG: A giant French national team jersey is hung from the top of Hotel Crillon at Place de la Concorde on July 3 during celebrations of the Euro 2000 triumph.

## Bid for World Cup 2006

# Smiles in South Africa as Brazil pull out

ZURICH, Switzerland, July 4: South Africa's hopes of winning the bitter battle to host the 2006 World Cup were boosted on Monday when Brazil announced they were pulling out of the race, reports AFP.

Their decision now pits two African countries - South Africa and Morocco - against two European countries - Germany and England.

Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) president Ricardo Teixeira forecast an easy win for South Africa.

"South Africa will win, possibly in the first round," announced Teixeira.

"We will vote for South Africa and in return they will support us in 2010," he added.

South African bid leader Danny Jordaan was clearly delighted with the news from Rio.

"Certainly we are very happy that there is now a single focus between Africa and Europe and

not a third continent involved in the contest. Now it is a question of whether FIFA gives Europe 10 World Cups and Africa nothing," said Jordaan.

But Jordaan stressed that despite the boost from Brazil, the South African campaign would go on right to the end on Thursday when FIFA's 24-man executive committee vote on 2006.

"South Africa's 2006 campaign is taking nothing for granted and will continue to press its case until the very last moment," he said.

The news of Brazilian support for South Africa is gloomy news for both England and Germany.

England face humiliation on Thursday as they can only count on two votes. Germany are hoping to pick up the eight European votes once England are ruled out, and the support of New Zealand's Charlie Dempsey, but they are struggling to gather the four other votes needed to reach the magic number 13.

South Africa only need 12 votes as FIFA president Sepp

Blatter carries a casting vote and he has made it clear both publicly and privately that he favours South Africa.

South Africa and Brazil have been in talks for months to reach an accord. If Africa win the 2006 World Cup and de-facto type of rotation will have been put in place, South America can argue that 2010 will be their turn.

Sources have confirmed to AFP that the deal was brokered between the African Football Confederation (CAF) and the South American Football Confederation (CONMEBOL).

"South Africa, for now, will not have a member on the FIFA executive committee when the 2010 vote is taken in 2004. Brazil are not going to give away their vote unless they are sure of African support for 2010 and that can only come from CAF, who has four seats on the executive committee," said the source.

Morocco at present can only muster three to four votes and are likely to be knocked out in the second round but there are grow-

ing reports that pressure is being put on the North Africans to withdraw and throw their weight behind South Africa and a united African bid.

But with only three days before the vote there is no sign of Morocco backing down in what is their third straight attempt to win the richest prize in football.

## Asia's votes to be decisive

ZURICH, Switzerland, July 4: Asia's four FIFA executive committee members hold the key to South Africa pulling off a stunning victory in the battle to host the 2006 World Cup.

The four, South Korea's Chung Mong-Jung, Thailand's Worawi Makudi, Saudi Arabia's Abdullah Al-Dabal and Qatar's Mohamed Bin Hammam, meet here Tuesday night to decide whether to throw their full support behind the South Africans.

## Women's Gold Cup Hosts lift title

FOXBORO, Massachusetts, July 4: Tiffeny Milbrett's 44th-minute strike was enough to give the United States a 1-0 victory over Brazil Monday and the first Women's Gold Cup crown, reports AFP.

Milbrett claimed her 76th international goal in 147 appearances with a left-footed blast from 12 yards out after a crisp pass from Mia Hamm.

"I just found myself open in the penalty area, and I thought, 'If Mia could just get the ball to me,'" Milbrett said.

"She had the great sight to get the ball to me and I just took a whack at it."

Siri Mullinix staked her claim to the starting US goalkeeper's job as the Olympics approach with five saves for her 10th clean sheet.

Mullinix originally inherited the role in place of injured World Cup hero Briana Scurry.

"I think we all get a sense that Siri Mullinix is playing big-time soccer," US coach April Heinrichs said of the keeper, who demonstrated her athleticism in the 60th minute when she dived and rolled to clear the ball in front of a closing Cindy Lin.

Brazil reached the final by beating China -- who had been expected to reach the final and make it a re-match of the 1999 Women's World Cup final won by the United States.

China earned third place earlier Monday with a 2-1 victory over Canada.

Qiu Haiyan scoring the game-winner in the 73rd minute, benefiting from a defensive mix-up that let her gain control of Pan Lina's long ball into the penalty area.

Canadian goalkeeper Nicky Wright came off her line sluggishly, and neither she nor two Canadian defenders could control the ball, leaving Qiu to grab her second goal of the tournament.

Jin Yan had given China a 1-0 lead in the 42nd minute, racing from the left onto a ball put through by Shui Qingxia and firing a left-footed shot through Wright's feet.

Charmaine Hooper converted a penalty in the 58th as the Canadians made the 1999 Women's World Cup runners-up work hard for the victory.

## Holland may bid for WC 2010

THE HAGUE, July 4: Holland are considering making a bid to stage the 2010 World Cup, Dutch Secretary of State for Sport Margo Vliegthart said Monday, reports AFP.

Vliegthart was speaking the day after the end of what is seen as a successful Euro 2000 co-hosted by Holland and Belgium.

Asked what the next project for the Dutch sports ministry would be Vliegthart replied: "The World Cup is a possibility but it could not be before 2010. We have proved we are capable of hosting the third biggest sports event in the world after the World Cup and the Olympics."

The venue for the 2006 World Cup will be named on Thursday with South Africa, Morocco, Germany, England the four candidates.

## Pires signs deal with Gunners

PARIS, July 4: France's World Cup and Euro 2000 winning midfielder Robert Pires has signed a four-year contract with English Premiership side Arsenal, he told France 2 TV channel Monday, reports AFP.

"I have signed a four-year deal with Arsenal. I am happy. I have a new club and I am happy to link up again with my French friends," said Pires in a reference to the large French contingent at Arsenal who are coached by Arsene Wenger, who hails from Alsace.

Simultaneously Arsenal released a statement confirming the signing of the Marseille playmaker alongside an earlier deal for Brazilian Edu, signed from World Club champions Corinthians of Sao Paulo.

Arsenal had faced a tough battle with Real Madrid to capture the services of Pires, who first came to prominence with Metz.

Pires joins fellow World Cup and Euro 2000 winners Emmanuel Petit, Patrick Vieira and Thierry Henry at the London club.

It was Pires who set up the Golden Goal for David Trezeguet in Sunday's 2-1 Euro 2000 Final victory over Italy in Rotterdam.



An AFP file photo of French international midfielder Robert Pires who has signed a four-year contract with English Premiership giants Arsenal.

# Now they take the World Cup road

PARIS, July 4 (AFP): No sooner is it over than it starts again for Europe's footballers.

World Cup 2002 in Japan and South Korea may be two years away, but the qualifiers kick-off with the new season and run through until October 2001.

First up are mighty minnows Andorra against Estonia on August 16 in Group 2, but there are several intriguing match-ups involving teams which soared or slumped at the Euro 2000 finals.

Top of the card must be the new clash between old enemies England and Germany in Group 9.

Both teams had miserable campaigns in Belgium and the Netherlands, failing to reach the quarter-finals and enduring scathing criticism over their level of play.

German coach Erich Ribbeck stood down the day after his ageing side crashed out of the tournament with a humiliating 0-3 loss to a second string Portuguese side.

He left German football in a state of crisis with calls for the resignation of the entire German Football Federation and a complete revamp of the national side.

In an unprecedented move, two men -- Rudi Voller and Christophe Daum -- have been named as joint coaches to usher in a new era.

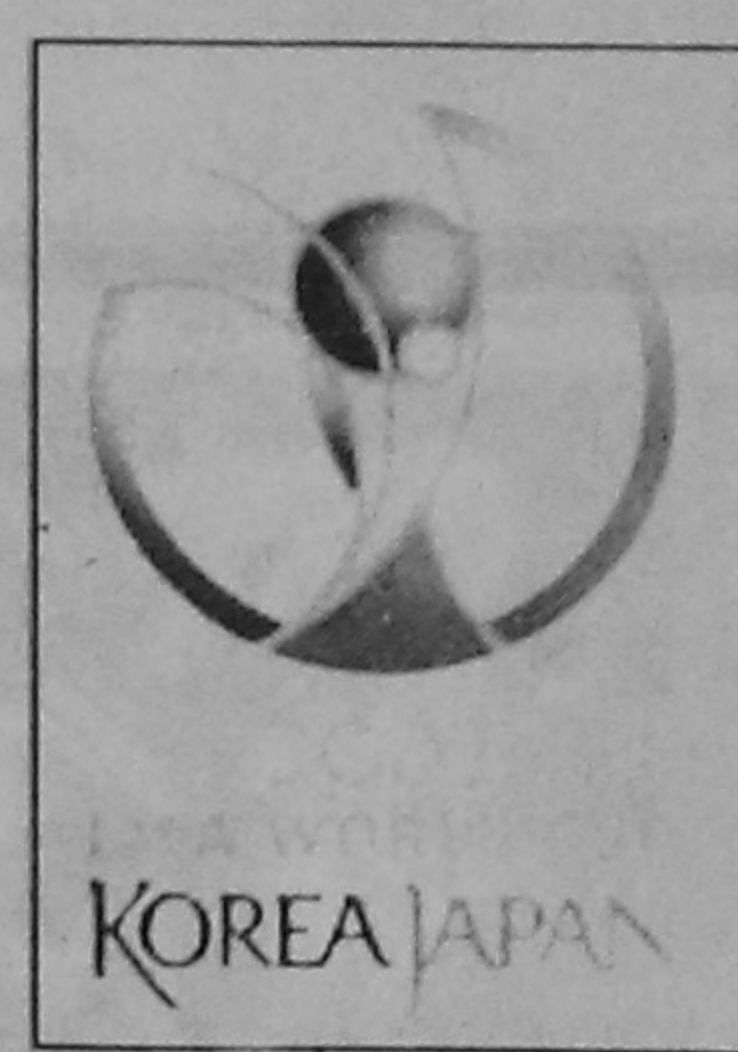
England's Kevin Keegan survived, but only just, after his side were badly mauled by both Portugal and Romania, but he will take some consolation from the 1-0 win over the Germans at Charleroi.

Neither side will have much time to take stock of things as they are scheduled to meet at Wembley on October 7 in a match which will go a long way to deciding who will go through to the finals.

As chance would have it Group 2 opposes the two beaten semi-finalists at Euro 2000 - Holland and Portugal.

The Portuguese will have to do without three suspended players for their opening matches, notably a crunch game against the Dutch in Amsterdam on October 11.

Wing back Abel Xavier, midfielder Paulo Bento and striker Nuno Gomes were all suspended by UEFA for their part in the fracas that followed the



awarding of a match-winning penalty to France three minutes from the end of extra time in the semi-finals.

Holland are looking for a new manager, Frank Rijkaard having resigned minutes after his side lost on penalties to Italy in the other semi-final. The likeliest scenario is that sacked Barcelona boss Louis van Gaal will be given the job.

Striker Dennis Bergkamp is another who will be missing having announced that he is retiring from international football.

Group 8 will see a rematch of the Euro 2000 quarter-finals in which Italy defeated Romania 2-0 with two first half goals.

The Italians will need time to get over the trauma of the extra-time loss to France in the Euro 2000 final, but coach Dino Zoff has put together an impressive side in the best of Italian traditions.

Once injured star striker Christian Vieri is back in action to supply much-needed firepower up front, the Italians will be even harder to stop.

For the first time in many years, Romania will have to do without their 'Player of the Century' Gheorghe Hagi who sadly brought down the curtain on his international career by being sent off against the Italians.

But they showed enough in the England game, when they were also without the suspended Hagi, to suggest that they are more than a one-man outfit and that qualifi-

cation for a fourth straight World Cup finals is a distinct possibility.

One of the most exciting games at Euro 2000 was the roller-coaster 3-3 draw in the group stages between Yugoslavia and Slovenia and these two teams will rejoin battle in Group 1.

In the Charleroi match, rank outsiders Slovenia went 3-0 up and Yugoslavia were down to 10 men before they launched a stunning comeback to draw level with three goals in seven minutes.

But in a tough group which also includes Russia and Switzerland, the two sides are not due to be at each others' throats again until March 28, 2001.

Denmark and the Czech Republic played out a meaningless final game at Liege (won 2-0 by the Czechs) after both had lost twice to France and the Netherlands and much more will be at stake in their two Group 3 games.

The Czechs, unlucky to go out after playing some fine football against the French and the Dutch will be looking to recapture their form in qualifying for Euro 2000 when they won 10 out of 10 scoring 26 and conceding just five.

Former Ajax player Morten Olsen is taking over the reins in Copenhagen after the resignation of Bo Johansson and he is expected to introduce some swinging changes after the Danes finished worst team at Euro 2000 with eight goals against and none scored in three straight defeats.

The other match-up of Euro 2000 sides is in Group 4 where Turkey and Sweden will be in opposition.

The two sides played out a dire 0-0 draw in Eindhoven, but Turkey went on for the first time to reach the quarter finals of a major competition by defeating hosts Belgium 2-0.

They will have a new manager with former international goalkeeper Senol Gunes taking over from Mustafa Denizli who has agreed to coach Istanbul side Fenerbahce.

Of the other Euro 2000 sides, champions France qualify for the 2002 finals as world cup winners, Belgium are in with Scotland and Croatia in Group 6, Spain have Austria and Israel in Group 7 and Norway go up against Ukraine and Poland in Group 5.

## Upset Zoff resigns

ROME, July 4: Italy coach Dino Zoff announced Tuesday that he was resigning following his team's dramatic 2-1 Golden Goal defeat by France in Sunday's Euro 2000 final, reports AFP.

He became the fifth coach to quit after European championship defeats and follows Germany's Erich Ribbeck, Turkey's Mustafa Denizli, Dutch trainer Frank Rijkaard and Portugal's Humberto Coelho.

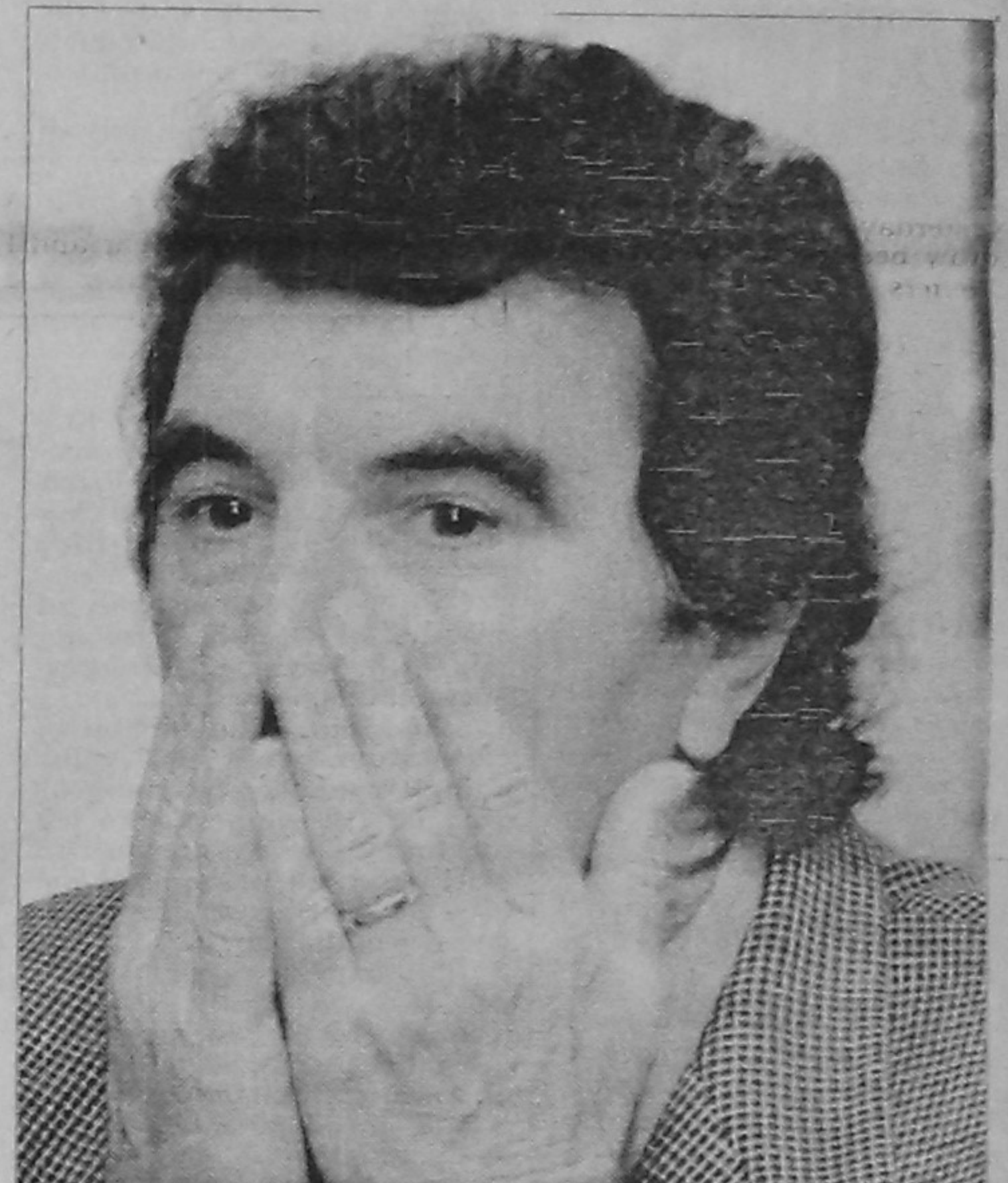
The resignation comes following a scathing attack launched Monday against Zoff by Silvio Berlusconi, the AC Milan president and former Italian Prime Minister.

"I was offended as a man. I am not taking lessons in dignity from Berlusconi," Zoff told a press conference announcing his decision.

Berlusconi described him as a "dilettante" - an Italian word used to describe someone who is unprofessional in their approach.

"He has behaved like a dilettante," said Berlusconi, who described Zoff's behaviour during Euro 2000 as 'unworthy'.

Zoff, who exceeded all expectations by taking Italy to the Euro 2000 final, added: "I know what will happen. It will be said that I benefited from the occasion, I know that my image will



Italy coach Dino Zoff hides his face during press conference in Rome yesterday where he announced that he was stepping down. -AFP photo

not come out of this unscathed, I have experience of this. But I don't want to continue."

Zoff, with 112 caps for the Squadra Azzurra and goalkeeper for the victorious 1982 World Cup side, has held the positions

since Italy's elimination from the 1998 World Cup by France.

The 58-year-old admitted that Sunday's heartbreaking 2-1 defeat was one of the worst moments of his illustrious career.

## World Cup 2006 bidding

# Germans furious at CBF decision

ZURICH, Switzerland, July 4: German bid leader Franz Beckenbauer angrily hit out here on Tuesday at this week's deal between South Africa and Brazil to give the African nation the 2006 World Cup, reports AFP.

Germany had been neck and neck with the South Africans as the two nations lobbied ahead of Thursday's decisive vote by the FIFA executive committee.

England and Morocco, the two other countries trying to win the biggest prize in football, are considered no hopes.

On Monday Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) president Ricardo Teixeira forecast an easy win for South Africa after announcing his country's withdrawal.

"South Africa will win, possibly in the first round," said Teixeira, who can deliver three votes.

"We will vote for South Africa and in return they will support us in 2010," he added.

Beckenbauer described the private deal between the two as "offensive."

"This is horse trading. It's probable we have lost the bid," added the German football legend.

South African bid chief Danny Jordaan has been wooing Teixeira for months to win South Africa's support.

He has been aided by Pele who has furiously opposed Brazil's 2006 dreams, insisting the money it would cost would be better spent on the poor.

Former FIFA president Joao Havelange of Brazil has also voiced his opposition for the bid, saying 2006 should go to South Africa and 2010 to Brazil.

Jordaan knows that Monday's deal has almost certainly ensured

the World Cup will go to Africa for the first time in the tournament's history.

"Certainly we are very happy that there is now a single focus between Africa and Europe and not a third continent involved in the contest. Now it is a question of whether FIFA gives Europe 10 World Cups and Africa nothing," said Jordaan.

But Jordaan stressed that despite the boost from Brazil, the South African campaign would go on right to the end on Thursday when FIFA's 24-man executive committee vote on 2006.

"South Africa's 2006 campaign is taking nothing for granted and will continue to press its case until the very last moment," he said.

Former South African president Nelson Mandela revealed on Tuesday that he was telephoning two nations to ask for their support on Thursday but he refused to name the countries.

The 24-man FIFA executive committee, made up of three members from South America, three from North and Central America, four from Asia, eight from Europe, one from Oceania, four from Africa and FIFA President Sepp Blatter, will meet all four candidates on Wednesday and vote on the winner on Thursday.