

Rangers' duo's international dreams revived

GLASGOW, Aug 17: Glasgow Rangers goalkeeper Stefan Klos and midfielder Jorg Albertz were offered international life-lines by the new Germany management team on Thursday, reports AFP.

Interim manager Rudi Voller and assistant Michael Skibbe have taken over from former coach Erich Ribbeck who quit after Germany's poor showing at Euro 2000.

Under Ribbeck the team made an early exit this summer following defeats by England and Portugal in the group stages.

And Skibbe has pledged to watch the duo in the near future to assess a return call-up to the national side.

"I intend coming to watch Rangers play very soon to see Stefan Klos and Jorg Albertz," said Skibbe.

"Klos is an amazing goalkeeper and a very special kind of person as well. I have known him since he was 14 and I have watched his development."

"I've never been surprised that he has reached the level he is at now with Rangers."

"The only reason he has not been picked for Germany so far is the strength of opposition in that position."

"Jorg has done well too and I intend to have a look at them as we start World Cup qualifying."

Kanu, Babayaro to join Olympic team

LAGOS, Aug 17: Nigerian internationals Nwankwo Kanu of Arsenal and Celestine Babayaro of Chelsea will join the Olympic team "as soon as practicable", the spokesman for the Nigerian Football Association (NFA) said Wednesday, reports AFP.

"Kanu and Babayaro have said they will join the Olympic team as soon as practicable, even though (coach) Jo Bonfrere would wish they are in camp without any further delays," NFA spokesman Austin Mgbolu told reporters here.

Mgbolu also said that the arrival of AC Milan defender Taribo West at the Dutch camp of the team has "brightened Bonfrere who has been worried about the absence of his key players."

The NFA official, however, said the association will respect the wish of Super Eagles captain Sunday Oshin not to feature at the Olympics.

Defending Olympic champions Nigeria have been locked in battle with the English clubs of Kanu and Babayaro over their release for the Sydney Olympics.

The NFA spokesman announced that Nigeria will play two friendly matches against South Korea as part of their build-up to the games, playing in Seoul on August 30 and September 1.

Taliban trying to get IOC ban overturned

ISLAMABAD, Aug 17: With time running short before the 2000 Olympics open in Sydney next month the ruling Taliban is still trying to get an International Olympic Committee (IOC) ban overturned, reports Reuters.

An annual sports budget of about 30,000 dollars a dress code that bans the wearing of shorts, a civil war and severe restrictions on women would appear to weaken Afghanistan's case for taking part in the Games.

Despite these problems, officials from the ruling Taliban have appealed to the International Olympic Committee to overturn a suspension that effectively stops Afghan athletes from competing in Sydney next month.

The IOC suspended the Taliban's Olympic Committee last year, saying the body had no control over sports in the country, but it offered to try to find ways for any athletes from the war-torn country to compete as individuals.

Second one-dayer

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playing in New Zealand. Australia won the second game before losing the series 2-1 and Buchanan felt the travel from Sri Lanka would have sapped South Africa.

The tourists also came here straight after a Test series against Sri Lanka and Buchanan said it took a little time to adjust to the faster pace of the limited-overs format.

While confident his side would rebound immediately, Ford admitted the absence of strike bowler Allan Donald was causing some short-term pain.

Donald has not played for South Africa since March, missing this trip because of English county commitments with Warwickshire.

A fiery competitor, Donald would give South Africa the same sort of lift in morale and competitiveness that Glenn McGrath and Shane Warne provide Australia.

"Particularly when you take out Hansie (Cronje), the sacked captain, it makes the absence of Allan quite serious," Ford said.

"It really is a pity we haven't got him around, but maybe in the long term it is good for South African cricket we've had to survive for a while."



Paraguayan striker Roberto Acuna (L) unleashes a shot to score against Argentina during their World Cup 2002 CONMEBOL zone qualifier at Buenos Aires on August 16.

- AFP photo

Qualifying race wide open

Argentina held at home

MONTEVIDEO, Aug 17: The South American zone campaign for World Cup final places became tighter after Wednesday's matches with wins for Ecuador and Peru while Argentina conceded an upset home draw to Paraguay, reports AFP.

Argentina, who opened the 10-country zonal qualifiers with five straight wins before losing 1-3 to Brazil still lead the way with 16 points from seven games.

But behind them, six teams, including struggling Brazil, are separated by just two points. The top four teams qualify automatically for the finals with the fifth-placed team going through to a play-off against the champions from Oceania.

Paraguay were once again the surprise packets as they held Argentina to a 1-1 draw in Buenos Aires. Earlier in the campaign they defeated Brazil 2-1 at home, the first time that the Brazilians had lost a World Cup qualifier.

Missing suspended goalkeeper Jose Luis Chilavert, the Paraguayans nevertheless again depended on a rock solid defence and on the art of the counter-attack.

They were the most accomplished side for the first hour and strikers Roque Santa Cruz and Jose Cardozo both had goal chances against home keeper Roberto Bonano.

But it was man-of-the-match Roberto Acuna who gave the visitors the lead after 60 minutes sweeping in a magnificent shot from the edge of the box after defender Diego Simeone had given the ball away.

Argentina, minus star striker Gabriel Batistuta, were stung into action when Lazio's new acquisition Hernan Crespo linked with River Plate



midfielder Pablito Aimar for the latter to fire home from close range.

Driven on by Juan Sebastian Veron, Argentina pushed forward in search of the winner, but Chilavert's replacement Ricardo Tavarreli made a string of outstanding saves.

Argentina captain Roberto Sensi admitted that Paraguay had been the better side, especially in the first half.

"After that we managed to equalise and we had our chances to win late in the game, but that would have been unfair for Paraguay."

In the day's other matches, Ecuador moved into contention with a 2-0 home win over Bolivia, both goals coming from Agustin Delgado, while Peru kept their hopes alive with a 1-0 win over bottom club Venezuela.

The Peru-Venezuela match was a hard-hitting affair with the home side getting the best of the play, but being unable to capitalise on their chances.

Roberto Palacios finally broke the deadlock in the 70th minute when he rifled home from a tight angle after the Venezuelan goalkeeper Gilberto Angelucci had parried his first effort.

That was enough to ensure three points for Peru and maintain their slim hopes of qualifying for the finals.

The next round of matches is on September 2-3 with the top being Chile-Colombia in Santiago. The other ties are Paraguay-Venezuela, Uruguay-Ecuador, Peru-Argentina and Brazil-Bolivia.

STANDINGS

MONTEVIDEO, Aug 17 (AFP). Standings after Wednesday's matches in the South American zone qualifiers for the 2002 World Cup finals in Japan and South Korea: (Played, won, drawn, lost, for, against, points)

Argentina	7	5	1	1	16	6	16
Colombia	7	3	3	1	7	4	12
Uruguay	7	3	2	2	7	5	11
Brazil	7	3	2	2	9	9	11
Paraguay	7	3	2	2	8	8	11
Chile	7	3	1	3	11	9	10
Ecuador	7	3	1	3	9	9	10
Peru	7	2	2	3	5	5	8
Bolivia	7	1	2	4	4	9	5
Venezuela	7	1	0	6	5	17	3

USA crush Barbados

FOXBORO, Massachusetts, Aug 17: The United States cruised to a 7-0 World Cup qualifying victory over Barbados in a CONCACAF Group E semifinal match here Wednesday.

The victory propelled the U.S. (1-1-1, four points) into second place over Guatemala (1-1-1, four) by goal differential (six to one). Barbados fell to 1-2.

In other qualifiers on Wednesday, Jamaica's 'Reggae Boyz' and Trinidad and Tobago remained undefeated.

The U.S. attacked at will as Barbados gave the hosts a lot of room in the midfield and along the wings before a crowd of 18,334 at Foxboro Stadium.

"It was a big relief," U.S. coach Bruce Arena said. "We were a team that was desperate to get three points tonight. We were very hungry and we went after the game."

Despite the poor reviews we had in our first two games, we could be in pretty good shape if we get three points against Guatemala (on Sept. 3)."

Asked about the huge goal differential, Arena replied, "We did not make a point to try to embarrass Barbados. We wanted to treat them with respect."

Barbados coach Hector Beckles had no problem with the huge goal margin.

"The Americans had their space and they utilized it," he said.

Joe-Max Moore scored two goals and set up a third for the U.S., which tied their largest margin of victory in international matches.

With the game only 15 seconds old, Moore took a 22-yard shot. The ball sailed wide left but the message had been sent: The U.S. would attack early and often.

That was the gameplan," Arena said. "The game was pretty fast in the first 15 minutes. It tired Barbados out a little bit and frustrated them."

Defender Eddie Pope gave the U.S. a 1-0 lead in the 14th minute. Earnie Stewart swung a corner kick to Pope in the middle of the penalty area and

the defender trapped the ball and slotted it home from 12 yards past goalkeeper Horace Stoute and into the lower right corner. It was Pope's third qualifying goal and fourth in international soccer.

The U.S. doubled the score in 28th minute on Brian McBride's goal. Stewart passed the ball into the middle to Joe-Max Moore. Moore sent McBride a short, quick heel flick the Columbus Crew forward fired into the lower left corner.

Barbados dug a deep hole for itself by incurring two red cards within three minutes later in the first half. Defender Au-



gustus Hurdle was given his marching orders by referee Joe Pinada of Honduras for punching Cobi Jones in the 38th minute.

Only three minutes later, the Barbadians found themselves two men down after midfielder Eric Lavine was red-carded for his vicious foul on Chris Armas in the midfield. Armas, who strained the MCL on his left knee, will be sidelined at least three weeks.

"I've never seen refereeing like this," Beckles said. "The referee was very, very poor."

The U.S. made the visitors pay for their foul play as Moore put in a rebound of his shot for a 3-0 advantage only seconds before halftime. The goal was Moore's 21st international score, tying him with the retired Bruce Murray on the

U.S. all-time list.

John O'Brien, who replaced the injured Armas in the final minute of the opening half, scored on his first touch of the match from 10 yards only 29 seconds into the second half for a 4-0 bulge.

Tab Ramos, who replaced Claudio Reyna in the 53rd minute, connected from 22 yards for the Americans' fifth goal in the 72nd minute and Stewart got into the act, scoring from six yards in the 74th minute.

Moore closed out the scoring, knocking in Cobi Jones' right-wing pass from six yards in the 82nd minute.

With a two-man advantage, the U.S. did just about anything it wanted.

Onandi Lowe's goal in the 34th minute gave Jamaica a 1-0 victory over El Salvador at Kingston and a perfect 3-0 record in continental semi-final round-robin qualifying matches for the World Cup.

The Jamaicans rose to 3-0 for nine points to lead Group D, one of three four-team semi-final clusters. The top two nations from each group advance. Three of those will go to the Cup.

Dwight Yorke scored in the 36th, 61st and 75th minutes to give Trinidad and Tobago a 6-0 rout of visiting Panama. Anthony Rougier scored in the second minute. Ansil Elcock found the net in the 59th and an own goal completed the romp.

Honduras rose to second in the group by routing visiting St. Vincent/Grenadines 6-0. Francisco Ramirez and Carlos Pavaon each had two goals in the triumph.

Trinidad and Tobago rose to 3-0 for nine points, regaining a three-point bulge on second-place Mexico in Group C.

The next round of matches, set for the first weekend of September, also include Panama at Mexico and Canada at Trinidad and Tobago in Group C. El Salvador at Honduras and Jamaica hosting St. Vincent/Grenadines in Group D and Barbados at Costa Rica in Group E.

Irwin's night spoiled by Weah

LONDON, Aug 17: Manchester United veteran Denis Irwin picked up 500,000 pounds (750,000 dollars) from his testimonial match Wednesday night as the champions beat local rivals Manchester City 2-0 at Old Trafford - but the Republic of Ireland defender is a serious doubt for Sunday's Premiership opener after picking up an ankle injury, reports AFP.

An early crunching challenge from City's new star George Weah after just eight minutes eventually ended Irwin's participation in the match played in front of just over 45,000 fans.

Irwin was furious with former Chelsea star Weah and when he finally got to his feet the Irishman angrily brushed aside the Liberian international's apologetic arm round his shoulder.

The testimonial man carried on until United took the lead through Teddy Sheringham's fine curling 20-yarder from Andy Cole's pass before being replaced by Ronnie Wallwork eight minutes from half time.

Weah's challenge on Irwin set the tone for some very unfriendly exchanges between these bitter rivals.

But Cole slid in the second from a Nicky Butt pass with a minute to go as City failed to rile the reigning champions and Irwin came back on at the end with his three young children to say thanks to the fans and take a slow lap of honour.

Arsenal ban 37 fans

LONDON, Aug 17: Thirty seven Arsenal fans were banned from attending games at the club's Highbury ground this season following the violence that flared in Copenhagen, the club confirmed on Thursday, reports AFP.

The fans have been written to by the club after being picked out as troublemakers in photographs and on television footage.

The English Premiership club said that officials were still trying to identify a number of other thugs caught on camera ahead of the UEFA Cup final against Galatasaray on May 17.

Leeds United also plans to ban three fans identified as troublemakers in clashes with fans from the Turkish club in the semi-final of the same competition.

An Arsenal spokesman said: "We have banned 37 fans as a direct result of Copenhagen and they will not be welcome at Highbury this season."

"Supporters of this club are generally very well behaved and this represents a very small minority."

The hooligans will be banned for at least one season with some barred for longer.

A Leeds spokesman said: "We have identified at least three troublemakers and they will be banned in due course."

World stars no match for France

MARSEILLE, France, Aug 17: World champions France, in their first game since being crowned European champions, crushed a FIFA world select side 5-1 here on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Six weeks after their victory over Italy in Rotterdam they turned on the style for 60,000 fans in a match in aid of charity.

Juventus' new recruit David Trezeguet, who got the winner at Euro 2000, proved the star turn. The 22-year-old scoring a hat-trick.

Robert Pires and Nicolas Anelka capped off the night for 'les bleus' with Roberto Baggio gaining a consolation for the world select team in the 78th minute.

France next turn out at the Stade de France in Paris against England on September 2 in what will be veteran defender Laurent Blanc's international farewell.



French forward Thierry Henry (L) rushing past FIFA World Stars' Japanese star Hidetoshi Nakata during their charity match at Marseille on August 16.

- AFP photo



Michael Ballack (L) of Germany trying to go past Spain's Etxeberria during their international friendly at Hanover on August 16.

- AFP photo

International friendly

Vintage Germany spank Spain

HANOVER, Germany, Aug 17: Germany's new coach Rudi Voller founded their critics Wednesday evening when they strolled to a 4-1 victory over Euro 2000 quarter finalists Spain, showing a new found sense of enthusiasm under debutante coach Rudi Voller, reports AFP.

Bayern Munich duo Mehmet Scholl and Alexander Zickler blew Spain out of the water with a pair of goals apiece while star Spanish forward Raul could answer only once.

A crowd of 35,000 turned up for the game, leaving 15,000 seats empty, but those watching including England coach Kevin Keegan who will face Germany in a World Cup qualifier on October 7th - were treated to the rare spectacle of a German side which won back some of the feel-good factor which has been absent for so long.

Voller is undoubtedly the big winner after this game.

He picked up a disgruntled and divided rabble of a side after Erich Ribbeck's belated post-Euro 2000 departure and, within weeks, has re-formed them. New rules of discipline have been laid down and a sense of roll up your sleeves honesty imposed.

"We showed unconditional desire," Voller said with relief.

"It's a basic quality if you want to play for your country or your club. They showed it tonight and I noticed it training in the last few days that that was what they wanted to do. Tonight was the last chance to make their apologies to the fans."

Despite the relatively small crowd size the rest of the nation

was watching Hanover expectantly on television and the pressure weighing on those on the field was obvious.

In the fifth minute an over anxious Sebastian Deisler back-passed nervously to keeper Oliver Kahn and just about scored an own goal.

Instead of bawling out his young team mate though, as is Kahn's wont when defenders expose him to unnecessary danger, Germany's captain loudly urged his men on.

"Anyone who looks back on European championships and remembers all the things which have happened in the last few months knows that we had to create a brand new spirit in the team," Kahn said. "It has to start from the roots and make its way right to the top. Tonight was just the start."

"If you look at tonight's game it's obvious what Rudi Voller has done. The boys fought from the opening minute and really showed what they can do. We have to hang on to this fresh desire now, build it up still further and push the national team along."

Wednesday's four goals quadrupled the total number Germany scored in their whole miserable Euro 2000 campaign two months ago. Significantly it was Scholl - Germany's lone Euro goal scorer - who sank the Spanish armada in Hanover with goals in the 24th and 51st minutes.

Scholl opened proceedings when he deftly placed the ball into the top left corner from a free kick. After the break Spain's last man Ivan Campo stumbled over the ball allowing an opportunistic Scholl to pounce, play a quick one-two with Carsten Jancker and then stab the ball home.

Spain, who are ranked fifth in the world listings, can be excused in part for their listless display because Wednesday's game came at an inopportune time for them. The Spanish league doesn't begin until September 10th and most of the players are still shaking off their summer fat and building up fitness.

Coach Jose Antonio Camacho was critical this week that he had to drum together a side for such an ill-timed friendly and can now feel justified in his scepticism through the scoreline. Raul's lone score, a delicate chip-shot on 69 minutes, was merely of statistical value in the end.

The real test of Germany's mettle will come on September 2nd when they play a World Cup qualifier against Greece in Hamburg.

Portugal run riot

European World Cup qualifier on the road to the 2002 finals in Japan and South Korea.

In a quiet affair in Tallinn watched by fewer than 2,000 fans, Martin Reim scored the only goal of the match with a 64th minute penalty to give Estonia a 1-0 win over Andorra in the first Group Two qualifier played.

For once, it was the friendlies that took priority over the competitive game.

Portugal, beaten 2-1 by France in the Euro 2000 semi-finals in Brussels, were other winners, demolishing Lithuania 5-1 in Visau after a slow start.

They were playing their first match under new coach Antonio Oliveira, back in charge of the team for the first time since 1996 following the post-Euro 2000 elimination

resignation of Humberto Coelho.

Goals from Joao Pinto, Luis Figo, Rui Costa, Roberto Severo and Pedro Resendes gave Portugal a well-deserved win over Lithuania whose goal came from the penalty spot.

Finland also had a good win, beating Norway 3-1 in Helsinki, underlining the progress they have made in the last couple of years.

Jari Litmanen scored twice and Stig Inge Bjornebye of Norway was sent off in the last minute for handball as the Finns won a competitive game with substitute Shefi Kugi adding the third from the spot in the last minute.

Bosnia scored a surprise 2-0 win over Euro 2000 quarter-finalists Turkey in Sarajevo, while Belgium, the co-hosts who suffered the disappointment of being knocked out by Turkey in the tournament, bounced back with a 3-1 win over Bulgaria in Sofia.

There was also a surprise win for Iceland, who beat Sweden 2-1 in Reykjavik thanks to an 84th minute penalty from Helgi Sigurdsson.

Further a field Iran and Japan warmed up for the Asian Cup finals to be staged in Lebanon in October with Iran beating Georgia 2-1 in Tehran and Japan beating United Arab Emirates 3-1 in Hiroshima.

Scottish Premiership

Paatelainen takes Hibs back atop

GLASGOW, Aug 17: Finnish striker Mixu Paatelainen chose the perfect time to score his first goal of the season in Hibernian's 1-0 win at Kilmarnock Wednesday - a result which sent the high-flying Edinburgh club back to the top of the Scottish Premier League table, reports AFP.

Frenchman Didier Agathe has stolen the limelight with four goals already this season with the Easter Road team enjoying an unbeaten start to the current campaign and full of confidence.

But Paatelainen was the hero at Rugby Park popping up with the winner eight minutes from the interval to put his side two points clear of the Old Firm clubs while the hosts fell to their third consecutive defeat.

In the other match Dunfermline picked up their first three points since promotion from the First Division thanks to a David Moss header in a 1-0 win at Motherwell.

Kewell signs fresh deal with Leeds

LONDON, Aug 17: Leeds Australian international striker Harry Kewell signed a new improved contract on Thursday which will tie him to the club until 2004, reports AFP.

Chairman Peter Ridsdale said Kewell, who is currently sidelined with an Achilles tendon injury, has signed a four-year deal.

"This proves Harry's committed to Leeds and I'm absolutely delighted," Ridsdale told the club's official website.