

## Costly US triumph

FOXBORO, Massachusetts, Aug 18 The United States' 7-0 World Cup qualifying victory over Barbados on Wednesday might have come at a high price, reports AFP.

The Americans may have lost midfielder Chris Armas to a knee injury for more than a month.

Armas, the top US defensive midfielder, strained the medial collateral ligament of his left knee when he was tackled by Barbados' midfielder Eric Lavine in the 41st minute of the CONCACAF Group E semifinal qualifying match.

The possible loss of Armas, who stars for the Chicago Fire in Major League Soccer, could have ramifications for the US beyond qualifying. He was one of three overage players to play for the US Under-23 team in the Sydney Olympics next month.

The US team (1-1-1, four points), which moved into second place by goal differential over Guatemala (1-1-1, four), hosts its Central Americans rivals in a qualifier in Washington on September 3. The top two teams will advance to next year's six-team North American confederation finals.

"Hopefully he'll be back in three weeks," US coach Bruce Arena said. "You know how those MCL's go. It could be six, nine or 12 weeks."

Arena, though, was just happy his players got their confidence back after a pair of disappointing results.

"Coming in where we were, I'm not ranting and raving about performance," he said. "It was a convincing win. It was a big night for us and also for our confidence, in the win column and the goal column."

Barbados (1-2, three) will be down two starters who were red carded for their next qualifier at group leader Costa Rica (2-1, six) on September 3. Defender Augustus Hurdle and Lavine were sent off late in the first half for hard fouls.

Barbados' coach Horace "Tobacco" Beckles promised things would be different for when the next time the U.S. and his team meet on November 15.

"It's not over," he said. "When they play us in Barbados, it's going to be a different game. There's going to be a different game on a level playing field."

Added Arena: "Before this is all said and done, Barbados is going to have good days."

Group E is the closest of the three semifinal groups.

In Group C, Trinidad and Tobago and Mexico are due to the final round with victories over Canada and Panama, respectively on September 3.

In Group D, a victory over St. Vincent and the Grenadines on September 3 will boost Jamaica into the next round. Honduras virtually can clinch a spot with a September 2 victory over El Salvador.

## Vialli gives a piece of his mind

LONDON, Aug 18: Chelsea boss Gianluca Vialli launched a crackdown on player-power at Stamford Bridge on Thursday after fining French international Frank Leboeuf two weeks wages, according to a report on SkySports.com, reports AFP.

Vialli held face-to-face talks with Leboeuf at the club's training ground after the French international publicly criticised Vialli's managerial style.

The central defender told an internet site on Tuesday: "Vialli has problems with everybody, with Albert Ferrer and many others - it's normal for a coach to get along with his lads, but not him."

Insisting that Vialli had not backed him sufficiently after he was sent off against Leeds last season and had "even tried to get me out of the club", Leboeuf concluded that he was "not sure that the coach has much faith in me".

His comments drew immediate criticism from Chelsea's managing director Colin Hutchinson who said that the comments were "unprofessional and out of order".

While it seems increasingly apparent that Leboeuf is unhappy at Stamford Bridge and could find that his future lies elsewhere, Vialli will have left him in no doubt that he should have kept any criticisms private.

"Whatever happens between us has to remain between us," Vialli told SkySports. "Whatever decisions I make and whatever I decide to do is going to remain within these four walls."

"I'll deal with the situation in the best possible way, trying to make the right decision but without making it public."

Asked about his relationship with his players, Vialli added: "In general - and we are not speaking about Frank Leboeuf's situation - I would like everything to be as smooth as possible."

"But as a manager, I know that sometimes, generally-speaking, you might have to deal with problems."

"You deal with them in the best possible way, trying to make the right decisions and sorting things out quickly in order to get on with your job. The same goes for the players."

"I think I get on very well with the players. I said to the players one day - you are the soldiers, I am the general."

"We are all working for the same cause, which is the club. It happens that I'm the general so I'm the guy in charge and I make the decisions."

"If you make mistakes, I've got to punish you or fine you. If you are behaving well, I try to praise you."

## Romario coming back?

# Luxemburgo in two minds



RIO DE JANEIRO, Aug 18: Brazil's poor performances in their World Cup qualifiers could force coach Wanderley Luxemburgo to abandon his dream of leading his country to their first Olympic gold medal, reports Reuters.

Luxemburgo is in charge of both the full and Olympic Brazilian teams but the dismal performances of the former, beaten 3-0 by Chile on Tuesday, could force him to pull out of the trip to Sydney.

The coach admitted after Tuesday's fiasco in Santiago that he had not decided what to do. He appears to be in a no-win situation.

If he travels to Australia with the Olympic team on August 28, he will miss the senior side's next game at home to Bolivia in Rio de Janeiro and could be accused of deserting them.

Australia, however, must look an enticing prospect compared to Rio's Maracana stadium, where the crowd seem to take pleasure in tormenting their own team.

The cries of "idiot, idiot" and "get out, Wanderley", which rang around the arena during Brazil's draw with Uruguay in June, may still be fresh in the coach's ears.

Brazil are fourth in the South American World Cup group, still good enough for a place in Japan and South

Korea, but their record of three wins, two draws and two defeats is not the stuff expected of the four-times world champions.

Luxemburgo has taken most of the blame for constantly changing the team and for sticking with the out-of-form Rivaldo in midfield and Roberto Carlos at left back.

United States World Cup.

Romario, kicked out of the team for disciplinary reasons, was reprimed and responded by scoring both goals in a 2-0 win.

Romario has again found himself out in the cold since Luxemburgo's takeover two years ago. During this time he has been picked only twice — for a match against Spanish club side Barcelona and for the brief British tour this year which he ultimately missed through injury.

Although Luxemburgo has insisted that the door for Romario is open, critics feel that some animosity dating back to the pair's days at Flamengo remains.

Romario, approaching his 35th birthday, has looked as sprightly as ever for Rio de Janeiro's Vasco da Gama.

At least Luxemburgo does not have Bolivia's problems.

Ninth in the table with five points from seven games, the Bolivians almost pulled out of the tournament last month because of financial problems.

The situation is so grim that expenses for this week's 2-0 defeat in Ecuador were paid by their opponents.

Bolivia's ploy of playing matches at high altitude in La Paz has also backfired, as their foreign-based players no longer have time to adapt.

Most have therefore been dropped by coach Carlos Aragonés, in favour of locally-based youngsters.

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Figo, newly arrived at Real Madrid for a world record fee of \$6.1 million dollars, has taken over the number 10 shirt at Real from Cercle Seedorf and Hagi is relishing their meeting.

"The number 10 is important on every team," Hagi, 35, told reporters at the club's training ground on the edge of Istanbul, adding he was eagerly looking forward to the match.

It will be a busy week for Galatasaray, who play Erzurumspor in the league on Saturday, then host Switzerland's St Gallen in the third qualifying round of the Champions League on Tuesday before meeting the European champions on Friday.

Galatasaray's new coach Mircea Lucescu, like Hagi a Romanian, implied being St Gallen to a place in the group phase of the Champions League was the most important game of the week. Galatasaray have a 2-1 lead from the first leg of the tie in Switzerland.

"Galatasaray has become an important team in the European panorama."

"Arriving at this level is tough but staying there is harder and more important. My duty is to keep Galatasaray playing against teams of this standard," he said.

Lucescu said Galatasaray's hectic schedule would be an advantage for the more rested Real Madrid side.

While Real Madrid have

further bolstered their impressive squad over the close season, Galatasaray's squad has remained largely the same.

Brazilian striker Mario Jardel has replaced Hakan Sukur who moved to Italy.

Lucescu said he intended to tone down the Turks' tactics of relentless pressing and harrying.

I think Galatasaray must mature and realise that many teams have the strength to resist and break down that kind of pressure. We need a more intelligent and mature game and I think we have the players to achieve that," he said.

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further Piotr Reiss is also pushing for selection.

"We can't make the same mistakes we made in Munich, but we just can't allow that against Hamburg," Hertha coach Jürgen Röder said.

Both sides have a habit of scoring big against each other, putting away 20 goals collectively in their last four encounters.

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Robbers attack Nigeria's FA boss

LAGOS, Aug 18: Chairman of the Nigeria Football Association (NFA) Dominic Onyea is recovering at home after he was attacked by armed robbers, a local radio station reported Thursday, reports AFP.

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