

Deportivo lift Spanish Supercup

LA CORUNA, Spain, Aug 29 (Reuters/Internet): Spanish champions Deportivo Coruna won the first trophy of the new season on Sunday with a comfortable 2-0 victory over Espanyol in the second leg of the Supercup.

After a goalless first leg in Barcelona and a dour opening 45 minutes in the return, Deportivo took control on 58 minutes as Brazilian midfielder Djalminha stroked in a free kick that struck the bar and bounced down well over the line.

Javier Irureta's side wrapped up victory against a disappointing Espanyol three minutes later as Diego Tristan pounced on some loose defending 30 metres out and calmly slotted home.

Depor had had to weather some early pressure from Espanyol, who created three half-chances in the opening 10 minutes.

The best of them fell to Raul Tamudo but the young striker's shot from the edge of the area was comfortably saved by Jose Molina.

Irish booters in trouble

DUBLIN, Aug 29 (Reuters/Internet): Ireland manager Mick McCarthy dropped Phil Babb and Mark Kennedy from his squad on Tuesday for the World Cup qualifier against the Netherlands after the pair appeared in court in Dublin charged with criminal damage.

Neither player will be travelling to Holland. They will be leaving the squad immediately, McCarthy told a news conference.

"It's my decision and it's supported by the Football Association of Ireland."

Earlier Babb and Kennedy, who also appeared at the conference, were charged at Dublin district court with causing criminal damage to a police-woman's car, with being intoxicated in a public place and with causing a breach of the peace.

The two men, arrested in central Dublin in the early hours of Tuesday, were released on bail of 950 Irish pounds (dollars 1,087) each and ordered to appear again on November 13.

Javed in no

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Miandad and team manager Brigadier Mohammad Nasir had held detailed discussions with PCB chairman General Tauqir Zia, and Director of Operations, Yawar Saeed.

Both Zia and Saeed had said earlier that action would be taken following the coach's report on the team's return from Singapore.

"We did not talk about the incident in Singapore because it could have been disturbing for the team," Miandad said.

Sources close to PCB said if the men were found guilty they would be fined and reprimanded, but not publicly so as to save their careers.

"The matter is delicate and the Board does not want to spoil the careers of the three young players," Zia observed last week.

Pakistani players have a history of off-field discipline problems.

An under-19 player, Zeeshan Pervez, was charged in Guyana, West Indies of raping a woman in 1997. He was released after the court ruled there was a lack of evidence.

Senior players Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis, Aaqib Javed and Mushtaq Ahmed were arrested for smoking cannabis in Guyana, West Indies during the 1993 tour.

Two other senior players, Saqlain Mushtaq and Mohammad Akram were reportedly beaten in a night-club brawl in 1998.

Readers' zone

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regularise all the irregularities of the last three years?

There is still time for the NSC, the controlling body of all sports in the country, to act and direct the BCB to shift the venue to Dhaka. Such a NSC decision might anger a few but do good to cricket. Let us see who prevails -- State Minister (Obaidul Quader) or the Deputy Minister (Saber Hossain Chowdhury, the BCB president).

Asif Haque, Dhaka

So far so good for Scifo



BRUSSELS, Aug 29 (Reuters/Internet): Just three weeks into the Belgian football season, Enzo Scifo, the country's most famous player of the past decade, has already woven a magic spell over Charleroi, the struggling club he took over in March.

Three brief months on from escaping ignominious relegation from Division One, Charleroi are riding high at the top of the league, with three wins from three matches.

Unexpected early success has brought new enthusiasm in a city better known for its high unemployment and crowd trouble at June's Euro 2000.

A consortium led by Scifo took over the club in March as it languished in deep trouble, staring relegation in the face.

Charleroi only avoided the drop thanks to seven points from their last three games, including a point in the last game against champions Anderlecht.

A nervous Scifo watched that game from the stands, desperate for his new club to take at least a point, but still officially an Anderlecht player until the final whistle blew.

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ENZO SCIFO

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Scifo himself has already got on the scoresheet, while veteran striker Dante Brogno -- brother of last year's Belgian top-scorer Toni -- is top of the Belgian rankings with five goals.

But the real test of how far Charleroi have progressed will come next week, when they travel to Brussels to take on Anderlecht.

"Can we win? No, we've got to be realistic. We'll be very happy to come back with a point and perform well," Scifo told La Derniere Heure.

"Now that we have nine points, things will probably be a bit easier for us. We'll play without the slightest pressure on us. For the moment, we're keeping our feet firmly on the ground."

As for Scifo, he may be robbed of the chance to take on his old team mates. An injury picked up in Sunday's defeat of Antwerp makes him a doubtful starter for next Tuesday's clash.

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