

Sport

Maldini set to make history

ROME, Oct 6: AC Milan defender Paolo Maldini will write his name in the record books on Saturday when he takes the field for Italy's World Cup qualifying match against Romania in Milan, reports AFP.

Maldini, 32, will be playing in his 113th international, making him the most capped Italian player of all time, having



MALDINI

already equalled former goalkeeper Dino Zoff's record of 112 appearances.

"It is certain to be an emotional occasion," Maldini said. "It will almost be like making my debut all over again and I just hope the team will help me celebrate by beating Romania."

A one-club player and the son of former Italian coach Cesare, Maldini is one of an elite band of players with more than 100 caps under their belt, but he has a long way to go before he matches the world record held of 150 by Germany's Lothar Matthaus. Former Swedish goalkeepers Thomas Ravelli played 130 times for his country, while Andoni Zubizarreta kept goal for Spain 126 times.

In the all-time lists, he is followed by two players who earned 125 caps - Romanian midfielder Gheorghe Hagi and yet another goalkeeper, Peter Shilton of England.

In his long international career, Maldini has played in three World Cups, in 1990, 1994 and 1998 and three European Championships in 1988, 1996 and 2000.

With his film star looks and calm temperament on and off the field, Maldini has been elevated to the status of national hero in Italy and is highly respected around the world.

But although he has won six Italian championships with AC, three European Cups, and two Super Cups, he has never tasted international success.

Toshack to take charge of Saint Etienne

SAINT ETIENNE, France, Oct 6: Much-travelled Welsh coach John Toshack is to take over at French club Saint Etienne, the club announced on Friday, reports AFP.

Toshack, 52, takes over from Robert Nouzelet, who was sacked last week. He is on a contract until the end of the present season.

Tie-break

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mistake to stab the ball into an empty net.

Mohammedan equalised in the seventh minute of first-half-injury-time through inspirational captain Alfaz Ahmed's header from close.

The goal originated from a set piece with Jahangir Patwari delivering a neat free-kick to Nabil who headed the ball to an unmarked Alfaz.

Apart from the two goals in the first half, both teams created a number of opportunities.

Abahani came close to scoring in the 14th minute when Iqbal exposed the suspected Mohammedan defence. But the Abahani captain missed with only Nizam at his mercy.

Kennedy spoilt a golden chance to double Abahani's lead three minutes after Don's goal when the muscular Ghanaian fired straight at the Mohammedan keeper.

Nabil's spectacular bicycle kick from the goalmouth melee was ruled offside in the 45th minute.

Don headed a perfect cross from Pasha over the bar in the 60th minute.

Eight minutes later Mohammedan substitute midfielder Shoab also headed the ball wide.

Mohammedan's best chance came in the second half when Ghansha in a bid to clear a Shoab cross from the right, only headed the ball to Alfaz. But the Mohammedan star striker shot the ball over the bar from about ten yards.

The tie-break victory now took Mohammedan's points tally to 23, one less than league leaders Mukti Jiddha Sangsads. On the other hand Abahani finished their first leg campaign five points behind Mukti Jiddha.

Yellow card: Rezaul (Mohammedan)

TEAMS:

MOHAMMEDAN: Nizam, Jahangir, Jewel, Faisal, Tito, Shah Alam (Rezaul) (Roman), Selim, Motur Munna (Shoab), Rakib, Alfaz and Nabil.

ABAHANI: Biplob, Tito, Partho, Ghansha, Dulal, Iqbal, Zakir (Arman), Sentu, Kennedy, Sabir Pasha and Galib (Don) (Kanchan).

Referee: Golam Mostafa

Candinho counts on Vasco power

RIO DE JANEIRO, Oct 6: Caretaker coach Candinho is set to use a nucleus of Vasco da Gama players for Brazil's World Cup qualifier against Venezuela on Sunday, reports Reuters.

The Brazilians travel to Maracana still smarting from their embarrassing defeat by nine-man Cameroon in the Olympic tournament. The shock result brought about the sacking of Wanderley Luxemburgo.

Candinho, who takes charge of Brazil for the first time on Sunday, has dispensed with the young players involved in the Olympic tournament.

Instead, he has called up proven goalscorer Romario and Vasco da Gama team mates Juninho Pernambucano, Juninho and Euler.

In an attempt to re-create the atmosphere of a settled team Candinho has also called up Cleber, Donizete and Ricardo from Cruzeiro.

"Let's try and take advantage of the understanding that already exists between these players," said Candinho. "Both teams are in a good phase."

A convincing win against Venezuela will ease the pressure on Brazil who are fourth in the South American qualifying group.

Candinho has said he would stand down after the Venezuela game in solidarity with Luxembourg who was dismissed on September 30.

Bottom-placed Venezuela will be without Gabriel Urdaneta, arguably their most creative player, who is undergoing surgery for appendicitis.

Group leaders Argentina are gearing up for a clash with second-placed Uruguay, managed by Argentine Daniel Passarella.

Argentina, who have been hit hard by injuries, hope that Gabriel Batistuta will be fit to play. He suffered a recurrence of a knee injury in Roma's Serie A.

German Burgos is likely to replace the suspended Roberto Bonano in goal.

Passarella has hinted he may employ a five-man midfield, but Federico Magallanes and Alvaro Recoba are still seen as the most likely strike force.

Uruguay will be without striker Dario Silva and captain Paolo Montero.

Paraguay's eccentric goalkeeper Jose Luis Chilavert was doing his best to provoke Co-

lombia ahead of their clash.

He accused the Colombian press of whipping up hostility toward the Paraguayan team and has refused to talk to their reporters.

Paraguay are currently on 14 points, one behind second placed Colombia.

Colombia are awaiting a fitness report on River Plate striker Juan Pablo Angel who is leading scorer in the Argentine league.

Both travel to Ecuador with both teams hungry for a win to keep alive their qualifying chances.

Chile will be without David Pizarro, who has a knee injury, while striker Marcelo Salas is doubtful, also with a knee problem.

Group stragglers Bolivia and Peru meet in La Paz with 17 year-old Josedito Vaca expected to secure a place in the Bolivia midfield after impressing coach Carlos Aragon.

Coventry City striker Israel Zuniga is expected to play for Peru despite missing his flight to Lima on Monday.

In the CONCACAF region Mexico, under new coach Enrique Meza, take on Trinidad and Tobago and Honduras meet Jamaica.

Trinidad and Tobago, hoping to qualify for the World Cup finals for the first time in their history, head group C of the semifinal round by three points from Mexico.

The top two nations go forward to the final stage of the CONCACAF qualifying competition.

Honduras are seeking to avenge their 3-1 group D humbling by Jamaica in July.

Both sides are well-placed to reach the final round, Jamaica on 12 points, lead second-placed Honduras by three points. El Salvador have three points and St Vincent are bottom with none.

Giggs for commitment

CARDIFF, Oct 6: Ryan Giggs is desperate to make up for the disappointment of defeat by Belarus last month by helping Wales to victory in Saturday's 2002 World Cup qualifying match against Norway on Saturday, reports AFP.

Mark Hughes's men made a poor start to their Group Five campaign with defeat in the former Soviet state and Giggs knows they have to get their act together fast or face missing out on yet another major finals.

Wales, who have not qualified for an international tournament since the 1958 World Cup, face another tricky test next Wednesday when they visit Poland.

Giggs, who has been in excellent form for English Premiership champions Manchester United, knows that Wales will face an early exit should they make play as poorly as they did in Belarus.

"We have to put things right," the United star said. "I think we all concede that the opening game in the group was highly embarrassing. It just wasn't acceptable."

"We went into this campaign with a great deal of optimism and high hopes of qualifying for our first World Cup in 44 years - and with two teams almost certain to qualify from the group we had every right to feel confident - but we haven't exactly got off to the best start."

"We can't afford to make the

same mistakes or we'll be propelling up the other teams in this group and be responsible for the doom and gloom that inevitably descends on Welsh football every time we enter a major competition."

"We've been too guilty of letting ourselves down on occasions, but there is no time like the present to put that right. We all realise there is a real

need to improve or we are going to be out of contention before Christmas."

"We owe it to ourselves and to the supporters to play well against Norway on Saturday," Giggs added. "We may not have the strength in depth that some

countries possess, but the desire to succeed and the determination that is needed to bring that success is there."

"Welsh football is in need of a lift and we carry the responsibility to ensure that happens."

The Welsh face a huge battle to get their qualifying campaign back on track with the Norwegians visiting Cardiff's Millennium Stadium on Saturday, followed by a difficult trip to Poland.

And Giggs does not need telling how tough this weekend's opponents will be.

"We will have our work cut out," he said. "Norway are not a side who like to play for a draw and with so many familiar faces in the team it's going to be tough."

They have a lethal strike force. Ole Gunnar Solsjaer I know all too well from Manchester United and Tore Andre Flo doesn't exactly struggle in front of goal either.

"Our defence will have to be alert and the midfield will need to cut off the supply to the front men if we are going to win."

"The right result for us will put us in a great frame of mind for the trip to Poland but we will make life extremely hard for ourselves if we don't pick up the points."

Like Wales, Norway were equally unimpressive in their first group match in which they dropped two valuable points at home to lowly Armenia.

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