New Brazil coach to be named very soon

RIO DE JANEIRO (Reuters/Internet): Brazil are to name a long-term national team coach by the end of the month after Candinho, who had been acting as an interim, said he did not want to carry on.

Antonio Lopes, the newly appointed technical co-ordinator, said he had been counting on Candinho to take charge for the last match of the year, a World Cup qualifier at home to Colombia in November.

This would have given Lopes until early next year to mull over the appointment.

But Candinho, who led Brazil in their 6-0 win away to Venezuela 10 days ago, appeared to feel that once was enough.

"Antonio Lopes himself is a coach and is perfectly capable of taking over the team if needed," said Candinho, who has already taken on a job at Sao Paulo club Corinthians.

Some media speculated that Candinho was upset because nobody had got in touch with him following Lopes' appointment at the weekend.

The Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) has announced a reshuffle in the national team set-up

following September's sacking of Wanderley Luxemburgo.

Lopes, who has worked as a club coach for the last 30 years, will oversee the work of the coach and will have the right to interfere in the picking of the squad. He will also have a say in the naming of the new coach.

"I have already been in contact with several people and we will name the coach by the end of the month," he said.

Favourites for the post include Oswaldo Oliveira, Emerson Leao and Rene Simoes. The name of Cruzeiro's Luiz Felipe Scolari has also been mentioned, even though "Big Phil" has already turned down an offer from the CBF.

Luxemburgo was dismissed after disastrous showings with both the senior team in the World Cup qualifiers and then the under-23 side at the Sydney Olympics.

Commentators say that the CBF want to distribute power rather have it centered on one man, as was the case with Luxemburgo. The former coach barred a number of top players from the Brazil team, including

Romario and at one stage even Ronaldo after falling out with them.

Romario scored a hat-trick against Bolivia in his only appearance under Luxemburgo and hit four goals in the win over Venezuela.

Players' chief blasts deadly turfs

MILAN, Oct 17: Italian Players' Union (AIC) president Sergio Campana Monday slammed the use of what he termed 'dangerous' pitches in *Serie A* football, reports AFP.

Campana was speaking after a weekend when Sunday's *Serie A* programme was played in atrocious weather conditions - three players were hospitalised in separate incidents.

"Referees have been ordered from up above to play the match whatever and this is worrying," said Campana.

"... The fact is in the Italian Championships irregular games are being played with grave danger for the safety of the players, with weighty penalisations for the (quality of the) game with an evident breach of the rights of the spectators. I hope it will not take a fatal event to stop this scandal."

Also Monday Vicenza club doctor Piero Fanton revealed that there had been fears for the welfare of player Giuseppe Cardone, one of the three players hospitalised Sunday - in his case after a clash of heads with Atalanta's Fausto Rossini in the match won 2-1 by Atalanta.

Cardone was unconscious on the field for a minute before the referee authorised the Vicenza staff to treat the player.

"He (the referee) told us he had not seen anything and he then apologised," said Fanton.

"I immediately knew it was a serious incident when I saw the player fall to the ground in an uncoordinated manner. When we got to him he was unconscious but was breathing. He was lucky he had his face turned away; if he had fallen with his face to the ground he might have suffocated."

Cardone was reported to have improved Monday but will undergo more tests. A scan has revealed no brain injury.

Bologna players Luis Oliveira and Renato Olive were also hospitalised during their team's 2-1 victory over AC Milan.

Bulgarian tragedy

SOFIA, Oct 17: A man died after the Levski Sofia versus CSKA Sofia football match here on Monday when a firecracker was thrown on to his back in the city centre.

Thirty-year-old Mladen Mladenov was sitting outside a cafe near a tram when a firecracker was thrown at him by mistake and he died later in hospital.

Four other supporters were also injured by firecrackers thrown at the windows of a tram and a bus.

Before the match, police had arrested 11 fans and during the game, more than 700 seats and the giant scoreboard of the stadium were broken.

Jassem leaves ROK in tatters

ASIAN CUP LEBANON 2000

TRIPOLI, Lebanon, Oct 17: Veteran striker Jassem Al-Houwaidi put more pressure on beleaguered South Korean coach Huh Jung-Moo here on Monday when his goal gave Kuwait a 1-0 win in a tense Asian Cup Group B match, reports AFP.

His 43rd minute-strike lifted Kuwait up to second in the Group with four points from two matches - behind China on goal difference - while South Korea are third with just one point.

The defeat could well leave Huh thinking of offering his resignation again just as he did when the side exited the Olympics in the first round.

However, Huh sounded a defiant note and laid his hopes on a vast improvement in their next match against Indonesia.

"The team did not play to its true ability and the players were not able to exert control over the game," he said.

"After watching China beat Indonesia 4-0 they were not in the best mental state," he added.

His Kuwaiti counterpart Dusan Uhrin, who guided the Czech Republic to the 1996 European Championship final, laid his success down to a change in style.

"We decided after the Indonesian match to change our style and it paid off for us," he said.

Kuwait finally struck just before half-time when Bashar Abdullah bisected the Korean central defence of Yoo Sang-Chul and Sim Jae-Won and his strike partner Al-Houwaidi coolly slotted past 'keeper Lee Woon-Jae.

The Koreans rarely looked like scoring in the second-half only creating one worthwhile chance when Lee Young-Pro produced a wonderful weighted pass that left Lee Dong-Gook free in the penalty area but the man known as the 'Lion King' had his shot blocked by 'keeper Falah Dabsah.

Lee, about the only player to retain his form from the opening 2-2 draw with China, also went close with five minutes to go as his rasping 10 yard shot was beaten away for a corner by Dabsah, who was in imperious form and yet to concede a goal in the tournament.

The Koreans, who clearly missed suspended sweeper Hong Myung-Bo, had one last chance in the final minute but Lee Young-Pro's shot was beaten away.

The duo should both have already been on the score sheet as they combined to miss several chances that the Al-Houwaidi of old would have taken with aplomb.

Abdullah, rather better at creating than shooting, had released Al-Houwaidi as early as the seventh minute with an identical throughball but the veteran, who has just returned from a cruciate ligament injury, smashed it high over the bar.

Al-Houwaidi, who plays for Kuwaiti club Al Salmiya, again went close 10 minutes later but his flashing header from the lightning-quick Nasser Othman's cross was well saved by Lee Woon-Jae.

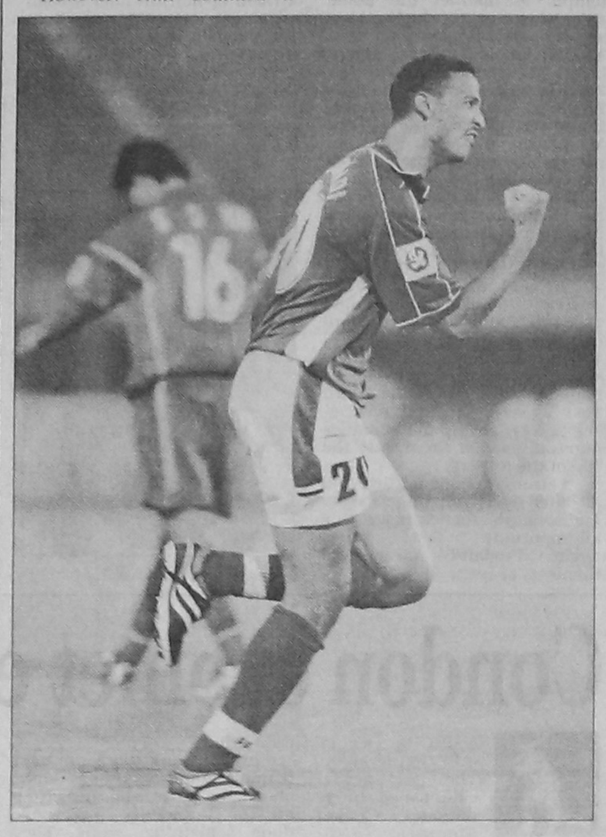
Abdullah took his turn at missing when his first touch let him down and his effort at point blank range was blocked by the 'keeper.

Uhrin said Abdullah was getting too anxious after failing to score in his last four internationals.

"Bashar is developing a psychological block regarding scoring and I hope for his sake he gets over it soon," he said.

The Koreans had few opportunities in the opening period, only Yoo Sang-Chul's long range effort and a flicked header by Seol Ki-Hyeon, troubling a defence well-marshalled by captain Osama Husain.

Such was the frustration of the Koreans that Park Sin-Jub was booked by American referee Brian Hall for diving.



Kuwait's Jassem Al Houwaidi celebrates after scoring against South Korea during their Asian Cup encounter in Lebanon on October 16. – AFP photo

Gulf war revisited

ASIAN CUP LEBANON 2000

BEIRUT, Oct 17: Iran coach Jalal Talebi has dismissed hype surrounding his side's scrap with Iraq, insisting the Iranians harboured no grudges ahead of Wednesday's crucial Asian Cup Group A showdown, reports AFP.

Talebi, who coached Iran in the 'Mother of all football matches' against the United States at the 1998 World Cup, said Iran and Iraq's bitter political rivalry would not spill over on to the playing field.

"It has been more than ten years since our countries were at war, and we have played three times since then," Talebi said, referring to the bloody 1980-88 conflict which left more than one million dead.

"There has never been a problem when we have played in the past and I don't think there will be one now.

"Neither myself nor my players have any hard feelings towards Iraq and their coach, and I'm sure they dont have any hard feelings towards us.

"Football is sport, and I'm only concerned about what happens inside the field of play. Politics is outside the field of play," Talebi added.

However, even with politics out of the equation, Wednesday's encounter at the Saida Stadium promises to be a robust battle between two physical teams.

Both Iran and Iraq are level on four points at the top of their group, and should go through to the quarter-finals as the top two finishers.

But both sides will be keen to win the group outright to avoid the likelihood of having to face the winners of Group C - in all probability an in-form Japan - in the quarterfinals.

With a goal difference of plus four thanks to their 4-0 drubbing of Lebanon last week, Iran need only a draw to be sure of topping the pool.

Iran will also want to avenge their 2-1 defeat at the hands of the Iraqis in the last Asian Cup.

Talebi has spent the week firing up Iran after their dismal showing in a 1-1 draw against Thailand, when their assembled collection of European-based stars looked several notches below their best.

Iraq have also spent the week kicking themselves after they let a 2-0 lead slip against Lebanon on Sunday to allow the hosts to snatch a draw, betraying their lack of match practice and exposure caused by international sanctions.

The Iraqis have frequently cited the impact of UN sanctions on their football preparations in the build-up to the tournament.

"The players in Iraq don't have any international exposure," said squad member Laith Hussein. "We can't play anywhere. How can we learn? How are we going to play against the other 11 teams here? We can't see them."

In Wednesday's other match Thailand will take on Lebanon with both teams needing to win to have any chance of qualifying for the quarter-finals as one of the two best third-placed teams.

Withe plots hosts' downfall

ASIAN CUP LEBANON 2000

BEIRUT, Oct 17: Thailand coach Peter Withe was an underdog who made good during his playing career and on Wednesday he will be hoping that his side do the same against hosts Lebanon in their final Asian Cup Group C match, reports AFP.

A win for Thailand, following their excellent 1-1 draw with pre-tournament favourites Iran, would put them in a great position to progress to the last eight, adding to Withe's hero status in the 'land of smiles' after he took them to the last four at the 1998 Asian Games.

Withe, an excellent target-man who reached the peak of his career with the goal that sealed Aston Villa's 1983 European Cup title, bases his coaching strategy on what he learned as a player - that the game is all about climbing ladders.

"I'm not one for setting goals I see a football career like climbing ladders as I did as a player," the former England international said.

"I imposed that message on the lads but the trouble is the ladder never ends. You just have to keep on trying to climb it even when you fall down it after a loss."

Withe, who originally had his wages paid by the English FA as part of a package they hoped would land them the Thai vote for hosting the 2006 World Cup, said there was no question of going for just a draw.

While Withe has been able to keep morale in the camp high despite the absence of star striker Kiatisak 'Zico' Senamuang, he will have to gee them up for a revived Lebanese side.

The hosts, who slumped to a humiliating 4-0 defeat to Iran in their opening match, looked a far different proposition when they came back from two goals down to draw 2-2 with Iraq on Sunday.

Coach Josip Skoblar, who coached Croatian stars Alen Boksic and Slaven Bilic at Hajduk Split before they found fame and fortune abroad, did not take kindly to comments that the reason for the difference was that he kept three of the five Brazilians brought in for the Cup on the bench.

"I don't want to talk about that. I only want to talk about the players who were out there," he said testily. "Whether there were five Brazilians or none makes no difference and will not influence my selection for Wednesday."

However, it was clear that the return to the starting line-up of previously out of favour homegrown playmaker Moussa Hojej, who scored with a superb freekick for their second goal, made the whole difference tactically and in terms of morale.

"I am just delighted to be back in the side and as far as I am concerned the past is the past and the only thing I am interested in is beating Thailand and getting into the last eight," a diplomatic Hojej said.

Kluivert out for a month

PARIS, Oct 17: Patrick Kluivert, Barcelona's Dutch international striker, will be out of action for a month with a hip injury, the player announced on his Web site on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Marseille may turn to out of contract Weah

MARSEILLE, France, Oct 17: French club Marseille, currently looking for a striker, may turn to Liberian marksman George Weah to bolster their attack, sources close to the player reported Tuesday, reports AFP.

It would be Marseille's second attempt to sign the 1995 World Player of the Year after failing to lure him from Italian club AC Milan during the close season.

The 34-year-old parted company with English Premiership club Manchester City on Monday, after just nine games and one goal, as he was annoyed at being consistently left out of the starting line-up.

Marseille could face competition from English clubs Blackburn Rovers and Derby County in the race for Weah's signature.

Weah was allowed to leave Maine Road by coach Joe Royle after failing to hold down a regular first-team place since arriving for two years on a free transfer in the summer.

Weah, who had a spell on loan at Chelsea last season stayed on the bench for the whole of Saturday's 2-0 home win over Bradford.

Weah said: "It is not a situation I thought would arise, however, having spoken to Joe Royle, we have amicably agreed it would be best for both parties to terminate my contract. I will review my own situation at a later date."

Royle spoke of his regret that the partnership had not worked out.

"It is always regretful when things do not work out between club and player," Royle said.

"George is a true professional who has a great stature throughout European football, and we wish him well."

Manchester City issued a statement in which they said Weah would be travelling immediately to America on official business for UNICEF and FIFA.

The club later announced that they had agreed a three-million-pound (4.5-million-dollar) fee to sign 21-year-old Everton and Republic of Ireland defender Richard Dunne who will discuss personal terms on Tuesday.

Premiership

Magpies climb to third

LONDON, Oct 17: Newcastle United moved up to third in the English Premiership Monday night after beating North East rivals Middlesbrough 3-1 at the Riverside Stadium, reports AFP.

The visitors took the lead eight minutes from half time when Kieron Dyer found Peruvian international Nolberto Solano down the right wing.

His looping first-time cross was headed down by Welshman Gary Speed for the unmarked Alan Shearer to blast past helpless Middlesbrough keeper Mark Crossley.

Ten minutes after the break Bobby Robson's men increased their lead after excellent work by Daniel Cordone.

Cordone's corner was cleared by Gary Pallister but the ball came straight back out towards the Argentinian.

Cordone then volleyed the ball straight back into the Middlesbrough penalty for Frenchman Alain Goma to power a header into the top corner.

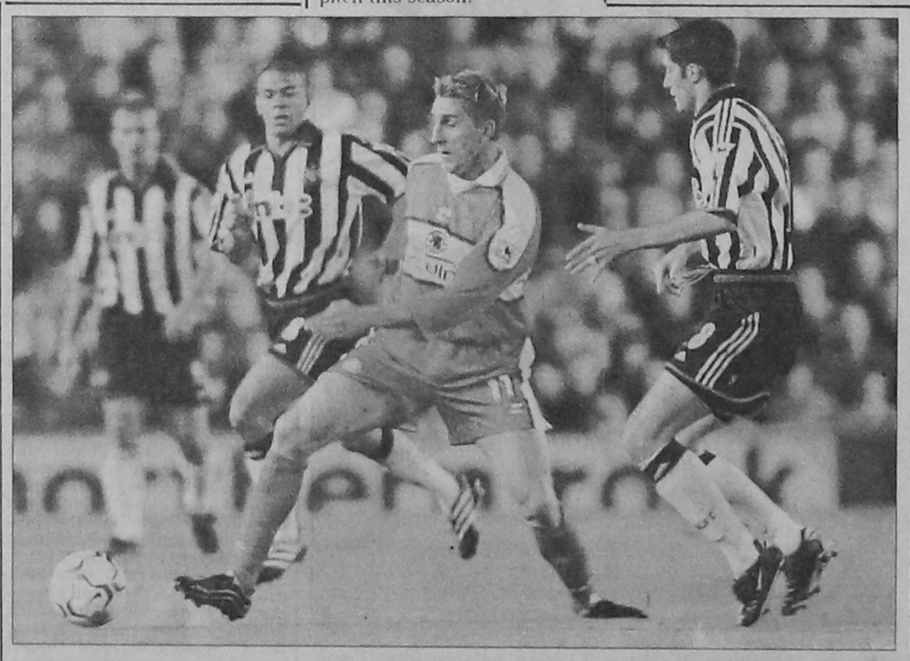
The home side rallied briefly with Croatian international Alen Boksic behind their best efforts, but in trying to haul themselves back into the game Middlesbrough left gaps at the back for Newcastle to exploit.

The only surprise was that Newcastle had to wait until two minutes from time to score again, Dyer striking United's third with a crisp right foot shot.

There was still time for substitute Brian Deane to score at the other end in injury time.

Deane struck from close range after Newcastle keeper Shay Given had failed to hold a low drive by Boksic.

Defeat for Middlesbrough piled on the misery for coach Bryan Robson who has yet to see his side win any of their five Premiership games on their own pitch this season.



Middlesbrough's Croatian international Alen Boskic (C) being followed by a Newcastle player during their English Premier League match on October 16. Newcastle won 3-1. – AFP photo

Big boys under pressure

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

PARIS, Oct 17: Bayern Munich, Leeds, Barcelona and Juventus have all had setbacks of differing types on the run-up to Wednesday's European Champions League matches with the second phase now appearing on the horizon, reports AFP.

Bayern are on a run of three defeats, Leeds must go to Istanbul where two of their fans died last season, while defeat for Barcelona could virtually see them out of the competition, meanwhile Juventus are without suspended playmaker Zinedine Zidane.

Manchester United, who lost their first match against PSV Eindhoven after underestimating them and fielding a weakened side, have the chance to make up for that with a match at their formidable Old Trafford home once again against the Dutch champions.

Bayern Munich, who host Paris Saint Germain in Group F, lost to basement dwellers Energie Cottbus at the weekend after defeats to Hansa Rostock and the French leaders PSG in their last Champions League outing.

To make matters worse, Munich were knocked off top spot in the *Bundesliga* by Schalke 04.

Norwegian giants Rosenborg, who travel to Sweden's Helsingborgs in the other group F game, are on two cloud nine.

They thrashed Bryne 9-0 at the weekend to win their ninth consecutive Norwegian title which will add to their confidence and give group outsiders Helsingborgs the jitters.

Manchester United could be without England striker Andy Cole for the Eindhoven clash in a crucial Group G matchup.

The Manchester United-PSV Eindhoven match will be televised live from Old Trafford on ESPN starting at 12:30 am Bangladesh Standard Time (BST) on Thursday.

Manager Sir Alex Ferguson is anxious to give Cole as long as possible to recover from the ankle injury which kept him out of Saturday's 3-0 Premiership win at Leicester, and the forward did not train Monday.

United currently lie in third place in their group behind PSV and Dynamo Kiev, and a win is vital to their chances of qualifying for the second phase.

"I think the players will be up for this one and certainly we will be playing our strongest team on Wednesday," said Ferguson.

"David Beckham and Gary Neville trained today (Monday) but we will have to wait and see how Andy Cole is. Other than that everyone else is fit."

Ferguson came under fire three weeks ago for fielding a much changed side in Holland as United lost 3-1. Beckham and Ryan Giggs were on the bench then, but look certain to start on Wednesday.

Belgian champions Anderlect meet their Ukrainian counterparts Dynamo Kiev in the other group G game.

Officials from Turkish club Besiktas and English Premiership side Leeds United outlined a series of security measures for their potentially volatile group H match in Istanbul, the Anatolia news agency reported.

WEDNESDAY FIXTURES

Group E:
Deportivo La Coruna (Spa) v Juventus (Ita)
Panathinaikos (Gre) v Hamburg (Ger)
Group F:
Bayern Munich (Ger) v Paris Saint Germain (Fra)
Helsingborgs (Swe) v Rosenborg (Nor)
Group G:
Anderlecht (Bel) v Dynamo Kiev (Ukr)
Manchester United (Eng) v PSV Eindhoven (Ned)
Group H:
Besiktas (Tur) v Leeds (Eng)
AC Milan (Ita) v Barcelona (Spa)

The meeting was attended by Besiktas spokesman Erol Kaynar and managers Fikret Orman and Hayri Cem as well as two officials from Leeds, David Spencer and Henry Stilcay, the report said.

Officials from Istanbul riot police and the West Yorkshire police were also present at the talks.

Kaynar told reporters after the meeting that Leeds players would arrive in Istanbul on the eve of the October 18 match at Besiktas's home stadium, Inonu, in the city's European quarter.

The English side will be accommodated in a hotel near Istanbul airport rather than one in the city centre and will leave Turkey the day following the match, he added.

With regards to visiting fans, Kaynar said that the only Leeds supporters to be allowed into the stadium would be the ones whose names have been previously notified to the Istanbul club and who have valid tickets.

"We will do everthing to prevent any outbreak of violence on the day of the game," he added.

The measures were called for amid fears of violence which comes just months after two Leeds fans were stabbed to death in Istanbul ahead of a UEFA Cup semi-final clash between the English club and Turkish giants Galatasaray.

AC Milan and Italy skipper Paolo Maldini returned to training Monday two days after being discharged from hospital where he had been admitted with a mystery virus.

Maldini, who 10 days ago set a new record of 113 caps for Italy, remains a doubt for their group H match with Barcelona of Spain.

Milan coach Alberto Zaccheroni will decide whether his captain is fit to play after training on Tuesday.

It's a crunch match for Barcelona as defeat would virtually eliminate them from the competition.

Juventus midfielder Zinedine Zidane has had his two-match suspension reduced to one match by European football's governing body UEFA.

Juventus lodged a successful appeal against the punishment but he will still miss Wednesday's fixture at Spainish champions Deportivo La Coruna.

Zidane was suspended for a reckless tackle on a Deportivo player in their first match in Turin on September 26.

Panathinaikos and Hamburg meet in the other group E match and a victory for either side would throw them back into the race for second round places.

Class of '82 making grades

MILAN, Oct 17(AFP): Eighteen years after leading Italy to their third World Cup victory in Spain many of the leading lights of Enzo Bearzot's fabled 1982 side are finally coming of age as coaches and administrators.

The past week has seen many key members of that 1982 team take important positions in the latest game of musical chairs in the traditionally flexible labour market of Italian football.

Marco Tardelli, Dino Zoff, Claudio Gentile and Francesco Graziani have all seen their status rewarded with new posts over the past seven days.

Tardelli's decision to end a highly successful stint as coach of Italy's under 21 side and take on the challenge of reawakening the sleeping giant that is Inter Milan began the latest shake-up.

The former midfielder, whose second goal in the 3-1 World Cup Final victory over West Germany effectively killed the match, will try and succeed where eight coaches in the past five years have failed and his new regime kicked off in style with a 3-1 home win against Napoli.

It is Tardelli's first experience of managing a top flight club although he has previously coached two relatively modest outfits Como and Cesena.

But he has built an impressive reputation as under-21 boss where he led the "Azzurini" to the European title.

The man whose passionate celebration of his 1982 goal in the Bernabeu Stadium - he embarked on an elliptical run with arms outstretched and with tears in his bulging eyes - is still constantly replayed in Italy.

On taking the job at Inter, Tardelli showed some of the same passion, saying: "The time has come to drag Inter out of this limbo. I don't like half measures. Either we are going to hell or we are going to heaven."

At that press conference Tardelli was flanked by Inter's sporting director Gabriele Oriali, also a member of Bearzot's team.

Tardelli was replaced at the helm of the under-21s by another member of the class of 1982, Gentile.

DINO ZOFF

Gentile boasted an even more fearsome reputation as a player than Tardelli and the former iron man of the national side looks likely to add steel to the talented pool of youngsters bequeathed by Tardelli.

Gentile said his two coaching inspirations were current Italy boss Giovanni Trapattoni and Bearzot.

Gentile said: "Both were extraordinary, meticulous, professional. I learned from them."

Asked about Tardelli Gentile said: "I said to him 'good luck for Inter' and I asked him to give me as much information as possible about the under-21s."

Zoff, meanwhile, was this week appointed vice-President of *Serie A* giants Lazio.

At 41, goalkeeper Zoff became the oldest player ever to win a World Cup in Spain - that victory came 14 years after he won a European Championship with the Azzurri.

The new job at Lazio comes three months after he relinquished the reins of the national side to Trapattoni after coming within 30 seconds of winning Euro 2000 before Italy went down to a golden goal defeat by France.

His resignation - with the exception of an extraordinary outburst by AC Milan president and former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi - was greeted with sadness in Italy where expectations had been low prior to the tournament in Holland and Belgium.

Zoff is credited with rebuilding the national team, giving youngsters like Francesco Totti, Alessandro Nesta and Stefano Fiore their international start - and creating the base on which Trapattoni is building what is looking increasingly like a strong challenge for the 2002 World Cup.

Graziani, who played in all the 1982 games although he was substituted early in the final after injuring a collarbone, also got a new job this weekend albeit in the relatively low profile Serie C as sporting director of Viterbese.

Many other leading 1982 stars have high profile jobs - Giancarlo Antognoni, Bearzot's playmaker who missed the final after picking up an injury in the semi-final, is general manager of Fiorentina while Bruno Conti is part of the coaching staff at AS Roma.

Antonio Cabrini is coaching at Serie C level with Arezzo.

Giuseppe Bergomi, who only finished as a player with Inter last year, Alessandro Altobelli, Franco Causio and Fulvio Collovati have chosen to make their careers as TV commentators while the man most synonymous with the 1982 triumph striker Paolo Rossi has left football and is working as a businessman with a building firm.

Bearzot's legendary sweeper Gaetano Scirea was killed in a car crash in 1989 in Poland.

Juve caught in floods

TURIN, Italy, Oct 17: The floods that have ravaged northern Italy have compromised the travel plans of Italian *Serie A* side Juventus, who visit Spain's Deportivo La Coruna Wednesday in the Champions League, reports AFP.

Juventus press officer Alessio Secco confirmed Monday that the Turin giants had been affected by the conditions.

Secco said that the flight from Caselle airport should not be problematic but added: "But the problem is reaching the airport. We are optimistic and at all costs we are hoping to leave."

Another problem could be getting all the players together in one place as many live in the nearby hillsides that have been affected by the floods.

Using Genoa airport could represent an alternative for the Bianconeri.

Maldini returns to training

MILAN, Oct 17: AC Milan and Italy skipper Paolo Maldini returned to training Monday two days after being discharged from hospital where he had been admitted with a mystery virus, reports AFP.

Maldini, who 10 days ago set a new record of 113 caps for Italy, remains a doubt for Wednesday's home European Champions League clash with Barcelona of Spain.

Milan coach Alberto Zaccheroni will decide whether his captain is fit to play after training on Tuesday.