

French First Div

PSG the team to beat

PARIS, Oct 27: Paris Saint Germain will look to underline their domination of the domestic French football scene when they welcome Bordeaux on Sunday to the Parc des Princes, reports AFP.

PSG spent a French record half a billion francs (some 70 million dollars) in a summer transfer spree to attract the likes of Nicolas Anelka to the club but that is proving money well spent.

Already they are through to the second round of the Champions League and stand four points clear of nearest rivals Bastia, suggesting that a first league title in six seasons is just around the corner.

Bordeaux, who could only manage a 1-1 home draw with Scotland's Celtic in the UEFA Cup second round first leg on Thursday, might be forgiven for feeling theirs is a hopeless task as PSG have won all nine of their home games in the league and in Europe thus far.

PSG have no injuries and have in Anelka, Laurent Robert and Christian the most potent strike force around - while their defence has started to settle down.

"Other sides are going to start being afraid of coming to the Parc des Princes," grinned defender and skipper Eric Raederstratana.

Starting with Bordeaux.

Contrast that with the disarray at PSG's traditional rivals Marseille, who this time last year were in the Champions League but who, having just avoided relegation, are doing little better this time round.

The former European champions may have lifted the European Cup that PSG so covet back in 1993 but their current league position inside the bottom five does not augur well for any European football next season.

Even their supporters club are threatening to boycott Saturday's trip to Strasbourg - who are in even more of a predicament as they are just one off the bottom and have conceded 29 goals in just 12 games.

Marseille's Brazilian coach Abel Braga is pinning his hopes on a haul of goals from new signing George Weah, who flopped on his debut last week in the 1-0 home defeat by Lille.

Weah expects to be partnered by Brazilians Marcelinho and Adriano - but neither has impressed to date despite the 10 million dollars or so they cost between them.

Monaco, who can still just about progress in the Champions League if they win at Rangers in their final group game, travel to Troves on Sunday needing three points just to stay in the hunt.

Diego ready for coaching?

BUENOS AIRES, Oct 27: Proving that he just can't keep out of the limelight Argentine football legend Diego Maradona is set to take over as coach of Argentine First Division club Almagro, the club's vice-president Dardo de Marchi said Thursday, reports AFP.

The club, sacked coach Mario Husillos after taking just four points from their opening ten games following promotion and promptly asked Maradona if he'd like to take over.

Maradona is currently in Havana recuperating after treatment for his drug problems but has accepted the offer.

De Marchi visited him in Cuba and told Argentine radio that he had a verbal agreement with the 1986 World Cup winner.

He added that Maradona, who turns 40 on Monday, hoped to be in place by the time Almagro face Racing Club at the weekend.

Maradona made it a condition of his appointment that his '86 World Cup teammates Hector Enrique and Jose Luis Brown, should join his staff and the pair told cable channel TN that they were already on board.

Schmeichel out for eight weeks

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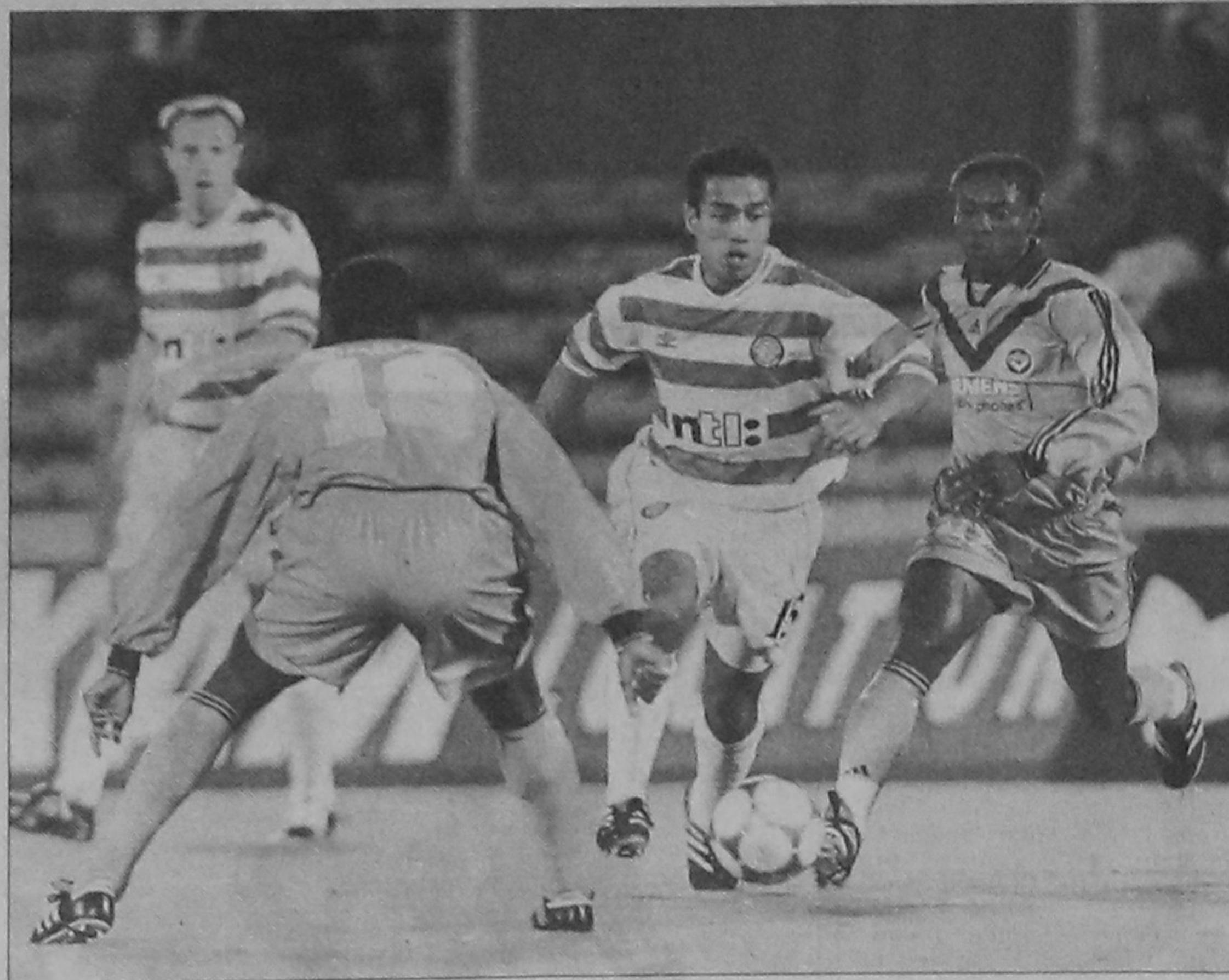
The 36-year-old Schmeichel has had knee problems for several weeks, but the injury worsened when he was playing for his Portuguese club side Sporting Lisbon in a European Champions League match against Spartak Moscow on October 17.

The operation went well, and surgeon Elif Larsen, who operated on Schmeichel told the daily paper *Jyllands-Posten* that the former Manchester United keeper would be able to play within two months.

That means he will miss Denmark's final friendly match of the year against Germany on November 15 at Copenhagen.

Three-game ban on Chilavert

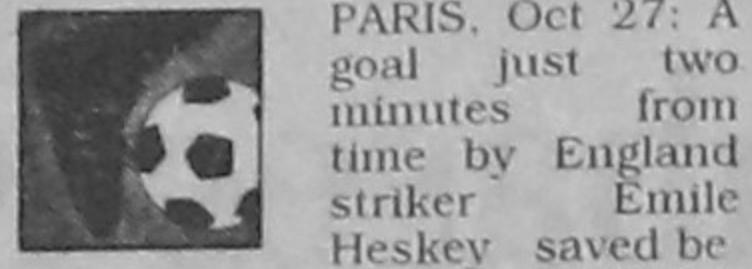
BUENOS AIRES, Oct 27: Jose Luis Chilavert, the colourful Paraguayan international goalkeeper who plays for Argentinian first division side Velez Sarsfield, has been suspended for three matches following a clash with Boca Juniors striker Martin Palermo, reports AFP.



Bobby Petta (C) of Celtic trying to go through Bordeaux players Lassina Diabate (L) and David Sommeil during their UEFA Cup clash at Bordeaux on October 26. - AFP photo

UEFA Cup second round first leg

Heskey's timely strike



PARIS, Oct 27: A goal just two minutes from time by England striker Emile Heskey saved the low-par Liverpool's blushes at Anfield on Thursday as he secured a narrow 1-0 UEFA Cup success against Czech outfit Slovan Liberec, reports AFP.

Heskey finally gave the crowd something to shout about with his fifth goal in three games as the four-times European champions laboured to break down a massed Czech defence in their second round, first leg meeting.

Robbie Fowler missed a penalty for Liverpool in the 54th minute but Heskey was in the right place at the right time as a Nick Barmby effort was deflected into his path.

His shot was deflected and England striker Heskey reacted first to hammer the ball into the net.

Scotland's Celtic scored a useful 1-1 draw at French side Bordeaux, who were UEFA Cup finalists in 1996.

Christophe Dugarry headed Bordeaux in front on 21 minutes but Swedish striker Henrik Larsson levelled three minutes later from the spot.

Chelsea's conquerors St Gallen of Switzerland, meanwhile, have it all to do in the return leg after losing 2-1 at Club Brugge, the Swiss giant.

Italy's AS Roma scored a useful 1-0 win at Portugal's Boavista, Vincenzo Montella on

target 15 minutes from the end. The individual performance of the night came from Themistoklis Nicolaides of Greek side AEK Athens as he blasted four goals in 27 minutes in a 5-0 home success over Denmark's Herfolge.

With the Champions League bagging most of the media attention the UEFA Cup has become a humble affair - and it clearly failed to inspire former European champions Ajax.

The Dutch former giants slumped to a 1-0 defeat at their Stade Beaujoire and battled back from a goal down after Ben Illes scored for the Hungarians in the 28th minute.

Pierre Aristote finally levelled after 63 minutes with a leveller and Nicolas Gillet cracked home a 73rd-minute winner.

And they duly decided to take things seriously as two second half goals from Marcio Anoros handed the Italians a 2-0 first leg win over Croatia's Dinamo Zagreb.

Italy's Parma, however, have something of a love affair with the competition having lifted the trophy twice - in 1995 and 1999.

They duly decided to take things seriously as two second half goals from Marcio Anoros handed the Italians a 2-0 first leg win over Croatia's Dinamo Zagreb.

Other results saw Alaves score a 3-1 away victory at Norway's Lillestrom while Porto, relegated to UEFA Cup action this season after several Champions League campaigns, drew a drab, goalless affair at Wisla Krakow of Poland.

Austria's FC Tyrol earlier edged Germany's VfB Stuttgart 1-0 but the Germans played two thirds of the match with ten men after midfielder Jens Todt was dismissed for hacking down Alfred Hertogel.

Stuttgart coach Ralf Rangnick said the decision was harsh.

"If you get a red for foul like that then by the end you'll only have five or six players left on the pitch," he asserted.

Rober.

Berlin tasted Champions League football last season but Rober earlier suggested the club had to recognise that a place in Europe was worth having whatever the competition.

French side Nantes, who have made little impression since a 1995 league title, would go along with that.

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Las Palmas hit form last week with their 3-0 victory away to Athletic Bilbao but they face a Racing side boosted by a 4-2 win against Numancia - their first of the season.

NUMANCIA (13) v DEPORTIVO CORUNA (6) (1600)

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

PARIS, Oct 27 (AP): UEFA Cup, second round, first leg results on Thursday:

Porto Boavista (Por) 0 AS Roma (Ita) 1 (Montella 74)

Barcelona Espanyol (Spa) 4 (Tamudo 15, Galca 18-pen, Sergio 29, 45) AK Graz (Aut) 0

Liverpool Liverpool (Eng) 1 (Heskey 88) Slovan Liberec (Cze) 0

Basel FC Basel (Swi) 1 (Tchouga 62) Feyenoord (Ned) 2 (Kalou 60, Bosvelt 84)

Madrid Rayo Vallecano 1 (Quevedo 17) Viborg (Dan) 0

Halmstad, Sweden Halmstad (Swe) 3 (Svensson 13, Selakovic 34, Andersson 56) 1860 Munich (Ger) 2 (Max 35, Hassler 37-pen)

Bordeaux Bordeaux (Fra) 1 (Dugarry 21) Celtic 1 (Larsson 24)

Milan Inter Milan (Ita) 0 Vitesse Arnhem (Ned) 0

Bruges Club Brugge (Bel) 2 (Lemb 54pen, Vermant 77-pen) St Gallen (Amonah 29)

Belgrade Red Star Belgrade (Yug) 1 (Druje 61) Celta Vigo (Spa) 0

Crete, Greece OFI Crete (Gre) 2 (Koltsaris 41, Mavro 77) Slavia Prague (Cze) 2 (Netas 30, Rada 68)

Athens AEK Athens (Gre) 5 (Nicolaidis 48, 52, 64, 75, Zicos 61) Herolfo (Den) 0

Lausanne, Switzerland Lausanne (Swi) 1 (Mazzoni 38) Ajax (Ned) 0

Parma, Italy Parma (Ita) 2 (Anoroso 61, 79) Dinamo Zagreb 0

Nantes, France Nantes (Fra) 2 (Aristony 63, Gillet 73) MTK Budapest (Hung) 1 (Illes 28)

Drammen, Norway Drammen (Nor) 1 (Helle 84) Lillestrom (Nor) 1 (Helle 84)

Innsbruck FC Tyrol (Aut) 1 (Mair 53) VfB Stuttgart (Ger) 0

Moscow Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus) 1 (Lokskov 38-pen) Inter Bratislava (Svk) 0

Krakow, Poland Wisla Krakow (Pol) 0 FC Porto (Por) 0

TUESDAY RESULTS:

Osijak, Croatia Osijak (Cro) 2 (Bieljac 27, 90) Rapid Vienna (Aut) 1 (Radovic 37)

Udinese, Italy Udinese (Ita) 1 (Margiotta 90) PAOK Salonica (Gre) 0

Bremen, Germany Werder Bremen (Ger) 4 (Ernst 16, Herzog 28, Baumann 56, Tiede 72) Genk (Bel) 1 (Sonck 35)

Daum paid for confidence

BERLIN, Oct 27: Disgraced Christoph Daum, sacked as Bayer Leverkusen coach earlier this month after testing positive for drug-taking, took an earlier test in secret which turned up negative, leading him to believe he had nothing to lose by taking the official one, Bild reported Friday, reports AFP.

Former England coach and current Southampton manager Glenn Hoddle celebrates his 43rd birthday here on Friday but he can have no realistic expectation of a late present from his team.

On Monday the 'Saints' as the perennial Premiership strugglers are known, went down to a 2-0 defeat against United's local rivals Manchester City.

That left the club in 17th place, just two points above the relegation zone.

Even worse for Southampton, Sir Alex Ferguson is in a bad mood after his club's European defeat.

"Our defending in the first 25 minutes was a nightmare," he said.

The shock news came as the prosecutor's office in the Rhine town of Koblenz said it had opened an enquiry into Daum, alleged to have taken cocaine, and searched his Cologne apartment in the early hours of Friday morning.

Police also