

Bonfrere forsee Nigerian doom

LAGOS, Oct 29: Nigerian football is on the downward slide and there is an urgent need to bring in new players to the national team. Dutch coach Jo Bonfrere said Saturday, reports AFP.

"Nigerian football is dying and we need to quickly get new players to replace some of the top stars who appear to be past their best," Bonfrere told reporters here.

"It is very worrying that many of the players we rely on are no longer playing regularly for their foreign clubs. We therefore have to look for suitable replacements for these players if not we will be in big trouble," the Dutchman added.

The chairman of the Nigeria Football Association (NFA) Dominic Oneya also decried the dwindling fortunes of the national team at the recent Annual General Meeting of the football association. He challenged national team selectors to discover new talents to replace ageing stars.

Bonfrere himself has not been spared heavy criticisms by a section of the local press following Nigeria's quarter-final exit from the Olympics.

He has been asked to quit the job he regained late last year after he was accused of not giving players from the local league a chance to play for the national team. His critics charge that he has preferred to stick to foreign-based stars many of whom are not even committed to the national team.

Bonfrere has also come under fire for flouting orders from the NFA.

The coach has said he is owed four months pay by the NFA, which is often broke and depends on subsidies from the government.

The leadership of the NFA and the Dutch coach, however, met here this week to iron out their differences.

Dortmund shares fixed at 11 euros

FRANKFURT, Oct 29: Shares in Borussia Dortmund, which is to be the first German football club to float on the country's stock exchange, have been fixed at 11 euros, the bank managing the flotation, Deutsche Bank, said on Saturday, reports AFP.

The banks said the price, equivalent to about nine dollars, had been fixed at the low end of the price band.

The subscription opened on October 23 and closed on October 27. Trading is due to begin on October 31.

One quarter of the shares have been allocated to German private investors while 71.7 percent have gone to European institutions like banks and insurance companies.

Three percent of the stock has been allocated to club members, while their families and friends will hold 0.3 percent.

Demand for shares far exceeded the offer and an extra 1.5 million shares were issued over and above the 13.5 million originally planned.

Borussia Dortmund was founded in 1909. The club has won the German league five times, the last triumph being in 1996.

The team won the European Champions League in 1997, and currently lies in fourth place in the German First Division.

Cruyff for England?

LONDON, Oct 29: Former Dutch World Cup star Johan Cruyff is under "active consideration" for the England manager's job, the Sunday Times reported, reports Reuters.

Quoting what it called a well-placed source, the newspaper said there was a shortlist of four with former Barcelona coach Cruyff and Celtic manager Martin O'Neill in the frame, with Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger and Lazio's Sven Goran Eriksson.

FC Copenhagen coach Roy Hodgson was only a peripheral figure despite heated media speculation, the newspaper said.

Unlike O'Neill, Wenger and Eriksson, Cruyff has no club commitments and could take over quickly. Kevin Keegan resigned as coach earlier this month after England's 1-0 defeat by Germany in a World Cup qualifier. City manager Peter Taylor and Manchester United's number two Steve McLaren are in charge for a friendly against Italy on November 15.

Riedl pays the price

HANOI, Oct 29: Vietnam's Austrian coach Alfred Riedl will be let go at the end of this year despite his success in leading the national squad to unprecedented silver medals in both the 1998 Tiger Cup and the 1999 South East Asian Games, football chiefs said Friday, reports AFP.

The 51-year-old is to pay the price for his public criticism of the state football federation's unusual decision to field the under-23 Olympic team for the qualifiers for the 2002 World Cup rather than his national squad.

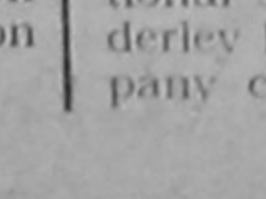
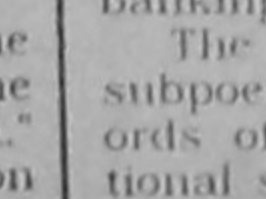
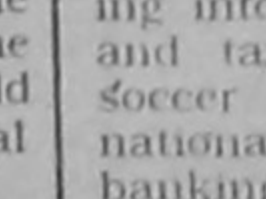
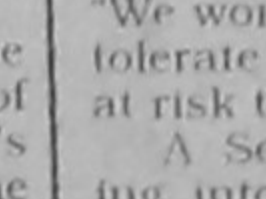
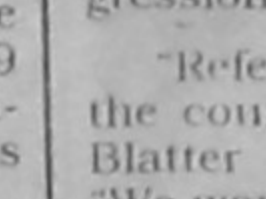
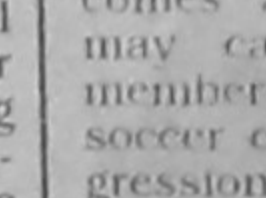
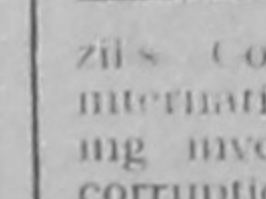
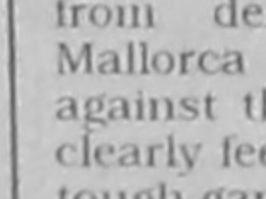
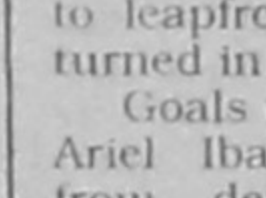
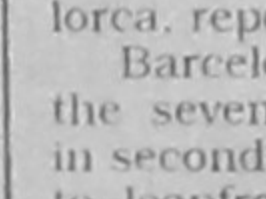
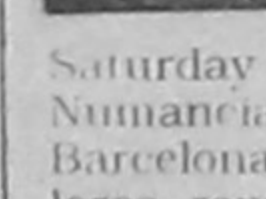
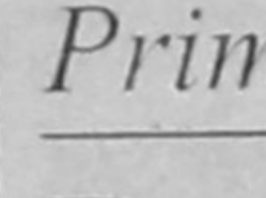
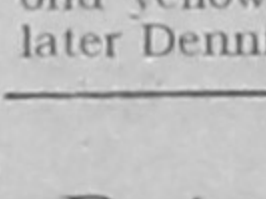
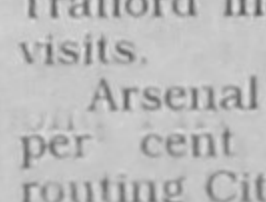
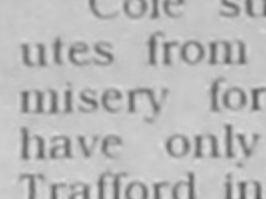
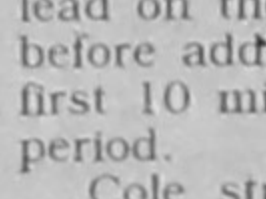
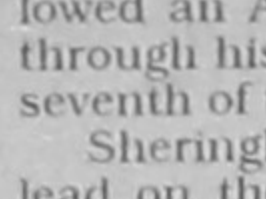
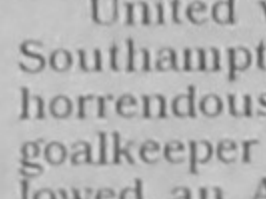
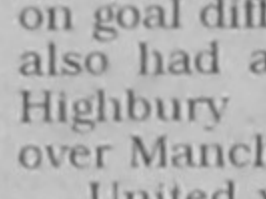
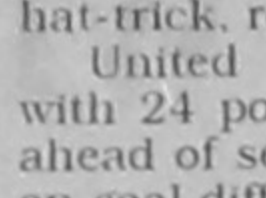
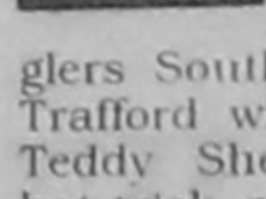
"He unilaterally broke the terms of his contract when he took the decision to speak out," Vietnam Football Federation (VFF) president Mai Van Muon said on Friday.



Ryan Giggs (R) of Manchester United tries to go past a Southampton defender during their English Premiership match at Trafford on October 28. --AFP photo

Premiership

MU, Gunners win big



LONDON, Oct 29: Premiership leaders Manchester United went goal-crazy Saturday thrashing strugglers Southampton 5-0 at Old Trafford with England forward Teddy Sheringham scoring a hat-trick, reports AFP.

United held onto top spot with 24 points from 11 games, ahead of second-placed Arsenal on goal difference. The Gunners also had an easy afternoon at Highbury with a 5-0 victory over Manchester City.

United went in front against Southampton thanks to an horrendous mistake by Saints goalkeeper Paul Jones who allowed an Andy Cole shot to go through his legs for the striker's seventh of the season.

Sheringham doubled the lead on the stroke of half-time before adding two more in the first 10 minutes of the second period.

Cole struck again 17 minutes from time to pile on the misery for Southampton who have only won once at Old Trafford in their last 28 league visits.

Arsenal extended their 100 per cent home record after routing City, who have not won at Highbury in 16 visits.

City's Danny Tiatto was sent off after 43 minutes for a second yellow card and a minute later Dennis Bergkamp touched

a free-kick sideways to youngster Ashley Cole who fired home an unstoppable shot.

Bergkamp and substitute Sylvain Wiltord added further goals before French international Thierry Henry finished off Joe Royle's men with two late strikes.

Leicester went behind to Derby, looking for their first win of the season, when Rory Delap hit an explosive shot from 35 yards to put the Rams in front after 12 minutes.

But Muzzy Izzet equalled the long-range effort to level and Iceland international Arnar Gunnarsson gave Peter Taylor's men a 2-1 victory at Filbert Street.

Paul Merson inspired Aston Villa to a 2-1 victory over Charlton at Villa Park.

Paul Merson capped a superb performance with a 42nd minute goal which gave John Gregory's side a timely boost just before the break.

In appalling wind and torrential rain, Villa had gone ahead just past the half-hour when Ian Taylor stooped to head home Steve Stone's right-wing cross.

Charlton got a lifeline six minutes from time when Dign Dublin screwed Mattias Svensson's cross past his own keeper but Villa held on.

Dutchman Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink netted his 10th

and 11th goal of the season in Chelsea's 3-0 victory over Tottenham at Stamford Bridge.

Hasselbaink, a former Spurs striker, scored with a penalty after 13 minutes when Raulon Vega handled a cross. Gianfranco Zola crept in at the far post to double the advantage after 39 minutes and Hasselbaink rounded off a comfortable win with the third three minutes from time.

Premiership newcomers Ipswich continued their excellent run with a 2-1 win against Middlesbrough at Portman Road.

Richard Naylor opened the scoring with a 35-yard shot after 25 minutes, and Mark Venus added a second from a free kick three minutes later.

Boro defender Dean Gordon scored a consolation goal for the visitors 22 minutes from time.

West Ham won for the first time at Upton Park in the Premiership with a 1-0 win over Newcastle, Frenchman Frederic Kanoute grabbing the only goal after 73 minutes.

Brazilian Emerson Thome scored his first goal for Sunderland in a 1-0 victory over Coventry at the Stadium of Light.

On Sunday there are two derby matches taking place with Bradford at home to Leeds and Liverpool taking on Everton at Anfield.

16-team Asian Cup in 2004

BEIRUT, Oct 29: The Asian Cup will be expanded to take in 16 teams at the 2004 tournament in China, Asian football chief Peter Velappan said here Saturday, reports AFP.

Velappan, general secretary of the Asian Football Confederation, said the tournament would be increased in size to help accelerate the development of football in Asia.

Twelve teams played in the finals of the 2000 tournament, which concludes with Sunday's final between Japan and Saudi Arabia.

"In recognition of the fast growing standard of national teams across Asia the tournament in China will have four more teams," Velappan said at a press conference following a four-hour meeting of the AFC's executive committee.

"We have seen several teams make great strides in standards in recent years and it is only right that more teams should be given the opportunity to play in the Asian Cup," Velappan said.

There have been increasing calls for an expansion of the Asian Cup throughout the Lebanon tournament, after 1996 finalists the United Arab Emirates failed to qualify.

But Velappan remained coy on whether the AFC would act on calls for the tournament to be held every two years instead of four years.

He said the issue of increasing the frequency of the competition would only be studied after the AFC had agreed upon a fixed calendar for all competitions which dovetailed with FIFA's recently announced time-table.

"We have to work out our Asian calendar first. This has been raised many times, and it will be reviewed again once we have agreed a calendar," Velappan added.

Iran parliament wants answers

TEHRAN, Oct 29: Iran's parliament on Sunday demanded a formal explanation from sports officials after the national football side, favourites to win the Asian Cup, crashed out in the quarter-finals, reports AFP.

"For Iranians, sports - and especially football - is just as important as the defence of their territory or their beliefs," parliamentary speaker Mehdi Karubi said in a speech opening Sunday's legislative session.

"The national pride was damaged," he said, calling on sports officials to "provide an explanation because the Iranian people do not understand this disorganisation." Other MPs also denounced the loss.

Coach Jalal Talebi resigned after Iran was dramatically dismissed by South Korea in last Monday's quarter-final in Lebanon with a golden goal.

Lee Dong-Gook booking the Koreans a place in the semi-finals.

Sports papers have been calling for high-level resignations and the mainstream press got into the act Sunday, with the conservative Kayhan International even blasting reformist President Mohammad Khatami.

"One of the slogans of the Khatami administration, the oft-repeated one, is paying attention to the needs of the country's youth," it said.

"The defeat of our national team in Lebanon may be cited as an instance that reflects that not much was done toward the realisation of the slogan."

It said the failure of officials other than Talebi to resign was evidence they were "procrastinating as usual."

South Korea went on to lose in the semi-finals to Saudi Arabia, who will play Japan later Sunday in the Cup final.

Maradona ready for new mission

BUENOS AIRES, Oct 29: Argentine legend Diego Maradona returned to Buenos Aires on Saturday to take up his new post as coach of struggling First Division club Almagro, reports AFP.

Maradona arrived from Cuba, where he had been undergoing treatment for his drug problems and was accompanied by his manager Guillermo Coppola.

Almagro will pose a big challenge to Maradona as he takes up his first coaching post on the eve of his 40th birthday as they are bottom of the league with just four points from their opening ten games.

One dead in Rio violence

RIO DE JANEIRO, Oct 29: One soccer fan was killed and at least one other was injured in violent clashes between rival fans after Flamengo beat Vasco in Rio's Maracana stadium, police said on Saturday, reports Xinhua.

Flavio Augusto Marinho, 14, was shot and killed as euphoric Flamengo fans and defeated Vasco supporters faced off at different points around the city after Friday night's match.

Flamengo fan Rodrigo Chuniha Coutinho, 18, was severely beaten and rushed to hospital in the early hours of Saturday morning.

About 2,000 police had provided security in and around the stadium.

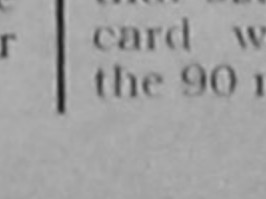
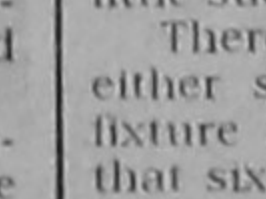
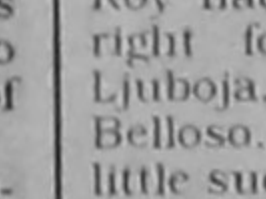
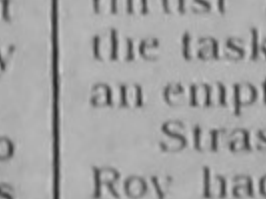
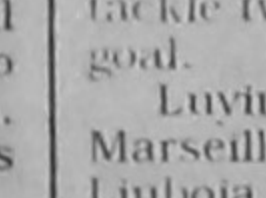
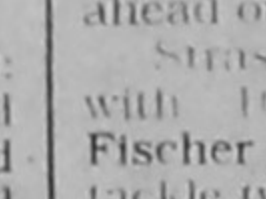
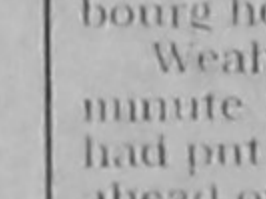
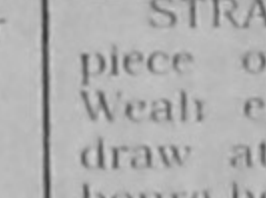
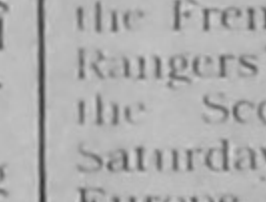
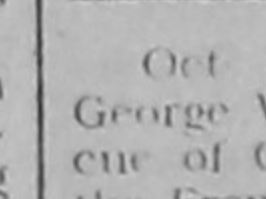
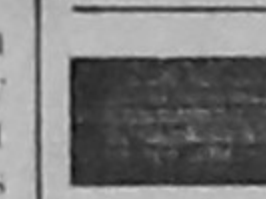
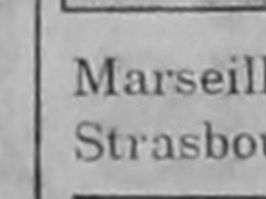
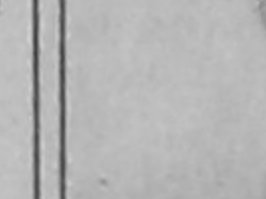
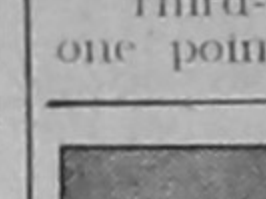
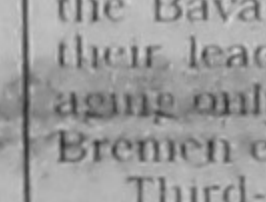
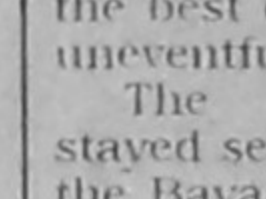
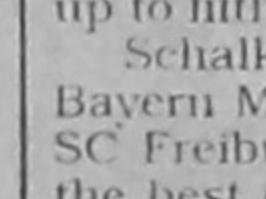
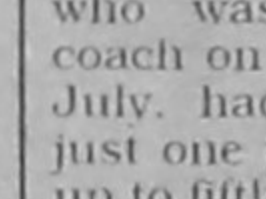
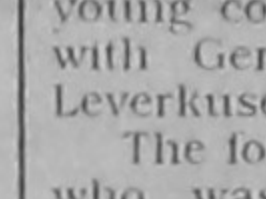
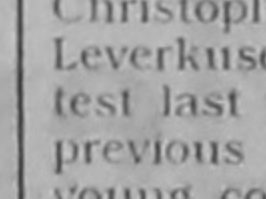
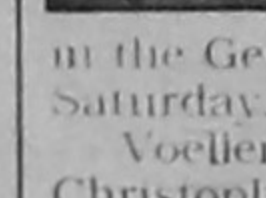
Rio Governor Anthony Garotinho condemned the violence on Saturday and urged soccer fans to control themselves.



Bayern Munich's Brazilian Giovane Elber (C) is being closely marked by two defenders of Werder Bremen during their Bundesliga match in Bremen on October 28. -- AFP photo

Bundesliga

Schalke halt Voeller's run



BEIRUT, Oct 29: Schalke 04 ended Rudi Voeller's winning streak by drawing 0-0 with Bayer Leverkusen in the German First Division on Saturday, reports Reuters.

Voeller, who stepped in for Christoph Damm after the Leverkusen coach failed a drugs test last weekend, had won all previous five matches in his young coaching career - three with Germany and two with Leverkusen.

The former Germany striker, who was appointed national coach on a caretaker basis last July, had to be content with just one point, taking his team up to fifth place.

Schalke, who lost top spot to Bayern Munich by losing 3-1 at SC Freiburg last weekend, had the best chances in a relatively uneventful match.

The Gelsenkirchen club stayed second one point behind the Bavarians, who had placed their lead in jeopardy by managing only a 1-1 draw at Werder Bremen earlier on Saturday.

Third-placed Hertha Berlin, one point behind Bayern, will

capture the lead if they win at TSV 1860 Munich today.

"Usually, we attack more but we did not want to take too many risks," said Voeller, whose side beat Spartak Moscow 1-0 on Wednesday but still went out of the Champions League.

The match against Spartak was very hard and the players were tired. Given the circumstances, a draw is not a bad result.

Champions Bayern improved marginally on their embarrassing showing in a 0-0 draw with Swedish side Helsingborg in the Champions League on Tuesday. But they still looked out of sorts in front of goal.

Brazilian Paulo Sergio put them ahead after six minutes with a spectacular overhead kick.

Werder fought their way back into the game five minutes later, Brazilian Ailton converting a penalty after Marco Bode was felled by Bayern goalkeeper Oliver Kahn.

Midfielder Mehmet Schull almost restored Bayern's lead in the 72nd minute but his free

kick hit the bar.

Striker Carsten Jancker then wasted a great opportunity before fellow substitute Alexander Zickler lost a duel with Werder goalkeeper Frank Rost in the final moments.

"We were not able to capitalise on our early lead," said Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld. "The most important thing is that we did quite well in a very difficult away game."

A late goal from midfielder Marco Reich gave 1998 champions Kaiserslautern a 2-1 victory at Borussia Dortmund which lifted the "Red Devils" to fourth place.

Kaiserslautern, who have now won their three games under new manager Andreas Breuer, took the lead through Bulgarian midfielder Marian Hristov in the 12th minute.

Dortmund equalised in the 63rd minute courtesy of Brazilian defender Evanilson but saw Reich deny them a draw with two injuries resulting.

Hamburg, who also lost ground, sliding down to eighth place with a 2-1 defeat at SpVgg Unterhaching.



Marseille's Liberian international George Weah (R) fights for possession of the ball with a Strasbourg player during their French First League match on Saturday. -- AFP photo

EUROPEAN SOCCER SCENE

OCT 29/AFPE - New signing George Weah came to the rescue of Olympique Marseille in the French First Division while Rangers' awful run continued in the Scottish Premiership in Saturday's league action in Europe.

FRENCH FIRST DIVISION

STRASBOURG: A superb piece of skill from Liberia's Weah earned Marseille a 1-1 draw at lowly 10-man Strasbourg here on Saturday.

Weah equalized in the 55th minute after Peggy Luvidula had put the eastern France side ahead on 10 minutes.

Strasbourg however finished with 10 men after Yannick Fischer was sent off for a tough tackle two minutes after Weah's goal.

Luvidula, put through Marseille's defence by Danijel Ljuboja, just got his foot to the ball from keeper Stephane Trevisan, who was rushing out of goal. Luvidula's momentum thrust him forward with only the task of tapping the ball into an empty net.

Strasbourg coach Claude Le Roy had seemed to hit on the right formula up front with Ljuboja, Luvidula and Gonzalo Bellosa, who has recently had little success at right back.

There was little space for either side in this competitive fixture and it was no surprise that six yellow cards and a red card were shown throughout the 90 minutes.

After the break, Marcelino brought a breath of fresh air to Marseille, who drew level thanks to Weah's skill.

From a Zoumana Camara centre, Weah controlled the ball with his chest on the edge of the area and then hit home a half-volley into the top left hand corner of Thierry Debes' goal.

The match became a much more closed affair after Fischer's exclusion though Coranin Martins looked dangerous for Strasbourg and Marseille's tireless Djamel Belmadi kept surging forward.

SCOTTISH PREMIERSHIP

GLASGOW: Rangers season collapsed further into chaos Saturday after they were soundly beaten 3-0 by Kilmarnock at Ibrox.

The reigning Scottish Premier League champions are now 12 points behind leaders Celtic, who could extend their lead at Motherwell on Sunday.

Rangers were as woeful as the scoreline suggests while Kilmarnock produced a brilliant counter-attacking performance.

The home defence were caught out twice before half-time and then once again after the break.

It could have been more and the home fans were leaving in droves long before the final whistle.

Frenchman Christophe Cordard put the visitors in front after six minutes, exchanging passes with Andy McLaren be-

fore shipping the ball past Ibrox debutant Jesper Christensen.

Gary Holt raced on to Ian Durrant's precision pass and held off Bert Konterman's challenge before putting Kilmarnock 2-0 up after 33 minutes.

Rangers rallied briefly in the second period but fell further behind when Arthur Numan turned McLaren's cross-shot into his own net after it had bounced off Christensen.

Substitute Tom McManus needed just one minute on the pitch to give Hibernian a 1-0 win that keeps them chasing Celtic at the top of the table.

Rock-bottom Dundee United looked like picking up only their third point of the season and were unlucky not to take the lead early in the game.

But as the game entered the last ten minutes manager Alex McLeish swapped French striker David Zifelli for youngster McManus who promptly made an impact by knocking home his third goal of the season.

That leaves United still searching for their first win of the season while the Edinburgh club remain second behind Celtic.

St Johnstone piled on the misery for Hearts with a comfortable 3-0 win at Tynecastle.

The Edinburgh side were looking to bounce back from the 6-2 hammering by rivals Hibernian last Sunday.

However, the Jambos were comprehensively beaten by an impressive St Johnstone side.