

Serie A giants want rules changed

ROME, Nov 5: Lazio have followed the example of Serie A rivals AC Milan by sending a letter to Italian football's governing body FIGC, insisting that they amend their rulebook to allow clubs to field as many non-European Union players as they wish, reports AFP.

Lazio's director general Massimo Cragnotti, son of club president Sergio, confirmed a letter had been sent Saturday night after the 2-0 victory over Bologna.

Cragnotti junior said: "We have done the same thing as AC Milan. In any case we have faith in the federation and what it will decide."

On Friday Milan's administrative delegate Adriano Galliani sent a letter to the FIGC - countersigned by his five non-EU players Andriy Shevchenko (Ukraine), Zvonimir Boban (Croatia) and Brazilian trio Dida, Roque Junior and Serginho.

In the letter Galliani threatened legal action if the FIGC did not change its rules promptly.

AC Milan's move came 24 hours after a court ruling in Reggio Emilia that ruled that Serie C's rulebook - which prevents any non-EU player competing - was illegal following a test case brought by Nigerian Ike Prince Ekong who had been unable to play for his side Reggina since they were relegated.

The judgement ruled that any discrimination between EU and non-EU citizens legitimately resident in Italy was illegal and opened the door for Serie A and Serie B clubs to challenge the cap of three non-EU players in any team (and five in a squad).

According to Sunday's sporting press AC Milan were not planning to challenge the FIGC by fielding all five of their non-EU players in the afternoon match at home to Atalanta as had previously been speculated.

Homesick Arif to return

SAINT SEBASTIEN, Spain. Nov 5: Turkish international Arif Erdem of Spanish side Real Sociedad is due to rejoin his former club Galatasaray in the next few days, announced the Basque club here on Saturday, reports AFP.

Arif follows the identical path chosen by his international team-mate Hakan Sukur who returned home from a brief spell (July - October 1995) with Torino in Italy's Serie A after saying that he missed life in Turkey, and complaining that he missed Turkish kebabs.

Real Sociedad bought the Turkish forward in the off-season for 600 million pesetas (3m dollars) but have come to a "verbal agreement" with the reigning UEFA Cup champions - to let the player's return.

No fee for the player's return was specified. The 28-year-old forward, after only months in the Spanish top flight, was unable to adapt to life in Spain and had been left out of the team's plans in previous weeks.

Fellow international midfielder Tayfun Korkut, who formerly played for Turkish side Fenerbahce, has had no such problems and will remain at Real Sociedad.

Meanwhile, another Turkish international player, Oktay Dereligioglu of Las Palmas, is taking legal proceedings against his Spanish club for similar problems.

Oktay inexplicably missed two days of training and was suspended without pay after a training field fight on September 26 with team-mate Wimpy Samways.

Oktay claimed the English player threatened him - facts which Samways denies after being reintegrated into the team.

Two-game ban on McCarthy

JOHANNESBURG, Nov 5: South African striker Benni McCarthy has been given a two match ban for provocative behaviour towards fans before a fatal stampede at a World Cup qualifier in Zimbabwe in July, reports Reuters.

South African Football Association (SAFA) officials said on Saturday that the striker had been given the ban by world body FIFA and also been fined. Thirteen people died after police firing teargas at that game in the country's worst sporting tragedy.

McCarthy, who plays in Spain for Celta Vigo, was found guilty of provoking the Zimbabwean supporters as he celebrated the second goal for South Africa late into the match at the National sports stadium in Harare.

The home crowd responded by throwing objects at McCarthy and the goalscorer Delron Buckley.

Police then opened fire with teargas.

The match was abandoned with seven minutes remaining and South Africa 2-0 ahead. A decision on the result of the game is to be made in early December when the World Cup organizing committee meet in Rome.

McCarthy ran towards the crowd and gestured with his finger in front of lips and the SAFA quoted FIFA as saying his actions had led to rioting.

The ban means McCarthy misses the next two World Cup qualifiers early next year against Burkina Faso and Malawi.



Hernan Crespo, the Lazio super-striker, outsmarting Bologna custodian Gianluca Pagliuca to score during their Serie A match at Rome on November 4. — AFP photo

Serie A

Champions blank Bologna

ROME, Nov 5: Marcelo Salas and Juan Sebastian Veron made the decisive moves and Pavel Nedved and Hernan Crespo scored to give defending league champion Lazio a 2-0 victory against Bologna which takes them 10 points atop the Serie A standings, reports AP.

The third home win of the Roman team in one of Saturday's matches of Week Five lifted Lazio into a tie with league leaders Atalanta and Udinese, who can regain an edge when they play AC Milan and Lecce respectively in Sunday's action.

In the only other match of the day, newly-signed Greek forward Zisis Vryzas scored a hat-trick in Perugia's 4-3 upset win against Fiorentina.

At Rome's Olympic stadium traveling coach Sven-Goran Eriksson, who is going to commute between England and Rome during the current season, made the proper choice as he decided to start Salas and leave leading team striker Simone Inzaghi on the substitutes bench.

Salas, the Chilean striker who was on the transfer list before Claudio Lopez serious knee injury, started his action from the midfield line, outdribbled three opponents and fed Nedved for the opening goal in the 9' minute.

The right-foot shot of the

Czech midfielder hit the post and the ball bounced into the net.

A perfect pass by Veron offered Crespo the chance to make it two in the 65', in an all-Argentine action. Crespo was replaced by Inzaghi shortly after scoring his second season goal.

Bologna, coming from three consecutive wins, did not cause any problem to Lazio defense and keeper Angelo Peruzzi had a very quiet night.

Bologna's record worsened to 3-0-2 (win-draw-loss). Lazio improved to 3-1-1.

The Roman team was apparently unshaken by Eriksson's decision to leave the team at the end of the current campaign to become England's coach.

The Swede is reportedly negotiating with Lazio officials the possibility to supervise England's World Cup qualifiers next spring while staying at the helm of Lazio through the expiration of his contract in June.

At Florence, the home team paid for their defensive weakness while scoring three goals and producing several scoring chances.

The home loss of the Fiorentina team, the first of the season which added to three draws and one win, was likely to put additional pressure on Turkish coach Fatih Terim, who already grew tense relations with Fiorentina's owner, movie tycoon Vittorio Cecchi Gori.

Vryzas, a Serie A newcomer who did not score in the previous four rounds, headed in his first goal in the 40th minute, to tie a 23' minute strike by Fiorentina's midfielder Angelo Di Livio.

A penalty, converted by Luca Saudati in the 42' minute, gave Perugia's short-lived 2-1 lead.

Brazilian Leandro made it 2-2 four minutes later, in injury time, deflecting into the net a rebound on a shot by Portuguese star Manuel Rui Costa which hit the bar.

Vryzas hit again in the 50', on a mishap by Fiorentina defenders, and in the 64', kicking in from one metre (yard) a diagonal pass by teammate Giovanni Tedesco.

Leandro headed in his second goal and Fiorentina's third with 14 minutes left.

Keeper Andrea Mazzantini made decisive saves on headers by Portuguese forward Nuno Gomes in the closing minutes as Perugia ended the game one player down following the expulsion of defender Roberto Goretto.

Second-half substitute Enrico Chiesa hit the bar of Perugia's net in the dying seconds as Fiorentina failed to achieve a last-minute equaliser, as it did in the previous match with Bari.

Fiorentina was left with six points in the league standings (1-3-1). Perugia climbed to seven (2-1-2).

Terim's days numbered?

FLORENCE, Italy, Nov 5: Fiorentina's Turkish coach Fatih Terim flew back to Istanbul Saturday evening after his team's 4-3 home defeat by Perugia that has revived speculation in the Italian press that his brief reign at the Florence-based outfit may hinge on next Sunday's match with Bologna, reports AFP.

Fiorentina's director general Giancarlo Antognoni gave the vote of confidence to the Turk, who returned to his homeland for a television appearance, but made it clear that the club needed to turn around soon.

After taking part in a board meeting after the match Antognoni - a member of Italy's 1982 World Cup winning squad - said: "No-one put up for discussion the position of the coach."

"Certainly when you have conceded 10 goals in five games something is wrong, let's say it is not an everyday occurrence," Corriere dello sport reported him as saying.

"Something has to be done. It will be up to Terim to decide what has been happening recently, it will be up to Terim to find a solution."

The president also said the press ban was now over. But the day that had started with a reconciliation ended in disharmony with a defeat marked by poor defending and a hat-trick by Perugia's Greek striker Zisis Vryzas leaving the Turk looking vulnerable again.

Cecchi Gori made an implied criticism of Terim when asked what his reaction was to the fans criticism of him - the fans and players had sided with the coach during the stand-off.

"It was not me who sent the players out on the field - perhaps it would have been right to make some changes," said Cecchi Gori.

Sources close to the president told Gazzetta dello Sport said that he was referring to what he considers Terim's wrong decision not to play Enrico Chiesa and Czech Tomas Repka in the starting line-up.

A board meeting then took place and it was after that meeting that Antognoni publicly backed Terim.

Terim arrived at Fiorentina on a personal high but with the club in turmoil.

The club was resigned to the loss of their talismanic Argentinian striker Gabriel Batistuta to AS Roma, ending the Latin American's record-breaking stay at Florence.

But Terim was basking in the euphoria of being the first coach to lead a Turkish side to a European trophy, after taking Galatasaray to the UEFA Cup, clinched on penalties against English side Arsenal after a 0-0 draw in Copenhagen.

minutes remaining. Stefan Beinlich hit the fourth ten minutes from time to underline the hosts' superiority following a superb solo run.

But Terim was basking in the euphoria of being the first coach to lead a Turkish side to a European trophy, after taking Galatasaray to the UEFA Cup, clinched on penalties against English side Arsenal after a 0-0 draw in Copenhagen.

But Terim was basking in the euphoria of being the first coach to lead a Turkish side to a European trophy, after taking Galatasaray to the UEFA Cup, clinched on penalties against English side Arsenal after a 0-0 draw in Copenhagen.

But Terim was basking in the euphoria of being the first coach to lead a Turkish side to a European trophy, after taking Galatasaray to the UEFA Cup, clinched on penalties against English side Arsenal after a 0-0 draw in Copenhagen.

But Terim was basking in the euphoria of being the first coach to lead a Turkish side to a European trophy, after taking Galatasaray to the UEFA Cup, clinched on penalties against English side Arsenal after a 0-0 draw in Copenhagen.

But Terim was basking in the euphoria of being the first coach to lead a Turkish side to a European trophy, after taking Galatasaray to the UEFA Cup, clinched on penalties against English side Arsenal after a 0-0 draw in Copenhagen.

But Terim was basking in the euphoria of being the first coach to lead a Turkish side to a European trophy, after taking Galatasaray to the UEFA Cup, clinched on penalties against English side Arsenal after a 0-0 draw in Copenhagen.

But Terim was basking in the euphoria of being the first coach to lead a Turkish side to a European trophy, after taking Galatasaray to the UEFA Cup, clinched on penalties against English side Arsenal after a 0-0 draw in Copenhagen.

But Terim was basking in the euphoria of being the first coach to lead a Turkish side to a European trophy, after taking Galatasaray to the UEFA Cup, clinched on penalties against English side Arsenal after a 0-0 draw in Copenhagen.

But Terim was basking in the euphoria of being the first coach to lead a Turkish side to a European trophy, after taking Galatasaray to the UEFA Cup, clinched on penalties against English side Arsenal after a 0-0 draw in Copenhagen.

But Terim was basking in the euphoria of being the first coach to lead a Turkish side to a European trophy, after taking Galatasaray to the UEFA Cup, clinched on penalties against English side Arsenal after a 0-0 draw in Copenhagen.

But Terim was basking in the euphoria of being the first coach to lead a Turkish side to a European trophy, after taking Galatasaray to the UEFA Cup, clinched on penalties against English side Arsenal after a 0-0 draw in Copenhagen.

But Terim was basking in the euphoria of being the first coach to lead a Turkish side to a European trophy, after taking Galatasaray to the UEFA Cup, clinched on penalties against English side Arsenal after a 0-0 draw in Copenhagen.

But Terim was basking in the euphoria of being the first coach to lead a Turkish side to a European trophy, after taking Galatasaray to the UEFA Cup, clinched on penalties against English side Arsenal after a 0-0 draw in Copenhagen.

But Terim was basking in the euphoria of being the first coach to lead a Turkish side to a European trophy, after taking Galatasaray to the UEFA Cup, clinched on penalties against English side Arsenal after a 0-0 draw in Copenhagen.

Veron extends contract

ROME, Nov 5: Lazio's Argentinian midfielder Juan Sebastian Veron has prolonged his contract with the Italian champions until 2005, the player confirmed Saturday night, reports AFP.

Veron, outstanding in his club's 2-0 home victory over Bologna in the Italian First Division, revealed he had extended his stay after the match.

"This has made me happy," said Veron. "I feel good at Rome. Now we must carry on on the same road. We still have lots of work to do."

Veron created Lazio's second goal which was scored by his compatriot Hernan Crespo and both players celebrated by lifting their jerseys to reveal t-shirts with a word of encouragement for another of Lazio's Argentinian contingent Claudio Lopez, ruled out of action for four months after an operation this weekend.

The t-shirts said: "Don't give up. Plojo (Lopez's nickname)" and Veron explained: "We were playing for him because we noticed he was looking a little downcast. I hope, he was watching on the television."

Twenty-five-year-old Veron also revealed he supported the decision of Reggio Emilia magistrates to ban all discrimination between European Union and non-European players - a ruling that will force Serie A and Serie B clubs to change their rulebooks and scrap the cap of three non-EU players to be fielded in a team (and five in a squad).

"I am happy that the controversy has been resolved in this way," said Veron. "It was about time we were considered all equal - non-EU or not. To discriminate on this basis is racism pure and simple."

Veron is currently at the centre of a judicial probe into his Italian naturalisation papers which investigators say are irregular.

Veron has previously played for Sampdoria and Parma in Italy. He joined Genoa-based Sampdoria from Buenos Aires club Boca Juniors after starting his career with Estudiantes.

Real plan big

MADRID, Nov 5: Debt-laden European champions Real Madrid are to sell their training camp in the centre of the city to local authorities to make way for a huge sports complex, reports said here Saturday, reports AFP.

Real are around 250 million dollars in debt and hope to build a sports complex for the club out in the suburbs, according to AS sports daily.

The town authorities will take over the current site and turn it into public sports facilities which will have 35-storey high skyscrapers at their four corners.

Real hope that the development could make them some 300 million dollars, still according to AS.

One of the paper's journalists Joaquim Marotto, who is also the head of Real's press service, has left the journal to take a post with the public works company led by Real president Florentino Perez.

Perez, who took charge in the summer after ousting Lorenzo Sanz, has vowed to clear the club's debts amid warnings that the club could face a European ban if they do not get their house in order.

Lopez has knee ligament operation

ROME, Nov 5: Lazio playmaker Claudio Lopez, injured in his side's league encounter against Brescia on Wednesday, underwent an operation on left knee ligaments here on Saturday, reports AFP.

The Argentine international will be absent from competition for four months, according to the Serie A club.

Lopez, who signed for Lazio from Spanish side Valencia in the off-season, was forced off after being tackled in the 12th minute of the game.

He was replaced by Italian Simone Inzaghi, who scored a brace of goals to hand Lazio a 2-1 victory.

Guy Roux blasts PSG vandals

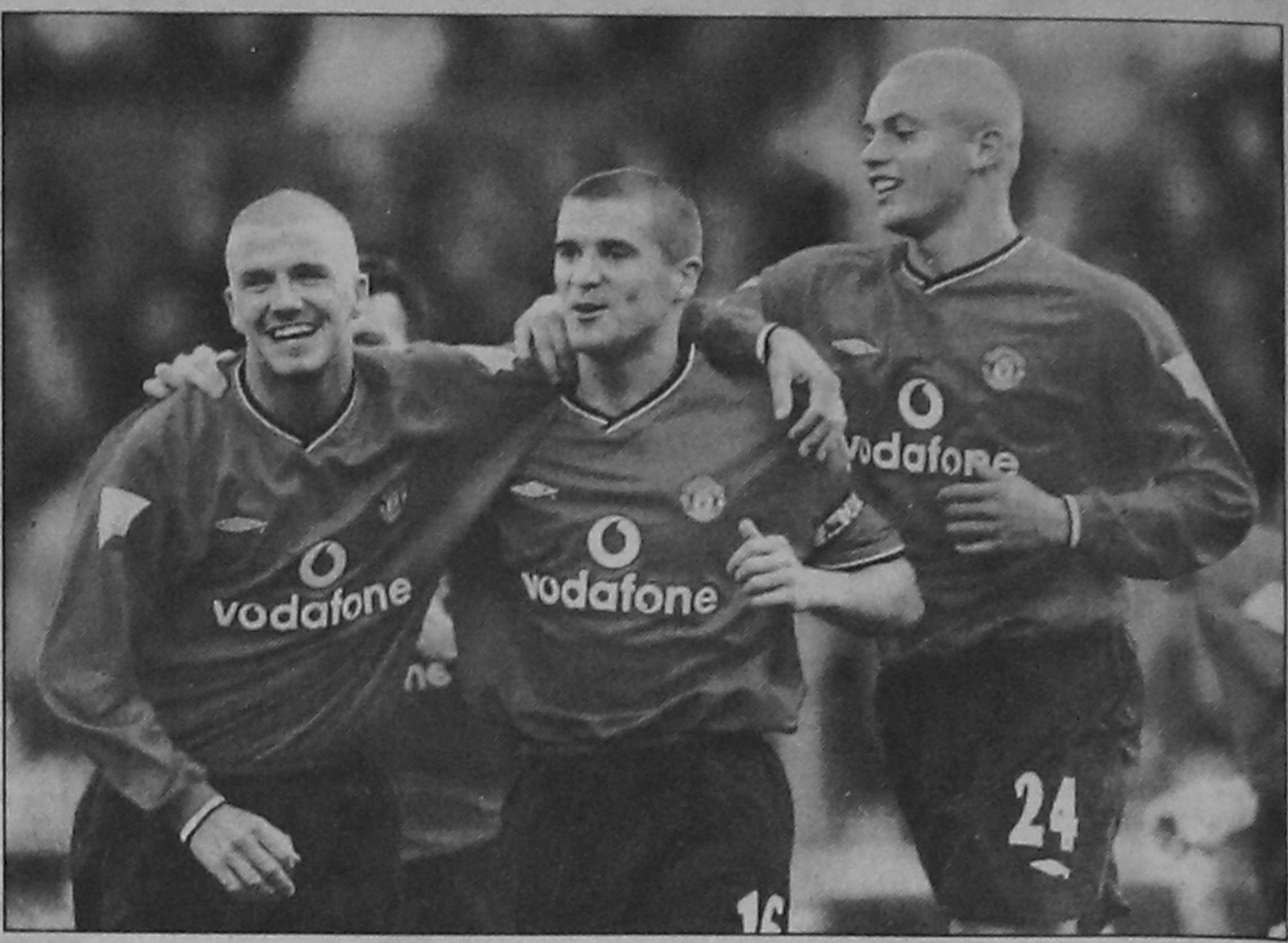
PARIS, Nov 5: Former Auxerre coach Guy Roux on Sunday slammed Paris Saint Germain supporters for vandalising their hosts' facilities after Saturday's match between the clubs, reports AFP.

Some 1,300 PSG fans attended the match at the Abbe-Deschamps stadium where their side lost 1-0 to lose the leadership of the first division to Sedan.

"They broke 25 seats in the stands and the radiators in the toilets," complained Roux, now Auxerre's general manager, adding the police had moved in and contained the hooligans.

Roux, who retired last summer after four decades as coach during which he turned Auxerre from a lower league club into a championship-winning side, told AFP he estimated the damage cost about 7,500 francs (1,200 dollars).

"And 7,500 francs, that's 25 footballs."



David Beckham (C) being congratulated by team captain Roy Keane (C) and Wes Brown after scoring Manchester United's second goal against Coventry at Highfield Road, Coventry on November 4. — AFP photo

Premiership

Ref lets Ipswich down

LONDON, Nov 5: Ipswich boss George Burley accused referee Alan Wiley of being influenced by the home crowd when he awarded Newcastle a decisive penalty in their 2-1 victory at St James's Park on Saturday, reports AFP.

Wiley pointed to the spot after he ruled that Mark Venus had fouled Alan Shearer in the penalty box midway through the second half.

Shearer tucked home the spot-kick for his second goal of the match after Premiership newcomers Ipswich had led through an early Marcus Stewart strike.

Burley believes Wiley paid too much attention to the reaction of the home supporters.

"The referee was about 50 or 60 yards from it. Alan Shearer falls, the crowd shouts penalty and he gives them a penalty," said Burley angrily.

"But sometimes when you come away from home to a big stadium like this the decisions go against you."

"Mark didn't think it was a penalty and if it had been at the other end I know what way it would have gone."

"Shearer has won the penalty and that has decided the game. You've got to say he was certainly looking for a tackle there."

"He's an experienced player, but as I say we're disappointed because we honestly felt we deserved something out of the game."

Newcastle leapfrogged over Ipswich to go fifth in the table and it was a great day for Robson against his old club.

He said: "I'm delighted, we've come from behind, we hadn't won here for some time in the league, we hadn't scored a goal, we've scored twice, we've picked up three points, we've beaten my old club and it's not been a bad day for me."

Manchester United held onto top spot after a narrow 2-1 triumph at Coventry but second-placed Arsenal kept pace with the title holders by winning 1-0 at strugglers Middlesbrough.

United have 27 points from 12 games, the same as Arsenal, but stay ahead of the Gunners on goal difference.

Leicester move up to third, five points adrift of the top two, after their 1-0 win at Manchester City.

Liverpool slip one place to fourth after losing a 4-3 thriller at Leeds in the early kick-off at Elland Road.

Australian international Mark Viduka scored four times to rescue Leeds in a sensational victory over Gerard Houllier's men.

James Beattie scored a late goal to sink Chelsea 3-2 at the Dell. The visitors had fought back from being two goals down at half time and looked good for a point until the youngster struck to leave Chelsea still searching for an away win.

Chris Armstrong took some of the pressure off his manager, George Graham, hitting the winner in a much-needed 2-1 home win over Sunderland.

Charlton beat Bradford 2-0 at the Valley with Jonatan Johansson lifting his eighth of the season after four minutes and Graham Stuart adding to the lead 12 minutes later.

clear of Deportivo. Barcelona climb to third on 16, ahead of Celta Vigo on goal difference after their 1-0 win at home to Malaga.

Real Madrid, who have now lost three of their last four league games, slip to sixth on 14 points thanks to Rosu's three goal heroics.

The Romanian international put Numanica ahead on eight minutes as he beat Claude Makelele to a near-post header that flashed past Casillas.

Raul equalised for Real seven minutes later as he was left unmarked at the far post to head in Savio's well-judged cross from the left.

But the European champions were level for just 40 seconds as a loss of concentration led in Rosu for his second.

Straight from the kick-off, Inaki threaded a pass through the Madrid defence for Rosu, who beat Casillas with a first-time shot.

Real coach Vicente del Bosque had recalled England international Steve McManaman for his first start since the Champions League final last season but the visitors struggled to keep possession against their disciplined opponent.

Rosu completed his hat-trick on 64 minutes as he latched on to a nod down on the edge of the Real area, took one touch to wrong-foot the Real defence and then smashed past Casillas.

McManaman then missed a glaring chance to reduce the deficit, playing a fine one-two with Raul only to put his shot high and wide when through on goal.

Barcelona's victory over Las Palmas was a triumph for their tenacity as well as skill.

The home side were ferocious in the tackle throughout against the Catalans, who were never allowed time on the ball.

Las Palmas had the better of the chances early on but the game was settled by one piece of brilliance from Barcelona.

At the start of the second half, midfielder Xavi slid through a pass that bisected the defence and Rivaldo slimmed past the keeper before side footing the ball home.

The World and European Player of the Year then showed he is only human by missing a similar chance midway through the second half, beating the keeper but then slipping as he was about to shoot and allowing time for the defence to clear.

Primera Liga

Who else but Rivaldo

BARCELONA, Nov 5: Barcelona won 1-0 at Las Palmas to gain important ground in the Spanish First Division on Saturday, as their three leading title rivals all suffered surprise away defeats, reports Reuters.

Victory for Barcelona, which came through a brilliant finish from Rivaldo at the start of the second half, took them back up to third place.

Meanwhile, league leaders Valencia, champions Deportivo Coruna and title favourites Real Madrid all had off days.

Valencia went down 1-0 at Espanyol to a Manuel Serrano goal 12 minutes from time, Deportivo conceded a last minute winner to Villarreal in a 3-2 thriller, while Real Madrid were

outgunned 3-1 at Numanica, with Romanian Laurentiu Rosu claiming a hat-trick.

After nine games, Valencia retain the league leadership with 19 points, still two points

clear of Deportivo. Barcelona climb to third on 16, ahead of Celta Vigo on goal difference after their 1-0 win at home to Malaga.

Real Madrid, who have now lost three of their last four league games, slip to sixth on 14 points thanks to Rosu's three goal heroics.

The Romanian international put Numanica ahead on eight minutes as he beat Claude Makelele to a near-post header that flashed past Casillas.

Raul equalised for Real seven minutes later as he was left unmarked at the far post to head in Savio's well-judged cross from the left.

But the European champions were level for just 40 seconds as a loss of concentration led in Rosu for his second.

Straight from the kick-off, Inaki threaded a pass through the Madrid defence for Rosu, who beat Casillas with a first-time shot.

Real coach Vicente del Bosque had recalled England international Steve McManaman for his first start since the Champions League final last season but the visitors struggled to keep possession against their disciplined opponent.

Rosu completed his hat-trick on 64 minutes as he latched on to a nod down on the edge of the Real area, took one touch to wrong-foot the Real defence and then smashed past Casillas.

McManaman then missed a glaring chance to reduce the deficit, playing a fine one-two with Raul only to put his shot high and wide when through on goal.

Barcelona's victory over Las Palmas was a triumph for their tenacity as well as skill.

The home side were ferocious in the tackle throughout against the Catalans, who were never allowed time on the ball.

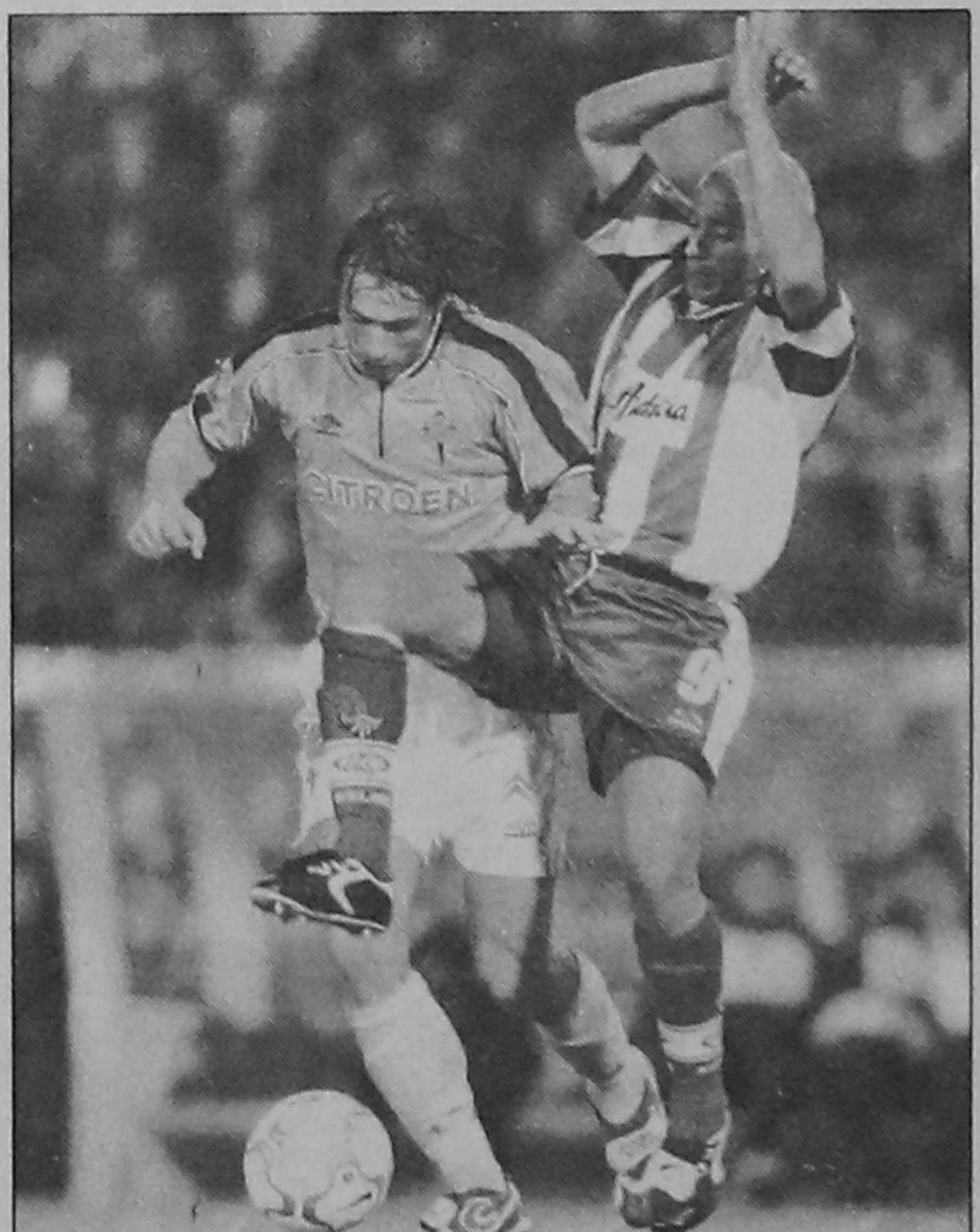
Las Palmas had the better of the chances early on but the game was settled by one piece of brilliance from Barcelona.

At the start of the second half, midfielder Xavi slid through a pass that bisected the defence and Rivaldo slimmed past the keeper before side footing the ball home.

The World and European Player of the Year then showed he is only human by missing a similar chance midway through the second half, beating the keeper but then slipping as he was about to shoot and allowing time for the defence to clear.



RIVALDO



Malaga's Uruguayan international Dario Silva (R) gets in the way of Celta Vigo's Russian recruit Alexander Mostovoi during their Primera Liga match at Vigo on November 4. — AFP photo