

## Drunken Irish duo disciplined

DUBLIN, Nov 14: Republic of Ireland internationals Phil Babb and Mark Kennedy were shown the yellow card by a Dublin judge Monday after damaging a policeman's car during a drunken night out, reports AFP.

Former Liverpool defender Babb and Manchester City winger Kennedy spent a night in police custody after the incident while they were preparing with the Republic of Ireland squad for a vital World Cup qualifier against Holland in August.

They were arrested after rolling over the stationary vehicle as they walked through Dublin city centre in the early hours of the morning, causing damage to the vehicle.

Babb, aged 29 and now playing for Sporting Lisbon, and Kennedy, 24, both pleaded guilty to being drunk and disorderly, breaching the peace and criminal damage.

They were dealt with under the Irish Probation Act which means that, though they have no criminal record, the matter can be raised again should they commit another offence.

Policewoman Elaine Farrell told the court how she was on duty on Harcourt Street when she saw Babb and Kennedy walking towards her car, a green Volkswagen Beetle.

She told Dublin District Court: "They ran towards this car and they rolled across the bonnet which set the car alarm off."

The pair ran off and, after she turned off the alarm, Farrell followed them and found them getting into a taxi and arrested them.

Defence counsel Peter Charleton said the players had paid for the damage and apologised to Farrell.

He said they "deeply regretted" the incident, which was an example of "wild horseplay... rather than a piece of intentional criminal wrongdoing."

They had already been punished by being dropped from the Irish team for four matches.

## Zidane not going anywhere

ISTANBUL, Nov 14: French playmaker Zinedine Zidane on Monday brushed aside speculation that he was ready to quit Italian Serie A side Juventus, reports AFP.

Zidane was jostled by fans last week at Turin airport after being blamed for his team's European exit because of his sending-off against Hamburg SV which earned him a five-match ban.

But despite rekindling speculation that he wanted out by polling supporters on whether he should stay or go on his website, Zidane said that he had every intention of seeing out his contract with Juventus which he extended two months ago until 2005.

"Everyone is trying too hard to know if I'm having a crisis. We were eliminated from the Champions League, that draws reactions."

"All the players were targeted. The card was held against me. It disappointed the fans. For me the important thing is to go back on the pitch with serenity," said Zidane.

"As for the survey, the question is badly put. It's a pity it's on my website. That says that I support it."

Zidane said: "Until now I've been happy. The only little sour note was the ban. But you have to accept it. There are highs and lows. I want to do well and win with Juventus."

And he added that he wanted to do well with the French team during Wednesday's international friendly against Turkey here, after missing their last two games against Cameroon and South Africa because of injury.

"The aim is to have a good match. You can't say that three draws in a row is a good record for the world and European champions. We're hoping to do better, we have to pull back a bit."

## Turkey friendly Henry gives it a miss

PARIS, Nov 14: Arsenal's Thierry Henry has dropped out of France's friendly against Turkey in Istanbul on Wednesday. Coach Roger Lemerre called up in-form Lyon striker Steve Marlet in his place on Monday, reports AFP.

Marlet, who will make his international debut with a run out against Turkey, arrived at Lyon from Auxerre in the close season and has quickly impressed.

The 24-year-old has depoted French international Tony Vairelles from the Lyon forward line and has scored three goals in the Champions League too, often proving in spectacular fashion that he can perform at the top level.

Henry arrived in France on Monday but was sent home after team doctors examined his groin strain.

Paris St Germain's Frederic Delu, newly arrived from Barcelona, was called up to the squad on Friday after Lyon's Pierre Laigle dropped out with a calf injury.

# Best two without their best



MONTEVIDEO, Nov 14: Group leaders Argentina go into the tenth round of the Latin American World Cup qualifiers this weekend without several of their key players, reports AFP.

Five points clear of closest chasers Brazil and Paraguay, the Argentines take on seventh-placed Chile in Santiago, but make the trip without several of their stars.

Roman rivals Gabriel Battista and Hernan Crespo, currently playing their trades at AS Roma and Lazio respectively are out, with Battista suffering from laryngitis and Crespo a thigh strain.

Another Serie A pair Javier Zanetti of Inter Milan and Claudio Lopez of Lazio also miss the tie as does Marcelo Gallardo of Monaco, who has a groin strain.

The match could however prove to be a good chance for Chile to improve their position in the ten-team Latin American group where the first four teams automatically qualify.

The clash between second-placed Brazil and Colombia, in fourth, is tipped as the match of the round.

After a questionable start to their qualifying campaign struggling Brazil fired their coach Wanderley Luxemburgo, who also failed to impress at the Sydney Olympics.

Brazil have now climbed out of fifth place three rounds ago and sit second on 17 points thanks to seven goals in two games from recalled veteran Striker Romario who failed to make the squad for France 1998.

Colombia, in fourth place on 15 points, will be looking to cause an upset Wednesday at Sao Paulo's Morumbi stadium and should take courage from the absence of Romario through injury.

Third-placed Paraguay will attempt to consolidate their position with a home tie in Asuncion against Peru, still struggling on eight points.

Paraguay coach Sergio Markarian, will be counting on colourful keeper Jose Luis Chilavert, not only to keep a clean sheet but to add to his 59 career goals from spot and free kicks.

Ecuador are favourites in their tie with bottom-placed Venezuela, Latin America's perennial losers, after a victory over closest rival Chile in the last round of matches put them in contention with Uruguay for the fifth spot that carries a play-off qualifying match with the winner of the Oceania group.

Uruguay coach Daniel Passarella, takes his side to the so-

called "Condor's nest", the Hernando Siles stadium in La Paz. Bolivia, 3,600m above sea level. Passarella and his side have spent 20 days in La Paz to acclimatize to the altitude and for the first time during the campaign the Argentine will field more domestic based players than foreign based stars.

Uruguay won 1-0 in the corresponding fixture in Montevideo, but have not won in La Paz for 40 years.

Bolivia coach Carlos Aragonés, is preparing to field an attack minded side led by his star player Erwin "Platin" Sanchez of Portuguese side Boavista.

Bolivia have won only eight points from nine outings so far and will need a string of good results to get back into the frame.

But with Italy already having one foot on the plane to Japan and South Korea in 2002 and England seemingly unable even to find the travel agents after a 1-0 defeat to Germany and a draw with Finland it is hardly surprising that the game is not causing undue excitement in Italy.

England had a dismal Euro and a poor start to the qualification campaign with Kevin Keegan resigning as coach after the Germany defeat.

With a host of names refusing a job widely considered to be a poisoned chalice England finally got their man in Sweden's Sven Goran Eriksson but he will not take the reins until July, when his contract with Italian champions Lazio expires.

For the Italy match Leicester City boss Peter Taylor will be assisted by Manchester United boss Sir Alex Ferguson's right-hand man Steve McClaren.

There was further controversy with reports on cliques within the England camp and card games involving Keegan where large sums of money were won and lost.

It seems a long time since 1997 when England visited Italy for a crucial World Cup qualifier in Rome.

England's fine display in the 0-0 draw earned them a ticket to France while sending Italy into a play-off and was seen as

confirmation that Glenn Hoddle's side were genuine contenders for the ultimate prize - how times have changed.

The usual spate of withdrawals that precedes any friendly has occurred at AS Roma's playmaker Francesco Totti and Juventus defender Mark Iuliano withdrawing from the "Azzurri".

Leeds striker Alan Smith, Liverpool's Michael Owen and Manchester United duo Paul Scholes and Wes Brown are sitting it out for the visitors.

Florentina's Daniele Adani and Juventus midfielder Gianluca Pessotto enter the squad for Italy as replacements for the injured pair.

Udinese playmaker Stefano Fiore - one of the successes of Euro 2000 - will take Totti's role behind a front two.

Taylor has appointed Manchester United midfielder David Beckham as captain.

"I told David and he is delighted," said Taylor. "He is captain for one game, as that's how long I am in charge for the moment, and I have no worries about his temperament."

Turin police will be on alert for possible hooliganism in a city where the death of 39 Juventus fans before the 1985 European Cup Final at the Heysel Stadium in Brussels after rioting by Liverpool fans has not been forgotten.

He continued: "Being together in this... and showing a common front and a common will and wish will make our job easier and it will also be understood by the Commission that football wants to change some things but not all the principles that have been laid down before."

Smith said he hoped the Commission would take notice of the submissions from member countries and heads of government when they meet in Nice.

He added: "The transfer fee system is important, particularly because it helps smaller clubs, and we are very worried indeed about what the position will be for smaller clubs in Britain if we simply abandoned the system altogether."

Blair set to meet Blatter

LONDON, Nov 14: British Prime Minister Tony Blair on Monday met with Sepp Blatter, the presi-

dent of FIFA - football's world governing body - to highlight his opposition to plans to scrap transfer fees for soccer stars, reports AFP.

FIFA president Blatter, his UEFA counterpart Lennart Johansson, English Premier League boss Mike Foster and Geoff Thompson of the Football Association (FA), met Blair at 10 Downing Street.

The prime minister is opposed to European Union (EU) Commission and FIFA plans to ban transfer fees in two years time for senior players.

Blair believes the lack of transfer cash for smaller clubs could send some out of business and lead to far fewer top-flight teams in Britain.

The Commission wants to outlaw the system because it believes it interferes with the free movement of labour under the EU's single market system.

Countries with major soccer leagues, such as Germany, Spain and Italy, are backing Blair's stand.

After the meeting, Johansson and latter said their time with Blair, Culture Secretary Chris Smith, and Sports Minister Kate Hoey, had been "very positive".

Blatter said the Nice Summit would be critical to the future of the transfer system as was the unified front that his alliance with Johansson represented.

transfer cash for smaller clubs could send some out of business and lead to far fewer top-flight teams in Britain.

The Commission wants to outlaw the system because it believes it interferes with the free movement of labour under the EU's single market system.

Countries with major soccer leagues, such as Germany, Spain and Italy, are backing Blair's stand.

After the meeting, Johansson and latter said their time with Blair, Culture Secretary Chris Smith, and Sports Minister Kate Hoey, had been "very positive".

Blatter said the Nice Summit would be critical to the future of the transfer system as was the unified front that his alliance with Johansson represented.

transfer cash for smaller clubs could send some out of business and lead to far fewer top-flight teams in Britain.

The Commission wants to outlaw the system because it believes it interferes with the free movement of labour under the EU's single market system.

Countries with major soccer leagues, such as Germany, Spain and Italy, are backing Blair's stand.

After the meeting, Johansson and latter said their time with Blair, Culture Secretary Chris Smith, and Sports Minister Kate Hoey, had been "very positive".

Blatter said the Nice Summit would be critical to the future of the transfer system as was the unified front that his alliance with Johansson represented.

## WC QUALIFYING FIXTURES

World Cup 2002 South American Zone qualifiers:  
Wednesday:  
Sao Paulo (18H00 GMT): Brazil v Colombia  
La Paz (20H00 GMT): Bolivia v Uruguay  
Asuncion (22H45 GMT): Paraguay v Peru  
Maracaibo (23H30 GMT): Venezuela v Ecuador  
Thursday:  
Santiago (00H40 GMT): Chile v Argentina

## Smith defends decision

LONDON, Nov 14: Alan Smith insisted Monday he had done "the sensible thing" in turning down the chance of a dream England debut against Italy.

The Leeds striker would almost certainly have played some part in the friendly in Turin on Wednesday, but he pulled out after sustaining an ankle injury in the 1-1 Premiership draw against Chelsea on Sunday.

That injury, combined with Leeds manager David O'Leary's belief that the 20-year-old star needs rest, was enough to convince caretaker England boss Peter Taylor to allow the striker to withdraw.

Smith said on his personal website: "Having to pull out of the England squad for Wednesday's friendly international against Italy in Turin is obviously a blow for me."

"The chance of playing in a full international at my age really appealed to me. But I've done the sensible thing in pulling out."

"We had a very hard game at Chelsea yesterday and I got a knock on an ankle that was pretty sore afterwards."

"I also damaged my shoulder so I had to accept that I'd be better off staying back and getting treatment in readiness for our Premiership home game against West Ham on Saturday."

"The gaffer had a word with Peter Taylor about my injuries and also told him that I'd played in a lot of games this season."

"Peter Taylor understands the situation and from my point of view that was nice. I'm still very young and I have time on my side so hopefully I can carry on doing well for Leeds United and earn another chance with England."

Smith said on his personal website: "Having to pull out of the England squad for Wednesday's friendly international against Italy in Turin is obviously a blow for me."

"The chance of playing in a full international at my age really appealed to me. But I've done the sensible thing in pulling out."

"We had a very hard game at Chelsea yesterday and I got a knock on an ankle that was pretty sore afterwards."

"I also damaged my shoulder so I had to accept that I'd be better off staying back and getting treatment in readiness for our Premiership home game against West Ham on Saturday."

"The gaffer had a word with Peter Taylor about my injuries and also told him that I'd played in a lot of games this season."

"Peter Taylor understands the situation and from my point of view that was nice. I'm still very young and I have time on my side so hopefully I can carry on doing well for Leeds United and earn another chance with England."

Smith said on his personal website: "Having to pull out of the England squad for Wednesday's friendly international against Italy in Turin is obviously a blow for me."

"The chance of playing in a full international at my age really appealed to me. But I've done the sensible thing in pulling out."

"We had a very hard game at Chelsea yesterday and I got a knock on an ankle that was pretty sore afterwards."

"I also damaged my shoulder so I had to accept that I'd be better off staying back and getting treatment in readiness for our Premiership home game against West Ham on Saturday."

"The gaffer had a word with Peter Taylor about my injuries and also told him that I'd played in a lot of games this season."

"Peter Taylor understands the situation and from my point of view that was nice. I'm still very young and I have time on my side so hopefully I can carry on doing well for Leeds United and earn another chance with England."

Smith said on his personal website: "Having to pull out of the England squad for Wednesday's friendly international against Italy in Turin is obviously a blow for me."

"The chance of playing in a full international at my age really appealed to me. But I've done the sensible thing in pulling out."

"We had a very hard game at Chelsea yesterday and I got a knock on an ankle that was pretty sore afterwards."

"I also damaged my shoulder so I had to accept that I'd be better off staying back and getting treatment in readiness for our Premiership home game against West Ham on Saturday."

"The gaffer had a word with Peter Taylor about my injuries and also told him that I'd played in a lot of games this season."

"Peter Taylor understands the situation and from my point of view that was nice. I'm still very young and I have time on my side so hopefully I can carry on doing well for Leeds United and earn another chance with England."

Smith said on his personal website: "Having to pull out of the England squad for Wednesday's friendly international against Italy in Turin is obviously a blow for me."

"The chance of playing in a full international at my age really appealed to me. But I've done the sensible thing in pulling out."

"We had a very hard game at Chelsea yesterday and I got a knock on an ankle that was pretty sore afterwards."

"I also damaged my shoulder so I had to accept that I'd be better off staying back and getting treatment in readiness for our Premiership home game against West Ham on Saturday."

"The gaffer had a word with Peter Taylor about my injuries and also told him that I'd played in a lot of games this season."

"Peter Taylor understands the situation and from my point of view that was nice. I'm still very young and I have time on my side so hopefully I can carry on doing well for Leeds United and earn another chance with England."

Smith said on his personal website: "Having to pull out of the England squad for Wednesday's friendly international against Italy in Turin is obviously a blow for me."

"The chance of playing in a full international at my age really appealed to me. But I've done the sensible thing in pulling out."

"We had a very hard game at Chelsea yesterday and I got a knock on an ankle that was pretty sore afterwards."

"I also damaged my shoulder so I had to accept that I'd be better off staying back and getting treatment in readiness for our Premiership home game against West Ham on Saturday."

"The gaffer had a word with Peter Taylor about my injuries and also told him that I'd played in a lot of games this season."

# English pride at stake



TURIN, Italy, Nov 14: Not so long ago a match between Italy and England would have been billed as a clash between two of the superpowers in world football, reports AFP.

But while Italy's almost successful Euro 2000 campaign and encouraging subsequent form since under new coach Giovanni Trapattoni confirms they are heading in the right direction, things have rarely looked bleaker for England.

The country that invented the game now has a football team that is homeless, unable to win an important match, leaderless until July and - if the newspapers are to be believed - also plagued by a gambling problem.

As such Wednesday's friendly here between the two teams is not attracting the interest it would have commanded in the past but Trapattoni is determined his men should not lose focus.

When I chose to play against them the English did not have a complicated qualifying situation (for the 2002 World Cup), said Trapattoni.

"Now, however, they will be more focused and we must play the match as if it was a qualification decider," said the coach.

But with Italy already having one foot on the plane to Japan and South Korea in 2002 and England seemingly unable even to find the travel agents after a 1-0 defeat to Germany and a draw with Finland it is hardly surprising that the game is not causing undue excitement in Italy.

England had a dismal Euro and a poor start to the qualification campaign with Kevin Keegan resigning as coach after the Germany defeat.

With a host of names refusing a job widely considered to be a poisoned chalice England finally got their man in Sweden's Sven Goran Eriksson but he will not take the reins until July, when his contract with Italian champions Lazio expires.

For the Italy match Leicester City boss Peter Taylor will be assisted by Manchester United boss Sir Alex Ferguson's right-hand man Steve McClaren.

There was further controversy with reports on cliques within the England camp and card games involving Keegan where large sums of money were won and lost.

It seems a long time since 1997 when England visited Italy for a crucial World Cup qualifier in Rome.

England's fine display in the 0-0 draw earned them a ticket to France while sending Italy into a play-off and was seen as

confirmation that Glenn Hoddle's side were genuine contenders for the ultimate prize - how times have changed.

The usual spate of withdrawals that precedes any friendly has occurred at AS Roma's playmaker Francesco Totti and Juventus defender Mark Iuliano withdrawing from the "Azzurri".

Leeds striker Alan Smith, Liverpool's Michael Owen and Manchester United duo Paul Scholes and Wes Brown are sitting it out for the visitors.

Florentina's Daniele Adani and Juventus midfielder Gianluca Pessotto enter the squad for Italy as replacements for the injured pair.

Udinese playmaker Stefano Fiore - one of the successes of Euro 2000 - will take Totti's role behind a front two.

Taylor has appointed Manchester United midfielder David Beckham as captain.

"I told David and he is delighted," said Taylor. "He is captain for one game, as that's how long I am in charge for the moment, and I have no worries about his temperament."

Turin police will be on alert for possible hooliganism in a city where the death of 39 Juventus fans before the 1985 European Cup Final at the Heysel Stadium in Brussels after rioting by Liverpool fans has not been forgotten.

He continued: "Being together in this... and showing a common front and a common will and wish will make our job easier and it will also be understood by the Commission that football wants to change some things but not all the principles that have been laid down before."

Smith said he hoped the Commission would take notice of the submissions from member countries and heads of government when they meet in Nice.

He added: "The transfer fee system is important, particularly because it helps smaller clubs, and we are very worried indeed about what the position will be for smaller clubs in Britain if we simply abandoned the system altogether."

Blair set to meet Blatter

LONDON, Nov 14: British Prime Minister Tony Blair on Monday met with Sepp Blatter, the presi-

dent of FIFA - football's world governing body - to highlight his opposition to plans to scrap transfer fees for soccer stars, reports AFP.

FIFA president Blatter, his UEFA counterpart Lennart Johansson, English Premier League boss Mike Foster and Geoff Thompson of the Football Association (FA), met Blair at 10 Downing Street.

The prime minister is opposed to European Union (EU) Commission and FIFA plans to ban transfer fees in two years time for senior players.

Blair believes the lack of transfer cash for smaller clubs could send some out of business and lead to far fewer top-flight teams in Britain.

The Commission wants to outlaw the system because it believes it interferes with the free movement of labour under the EU's single market system.

Countries with major soccer leagues, such as Germany, Spain and Italy, are backing Blair's stand.

After the meeting, Johansson and latter said their time with Blair, Culture Secretary Chris Smith, and Sports Minister Kate Hoey, had been "very positive".

Blatter said the Nice Summit would be critical to the future of the transfer system as was the unified front that his alliance with Johansson represented.

transfer cash for smaller clubs could send some out of business and lead to far fewer top-flight teams in Britain.

The Commission wants to outlaw the system because it believes it interferes with the free movement of labour under the EU's single market system.

Countries with major soccer leagues, such as Germany, Spain and Italy, are backing Blair's stand.

After the meeting, Johansson and latter said their time with Blair, Culture Secretary Chris Smith, and Sports Minister Kate Hoey, had been "very positive".

Blatter said the Nice Summit would be critical to the future of the transfer system as was the unified front that his alliance with Johansson represented.

transfer cash for smaller clubs could send some out of business and lead to far fewer top-flight teams in Britain.

The Commission wants to outlaw the system because it believes it interferes with the free movement of labour under the EU's single market system.

Countries with major soccer leagues, such as Germany, Spain and Italy, are backing Blair's stand.

After the meeting, Johansson and latter said their time with Blair, Culture Secretary Chris Smith, and Sports Minister Kate Hoey, had been "very positive".

Blatter said the Nice Summit would be critical to the future of the transfer system as was the unified front that his alliance with Johansson represented.

transfer cash for smaller clubs could send some out of business and lead to far fewer top-flight teams in Britain.

The Commission wants to outlaw the system because it believes it interferes with the free movement of labour under the EU's single market system.

Countries with major soccer leagues, such as Germany, Spain and Italy, are backing Blair's stand.

After the meeting, Johansson and latter said their time with Blair, Culture Secretary Chris Smith, and Sports Minister Kate Hoey, had been "very positive".

Blatter said the Nice Summit would be critical to the future of the transfer system as was the unified front that his alliance with Johansson represented.

transfer cash for smaller clubs could send some out of business and lead to far fewer top-flight teams in Britain.

The Commission wants to outlaw the system because it believes it interferes with the free movement of labour under the EU's single market system.

Countries with major soccer leagues, such as Germany, Spain and Italy, are backing Blair's stand.

After the meeting, Johansson and latter said their time with Blair, Culture Secretary Chris Smith, and Sports Minister Kate Hoey, had been "very positive".

Blatter said the Nice Summit would be critical to the future of the transfer system as was the unified front that his alliance with Johansson represented.

transfer cash for smaller clubs could send some out of business and lead to far fewer top-flight teams in Britain.

The Commission wants to outlaw the system because it believes it interferes with the free movement of labour under the EU's