

Sport

Home calling Leonardo

MILAN, Italy, Nov 17: AC Milan's Brazilian star Leonardo wants to return to his homeland in January, reportedly returning to the Rio de Janeiro club Flamengo where he began his career. It was reported Friday, reports AFP.

Curbishley may be offered England role

LONDON, Nov 17: Charlton have given the Football Association (FA) permission to speak to Alan Curbishley about joining the England coaching set-up, reports AFP.

Serie A preview

Lazio wait for Milan

MILAN, Nov 17: Italian champions Lazio again top the Italian First Division bill this weekend when they host AC Milan at the Olympic Stadium on Saturday night, reports AFP.

A week after they drew 1-1 at Juventus Lazio will this time have home advantage as they battle with the other surviving Italian team in the Champions League.

While it is probably too early even for Inter's notoriously trigger-happy president Massimo Moratti to eject Tardelli if Perugia prevail it would certainly leave the coach in the uncomfortable position of knowing that unless he turns the team around soon that he may yet be out of the door before Christmas.

Primera Liga preview

Valencia's task cut short

MADRID, Nov 17: The battle for supremacy continues in the top half of the Spanish league with Valencia retaining dominance - albeit with a mere six-point cushion over 10th-placed side Oviedo, reports AFP.

Bundesliga preview

Berlin face on-fire Schalke

BERLIN, Nov 17: League leaders Hertha Berlin would be mistaken in thinking the visit of Schalke 04 is a guaranteed three points this Saturday, reports AFP.

All eyes this weekend, however, will be on third-placed Leverkusen, who welcome former national coach Bert Vogts to the helm after Rudi Voller jumped ship to manage the German national side last week.

way back after long-term injury problems, may yet play the full 90 minutes with Robbie Keane likely to make way.

Another problem for Tardelli is the San Siro quagmire that makes flowing football an impossibility and often means more modest teams can more easily cope with their theoretically superior hosts.

Although their coach Alberto Zaccheroni has already had a couple of raps on the knuckles from the club's vice-president Adriano Galliani continued good form in the continental competition is likely to keep the wolf from his door for the time-being.

Friday's 3-1 victory over Bari last week has also boosted their domestic plight and confirmed the excellent goalscoring touch of Ukrainian Andriy Shevchenko who is level with AS Roma's Argentinian forward Gabriel Battistuta as Serie A's top scorer with six goals.

Asian youth soccer

Japan escapes with a draw

TEHRAN, Nov 17: A last gasp goal from defender Soto Nakazawa saved Japan from defeat at the hand of Oman at the Asian under-19 youth championships here Thursday, reports AFP.

PSG fined

PARIS, Nov 17: A French league inquiry on Thursday fined Paris Saint Germain 500,000 Francs (65,000 dollars) and imposed a suspended punishment of having to play a game behind closed doors following an incident which occurred after the October 13 match between PSG and Marseille at Parc Des Princes, reports AFP.

Undoubtedly, all thoughts will be with Herlich as Dortmund travel to bottom-placed side Bochum on Sunday.

Blanc Marseille's next general manager?

MARSEILLE, Nov 17: Marseille chief Robert Louis-Dreyfus announced here Friday that former French international Laurent Blanc will be the next general manager of the crisis-ridden club, according to representatives from Marseille's supporters' groups, reports AFP.

Blanc retires next June, he will be sought out for the post. Blanc, a former Marseille player who now plays with Inter Milan, retired from the international side following France's victory in Euro 2000 in July.

Blanc did not attend the meeting at which Louis-Dreyfus assured that Friday night's home encounter to Metz, who sit one place and four points ahead of Marseille, sitting in 16th, would be Braga's last.

Second analysis opposes Daum's positive test

KOBLENZ, Germany, Nov 17: Disgraced former Bayer Leverkusen coach Christoph Daum, sacked for suspected use of cocaine, has carried out a fresh analysis of a hair sample - this time proving negative - according to German daily Bild, reports AFP.

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Nakazawa's volley in injury time put the scores level at 2-2 after Hassan Sarim had put the Gulf side ahead in the 90th minute.

Japan had taken the lead in the 10th minute when Yamase's left foot drive went in off the post.

The Japanese were well on top at that stage and should have gone further ahead, but the Oman defence managed to hold firm.

Oman coach Jorvan Viera's half-time talk worked wonders as it was a different side that came out for the second period.

They were rewarded in the 53rd minute with an equaliser from man of the match Ahmed Khalid Ba Alawi.



Thailand's Tananchai Boriban (L) struggling to keep possession against Muhammad Anuar of Malaysia during their Tiger Cup semifinal clash on November 16.

Tiger Cup

Hosts march into final

BANGKOK, Nov 17: Thailand ended Malaysia's hopes of a place in the final of the Tiger Cup competition with two goals in the first half of play in their semi-final match at the Rajamangala Stadium Thursday night, reports AFP.

The Thais, who were definitely the superior side, could have won by a bigger margin but missed some easy goals as Malaysia put up a gallant fight in the second half.

Thailand, urged on by more than 20,000 screaming fans, went into the offensive with some terrific moves on both flanks that had the Malaysian defence backpedalling in desperation to keep the Thai strikers at bay.

Kiatissak Senamuang also known as 'Zico', caused all sorts of problems for the Malaysian defence, teasing them and

wrong-footing them at every turn.

The crowd screamed every time Zico touched the ball and urged him on to score. He nearly did so in the 14th and 16th minutes, when he missed goals by inches.

However in the 30th minute he put Thailand in the lead when he hammered in a cross from the right, past Malaysian goalkeeper Kamaruzaman Hassan.

Thailand continued their onslaught and in the 34th minute they led 2-0 after Senamuang dribbled past a defender on the left before passing the ball to the unmarked Tawan Sripan who hit the mark with his shot.

Thailand could have led by more goals but the Malaysian goalkeeper worked hard to keep the scorers down.

The closest Malaysia came to scoring was in the opening minutes of the second half, but Muhammad Anuar's long range effort just skimmed the bar.

Malaysia, who were completely outplayed in the first half, stepped up their game and strung some fine passes together to pressure the Thai defence.

Hairuddin Omar saw a header go wide of the right post and Anuar's free kick saved by the Thai keeper Wirat Wangchan.

But Malaysia, who dominated for a 10-minute spell, lost momentum as Thailand regained its footing in the game and mounted some dangerous raids.

But the Malaysian defence held firm and created some good chances with striker Azman Adnan testing the Thai's goalkeeper on two occasions.

Towards the end of the match both sides' play slowed considerably and hosts Thailand appeared content with their two-goal margin.

The Thai's face Indonesia in the final of the Cup this weekend.

Premiership preview

All eyes on Manchester derby

LONDON, Nov 17: From the moment Paul Dickov slid home the goal that ensured promotion for Manchester City last May, the thoughts of all their supporters turned to the following month's publication of the fixture list, reports AFP.

When the moment arrived there was only one name and one date the City faithful were looking for - the Manchester derby.

Their agonising wait comes to an end Saturday morning when City play host to Manchester United in front of a sell-out crowd at Maine Road.

The last time the teams met in the Premiership was on April 6 1996. United won 3-2 that day to complete a double over their local rivals and a month later they lifted the title.

For City, however, fortunes could not have been more contrasting. They were relegated to the First Division before falling further from grace two years later.

The once mighty City, who won the European Cup Winners Cup 28 years earlier, were condemned to the Second Division in May 1998 - despite the efforts of coach Joe Royle, appointed three months earlier after Frank Clark's sacking.

But Royle, whose 'never-say-die' spirit endeared him to the City supporters whilst playing for the 'Blues', worked his magic and United's poor relations found themselves rubbing shoulders with the cream of English football two seasons later after successive promotions.

Little has changed for United since City's sojourn in the lower divisions. After 13 matches, the reigning champions are sitting pretty at the top of the Pre-

mier-ship with 30 points, two ahead of second-placed Arsenal.

City, meanwhile, have struggled on their return to the top flight, currently languishing fifth from bottom, 14 points behind their illustrious neighbours.

But despite the poor start to the campaign, City could have only dreamed of facing United 24 months earlier when they were travelling to places such as Wycombe, Lincoln and Macclesfield.

And it is for that reason that City fans are counting down the hours to Saturday's eagerly-awaited visit of the 1999 European champions.

Although City have won just four of the last 35 Manchester derbies, Northern Ireland manager Sammy McIlroy, who represented both clubs in his playing days, believes an upset should not be ruled out.

United go into the match top of the league, while City are struggling, he said.

But I think the form book goes out the window when it comes to derby matches.

"Of course United will be red-hot favourites and rightly so, but in a two-horse race anything can happen and even red-hot favourites have an off day."

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United's young defender Wes Brown is set to make a surprise comeback from his knee injury in time for Saturday's clash.

The club feared Brown could be out for several weeks after he came off during last weekend's win over Middlesbrough and manager Ferguson immediately ruled him out of England's

Van der Sar vows to stay and fight

TURIN, Italy, Nov 17: Juventus goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar Friday vowed to fight for his place with the Italian First Division giants despite a series of blunders in recent games that have made his position insecure at the Stadio Delle Alpi, reports AFP.

The Dutch goalkeeper has faced calls from supporters for reserve Michelangelo Rampulla to replace him as first-team goalkeeper while Uruguayan goalkeeper Fabian Carini is expected to join Juventus in January.

Scotland coach Craig Brown on Thursday pulled the plug on World Cup warm-up friendlies following the dismal Hampden Park defeat by Australia, reports AFP.

Brown was shocked by his side's lack of application against a lively Soccerero side that clearly showed more desire and ran out comfortably 2-0 winners on Wednesday.

Now he has concluded that his players have trouble motivating themselves for anything other than the big matches and has therefore scrapped plans for more non-competitive games.

Friendlies irks Brown

Scotland has turned down a lucrative tournament in India plus an offer from Wales to play in Cardiff before Belgium visit the national stadium in March.

That crucial World Cup qualifier is sure to have a big bearing on the destiny of Group 6 as both sides are likely to begin level on points at the top of the group.

Now the Scots will make do with a squad gathering in February to prepare for the visit of Robert Waseghe's Belgium team.

Brown said: "We have got to up the level of enthusiasm and effort. It's a subconscious thing for a lot of the guys because they are playing in Europe and the Champions League and this was billed as a friendly."

"It's not a deliberate thing but the incentive is not there when it's not for points. They are only humans."

After the 1-1 draw in Croatia last month, a number of Croat stars declared they would win at Hampden because Scotland were a counter-attacking team that could not dictate the game in front of their own crowd.

So far, the Scots have all lost three matches in the revamped Hampden, all by 2-0 scoreslines, to France, England and now Australia.

Brown insisted: "Up until the play-off game with England we had a very good record at home. Then we lost to the Czech Republic and broke it."