

Brazil-Nike deal

FIFA set to step in to block inquiry

GUATEMALA, Nov 19: The International Football Federation (FIFA) is set to block recent "serious interference" by two Brazilian parliamentary commissions into the country's football federation (CBF), announced FIFA secretary general Michel Zen-Ruffinen Friday, reports AFP.

"According to the information we currently have, we don't believe there is a real need to interfere, but we hope to obtain more information from the CBF," Zen-Ruffinen told AFP in Guatemala.

A Parliamentary inquiry was launched to investigate the mammoth contract, worth a reported 180 million dollars, signed between the CBF and American sportswear giants Nike.

The inquiry is trying to determine if the Brazilian national side's 10-year contract with Nike might harm the Brazilian game's interests and give Nike too much say in where they play and when.

"Quite naturally, we are following developments because, apparently, there is significant political interference," said Zen-Ruffinen, adding that FIFA regulations formally ban all political or judiciary interference in affiliated federations.

"It's not surprising that this case is provoking a lot of outside interest because of the prestige of Brazilian football, but it's not so different to those we've been confronted with in the past," he added.

Zen-Ruffinen stopped short of saying whether FIFA would eventually decide to suspend Brazil from international competition if the inquiry's "interference" in the case was confirmed, as FIFA president Joseph Blatter had indicated a few weeks ago.

"The executive committee's decision could lead to all sorts of possible conclusions," he concluded.

Scottish Premiership

Celtic go on a goal-spree

GLASGOW, Nov 19: Leaders Celtic came from a goal behind to crush managerless Hearts 6-1 Saturday with a rampant display which keeps their Scottish Premier League title aspirations on track, reports AFP.

Colin Cameron stunned the home crowd with an early goal but Martin O'Neill's men hit back with goals from Iain Valgreen, Lasse Moravcik, Henrik Larsson (2), Johan Mjallby and Stilian Petrov.

Celtic have 44 points from 16 matches and hold an eight point lead over closest challengers Hibernian who lost 2-0 at home to Aberdeen.

Asian youth soccer

Japan breeze into last four

TEHRAN, Nov 19: Japan reached the last four of the Asian Youth Under 19 Championship with a comfortable 3-0 victory over Kuwait at the Sharoudi stadium in Tehran here Saturday, reports AFP.

Together with Iran's 3-0 win over Oman, the result meant that the Japanese were through to the semi-finals.

Goals from Kazumori Ito, Sota Nakazawa and Koji Yamase clinched victory, which knocked Kuwait out of the competition and earned both Japan and Iran a place at next June's FIFA World Youth Championships in Argentina.

Japan now have seven points from three games, and will face Iran in their last group match on Monday.

J-League

Antlers stay on top

TOKYO, Nov 19: A late strike from substitute Masashi Motoyama kept Kashima Antlers on top of the J-League's second-stage table on Saturday night, reports Reuters.

The 21-year-old attacking midfielder, a member of Japan's Olympic squad in Sydney, struck with just four minutes of sudden-death extra time remaining to earn Antlers a 2-1 victory at home to Sanfrecce Hiroshima.

Wins in extra time are worth only two points, but it was still enough to hold off Gamba Osaka and Kashima Reysol, who are second and third respectively on 28 points, just one behind Antlers with two games remaining.

Antlers went in front after 26 minutes with an own goal from Sanfrecce defender Tetsuya Ito, but the visitors pulled level on 65 minutes when Keisuke Kurihara headed home a free kick.

Motoyama, who has been described as Japan's Ryan Giggs by national coach Philippe Troussier, joined the action after 85 minutes and conjured up a memorable winner late in the second period of extra time.

Receiving a pass from 1998 World Cup right-back Akira Nishizaki, Motoyama cut in from the left and drove a low, right-foot shot into the bottom corner.

Serie A

Shevchenko denies Lazio



ROME, Nov 19: A 54-minute goal from Andriy Shevchenko earned AC Milan a 1-1 draw at champions Lazio in a compelling Serie A match on Saturday, reports Reuters.

Lazio took the lead in the third minute when Dino Baggio unleashed a searing drive from 30 metres out that crashed into the top corner of Christian Abbiati's goal.

But despite the explosive opening, Lazio struggled to gain control of the game with Dario Albertini orchestrating the game for the visitors, assisted by some lively movement



AC Milan's Ukrainian goal machine Andrei Shevchenko (R) in action against Lazio in their Serie A encounter on November 18.

— Internet photo

from Shevchenko in attack.

The Ukrainian, who scored a hat-trick in last season's 4-1 thriller at the Olympic stadium, gave an early reminder of his deadly finishing abilities when he conjured up enough space in front of the Lazio defence to drive a left-foot shot just wide of Angelo Peruzzi's left hand post.

Despite being forced to make two substitutions through injury, with Alessandro Costacurta and Francesco Coco being replaced by Brazilians Julio Cesar and Serginho, Milan continued to keep a firm hand on possession but lacked the incisiveness to carve out a clearcut chance.

But nine minutes after the

break, Shevchenko chased a looping ball into the box, held off his marker Alessandro Nesta and slotted the ball past Peruzzi to bring Milan level.

Lazio stepped up the tempo and in the space of 10 minutes Abbiati had to make three fine saves to keep his side level.

He got down well to block a close-range shot from Hernan Crespo with his feet and was then at full-stretch to keep out a Sinisa Mihajlovic free-kick, before again foiling Crespo with a diving save.

In the final minutes, with Lazio now firmly in the driving seat, Julio Cesar did well to hook away a goal-bound shot from Attilio Lombardo.

In Saturday's other game, a goal by substitute Christian Vieri, his first in eight months, earned Inter Milan a 2-1 home win over Perugia.

Inter took the lead after just nine minutes with a stunning left-foot strike from Alvaro Recoba at San Siro.

After dribbling past several Perugia defenders, the Uruguayan turned sharply to his preferred left foot and angled a shot into the top corner past goalkeeper Andrea Mazzantini.

Inter kept the pressure on Perugia's defence but were often exposed to Perugia's counter-attacks.

One of them led to a free-kick on the edge of the box in the 29th minute which Marco Materazzi curled into the top left-hand corner past the outstretched hands of goalkeeper Sebastian Frey.

Inter coach Marco Tardelli added more weight up front at the start of the second half — substituting midfielder Benoit Cauet for Vieri.

Tardelli's move paid off as the Italy centre-forward, making his third substitute appearance in three games, headed home the winner in the 77th minute.

Perugia came close to equalising with striker Luca Saudati's close-range shot, but Frey produced a great save to secure a much-needed victory for Inter.

Nerves unnerve Inter!



MILAN, Nov 19: Fear remains the key problem for ailing Italian giants Inter Milan, their coach Marco Tardelli insists, reports AFP.

Tardelli, speaking after a hard-earned Saturday's 2-1 victory over Perugia at the San Siro, believes that his expensively-assembled crop of players will not be forged into an outfit capable of winning the Scudetto (Championship) until they have overcome the nerves that seem to afflict them — especially at their San Siro home.

Just a week after unfashionable Lecce, reduced to 10 men for an hour and surviving a missed penalty by Inter's French defender Laurent Blanc, defeated Inter on home soil Perugia looked well capable of pulling off a similar result.

The turning point came after an hour when Perugia had a glorious chance to take a 2-1 lead but Inter's French goalkeeper Sebastian Frey pulled off a magnificent save from Luca

Saudati's close-range volley.

Fourteen minutes from time substitute Christian Vieri struck to earn all three points and produce sighs of relief from the Inter faithful who had shrieked in anguish as the ball fell to Saudati's feet minutes earlier.

Even then Perugia threatened to snatch a point in the closing minutes and Tardelli said: "I suffered enormously in the last 15 minutes. But Vieri's goal was very important for the team."

Inter had made a barnstorming start, ending in Inter's opener from Uruguayan striker Alvaro Recoba after nine minutes but then seemed to lose the plot as Perugia fought back with defender Marco Materazzi grabbing an equaliser just before the half-hour mark.

"After Recoba's goal we went very quiet," admitted Tardelli, a key member of Italy's 1982 World Cup winning team. "We had moments of fear and it was not really a surprise when Perugia scored."

"(Fabio) Liverani had a lot of control for Perugia and we failed to really deal with him."

Tardelli, who replaced the sacked Marcello Lippi at the helm of the San Siro outfit last month, then admitted that it was fear that was preventing his troops from firing on all cylinders, saying: "There is still a fear factor and that is our biggest problem."

Vieri, scoring his first goal since returning from a five-month injury lay-off, admitted he was still lacking in confidence because of his injury problems and echoed Tardelli's remarks about fear.

"I am still a little bit frightened when I go on the field but that's normal when you have been out for a long time," said the Italian international who spent much of his childhood in Australia.

His Perugia counterpart Serse Cosmi was clearly disappointed his team did not snatch all three points, saying: "Until Vieri scored I was convinced we could go on and win it."

Primera Liga

Luck smiles on Real



BARCELONA, Nov 19: An own goal from former Barcelona midfielder Guillermo Amor handed Real Madrid a 1-0 win at Villarreal on Saturday to take the European champions back up to within a point of the Spanish first division leaders, reports Reuters.

Amor's misdirected clearance on 67 minutes, after Steve McManaman had sent an innocuous cross into the area, was enough to give Real a fortunate win from what was a poor performance.

The result allowed them to gain ground on Deportivo Coruna and Valencia, who both dropped points away from home.

Deportivo were held to a 1-1 draw at relegation candidates Osasuna, despite taking a first-minute lead, while Valencia came back to draw by the same score at Alaves, John Carew striking late to cancel out an Ivan Alonso header midway through the second half.

Valencia continue to lead the standings with 21 points from 11 matches, ahead of Deportivo on goal difference.

Real Mallorca missed the chance to join Real Madrid on 20 points as they were beaten 1-0 at Las Palmas in Saturday's late game.

Barcelona, in seventh place and with 16 points, travel to take on Real Zaragoza today.

Villarreal went in to their clash with Real Madrid buoyed by victories over Deportivo Coruna and Barcelona in their last two games.

They looked a good bet to complete a famous hat-trick, too, as they enjoyed the bulk of the possession early on.

Real, missing the suspended Luis Figo, struggled to make use of the ball and were grateful to two fine saves from Iker Casillas in the first half.

The home side tired after the break and Real began to gain the upper hand.

Their goal was a huge slice of luck, though, as Amor's sliding attempt to clear McManaman's aimless cross flashed past his keeper Javier Lopez Vallejo.

As Villarreal pushed forward, the visitors came close to getting a second, Raul slipping

across from Santiago Solari just wide when well placed.

"We created the better chances in what was an open game," said Real coach Vicente del Bosque, who was celebrating a year in charge of the team.

It was a great result for us, allowing us to catch up with the two leaders."



Roberto Carlos (R), the Real Madrid superstar, having a hard time keeping Jorge Lopez Montanya of Villarreal in check during their Primera Liga match on November 18.

Vieri on the right path

MILAN, Nov 19: Inter Milan striker Christian Vieri Saturday dedicated his first goal since returning from a five-month injury lay-off to the medical staff who have treated him in that time, reports AFP.

Substitute Vieri headed the winner after 76 minutes as Inter edged Perugia 2-1 in an Italian First Division match.

"I am very happy," Vieri told journalists. "I dedicate this goal to the doctors, physiotherapists and masseurs who have looked after me during this time."

The Italian international, who spent much of his childhood in Australia, admitted it had been a long struggle with the injury that struck him down in May.

"It is not easy working when you are not playing and I was feeling low during that time," said the former Juventus, Atletico Madrid and Lazio forward.

"But now I am fine although I am still a little bit frightened when I go on the field but that's normal when you have been out for a long time."

Asked if he would be in the starting line-up for the first time when Inter play Hertha Berlin of Germany in the UEFA Cup next Tuesday Vieri said: "Let's just wait and see."

French First Division

Monaco back in the hunt

MONACO, Nov 19: French champions Monaco got their derailed league campaign back on track Saturday with a vital 2-0 home win over Paris Saint Germain here on Saturday, reports AFP.

Defender Martin Djetou got on the end of a bad defensive error to strike in the fourth minute, with Burundi international Shabani Nonda adding a second before the break to give the Monegasques a much-needed three points.

The result leaves Monaco on 22 points, hoisting Claude Puel's side temporarily up to sixth place in advance of the remaining league games in the French top flight.

Paris SG, meanwhile, sitting in third position behind Bordeaux on 25 points, will be cursing a non-productive afternoon in the Principality which leaves their title aspirations in limbo — at least for this week.

Philippe Bergeroo's side lacked creativity in the first half, though a shot from forward Laurent Leroy in the 14th minute threatened to bring the scores level.

Monaco, however, were more tactically aware and this proved crucial when Nonda beat the offside trap to run through and beat Lionel Letizi.

Paris piled on the pressure in the second half with Brazilian forward Christian's shot parried by Stephane Porato on the hour mark, but Monaco's defence proved astute.

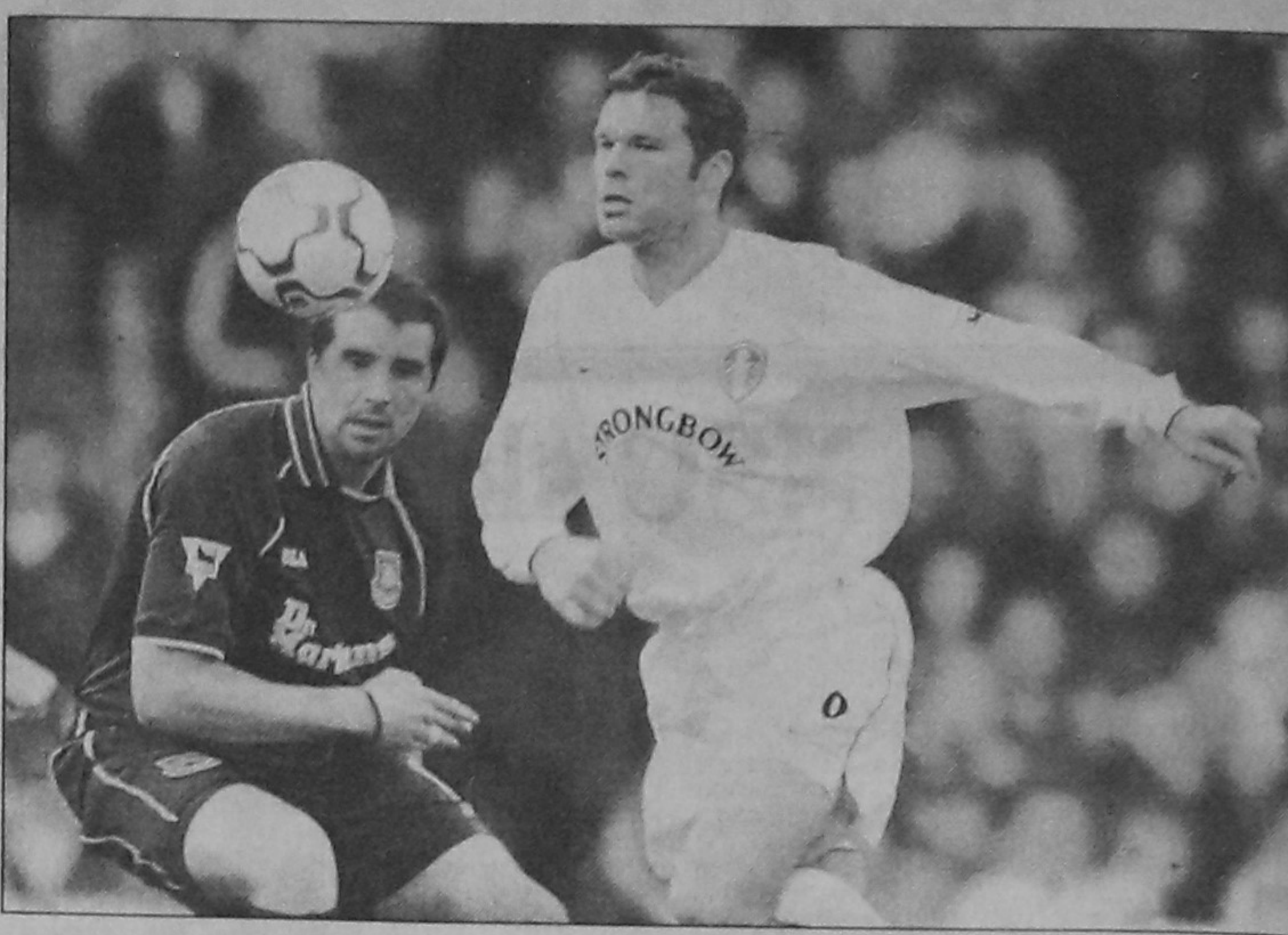
Five minutes later, Letizi was on his toes to deflect a vicious shot from Ludovic Giuly and a Nonda effort close in on goal shortly afterwards simply illustrated Monaco's renewed vigour.

In the end, Monaco's deserved win was humbly accepted by Paris coach Bergeroo, who simply said: "We didn't do enough to merit a win today."

Fernandez's answer due this week

PARIS, Nov 19: Former French international Luis Fernandez, poised to take over the now vacant coaching hot seat at crisis-ridden Marseille, will give his answer to the club on Monday or Tuesday, he told French satellite channel Canal, where he is a consultant, Saturday, reports AFP.

According to an informed source at the club there is a strong possibility that the former Athletic Bilbao coach will save face come Monday afternoon.



Mark Viduka (R), Leeds United's Australian ace, reaching for the ball during a Premiership fixture against West Ham at Leeds on November 18.

— AFP photo

Premiership

Gunners gunned down



LONDON, Nov 19: A goal by England captain David Beckham after just two minutes was enough to give Premiership leaders Manchester United a 1-0 win over local rivals Manchester City in the 125th Manchester derby at Maine Road Saturday, reports AFP.

Dead-ball specialist Beckham curled a superb free-kick past City goalkeeper Nicky Weaver after Alfie Haaland had cluttered into Paul Scholes just outside the penalty area.

The goal was particularly sweet for Beckham who was pelted with missiles thrown by City fans when taking corner kicks.

City, competing in their first local derby for four-and-a-half years, have lost their last four league games and are still dangerously close to the relegation zone.

United, with nine wins from

their last 10 games, have 33 points from 14 games, five ahead of second-placed Arsenal who went down 2-0 at Everton. Danny Cadamarteri and Kevin Campbell grabbing the goals.

Leicester move up to third with a convincing 3-0 win over strugglers Middlesbrough at the Riverside Stadium — a result which piles the pressure on under-fire coach Bryan Robson.

Muzzy Izzet was pulled down after eight minutes and got up to score from the spot and a header from Trevor Benjamin, his first Premiership goal, doubled the advantage.

Darren Eadie rounded off a miserable afternoon for Middlesbrough by adding a third. Southampton's James Beattie made it five goals in three games with two headers in a 2-0 win against Aston Villa, both provided by crosses from Latvian international Marian Pahars.

Gary Speed gave Newcastle the lead in a fast and furious

North East derby against Sunderland but the visitors fought back to win 2-1 with goals from Niall Quinn and Don Hutchison.

Former England international Alan Shearer could have rescued a point for Bobby Robson's side but he missed from the penalty spot.

Leeds, unbeaten in their last 10 home meetings with West Ham, lost 1-0 at home to the Londoners, veteran defender Nigel Winterburn scoring the only goal of the game.

The former Arsenal star arrived at the far post to convert a cross on the stroke of half-time.

In the London derby, Chelsea, still without an away win, slumped 2-0 at Premiership newcomers Charlton with Jonatan Johansson and Martin Pringle on target for Alan Curbishley's men.

Down at the bottom Derby beat Bradford 2-0 with goals from Malcolm Christie and Rory Delap securing the points.



WE'VE DONE IT: Alexander Schur (L) and Torsen Kracht of Eintracht Frankfurt embrace each other after their team's shock win over giants Bayern Munich in the Bundesliga on November 18.

— AFP photo

Bundesliga

Leaders, Bayern humbled



BERLIN, Nov 19: Two goals from Paulo Rink helped Bayer Leverkusen beat Hamburg SV 3-1 on Saturday.

and celebrate Bert Vogts's first game in charge with a move to the top of the table, reports Reuters.

Vogts, who replaces German head coach Rudi Voeller, now concentrating on the national team, watched Paulo Rink exploit two mistakes by the Hamburg defence for a pre-cious win.

The Brazilian-born striker opened the scoring after 58 seconds following a blunder from Bernd Hollerbach, then made it 2-1 in the 33rd minute after Hamburg keeper Hans-Joerg Butt had attempted to dribble him in the box.

Hamburg striker Roy Praeger had levelled for the home side in the 10th minute.

Germany striker Oliver Neuville sealed Leverkusen's win in the 73rd minute.

Vogts's men moved one point clear of Schalke 04, who crushed overnight leaders Hertha Berlin 4-0 at the Olympic stadium earlier on Saturday.

Voeller had stepped in for Christoph Daum after the Leverkusen coach failed a drugs test last month but both the club and the German Football Association (DFB) had made it clear he could only fill both seats temporarily.

Vogts, without a job since he resigned as Germany head coach in September 1998, happily took over, enabling Voeller to focus on the top job, which he will hold until 2002.

"There is a lot of class in this team and the players have plenty of temperament," said Vogts, who has never coached a Bundesliga team before. "It is a real pleasure to take over such a good team."

A hat-trick by Danish striker Ebbe Sand helped Schalke to an impressive win which ended Hertha's stay at the top of the league.

Midfielder Joerg Boehme also contributed to the demolition which lifted the Gelsenkirchen club to second, ahead of third-placed Hertha on goal difference.

The embarrassing defeat before a 50,000 crowd in their Olympic stadium was Hertha's heaviest at home in 20 years.

Sand showed Schalke the way after four minutes and 15 minutes later the Danish international, now the top Bundesliga scorer with 11 goals, made it 2-0 with a header from a corner kick.

An angled free-kick from Boehme in the 81st minute put the issue beyond doubt before Sand completed the rout with his third three minutes from time.

"We helped Schalke with two defensive mistakes for their first two goals," said Hertha coach Juergen Roever.

"In the second half we put

them under more pressure but by doing that, we exposed ourselves to counter-attacks and Schalke made us pay dearly. They played really well."

Schalke's Dutch coach Huib Stevens was naturally delighted.

"Sitting here to watch that was just great," he said. "Sand was superb once again but the whole team deserves credit."

Defending champions Bayern Munich dropped two spots down to fourth place, three points behind the new leaders, by losing 2-1 to Eintracht Frankfurt.

It was the second defeat in succession for the Bavarians, who were beaten 3-2 by Schalke last weekend.

Everything started well for Bayern, who opened the scoring in the 13th through Brazilian midfielder Paulo Sergio, ideally set up by a long pass from Michael Tarnat.

Not since 1992 had Bayern lost a home game after leading 1-0 but Eintracht were not impressed.

The visitors equalised with a header from midfielder Alexander Schur in the 38th minute before sealing victory with an effort from just outside the box by Norway striker Jan-Age Fjorflott in the 63rd.

"We should have moved 2-0 up but we wasted too many chances once again," said Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld.

Eintracht countered well and after trailing 2-1, we became very nervous."