Encouraging signs for Bertolotti

LECCO, Italy, Nov 22: Modena player Francesco Bertolotti, who has been in a coma for three days following an assault by an opponent after an Italian Third Division game. was Wednesday showing signs of improvement in hospital here, reports AFP.

The medical update on the 33-year-old said he was showing 'discrete motor reactions' and 'spontaneous opening of

However, physicians treating the player are still reserving a prognosis on Bertolotti who was hospitalised Sunday after being assaulted in the dressing room area half an hour after the match won by Modena's opponents Como.

The text of the bulletin. signed by Doctor Laura Chiappa, read as follows: "The patient passed the night in stable condition. In the morning there was a temporary suspension of pharmacological sedation so that the (patient's) neurological state could be evalu-

"It was possible to observe a discrete motor reaction and the spontaneous opening of the eves. The prognosis remains

Professor Cristiano Martini. who performed emergency surgery on the player in the early hours of Monday morning, told "Undoubtedly journalists: hopes are rising at this point But we will continue with the pharmacological sedation because it is an indispensable part of the therapy.

"The prognosis can only be released when the patient is conscious and able to respond to orders."

Como captain Massimiliano Ferrigno has been charged with grievous bodily harm and failing to aid a person in distress.

Flo's future not clear

chairman David Murray inchampions have struck a deal | finished 2-2. in "broad principle" with Eng-

that the deal is still alive despite reports that any move had fallen through.

Now Murray believes that the forward will be available for the Old Firm clash with Celtic on Sunday providing Flo can negotiate personal terms with the Stamford Bridge club before his departure.

"I am fully aware that our supporters are concerned that we have so far not managed to sign a striker of the stature of Flo but we are still hopeful." Murray told Rangers' website.

"We have always tried to do our best in the transfer marker for the club and that is why we

"We have made a deal in broad principle with Chelsea, but we can't go forward until some negotiations between the player and Chelsea are resolved. It is really a case of waiting to see what happens.

"We are still in an area where we are waiting to take a step forward, but we can't make that step until Chelsea and the player have resolved their differences."

The 27-year-old has found himself out of favour at the London club since the arrival of Claudio Ranieri as replacement for Gianluca Vialli.

The deal, reportedly worth 12 million pounds (17 million dollars), would shatter the previous Scottish record transfer when Celtic paid half that amount for Chris Sutton ironically a former team-mate at Stamford Bridge - in the sum-

Flo's arrival could be financed by the exit of winger Andrei Kanchelskis, who looks destined to leave the club after refusing to play in an under-21 game earlier this week.

The former Everton and Fiorentina star's reaction to being dropped for last Sunday's game at Aberdeen was to ignore boss Dick Advocaat's instruction for him to play with the

youngsters. That snub enraged Advocaat, who banned the player from joining the first-team squad which travelled to Dun-

Laurent Robert and the musfermline on Saturday. cular Brazilian Christian in "The real reason for the release of Kanchelskis from the first-team squad for the last game is that he refused to play in a second-team game on

Monday night against Aber-

deen," said Advocaat. "That I cannot accept and international Jay Jay Okocha that is why Kanchelskis is training with the second team

at the moment. Strasbourg to seek FIFA's

intervention STRASBOURG, France, Nov. 22: French First Division strugglers Strasbourg are to turn to world governing body FIFA for help regarding the case of their

who played for them last season while holding a fake passport. reports AFP. In a statement on the club website Strasbourg said they

from this affair." Strasbourg signed Garay from Cordoba-based Argentine First Division side Talleres. He has now returned to Argentina



Andriy Shevchenko (X), AC Milan's goal-machine, sends Galatasaray custodian Kerem the wrong way while scorning from a penalty at Milan on November 21. - AFP photo

Galatasaray denied in Milan

MILAN. Nov 22: A brave second-half fightback by Italian giants AC Mi-CHAMPIONS lan ensured their European Cham

pions League second phase Group B clash with Turkey's UEFA Cup holders Galatasaray finished 2-2 here at the San Siro Tuesday, reports AFP. The visitors from Istanbul

showed their intent to follow last year's landmark victory in the junior continental tournament by success in the biggest European club competition of all, sweeping to a 2-O interval lead through Brazilian striker Mario Jardel and Hasan. But Spanish forward Jose

Mari and Ukrainian hitman GLASGOW, Nov 22: Rangers | Andriv Shevchenko, from the penalty spot, hit back after the sisted Tuesday that the Scottish | break for Milan to ensure it

Milan coach Alberto Zaclish Premiership side Chelsea | cheroni said the match had for Norwegian international vindicated his view that this striker Tore Andre Flo, reports | would be a very tight pool -Spain's Deportivo La Coruna The Ibrox chief is adamant and France's Paris St Germain

are the other teams in Group B. "I am still convinced this is a very balanced group and that everything will be decided on the last day," said Zaccheroni.

He was perplexed at why his team find it so hard to win at the San Siro these days, saying: "It is not fear, it could be more that we are trying to overdo it." His Galatasaray counterpart

Mircea Lucescu - no stranger to the San Siro as he formerly coached Inter Milan - believed his side had received no favours from Swiss referee Urs Meier.

"In the first half we should have had a penalty for a foul on about the one awarded to Milan even though I must admit they

CHAMPIONS

Parc des Princes.

had a lot of chances," said Lucescu, a Romanian.

Two goals in the closing minutes of the first half for the Turks turned this match on the head after five-times European champions Milan looked in control of the opening stages of his club's next match. the game.

Massimo Ambrosini and Gennaro Gattuso seemed to be dominating the midfield with Milan apparently unfazed by the absence through injury of Demetrio Albertini, Francesco and Alessandro Costacurta.

Brazilian Serginho went close with a lob while the fleetfooted Shevchenko fell under the challenge of Bulent in the box with Meier correctly deciding the Ukrainian had fallen over the ball rather than the player.

eran Georghe Hagi, saved by Milan goalkeeper Christian Abbiati, was the first signal of what was come.

And then six minutes before the interval the game changed shape completely.

First Jardel, the prolific Brazilian signed from Portuguese giants FC Porto to replace Hakan Sukur in the close season. gave the Istanbul outfit the lead with a fine volley after 38 min-

headed a second over the ex- made no mistake. two goals down.

defener Jose Luis Chamot into club. the path of Jardel and then Jardel," he said. "On the other finding Hasan with a long ball will be satisfied at the way his have been pursuing a player of hand I have a lot more doubts with the Italian defence static. side battled for a point that hit a post in first-half injury a sixth continental crown.

time but it was 2-0 to the Turks at the break.

The only blot in the first period for the visitors was the vellow card for their Romanian defender Gheorghe Popescu, who will now be suspended for

But it did not take long after the interval for Milan to change the nature of the game.

Their Spanish striker Jose Mari, set up by Serginho and another Brazilian Roque Junior, scored after 47 minutes and that seemed to reinvigorate Milan

Jose Mari was having more joy than the San Siro outfit's two more orthodox strikers Shevchenko and Oliver Bierhoff who were marked closely by a massed Galatasaray defence.

The Spaniard then created a A shot by Galatasaray's vet- fine opportunity for Shevchenko who totally miscued his shot.

> The San Siro then erupted as Bierhoff netted what appeared to be an equaliser but Meier ruled the goal was offside. Bierhoff and Brazilian defender Roque Junior, who hit the bar, went close before Milan

finally got back on terms. Meier awarded a penalty when Galatasaray's Brazilian substitute Capone handled the ball and Shevchenko, who missed from the spot against Three minutes later Hasan Leeds in the previous round,

bosed Christian Abbiati and It was another fine perform-Milan went in at the interval lance by Galatasaray, whose UEFA Cup victory in May over Hagi was the instigator of English Premiership side Arseboth goals, first seeing his cross nal in Copenhagen was the first deflected by Milan's Argentinian at European level for a Turkish

But Milan coach Zaccheroni Milan skipper Paolo Maldini keeps them well in the hunt for

Group A

PARIS, Nov 22 (AFP): European Champions League second round, first match results here

RESULTS AT

A GLANCE

At Valencia, Spain Valencia (Spa) 2 (Carew 45, Juan Sanchez 47) Sturm Graz (Aut) O

At Manchester, England Manchester United (Eng) 3 (Sheringham 47, Scholes 81, 90) Panathinaikos (Gre) 1 (Karagounis 64) Group B

AC Milan (Ita) 2 (Jose Mari 47, Shevchenko 73-pen) Galatasaray (Tur) 2 (Jardel 39, Hasan

At Milan

At Paris Paris St Germain (Fra) 1 (Algerino 37) Deportivo La Coruna (Spa) 3 (Naybet 64, Turu Flores 70. Makaay 90)

Valencia keep home record intact

VALENCIA, Spain. Nov 22: Valencia maintained their unbeaten home record Tuesday night when they easily saw off Austrian visitors Sturm Graz 2-0 in their second round Group A match, reports AFP.

Last season's Champions' League runners-up gained a valuable three points thanks to goals on either side of half time from Norwegian international John Carew and Juan Sanchez. Both efforts were set up through corners by Valencia

captain Gaizka Mendieta. Carew could have made it three for the Spanish league leaders but he chipped the ball over the top missing what looked like a relatively easy shot.

It was only an impressive performance by the visitor's Polish goalkeeper Kazimierz Sidorczuk that prevented Hector Cuper's side increasing the scoreline.

The win puts Valencia second in Group A behind Manchester United, who scored a 3home win over Greek side Panathinaikos.

Leeds agree megadeal for Rio

LONDON, Nov 22: Leeds United on Wednesday agreed an 18 million pound (26 million dollar) megadeal for West Ham's England defender Rio Ferdinand with Hammers boss Harry Redknapp saying his club had accepted the offer, reports AFP.

The 22-year-old Ferdinand has been in Leeds' sights since the summer and they had already tabled a 15million pound bid which was flatly rejected by

what would be a British transfer record the Londoners appear to have relented.

Redknapp. "After speaking to the Leeds chairman (Peter Ridsdale), our chairman (Terry Brown) has accepted the fee and has given permission for Rio to speak to

The loss of Ferdinand, who put in an impressive display for England against Italy in Turin last week, would be a huge setback to West Ham who have begun to climb the Premiership table after a poor start to the

Ferdinand was an integral part of the side which beat Leeds 1-0 at Elland Road on Saturday and that led to Ridsdale speaking to Brown following the match as he again sounded out the prospect of Ferdinand leaving Upton Park

"It's a massive blow," admitted Redknapp. "I've said all along this season that I didn't want to lose Rio and the club has rejected previous bids from Leeds, but this is an awful lot of dough.

Probe boss blasts Brazil Nike deal

SAO PAULO. Nov 22: The head of the Brazilian parliamentary probe (CPI) into the mammoth contract between the country's football federation (CBF) and American sportswear tiate the contract, reports AFP. Inquiry president Aldo Re-

belo told the Folha newspaper that he believed that the deal. which was signed in July 1996. was badly negotiated and damaging for Brazilian football.

"The aim of the CPI is to cancel or at least renegotiate this contact." said Rebelo. He said that the cancellation

could be obtained by depriving the CBF of their power of administering national football. "The CBF represents the

people. If it is found that there was a loss of national sovereignty to benefit Nike, we can withdraw responsibility for national team selection from the confederation," said Rebelo. quiring an Emperor-like status The parliamentary inquiry is:

bidding to determine if the Brazilian national side's 10-year contract with Nike, which is worth an estimated 180,000 million dollars, might harm the Brazilian game's interests and give Nike too much say in involving Batistuta's image. where they play and when.



Teddy Sheringham (C), the prolific Manchester United marksman, is the toast of his teammates after scoring against Panathinaikos whose goalkeeper Antonis Nikopolidis (L) is desolate at Old Trafford on November 21.

Scholes spurs United

than a match for the home



England, Nov 22: 45 minutes. CHAMPIONS ternational Paul game. That goes for any game. Scholes gave because they are a good side.'

Premiership leaders Manchester he said. United a 3-1 win against Panathinaikos of Greece in 3,000 of a sell-out crowd at Old his legs and the England for-Tuesday's Group A opener of Trafford, the noisy Panathithe second phase of the Cham- naikos supporters were more pions League, reports AFP.

But the 18-time Greek fans, who were criticised by champions, who have already United captain Roy Keane for shown little respect for reputa- not getting behind the team in tions in Europe, having beaten their last European outing at Hamburg in Germany and Ital- home. ian giants Juventus at home, ran the 1999 European champions close.

The Athens club were only denied a healthy first half lead by the excellent Fabien Barthez in the United goal.

United took the lead three from close range before Giorgios Karagounis levelled after 64 the Greeks took full advantage minutes with a blistering free by putting early pressure on the

was on hand to knock home the

round off a good night for line.

The goal rounded off a Sypniewski put Liberopoulos splendid United move which clean through after 11 minutes consisted of 32 passes.

Alex Ferguson paid tribute to Barthez's legs. his team after overcoming a Greek club - the 1971 Euro-With the fee going up to pean Cup finalists. "With the speed of the pass-

ing and the movement from both teams. I am really pleased "It's up to Rio now," said to win that," said Ferguson. "I thought it was a magnificent performance by us."

Ferguson also praised

Panathinaikos who should have

Ryan Giggs failed to shrug off a troublesome hamstring injury and was left out of the team altogether by Ferguson,

who was back in the dug-out after missing the Manchester derby last weekend to attend minutes after the interval with his son Mark's wedding in a strike from Teddy Sheringham South Africa. United started nervously and

home defence. Nikolaos Liberopoulos, last With just nine minutes remaining. French defender Mi- season's leading scorer in the kael Silvestre cut through the Greek First Division, went close Panathinaikos defence and after five minutes but blazed when his shot was saved by over the bar from the edge of Antonis Nikopolidis. Scholes the United penalty area. United were left chasing

rebound to restore United's shadows moments later when Panathinaikos' all-time leading Scholes saved the best till scorer Krzysztof Warzycha - put last when a minute from time through by Liberopoulos he chipped Nikopolidis, who poked the ball inches wide as had strayed off his line, to Barthez came rushing off his A delightful flick by Igor

but with plenty of time to pick Manchester United manager his spot he shot straight at That miss sparked United

spirited performance by the into life and Nicky's Butt's fizzing low drive had Nikopolidis at full stretch. Beckham's swerving long range effort had Nikopolidis in

trouble after 21 minutes but low drive. after spilling the England midfielder's effort. the visiting

keeper regained his composure to smother the ball.

killed the game off after the first three minutes later but Warzycha. released by Fernando Two late goals "Whoever goes to Panathi- Galetto, was again thwarted by from England in- natkos is going to get a hard the legs of French international

> On the half hour Nikopolidis took a leaf out of Barthez's book Despite making up just by denying Sheringham with ward spurned United's best chance three minutes later by heading Beckham's teasing right wing cross inches over the crossbar

A minute from half time Liberopoulos broke smartly and once again Barthez's legs came to United's rescue.

Ferguson must have had some stern words with his players during the interval because after 48 minutes United took the lead. A long hopeful ball by Bar-

into the path of Sheringham, who held off Rene Henriksen before rifling the ball past Nikopolidis. Yorke, who had a quiet first half, became more involved in United's attacks, and with

thez was flicked on by Yorke

Beckham always a danger on the flanks, the hosts started to dominate the game. Butt then provided Scholes with an opportunity to put United further ahead but could

ball and his shot went high and United were to rue that miss because Panathinaikos equalised after with 26 minutes left

not get his foot over a bouncing

Butt conceded a free-kick 25 vards out and Karagounis stepped up to thump the ball high past Barthez, who appeared to wander too far off his

United rallied and only an excellent fingertip save by Nikopolidis kept out a stinging shot from Beckham and then the Panathinaikos goalkeeper got down well to keep out Scholes'

But just when it looked as if the Greeks were going to leave Manchester with a precious point. Scholes found his goal-Panathinaikos responded scoring touch to rescue United.

Crazy about 'Batigol'



Fiorentina.

mobbed at airports, good looking and with long hair. Unlike many

in his trade he also has a sublime talent and star quality. Fab Four are inevitable but it is Bati-mania not Beatlemania that is sweeping Rome since Argentinian striker Gabriel Batistuta joined AS Roma in the

close-season after a long and

year-old's wisdom in swapping the violet shirt of the Florence club for the red and yellow of Roma

After all Batistuta was idolised after setting a club scoring record of 152 goals for Fiorentina - a statue had even been built to commemorate his exploits in the city that considers itself the home of Italian Renaissance art.

Batistuta - offered a king's ransom by Roma chairman Franco Sensi - said he had giants Nike said Tuesday that | moved because he wanted to he wanted to cancel or renego- | win a title - Fiorentina had been something of a one-man band with the Argentinian often ploughing a lone furrow.

> not won the Scudetto (Championship) since 1982-3 and many cycnics doubted whether the hirsute hitman could make that much of a difference. But when Fiorentina visit Roma at the Olympic Stadium on Sunday evening it will be the home supporters who will be

But Roma themselves have

hoping for Batistuta to hit the back of the net - although his former admirers from Florence have vowed to give the Argentinian a respectful reception. qualified success and the Florentine favourite is already ac-

First Division table, 'Bati-gol' tops the goalscoring charts while the Roma coffers are raking in the dividends in the resultant increased attendances and merchandising deals, many

It was Batistuta who was Stadium.

mobbed on Sunday evening at twice in the 4-1 victory over the supporters sit.

local favourites. The closest challenger to vowed respect rather than ani-The comparisons with the cannonieri' (top goalscorer) the field on Sunday. stakes is AC Milan's Ukrainian penalties.



BATISTUTA

accept the number 18 jersey est any coach," said the 41after Roma's Vincenzo Montella vear-old former French interrefused to yield the number national midfielder. nine traditionally awarded to a club's top striker during the aging word for the current Barclose-season.

The move has proved an un- can now be seen on the back of eliminated from the Champions most replica red-and-yellow League and drop to ninth in the shirts in the Italian capital. league. eclipsing even the number 10 of Italian football's golden boy trainer worthy of respect and The club sits on top of the Totti, who has come through perfectly capable of leading the

the youth ranks at Roma. Fiorentina's supporters. meanwhile, are steeling them- Paris and insists that he is on a

Last week the Florence outfit Fiumicino airport after return- removed the statue of Batistuta ing with his team-mates from at the foot of the Curva Fiesole -Verona where he had scored where the hardcore Fiorentina

But the Fiorentina fans have

Batistuta in the Serie A Capo- mosity when Bati-gol takes to A statement issued by the striker Andriy Shevchenko Colletivo Autonomo Viole - the

whose seven goals have come in club's most passionate group of seven games and include two fans - said: "The Colletivo will always respect Gabriel Batis-But Bati-gol has hit the tuta as a man and a player so successful stint at Serie A rivals mark eight times in just six for this game there is absolutely games and is leaving the penal- no intention to participate in Many questioned the 31- ties to colleague Francesco any harassment of the person who gave so much to the violet

"But it is also obvious that our supporters will be doing everything to support Fiorentina in the hope of a great victory at the Olympic Stadium."

Fernandez interested in Barca

BARCELONA. Spain. Nov 22: "I'd be a liar if I said Barcelona didn't interest me." former Athletic Bilbao and Paris St Germain coach Luis Fernadez confirmed on Tuesday to "Sport" a

Catalan daily, reports AFP. "Their representatives have contacted mine," said Fernandez who turned down an offer to coach French giants Marseille at the weekend.

"I haven't really considered it Batistuta in the end had to but it's a post that would inter-Fernandez had an encour-

celona coach. Lorenzo Serra But it is the number 18 that Ferrer, who has seen the side Barcelona have a great

> team. Fernandez, who is based in

selves for the traumatic experi- sabbatical year, has also been ence of seeing Batistuta try and connected with Lazio whose score against the club that once coach Sven Goran Eriksson is idolised him at the Olympic due to take over as England

Argentine player Diego Garay.

were launching an ivestigation, to find out "who has benefited,

following his year loan.

PARIS, Nov 22: Spanish champions Deportivo La La Coruna had clearly raised Coruna destroyed their game and went ahead a

Tuesday with a devastating second-half performance in the Parisian defence. sides' Group B match as the second phase of the Champions but Christian's intelligent cross League began, reports AFP.

Saint-

into the penalty area led to Three classy goals in the second half, from Nourredine Navbet, Argentinian Turu Flores gan to tread water. and Dutch international Roy Makaay left the Spanish champions easy 3-1 winners at the

"PSG definitely played well, but in the second half we came out stronger and as PSG started man. to go downhill we never gave up," said Turu Flores after the match.

month, were left to contemplate the apparent gulf between the best in Europe and the alsorans - and how tough the next five matches in this highquality group could be. The Parisians had started brightly, relying on the lively

PSG, who have not won for a

attack in place of injured star striker Nicolas Anelka. Turu Flores shone from the start for the Spaniards. With the teams trading attacks in the opening 20 minutes, it was not until Nigerian

began to skilfully run the game from midfield, that PSG began to get on top. In the 35th minute, Christian flashed a shot from 25

yards past the post. The breakthrough came in the 37th minute, when captainfor-the-night Jimmy Algerino angled a low shot from outside the penalty area which skidded off the greasy turf and through the hands of La Coruna goal-

keeper Francisco Molina. But "Super Depor" as their fans call them showed their pedigree after the break, equal-

WC 2002 co-hosts to take on the world SEOUL. Nov 22: A joint

South Korean-Japanese all star team will play a World XI in Japan on January 3 in a bid to step up cooperation between the two hosts of the 2002 World Cup finals, officials said, reports AFP.

Deportivo invade Paris ising in the 64th minute, with a centre from Victor to an unmarked Naybet who converted.

> few minutes later through Turu Germain here on Flores, who had been a constant second-half threat to the PSG could have equalised.

> > Instead, the French side be-Makaay, recently introduced as a substitute, profited after PSG's Peter Luccin lost posses-

ball before it fell to the Dutch-He rounded goalkeeper

capacity 31,890 spectators. Under-pressure PSG coach Philippe Bergeroo bluntly summed up his team's night.

"We lost the match because of naive mistakes and when we come against teams of this level we simply cannot afford to do that," he said. He laid down a challenge to his team after a soul-destroying

week in which PSG also lost 2-0 to Monaco in the French league. "We're in a downward spiral. Now we're going to see if there are real fighters in this team." The French club's president

Laurent Perpere added: "They

were stronger and better, but

sion and former Middlesbrough we must give PSG a little bit of player Emerson retrieved the time to be as strong. But as he and his players know, Galatasaray will not be in a patient mood when they Lionel Letizi to score in the final take on PSG in Turkey on Deminute of the match, which was watched by a well-below- cember 6.



Donato (R), Deportivo La Coruna's Brazilian recruit, under pressure from Paris Saint Germain's Laurent Leroy at Paris on November 21. - AFP photo