

### Dida submits evidence in passport fiasco

MILAN, Italy, Dec 13: AC Milan's Brazilian goalkeeper Nelson De Jesus Silva, known as Dida, who has been charged with using a false passport, handed over evidence to an Italian court Tuesday, according to a judicial source, reports AFP.

The 27-year-old player's lawyer, Massimo Bassi, submitted a file to the court in which Dida affirms having acquired his Portuguese passport from a "non-Italian" middle man.

The AC Milan goalkeeper, who has claimed that he did not know the passport was false, is the latest player in the spotlight of the Italian justice system, which is currently investigating the shady world of illegal passport dealing.

Fake passports are used by clubs and players, hoping to evade strict regulations on the hiring of non-European Union nationals.

The Italian probe was launched after two Brazilian stars with Udinese, Warley Silva dos Santos and Alberto Valentino Carmo, were detained in September at Warsaw airport for presenting false Portuguese passports.

After several hours of questioning the players presented authentic Brazilian passports and were allowed to enter Poland.

If Dida is confirmed as using a fake Portuguese passport he faces expulsion from Italy.

### Nakata not leaving

ROME, Dec 12: AS Roma's out-of-favour Japanese midfielder Hidetoshi Nakata will not be leaving the Italian capital for Manchester United, the player's management company announced Tuesday, reports AFP.

Earlier reports in the British press had suggested the best player Japan has ever produced was on the verge of quitting Rome, complaining of "suffocation" and lack of a private life.

Nakata, twice Asian player of the year, reportedly told British newspapers he would "love to play in England and in a club that can win titles, such as Manchester United."

However, on Tuesday the player's management company were quick to deny all rumours of an impending move to the English Premiership.

"Nakata is happy at Rome, and with the results of the team," a spokesman said on behalf of the player.

In weekend press reports from Britain Nakata had earlier said: "Rome is a wonderful place, but it is suffocating me. I have no privacy and I need a change of country. I know Roma wouldn't sell me to a rival club in Serie A, so I must look abroad."

"I'd like to play in England and where better than a club that can win trophies - a club like Manchester United."

"They're a great team and I know I could help them," he said.

The 23-year-old, whose presence in the AS Roma lineup has made him a huge star in his native Japan, was transferred to Rome by Perugia for 20 million dollars.

### Shearer takes steroid aid

LONDON, Dec 13: English Premiership club Newcastle United announced Tuesday that skipper Alan Shearer has had a steroid injection in his injured knee, reports AFP.

After a bout of tendonitis which has sidelined him for the club's last two games, Shearer was treated with an injection rather than surgery.

However, both Shearer and United's medical staff are aware that the steroid treatment - his third - must be the last, and that if it does not work, an operation will be the only solution.

"Alan had the injection yesterday (Monday) and they now have to wait a couple of days to see how it works," said a club spokesman.

"They will look at the injury again in a couple of days and a decision will be taken then."

Newcastle, however, will be glad of any positive news on Shearer's eventual return. The club sit 10th in the league on 24 points, and have the fourth worst attack with only 18 goals from 17 games.

### Mauro Silva Deportivo's till 2004

LA CORUNA, Spain, Dec 13: Brazilian World Cup winner Mauro Silva has extended his contract with Spanish club Deportivo La Coruna till 2004, Spanish newspapers reported on Wednesday, reports AFP.

The 32-year-old midfielder Silva originally had a deal till June 2001.

On the domestic front, he won a Spanish league title (2000), a Spanish Cup (1995) and two Spanish Super Cups (1995 and 2000).

Internationally his high point came in helping Brazil win the 1994 World Cup.



UEFA board member Jean-Fournet Fayard picking a ball during the fourth round of the UEFA Cup at Nyon yesterday. --AFP photo

## UEFA Cup round four draw Roma face off with Liverpool

NYON, Switzerland, Dec 13: Italian giants AS Roma will be out to avenge their 1984 European Cup final defeat against Liverpool after the two sides were drawn to face each other in the UEFA Cup here Wednesday, reports AFP.

Fabio Capello's men, with high hopes of success following their big-spending in the summer transfer market, have a tough fixture against a Liverpool side with a strong tradition of success in Europe.

The Olympic stadium clash in Rome on February 22 could be the match of the fourth round following the first-leg a week earlier.

The tie evokes memories of the 1984 European Cup final in Rome, which Liverpool won on penalties.

Liverpool chief executive Rick Parry, speaking in Nyon on Wednesday, said: "In the next few days we will be facing Manchester United and Arsenal

in the Premiership so the UEFA Cup is a little far ahead.

"But Roma is certainly one of the best teams in Europe at the moment with their Gabriela Batistuta/Francesco Totti attack the best on the continent."

Barcelona, looking for UEFA Cup compensation after their Champions League exit, can count themselves lucky to draw AEK Athens with the second leg at the Nou Camp stadium.

Spain's Celta Vigo travel to VfB Stuttgart, Rayo Vallecano hosts Bordeaux, and little Basque club Alaves have the chance to pit themselves against an Inter Milan whose fortunes have slumped this season.

Inter official Giacomo Facchetti said at Nyon: "I would have preferred to have drawn a bigger team than Alaves even though they are currently one of the better sides in Spain."

"But we are not worried as we have beaten both the Dutch league leaders Vitesse Arnhem and Germany's Hertha Berlin."

Parma director of communi-

cation Michele Uva praised their next opponents PSV Eindhoven. "PSV were only just knocked out of a very tough Champions League group and are therefore an excellent team."

"But Parma won't be worrying about our opponents. We have a team which could take us far."

### FOURTH ROUND DRAW

FC Porto (Por) v Nantes (Fra)  
AEK Athens (Gre) v Barcelona (Spa)  
VfB Stuttgart (Ger) v Celta Vigo (Spa)  
Liverpool (Eng) v AS Roma (Ita)

Alaves (Spa) v Inter Milan (Ita)  
PSV Eindhoven (Ned) v Parma (Ita)  
Slavia Prague (Cze) v Kaiserslautern (Ger)  
Rayo Vallecano (Spa) v Bordeaux (Fra)

"Matches played at home by the first mentioned clubs on February 15 with the return fixture on February 22"

## WORLD FOOTBALL BRIEFS

Dec 13(AFP): World football briefs on Wednesday:

### SAUDI FOOTBALL ON RAMADAN BREAK

RIYADH: Saudi Arabian authorities have postponed all national league matches for the ten final days of the holy month of Ramadan, according to the SPA agency Tuesday.

The decision was taken by prince Sultan Ben Abdel Aziz, president of the organisation for the Protection of Youth and president of the Saudi football federation, "to respect the ten final days of Ramadan."

The holy month of Ramadan, during which all Muslims must abstain from food, drink and sex from dawn until sundown, began on 27 November and the last ten days of the period are particularly sacred.

### FERGUSON ALL FOR VETERAN'S

LONDON: Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson on Tuesday revealed he is determined to reward veteran stars Denis Irwin and Teddy Sheringham with new contracts.

The current deals involving Republic of Ireland defender Irwin, 35, and England striker

Sheeringham, 34, end in the summer but Ferguson is so pleased with their form and fitness he wants them to remain at Old Trafford.

"I'd like them to stay on," said Ferguson.

"Fitness-wise they are both looking in good condition and their performance levels are good."

"I want them to stay for the experience they give us. They've both got that in abundance and both of them have kept themselves in great physical shape."

"You need to have that to play here. You have to be at peak fitness to cope with the level we are playing at and the number of games we play."

"It is obvious you need to be in good order and that's the case with both of them."

"We all know about their ability but the other things allow them to stay on longer than other players in football."

"Time does catch up on footballers but they are both doing terrifically. I just wish they were 29!"

### SA PINTO OUT FOR SIX WEEKS

LISBON: Sporting Lisbon's Ricardo Sa Pinto tore ligaments in his right knee in Saturday's match against Belenenses in the Portuguese football championship and will be out for six weeks, his club said Tuesday.

The 28-year-old striker is set to have an operation at the beginning of next week.

### DEL PIERO INJURED

TURIN: Juventus star Alessandro Del Piero will be out for six weeks with a right hamstring pull, club doctor Riccardo Agricoia said on Tuesday.



Del Piero, injured in Sunday's 1-0 victory over Parma, will therefore miss the Lecce game on December 17 and the trip to Rome on December 23, the last two matches before the winter break.

Del Piero's absence will mean Filippo Inzaghi, unsettled after being on the bench the last two games, will probably feature up front alongside David Trezeguet of France.

### PSG serious about Ronaldinho

PARIS, Dec 13 (Reuters/Internet): Big-spending Paris St Germain are negotiating to sign Brazilian international striker Ronaldinho Gaucho from Gremio, according to French media reports on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Ronaldinho, 20, has been a target for several leading European clubs including Barcelona and Inter Milan.

Le Parisien reported he had signed a pre-contract with PSG and could sign a deal as early as next week.

The tabloid reported that one of PSG's sponsors, television channel Canal Plus, were prepared to help finance the deal.

Ronaldinho - full name Ronaldo de Assis Moreira - would join a long line of Brazilians to have played for PSG including Rai, Ricardo and Leonardo, as well as current first-choice striker Christian.

Ronaldinho helped Brazil to the 1999 Copa America title and finished as top scorer at the 1999 Confederations Cup, scoring six goals.

Paris St Germain are also reported to be interested in resigning fullback Didier Domi, who is currently playing with Newcastle United.

"If PSG want me, then I'll come back," Domi told Le Parisien.

### UEFA considering second-level Champs' League

NYON, Switzerland, Dec 13: European football chiefs will consider an overhaul of the UEFA Cup after hearing pleas from top clubs from smaller European nations here on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Officials from 11 leading clubs in Scotland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Belgium and Denmark have signed a charter promoting the concept of a separate European league for big clubs from smaller nations. Leading Swedish clubs have also expressed an interest in the initiative.

They fear that the power of the Champions League, the competition which brings together Europe's biggest clubs, could lead to a worsening of the standard in their domestic competitions.

UEFA chairman Lennart Johansson agreed to take their proposals to an executive committee meeting on Thursday and Friday after receiving a delegation from the clubs.

A UEFA source said "serious consideration" was being given to revamping the UEFA Cup - the competition currently open to high-placed finishers in domestic leagues - in order to create a second-level Champions League.

A statement from the clubs said: "Unless stakeholders in football in our countries take such positive action now, we consider that the growing gap between our domestic competitions and those in the larger European Union countries will continue to have a dramatic and increasingly detrimental effect on the continuity, quality and competitiveness of our competitions."

If sanctioned, the establishment of a new European competition could involve teams such as Rangers, Celtic, Ajax, PSV Eindhoven, Feyenoord, Benfica, Sporting Lisbon, Brondby, Club Brugge, Anderlecht, FC Copenhagen, AIK Stockholm, and IFK Gothenburg.

### Laudrup making a come-back?

COPENHAGEN, Dec 13: Former Danish international Brian Laudrup, who left Ajax in the summer because of a chronic achilles tendon injury, is set to play next April for a Danish club, according to a television report here, reports AFP.

The 31-year-old former Glasgow Rangers midfielder decided last May he would retire because of the injury though his Ajax contract ran till August 2001.

Laudrup had been a key member of the Danish team for years, his high-point coming with a World Cup quarter-final appearance in 1998.

### Scarsella fighting resentment in Oceania bid

SYDNEY, Dec 13: Soccer Australia chief Basil Scarsella must overcome lingering anti-Australian sentiment in his bid to be elected chief of the Oceania confederation in Vanuatu on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Scarsella is one of four candidates to replace controversial New Zealander Charlie Dempsey, who quit the post after sparking international football outrage with his non-vote in the 2006 World Cup hosting decision.

Dempsey abstained from the vote to determine who would stage the 2006 World Cup, effectively handing world sport's biggest event to Germany, ahead of favourites South Africa.

Dempsey claimed he had been put under intolerable pressure by both nations.

Scarsella is the obvious replacement but there are three other challengers, with Samoa's Tautulu Roebuck, the OFC treasurer, expected to be a front-runner.

Other nominations for the post are Vanuatu's Johnny Tusley Lulu and Adrian Wickham from the Solomon Islands.

Commentators say Scarsella's biggest problem will be convincing the 11 Pacific nations with voting rights that Australia does not want to become the big brother of the federation.

Former Soccer Australia (SA) chairman David Hill soured relations with the OFC when he tried to move Australia into the Asian federation to gain easier access into the World Cup finals.

## ETA threat for Lizarazu



PARIS, Dec 13: Bixente Lizarazu, the French World Cup-winning defender, will face reprisals by Basque separatist group ETA, unless he pays a "revolutionary tax", judicial sources said Wednesday, reports AFP.

The extortion demand was made Monday in a letter to Lizarazu's family, who still live in the Basque region of France. His mother, clearly shaken by the threat to her son, refused to comment on the matter.

But the demand was dismissed as "absurd" by French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin after police had revealed that security had been stepped up and anti-terrorist magistrates had been asked to investigate the threats.

Lizarazu, 31, who plays for German club Bayern Munich, was born in the French Basque town of Saint-Jean-de-Luz,

grew up in nearby Hendaye and began his footballing career at Bordeaux.

In the hand-written letter, Lizarazu was ordered to pay the "revolutionary tax" in compensation for playing for the French national side, which was described as "an enemy state".

It is the first time that ETA, which normally targets wealthy business leaders or companies in the Basque country, had turned its attention to a French national living abroad.

Jospin was quick to denounce the threat. "I find this proposal absurd in its fundamental intentions and I am sure the player will take it very calmly," he said.

In Bayonne, the town at the heart of the French Basque region, there was scepticism in nationalist circles over the authenticity of the letter. The fact that it was hand-written, while all previous ETA demands

and claims had been type-written, meant that the possibility the letter was a hoax could not entirely be ruled out.

If it is genuine, it comes as something of an irony that the separatist movement should target Lizarazu, who has been a loyal ambassador for his native region and is on record as saying: "It is primordial to keep in touch with one's roots and to pass them on to one's children. The Basque culture is very rich and interesting."

Indeed, he was christened Vincent but in the early 1990s, while with Bordeaux, asked friends and team-mates to call him Bixente - the Basque equivalent.

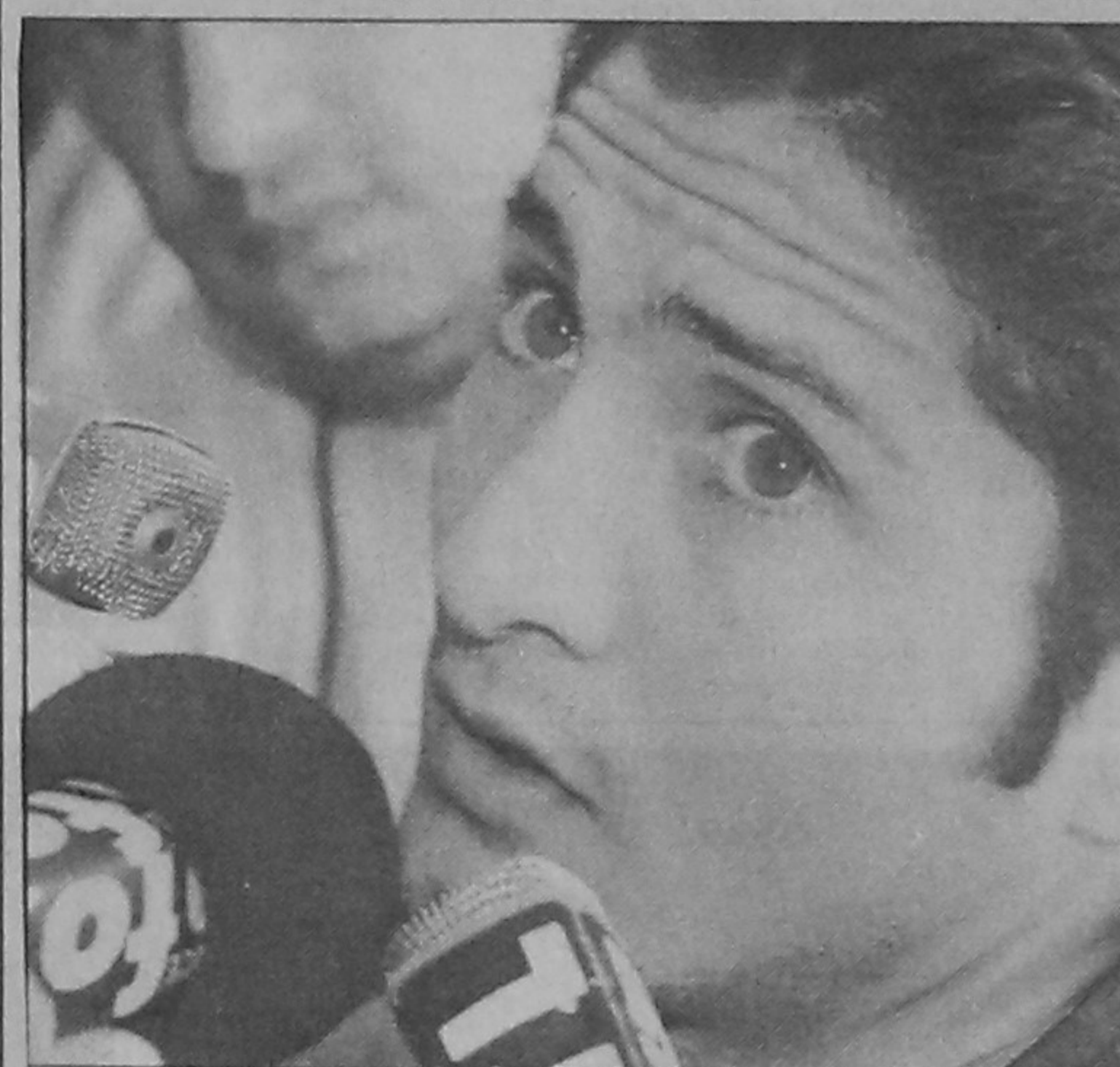
A keen surfer, Lizarazu frequently returns to the Atlantic coast around Biarritz to indulge his hobby, and is a popular local figure, as well as being able to lay claim to being probably the best-known living Basque.

He inherited the nickname "The Bouncing Basque" from former tennis legend Jean Borotra, for his bouncy style of play, which has brought him success wherever he has played and his trophy cabinet includes World Cup and European Championship medals alongside the 62 caps he has won for the national side - the bone of contention, as far as ETA are concerned.

With his playboy good looks and his relationship with glamorous French pop star Elsa, his photograph is to be found gracing the news pages of the glossy magazines almost as often as on the sports pages.

He joined Bayern Munich in 1997 after a season with Spanish First Division club Athletic Bilbao in 1996-97 - the Basque club which prides itself on employing only Basque players.

ETA is accused of killing some 800 people since it began waging its violent campaign for an independent Basque homeland straddling France and Spain in 1969.



An AFP file photo of French international Bixente Lizarazu.

## EUROPEAN FOOTBALL SCENE

Dec 13(Reuters/AFP) Internet: Situation in Europe following League and Cup action on Tuesday:

### ITALIAN CUP

UDINE: Holders Lazio crashed out of the Italian Cup after a 4-1 quarter-final second leg defeat to Udinese on Tuesday, ending the match with nine men after two second half dismissals.

The defeat is the latest setback for the Italian champions who are struggling in the Champions League and face a vital Serie A derby match with leaders AS Roma on Sunday.

Lazio were leading 2-1 from the first leg but their lead was overturned in just eight minutes thanks to

close range strikes from Andrea Sottile and Massimo Margiotta.

Sven Goran Eriksson's side pulled a goal back, to go level on aggregate in the 22nd minute when Diego

Simone was judged to have been brought down by Mohammed Gargo and Sinisa Mihajlovic converted the spot-kick.

But not for the first time in his career Mihajlovic, who was booed by Udinese fans throughout the game, became the villain when he was sent off eight minutes into the second half for dissent.

With the extra man Udinese pushed forward in search of the crucial third goal and it came in the 82nd

minute when Johan Walem picked out Margiotta who headed home.

Czech Pavel Nedved was dismissed for a second bookable offence in the last minute before Udinese added a fourth when Roberto Muzzi's shot was parried out by Luca Marchegiani and Walem tapped in the loose ball.

### SPANISH (KING'S) CUP

MADRID: Barcelona, Valencia and Villarreal all made it safely through the first round of the King's Cup on Tuesday with away wins against Third Division opposition.

The first two rounds of this

year's competition are being played on a one-off basis, with the lower-ranked team always at home, but the three First Division sides in action on Tuesday avoided potential banana skins.

Barcelona, who went out to Atletico Madrid last season after refusing to go ahead with their semifinal because of a lack of available players, had the easiest time of it with a 3-0 win over Gauda.

Getafe gave them the lead on 27 minutes with a header from Alfonso's left-wing cross and second-half goals from Luis Enrique, after 71 minutes, and Pep Guardiola (78) completed a comfortable win.

Valencia came through against Girona 1-0 thanks to a long-range strike from Miguel Angel Angulo on seven minutes.

Villarreal were held to a goalless draw over 90 minutes against Burriana but goals from Diego Cagna and Victor put their 2-0 ahead in extra-time.

A goal after 120 minutes late to save the home side.

The remaining 28 first round ties are being played on Wednesday. Madrid club San Sebastian de los Reyes have a bye and will also go through to the draw for the round-of-32.

### BUNDESLIGA

BERLIN: Reports of German First Division soccer matches played on Tuesday:

SPVGG UNTERHACHING - 0 SCHALKE 04 - 2

Danish striker Ebbe Sand put the visitors ahead from close range in the 26th minute with his 13th goal this season.

Dutch defender Marco van Hoogdale wrapped it up with a superb shot from 20 metres in the 60th minute.

Unterhaching came close several times but Schalke goalkeeper Oliver Reck had a great game.

VFB STUTTGART - 4 EIN-TRACHT FRANKFURT - 1

Defender Vladimir Maljkovic had given Stuttgart the lead with an own goal and midfielder Marco Gebrhardt had levelled for the visitors when Eintracht goalkeeper Dirk Henen had to leave the pitch with a thigh

muscle injury. That was the turning point. His replacement, Sven Schmitt, making his Bundesliga debut, conceded three goals from midfielder Zvonimir Soldo and strikers Lou Vroel Ganea and Sean Dundee.

The victory of the four-times German champions enabled them to leave the bottom spot and probably saved coach Kai Rangnick's job.

VFL WOLFSBURG - 1 SC FREIBURG - 2

An effort from close range by Sebastian Keil and a headed goal from fellow defender Oumar Konate gave the visitors a 2-0 lead after 59 minutes. Polish striker Andrzej Juskowiak pulled one back for Wolfsburg seven minutes later but they still suffered their first home defeat since December last year.

### ENGLISH LEAGUE CUP

LONDON: Birmingham City beat First Division rivals Sheffield Wednesday to book their place in the last four of the English League Cup on Tuesday, while the two other ties were hit by heavy rain.

Birmingham midfielder Danny Sonner, signed on a free transfer from Wednesday last summer, broke the deadlock against his former club.

Sonner struck in the 27th minute of a game which provided plenty of excitement at both ends in atrocious conditions.

After 56 minutes the home side doubled their lead with Dele Adebola's eighth goal of the campaign.

Australian Stan Lazaridis was the creator with a teasing left-wing centre which Adebola headed powerfully past Wednesday keeper Kevin Pressman.

Referee Graham Poll abandoned the quarter-final between Manchester City and Ipswich after 27 minutes due to a waterlogged pitch with the score standing at 1-1.

Poll had given the fixture the thumbs-up despite torrential rain 30 minutes before kick-off.

The pitch quickly became waterlogged but Poll allowed the match to start with a five-minute delay after a brief inspection.

In-form Ipswich made light of the conditions to open the scoring after just four minutes.

Marcus Stewart peeled away from his marker as Mark Venus swept in a deep cross.

The Ipswich striker's diving header went beyond goalkeeper Nicky Weaver to take his tally for the season to 11 goals.

It was Stewart's second in three days following his winner at Liverpool on Sunday.

Both sides were finding it difficult to string passes together with the Matt Holland should have added a second for Ipswich after Stewart delivered a perfect cross but somehow steered his effort wide.

Paul Dickov equalised after 21 minutes and then referee Poll let the teams off due to the conditions and shortly afterwards abandoned the fixture.

The quarter-final between First Division Crystal Palace and Sunderland was abandoned earlier in the day due to a waterlogged pitch.

Liverpool play First Division leaders Fulham in the remaining tie on Wednesday.



RINALDINHO



Dele Adebola (C) is being tackled by Des Walker (L) of Sheffield Wednesday during their Worthington(English League) Cup quarterfinal at Saint Andrews, Birmingham on December 12. --AFP photo