

Sport

Nigeria denies owing Bonfrere

LAGOS, Dec 20: The Nigeria Football Association (NFA) Wednesday denied it owed money to the country's Dutch coach Jo Bonfrere, reports AFP.

Bonfrere last week threatened to lodge a complaint with the world football governing body FIFA over what he said was four months of overdue payments of salaries and allowances.

"We don't owe Bonfrere any money. We have paid him up to the month of November and by the end of December we will pay him for that month. We are waiting for him to report us to FIFA," NFA secretary-general Tijani Yusuf told reporters.

The coach, who is on a monthly salary of 30,000 dollars, told a Lagos radio station he would hold talks with the NFA when he comes back from holidays and then complain to FIFA if nothing was done.

"When I return from my holidays, I will discuss with the FA officials. I will give them some time to pay me. If nothing happens, I will have to take my case to FIFA," Bonfrere said.

"We cannot continue to work like this. I have to be paid regularly," he added.

Elliott charged by the FA

LONDON, Dec 20: Leicester City captain Matt Elliott has been charged with violent and threatening behaviour by the English Football Association after allegedly elbowing Coventry striker Craig Bellamy in the recent midlands derby at Highfield Road, reports AFP.

Elliott appeared to catch Bellamy in the face with his right elbow in an off-the-ball incident midway through the second half of the live televised match on December 10.

Referee Steve Dunn took no action at the time, and many of the Coventry fans mistakenly thought it was Foxes midfielder Robbie Savage - during a running battle throughout the game with Bellamy - who was responsible.

But the incident was picked up by television cameras and subsequently studied by the FA video advisory panel who decided that Scotland centre-back Elliott has a case to answer.

If the case is proven then Elliott could face a three-match ban - the mandatory punishment handed out to a player if he is sent off for violent conduct.

It is the second time that Elliott, who has to decide whether to seek a personal hearing, will be in the FA dock over alleged use of the elbow in 15 months.

In September 1999 Liverpool striker Michael Owen was left unconscious after Elliott appeared to elbow him in the face in a Premiership clash at Filbert Street.

Kiev rope in Bulgarian talent

KIEV, Dec 20: Ukraine's Dynamo Kiev have begun to strengthen their squad after their European Champions League fiasco, signing Bulgaria's international midfielder Georgi Pevov from Lokomotiv Sofia, the club said Tuesday.

Peyev, who was sought by Italy's Serie A giants AC Milan and several of Russia's top sides, reportedly cost Dynamo around three million dollars.

Dynamo's press spokesman Alexei Semenchenko said that Ukraine's champions were hoping that 21-year-old Peyev, who signed a five-year deal with them, would significantly strengthen their squad.

The top Kiev side, who reached the Champions' League semi-finals in 1999 and the quarter-finals in 1998, did not make it into the current tournament's second-round stage.

Dynamo's early exit from the Champions' League has infuriated their fans, who were not only exasperated by a string of poor results, but also by the club's decision to sell star players Andriy Shevchenko, Sergei Rebrov and Oleg Luzhny, to western European teams.

Their replacements have been written off as inferior talents, while also failing to blend into Dynamo's overall playing style.

Dynamo coaches are currently testing two midfielders from Romania along with a halfback and full back from Yugoslavia.

Dynamo's biggest signing last season, Georgian international striker Georgi Demetradze, who has been labelled the biggest disappointment after failing to produce the goods in Kiev this season, was allowed to try his skills in the Spanish top flight side Real Sociedad.

The out-of-luck Demetradze, who cost Dynamo almost 20 million dollars, failed to enhance his reputation as a goalscorer either in the Champions' or domestic league this season.

Dynamo players restarted their training on Monday after a three-week vacation during the winter break in the Ukraine's



ETERNAL NUMBER ONE! The Brazil national football team finished the sixth consecutive year ranked as FIFA's number one.

--Star file photo

FIFA rankings for 2000**Brazil finishes year on top**

PARIS, Dec 20: Despite struggling throughout 2000 Brazil have ended the year once again ranked the world's top team by football's governing body FIFA, reports AFP.

France - the reigning World and European champions - have moved up one place from third to second.

Brazil have had a difficult 12 months, sacking their coach and getting off to a slow start in South American World Cup qualifiers, where they are second in the standings five points behind Argentina.

Argentina have moved up from sixth to third, and Italy and the Czech Republic equal fourth.

Others on the move up were Euro 2000 semi-finalists Portugal (up nine places to sixth), the Netherlands, also semi-finalists in Euro 2000, (up 11 places to

eighth) and Paraguay (up eight places to ninth equal).

The following teams leapt up at least 20 rungs over the last 12 months: Honduras (46th, up 23), Nigeria (52nd, up 24), Madagascar (114th, up 20), North Korea (142nd, up 30) and Cape Verde (156th, up 21).

Heading in the other direction were Germany (11th, down 9), Croatia (18th, down 9), Denmark (22nd equal, down 11), and Austria (44th, down 16). Both England (17th) and Scotland (25th) dropped five places from last year.

On a continental breakdown of the top 50, Europe have 28 (down three), South America have seven, Africa have six, North and Central America have five (up one), Asia have four (up two) and Oceania have none.

FIFA TOP 30

1. Brazil

* (Next rankings are issued on January 17, 2001)

Co-hosts share honours

TOKYO, Dec 20: Japan held 2002 World Cup co-hosts South Korea to a 1-1 draw to end the last game of their traditional series in the 20th century against the archrivals on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Ahn Jung-Hwan, South Korea's first Italian Serie A striker, opened the scoring in the 14th minute when he collected a pass in the midfield and then disguised a defender just outside the area to fire a sizzling shot which flashed past two defenders and keeper Seigo Narazaki.

The home side had three chances to even the score when forward Atsushi Yanagisawa was pulled down once in the area in the 18th minute and another just outside the area in the 26th minute, which sent Kim Sang-Sik off.

Yanagisawa himself kicked the penalty, only to see Korean goal keeper Kim Byung-Ji showed a diving save, while midfielder Shunsuke Nakamura's free kick hit a defender.

At the end of the first half, Nakamura produced a nice cross pass into the right side of the Korean area, but Tomokazu Miyaji's right-footer went just wide.

Nakamura left the field at half time with an injury but Masashi Nakayama, Japan's only scorer in the World Cup finals, came in, and the Japanese started to connect passes through the defensive Koreans.

The Japanese finally made it even in the 56th minute when Teruyoshi Ito sent a pass from the right, which defender Toshihiro Hattori nodded home for his first goal for the national

side.

The two archrivals went for it in the dying moment, but neither could make a get ahead shot.



It was their 15th draw with South Korea winning 35 games and Japan with 11 winning games since their first encounter in 1954.

--AFP photo

Future of the transfer system**FIFA, EU dead serious**

BRUSSELS, Dec 20: The European Commission will hold a third meeting inside a month with representatives of the football world on Wednesday to thrash out an agreement on the future of the transfer system with both sides keen to stress their wish to reach a consensus, reports AFP.

The Commission is stuck between a rock and a hard place as it has to balance the FIFPro view, which is that footballers should enjoy freedom of movement, and FIFA and UEFA's position, which is defending the position of their clubs and competitions while stating that sport should have

Sociedad target Schelotto

SAN SEBASTIAN, Spain, Dec 20: Struggling Spanish top flight outfit Real Sociedad are bidding to sign Boca Juniors' striker Guillermo Barros Schelotto for 5.5 million dollars, Spanish media reports said Tuesday, reports AFP.

Following last Wednesday's meeting FIFA general secretary Michel Zer-Ruffini said he was optimistic an accord could be struck by mid-January.

But strong doubts remain as to whether that optimism is well-placed.

One European Union source said talking of time frames was

dangerous.

"Fixing a deadline would only put the negotiators under pressure - it would be astonishing to see things move along so rapidly," said the source.

Another source opined that "the discussions are currently focusing on principles but not as yet on details of a future accord."

The Commission is stuck between a rock and a hard place as it has to balance the FIFPro view, which is that footballers should enjoy freedom of movement, and FIFA and UEFA's position, which is defending the position of their clubs and competitions while stating that sport should have

dangerous.

"Fixing a deadline would only put the negotiators under pressure - it would be astonishing to see things move along so rapidly," said the source.

Another source opined that "the discussions are currently focusing on principles but not as yet on details of a future accord."

The Commission is stuck between a rock and a hard place as it has to balance the FIFPro view, which is that footballers should enjoy freedom of movement, and FIFA and UEFA's position, which is defending the position of their clubs and competitions while stating that sport should have

dangerous.

"Fixing a deadline would only put the negotiators under pressure - it would be astonishing to see things move along so rapidly," said the source.

Another source opined that "the discussions are currently focusing on principles but not as yet on details of a future accord."

The Commission is stuck between a rock and a hard place as it has to balance the FIFPro view, which is that footballers should enjoy freedom of movement, and FIFA and UEFA's position, which is defending the position of their clubs and competitions while stating that sport should have

dangerous.

"Fixing a deadline would only put the negotiators under pressure - it would be astonishing to see things move along so rapidly," said the source.

Another source opined that "the discussions are currently focusing on principles but not as yet on details of a future accord."

The Commission is stuck between a rock and a hard place as it has to balance the FIFPro view, which is that footballers should enjoy freedom of movement, and FIFA and UEFA's position, which is defending the position of their clubs and competitions while stating that sport should have

dangerous.

"Fixing a deadline would only put the negotiators under pressure - it would be astonishing to see things move along so rapidly," said the source.

Another source opined that "the discussions are currently focusing on principles but not as yet on details of a future accord."

The Commission is stuck between a rock and a hard place as it has to balance the FIFPro view, which is that footballers should enjoy freedom of movement, and FIFA and UEFA's position, which is defending the position of their clubs and competitions while stating that sport should have

dangerous.

"Fixing a deadline would only put the negotiators under pressure - it would be astonishing to see things move along so rapidly," said the source.

Another source opined that "the discussions are currently focusing on principles but not as yet on details of a future accord."

The Commission is stuck between a rock and a hard place as it has to balance the FIFPro view, which is that footballers should enjoy freedom of movement, and FIFA and UEFA's position, which is defending the position of their clubs and competitions while stating that sport should have

dangerous.

"Fixing a deadline would only put the negotiators under pressure - it would be astonishing to see things move along so rapidly," said the source.

Another source opined that "the discussions are currently focusing on principles but not as yet on details of a future accord."

The Commission is stuck between a rock and a hard place as it has to balance the FIFPro view, which is that footballers should enjoy freedom of movement, and FIFA and UEFA's position, which is defending the position of their clubs and competitions while stating that sport should have

dangerous.

"Fixing a deadline would only put the negotiators under pressure - it would be astonishing to see things move along so rapidly," said the source.

Another source opined that "the discussions are currently focusing on principles but not as yet on details of a future accord."

The Commission is stuck between a rock and a hard place as it has to balance the FIFPro view, which is that footballers should enjoy freedom of movement, and FIFA and UEFA's position, which is defending the position of their clubs and competitions while stating that sport should have

dangerous.

"Fixing a deadline would only put the negotiators under pressure - it would be astonishing to see things move along so rapidly," said the source.

Another source opined that "the discussions are currently focusing on principles but not as yet on details of a future accord."

The Commission is stuck between a rock and a hard place as it has to balance the FIFPro view, which is that footballers should enjoy freedom of movement, and FIFA and UEFA's position, which is defending the position of their clubs and competitions while stating that sport should have

dangerous.

"Fixing a deadline would only put the negotiators under pressure - it would be astonishing to see things move along so rapidly," said the source.

Another source opined that "the discussions are currently focusing on principles but not as yet on details of a future accord."

The Commission is stuck between a rock and a hard place as it has to balance the FIFPro view, which is that footballers should enjoy freedom of movement, and FIFA and UEFA's position, which is defending the position of their clubs and competitions while stating that sport should have

dangerous.

"Fixing a deadline would only put the negotiators under pressure - it would be astonishing to see things move along so rapidly," said the source.

Another source opined that "the discussions are currently focusing on principles but not as yet on details of a future accord."

The Commission is stuck between a rock and a hard place as it has to balance the FIFPro view, which is that footballers should enjoy freedom of movement, and FIFA and UEFA's position, which is defending the position of their clubs and competitions while stating that sport should have

dangerous.

"Fixing a deadline would only put the negotiators under pressure - it would be astonishing to see things move along so rapidly," said the source.

Another source opined that "the discussions are currently focusing on principles but not as yet on details of a future accord."

The Commission is stuck between a rock and a hard place as it has to balance the FIFPro view, which is that footballers should enjoy freedom of movement, and FIFA and UEFA's position, which is defending the position of their clubs and competitions while stating that sport should have

dangerous.

"Fixing a deadline would only put the negotiators under pressure - it would be astonishing to see things move along so rapidly," said the source.

Another source opined that "the discussions are currently focusing on principles but not as yet on details of a future accord."

The Commission is stuck between a rock and a hard place as it has to balance the FIFPro view, which is that footballers should enjoy freedom of movement, and FIFA and UEFA's position, which is defending the position of their clubs and competitions while stating that sport should have

dangerous.

"Fixing a deadline would only put the negotiators under pressure - it would be astonishing to see things move along so rapidly," said the source.

Another source opined that "the discussions are currently focusing on principles but not