

## 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 Tijlani 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 Fulbert 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 Bulgarian international midfielder Georgy Peyev from Lokomotiv Sofia, the club said Tuesday, reports AFP.

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 Semenenko 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 Andrei 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 Georgy 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 goal-scorer 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 league.



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 six), 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

2. France
3. Argentina
4. Italy and Czech Republic
5. Portugal
6. Spain
7. Netherlands
8. Yugoslavia and Paraguay
9. Germany
10. Mexico
11. Romania
12. Norway
13. Colombia
14. United States
15. England
16. Croatia
17. Chile
18. South Africa
19. Russia
20. Denmark and Sweden
21. Slovakia
22. Scotland
23. Tunisia
24. Belgium
25. Morocco
26. Trinidad and Tobago
27. Turkey

\* (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 arch-rivals 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 Moyoji'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.

Shinji Kagawa (S. Korea) - 1

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



South Korean custodian Kim Byung-Ji (R) trying to thwart a headed attempt from Kapan's Toshihiro Hattori during their friendly encounter at Tokyo yesterday. --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.

"There is evident goodwill among the different parties," was the official Commission view Tuesday - but the players' union FIFPro warned that they believe "the negotiations are not moving forward," a view which is being viewed with some alarm by UEFA director general Gerard Aigner.

Following last Wednesday's meeting FIFA general secretary Michel Zen-Ruffinen 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

## 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.

special status and not conform to EU rules on free movement of labour.

The Commission's task is to strike a compromise which best meets the game's interests.

Over the past two years and following player protests, the Commission has been trying to square the circle and make the transfer system conform to the principles of competition and the free movement of labour as enshrined in EU labour laws.

The Commission is looking in essence to uphold three principles - the free movement of players, ensure that clubs which bring through youngsters receive a fee if the player then leaves and also guarantee that contracts are respected.

But the Commission admits that the free movement of players "cannot be applied to the letter as sport has certain specific features."

To begin with, the EU wants FIFA to set down a basic framework in which to operate in future to which it can then propose amendments where appropriate.

## Madrid duo fined for drink driving

MADRID, Dec 20: Real Madrid players Alber Celades and Alberto Rivera face a fine for drink-driving and crashing into a barrier, municipal police said here Wednesday, reports AFP.

The two players, who had been out celebrating the run-up to Christmas following Tuesday's 3-1 win over local rivals Rayo Vallecano, bumped into each other and then hit a barrier on Madrid's Paseo del Prado.

Neither player was hurt in the incident and their vehicles were undamaged, but breath tests revealed they had been drinking and they were taken for police questioning.

The pair were later released but told they will be fined and could additionally face a club punishment.

## Strasbourg want Garay banned

STRASBOURG, France, Dec 20: French club Strasbourg have called on international governing body FIFA to suspend Argentinian player Diego Garay from all football worldwide for using a fake passport, reports AFP.

Strasbourg President Patrick Proisy said Garay - who played for the club last season - should be suspended until the end of an investigation into the affair.

"The Garay case is far from over. We want a hearing to determine the validity of the contract," Proisy said.

Proisy said the club had no reason to suspect Garay's passport, which the club claim was issued to the player by the Italian consulate in Cordoba, was fake.

Garay played 22 games for the First Division strugglers last year, and his case has prompted the threat of legal action by Second Division side Nancy.

Strasbourg survived in the topflight last year while Nancy were relegated. Nancy say Strasbourg broke the rules by fielding a non-eligible player, and are calling for their reinstatement in the league.

Strasbourg signed Garay from Cordoba-based Argentine First Division side Talleres. He has now returned to Argentina following his year loan.

A rash of cases of players using fake EU passports has cropped up in European football in recent years, with players seeking to evade strict rules on quotas of non-EU players.

## French Cup draw

# Giant-killers to face on-fire Sedan

PARIS, Dec 20: Giant-killing Calais were handed a dream draw at home against league-leaders Sedan in the first round of the French Cup here Wednesday, reports AFP.

Calais stunned French football last season by reaching the final of the competition where they lost 2-1 to Nantes at the Stade de France but are currently languishing in the fourth division.

Little Sedan have been the surprise package this season and are currently top of the French league.

Elsewhere, Nancy have been paired with Strasbourg in what is likely to be a keenly-contested tie.

Nancy, relegated to the Second Division last season, are taking legal action to get reinstated in the top flight at the expense of Strasbourg, who fielded an ineligible player for 22 matches of the 1999/2000 campaign.

## Kachloul in trouble

LONDON, Dec 20: Moroccan international Hassan Kachloul has been charged with misconduct by English football authorities after his sending off in Southampton's stormy Premiership clash with Leeds last week.

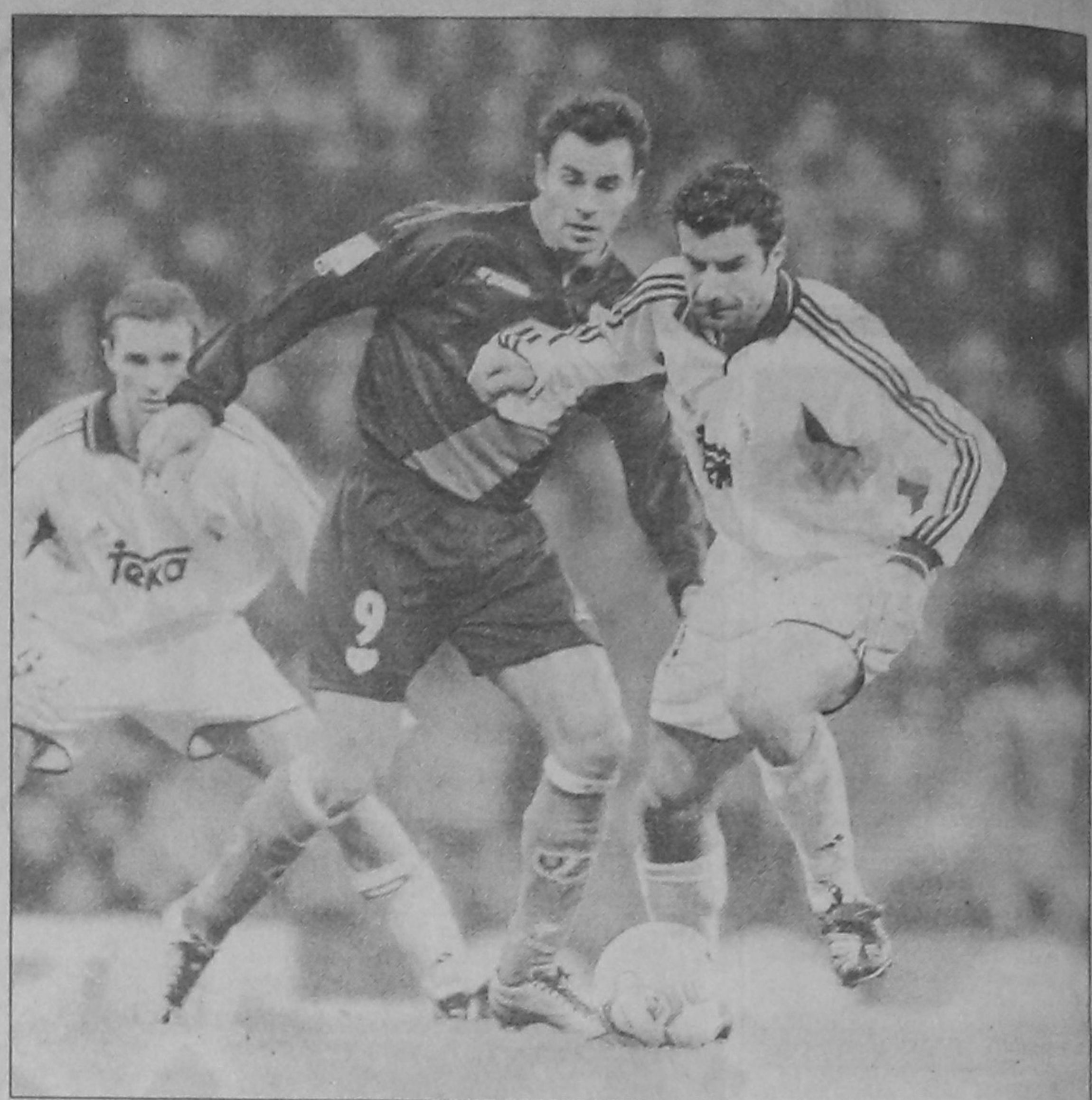
An English FA spokesman said Kachloul had been charged "due to violent and threatening behaviour towards Lee Bowyer during the Premier League fixture on December 16."

Kachloul was booked twice in the space of three minutes late in the game, won 1-0 by Southampton.

The first booking was for throwing the ball away and dissent at a free-kick and the Saints midfielder received his second yellow for grabbing Bowyer round the throat in the mass melee sparked by a clash between Leeds' Alan Smith and Southampton substitute Mark Draper.

Kachloul then appeared to aim a headbutt at Bowyer and lash out with his elbow as he left the pitch.

Southampton have suspended the player from Friday's match with Coventry and Kachloul could face a three-match ban if found guilty by the FA.



Real Madrid's Portuguese maverick Luis Figo (R) contemplates his next trick during the Primera Liga match against Rayo Vallecano at Madrid on December 19. --AFP photo

## Primera Liga

# Real ease past Rayo



MADRID, Dec 20: Real Madrid returned to the top of the Spanish First Division yesterday after early goals from Luis Figo and Ivan Helguera and a superb second-half effort from Raul sealed a 3-1 victory over Rayo Vallecano, reports Reuters.

After just nine minutes Helguera set up Figo for the opener. The Portuguese international showed composure, side-stepping Rayo keeper Kasey Keller and guiding the ball home.

Four minutes later Figo returned the compliment when he sent in a far-post cross to the waiting Helguera who had plenty of time to head home and put Real 2-0 up.

Rayo barely mounted an attack in the first half, but gave Real a brief scare in the second when Bosnian Elvir Bolic found room on the right in the 64th minute and spun in a fine cross to the unmarked Michel who volleyed home powerfully. But in the 73rd minute Raul produced a superb individual goal.

clipping over the advancing Keller and then finishing with a volley from a difficult angle.

Real's sixth consecutive win helped them dislodge Valencia from the top spot for at least 24

hours. Real lead on 32 points, one ahead of Valencia and four ahead of third-placed Deportivo Coruna.

The rest of the teams play today.

## STANDINGS

MADRID, Dec 20: Spanish First Division table after Tuesday's match (Played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):

Real Madrid	15	10	2	3	34	18	32
Valencia	15	9	4	2	27	9	31
Deportivo La Coruna	15	8	4	3	25	14	28
Rayo Vallecano	16	6	6	4	33	25	24
Alaves	15	7	3	5	23	15	24
Barcelona	15	7	3	5	29	22	24
Real Mallorca	15	6	5	4	18	17	23
Oviedo	15	7	2	6	20	22	23
Villarreal	15	6	4	5	19	18	22
Athletic Bilbao	15	5	4	6	20	21	19
Celta Vigo	15	5	4	6	19	22	19
Real Zaragoza	14	4	6	4	17	15	18
Malaga	15	5	3	7	23	25	18
Espanol	15	5	3	7	15	18	18
Las Palmas	15	5	3	7	17	32	18
Valladolid	15	3	8	4	14	17	17
Osasuna	15	2	7	6	14	21	13
Racing Santander	15	3	4	8	17	26	13
Numancia	15	3	4	8	14	24	13
Real Sociedad	15	3	3	9	15	32	12



Clinton Morrison (L), the Crystal Palace striker, scoring past Sunderland custodian Thomas Sorensen during their Worthington Cup (English League Cup) fifth round encounter at Selhurst Park on December 19. --AFP photo

## English League Cup

# Palace set up Liverpool date



LONDON, Dec 20: A superb late strike from Clinton Morrison dumped Sunderland out of the English League Cup to earn Crystal Palace a semi-final meeting with Liverpool here Tuesday, reports AFP.

In Tuesday's other quarter-final, Ipswich kept up their dream season with a 2-1 win away at Manchester City to set up a semi-final against First Division Birmingham City.

At Selhurst Park, Morrison fired Palace into the last four nine minutes from time after a

blunder by Sunderland goalkeeper Thomas Sorensen had gifted his team the lead in the 48th minute with a Mikael Forsell strike.

Peter Reid's Premiership side bounced back immediately however when Alex Rae equalised with a simple finish less than a minute later.

But Morrison's late intervention finally settled a full-blooded cup encounter. The 21-year-old captain Michael Gray on the right-hand edge of the area and his piercing angled shot flew past Sorensen's dive and in off the far post.

Sorensen kept the tie alive with a sprawling stop from Forsell five minutes from time but it was not enough to make up for his earlier error as Palace marched on.

At Maine Road, Mark Venus was the Ipswich hero, hitting a dramatic winner deep into extra time to steer his team to victory over Joe Royle's side.

Matt Holland pulled Ipswich

## Serie A stars to protest fan violence

MILAN, Dec 20: Italian footballers will stage a silent 15-minute protest this weekend after a firebomb attack on a coach carrying the Inter Milan team. Italy's players union announced Tuesday, reports AFP.

Matches in Serie A scheduled for Friday and Saturday will kick off 15 minutes later than scheduled as Italian professionals close ranks in protest at last week's attack.

An unidentified assailant hurled the firebomb at the Inter Milan team bus as it left the San Siro Stadium after the Italian Cup quarter-final against Parma.

## Reyna US player of the year

LOS ANGELES, Dec 20: Glasgow Rangers' international midfielder Claudio Reyna has been named United States footballer of the year, reports AFP.