

Graham won't quit

LONDON, Jan 1 (Reuters/Internet): George Graham has been reported as saying he would not quit Tottenham Hotspur despite watching his team's worst performance of the season at Ipswich Town on Saturday.

The Spurs manager rejected speculation that he was negotiating a pay-off with the club's new owners ENIC.

I don't know what plans the new owners have for the club, he was quoted as saying by the Sunday Mirror.

I have not spoken to them yet.

But I know one thing, I want to stay the manager, and I want to be a successful one.

I've never been someone who gives up on a job halfway through. People can link whatever they want with my job but as far as I am concerned I am still Spurs manager and nothing is going to change.

Graham was angry with his players after the 3-0 defeat at Ipswich, a result that left Spurs with the worst away record in the English premier league - nine defeats in 11 games.

I can only apologise to the fans who travelled to watch us, he said.

Former Tottenham hero Glenn Hoddle, currently in charge at Southampton, has been linked with a return to White Hart Lane by the media.

Ex-Chelsea manager Gianluca Vialli has also entered the running, according to the Sunday Mirror.

Saint Etienne deny Toshack's leaving

PARIS, Jan 1: Saint Etienne on Saturday dismissed rumours that their Welsh coach John Toshack might be headed back to former club Real Sociedad, where he was twice previously in charge, reports AFP.

Toshack, under contract until the end of the season, has been trying to revive Saint Etienne's fortunes since his October arrival but they remain in the bottom six and face a long struggle against the drop.

L'Equipe cited Spanish media sources on Saturday as saying that former Real Madrid coach Toshack, who made his name as a player in the 1970s with Liverpool, would be ready to move back to San Sebastian-based Real Sociedad as he has remained a home in the Basque city.

But L'Equipe said the Welshman would not leave before his contract expires without the agreement of Alain Bompard, the Saint Etienne president.

And deputy president Gerard Soler said that would not be forthcoming.

"He (Toshack) is with us until the end of the season and we will have to meet up next Tuesday to run the rule over the squad," said Soler.

Should Toshack quit "Les Verts" Saint Etienne could turn to Joel Muller, who was fired last week by Metz.

Saint Etienne are, meanwhile, having to re-jig their squad as Spartak Moscow have announced the signing of their Ukrainian keeper Maxim Levitsky, although Soler said the deal had not gone through officially.

Brazilian Alex is still unsettled amid the unfolding passport scandal in French football which saw him temporarily become Portuguese, while midfielder Alain Masudi is set for a move to Lokomotiv Moscow.

Drulovic has jaw operation

LISBON, Jan 1: Porto's Yugoslav international Ljubinko Drulovic had an operation on Sunday after breaking his jaw and two teeth the day before in a Portuguese Cup match, club doctor Nelson Puga said, reports AFP.

Midfielder Drulovic had clashed with defender Nuno Abreu of Second Division side Feijerias in the last 32 of the competition.

According to Puga, plastic surgeons fixed his jaw together and he will only be able to have liquid food for a month, though he is expected to undertake light training after just seven days.

Kashima complete treble

TOKYO, Jan 1: J-League champions Kashima Antlers stunned Shimizu S-Pulse with a golden goal to win the Emperor's Cup Monday 3-2 in Tokyo to win an unprecedented Japanese football treble, reports AFP.

Kashima, who also won the J-League Nabisco Cup, opened the scoring in the 42nd minute when Mitsuo Ogasawara scored from a free kick, but Shimizu equalised just before half-time through Argentine midfielder Fernando Nicolas Oliva.

Takayuki Suzuki scored Kashima's second goal in the 49th minute but Teruyoshi Ito equalised in the 81st minute.

The match ended in extra time when Ogasawara rifled in a 25-metre right-footed volley to secure the win for the Antlers.

Premiership preview

Season's wonders face off



LONDON, Jan 1: The surprise packages of the current English Premiership season Ipswich Town will be hoping to consolidate their third place position on Monday when they play their nearest rivals Sunderland, reports AFP.

Ipswich, who have gained the nickname of the Tractor Boys during the current season as they hail from one of the most fertile farming areas in England, travel to Sunderland - known as the Black Cats - on the back of a comprehensive 3-0 win over struggling Spurs on Saturday.

Sunderland, though, can look forward to the match on the back of a fine 2-2 draw at second-placed Arsenal on Saturday in which they came from 2-0 down to gain a point.

While those two take top billing runaway leaders Manchester United, who were fortunate to get a point at Newcastle on Saturday, host West Ham, who will be hoping to avoid anything nearing the 7-1 thrashing they endured at Old Trafford last season.

Arsenal, who against Sun-

derland looked a different side to the one that thrashed Leicester 6-1 last Tuesday, could travel to London rivals Charlton Athletic, fresh from a morale-boosting 4-1 away win over struggling Manchester City without leading scorer and French footballer of the year Thierry Henry.

The forward suffered an ankle injury against Sunderland.

Ipswich, who finally made it into the Premiership after failing in the play-offs for the past two years, will be looking to their strikeforce of Marcus Stewart and recent signing from Middlesbrough Alan Armstrong to see off Sunderland.

The 28-year-old Stewart, who was coveted by Premiership clubs when he was at Bristol Rovers, but who instead moved to Huddersfield for two seasons, notched his 10th goal of the season against Spurs while 25-year-old Armstrong, whose time at Boro was marred by injury, scored his third goal for them against Spurs.

Ominous for Ipswich is the

return to form of England

striker Kevin Phillips, who has

scored four times in the last

two matches to take his total to

11, though his effective strike

partner Republic of Ireland

international Niall Quinn could

be missing with a rib injury.

Manchester United coach Sir

Alex Ferguson looks set to give

England international mid-

fielder Paul Scholes a place in

the starting line-up against the

Hammer after being used only

as a substitute at the weekend

because of a slight rib injury.

West Ham, who had their

match with Chelsea cancelled

on Saturday because of the icy

conditions, will travel to United

with star winger Trevor Sinclair

imploring his teammates to play

more like the side that drew 2-2

with United at Upton Park in

August than the one humiliated

on April Fools Day last season.

"You've got to go into not show

them too much respect," he said.

"Psychologically it is a

daunting place to go to, everyone

knows that. Maybe that is part and parcel of what goes on there."

But if you don't look forward

to playing the best team at the best stadium you shouldn't even be in the game.

"They had an off day against

Liverpool a couple of weeks ago,

which was their first in two years.

Let's hope they have another

against us," he added.

Liverpool look to regain the

momentum they had picked up

with successive wins over Man-

chester

United

and

Arsenal

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a 1-0

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