

Brazilian finalists to replay

RIO DE JANEIRO, Jan 9: Brazilian league finalists Sao Caetano and Vasco da Gama must play a third match on January 18 to determine who takes the title after the return leg was abandoned when a fence collapsed, injuring some 160 people, reports AFP.



Brazilian soccer star Edmundo waves to Napoli fans at the San Paolo's Stadium on January 8. —Internet photo

'Animal' gets Diego-like welcome

ROME, Jan 9 (Reuters/Internet) - Brazilian striker Edmundo added nine and seven, subtracted 10 and came up with an answer of 97 on Monday when he became the first player since Diego Maradona to receive a "stadium welcome" at Serie A side Napoli.

He is still vividly remembered in Florence, scene of his previous incarnation as a Serie A player in 1997-99. When Edmundo joined Fiorentina the Italian club's president Vittorio Cecchi Gori described him as "a player of crystalline class and a lion-like temper".

Edmundo's return to Italy is the latest twist in a troubled career littered with fights, red cards and a car crash which led to manslaughter charges and a brief prison sentence. He is still vividly remembered in Florence, scene of his previous incarnation as a Serie A player in 1997-99.

Brazilian league finalists

The decision has to be ratified Tuesday by the Superior Tribunal of Sporting Justice. "We could not punish either team because we had no proof," explained Koff.

Observers said that the 35,000-capacity stadium was too small for a match of such significance and that too many spectators had been allowed entry.

The clubs had drawn 1-1 in the first leg at Sao Caetano's Palestra Italia stadium in Sao Paulo and had the 0-0 second leg result stood. Vasco da Gama would have won on away goals.

Afer the match was abandoned, television footage showed Miranda demanding police clear the pitch so the winners' trophy could be awarded to his team.

Miranda had reportedly said: "The governor is an incompetent idiot. I consider we are the champions."

Garotinho even said last Wednesday he would be suing Miranda for his comments.

Dundee after Maradona

GLASGOW, Jan 9: Dundee are hoping to reunite Argentinian legend Diego Maradona with former international teammate Claudio Caniggia at Dens Park, reports AFP.

The ambitious Tayside outfit are still in talks to bring the former World Cup star to Dundee for a one-off spectacular against his former club Napoli.

Maradona was recently voted the world's greatest player with Brazilian Pele and the Dundee supporters are hoping to get the chance of a lifetime.

Dundee chiefs have stepped up their attempts after Caniggia promised to bring his close friend to the club when he arrived in October.

Blazevic taking over Iran

TEHRAN, Jan 9: Former Croatian national coach Miroslav Blazevic will arrive in Tehran this week to take over under-achievers Iran, whose elimination from last year's Asian Cup led skipper Jalal Talebi to resign, reports AFP.

Blazevic arrives Thursday for final talks with Iranian football officials before the official announcement of his contract to guide the national side through the run-up to the 2002 World Cup, state news agency IRNA said.

The contract will be extended if steers Iran to qualification for the finals in Japan and South Korea, IRNA said.

Blazevic led giant-killers Croatia to a surprise third-place finish in the 1998 World Cup in France, but stepped down last October after saying he could no longer "endure the constant media pressure and stress".

Zoff the replacement Ericksson leaves Lazio

LONDON, Jan 9: The English Football Association (FA) on Tuesday confirmed Sven Goran Eriksson will definitely be in charge of the national team for next month's friendly against Spain, the Press Association reported, reports AFP.

That deal - Eriksson becomes the first foreigner to coach England - originally promised a deal with the English Football Association (FA).

He has also won many other trophies with Lazio and during earlier Serie A assignments with AS Roma, Fiorentina and Sampdoria as well as three Portuguese titles with Benfica.



SVEN GORAN ERIKSSON

But Lazio's indifferent form in both Serie A and the Champions League has caused tension with the supporters although until now both club and coach had been adamant the contract would be honoured.

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Although retiring shirts is common practice in American sport, it is almost without precedent in Italian soccer. Edmundo, whose arrival in Naples has inevitably drawn comparisons with fellow Latin American bad boy Maradona.

While Zoff's replacement is still in doubt, Zoff has been told he will stay in charge of the national team for next month's friendly against Spain, the Press Association reported, reports AFP.

The Swede confirmed his resignation as Lazio coach on Tuesday, with FA spokesman Paul Newman admitting talks would start aimed at Eriksson taking over as soon as possible.

Reports from Rome say Eriksson resigned his position with the Italian champions, clearing the way for him to become coach of the England national team six months ahead of his scheduled start date in July.

And the Roman side lost no time in finding a replacement, appointing club vice-president Dino Zoff as the new coach.

Zoff was the logical appointment as coach and was being touted as the leading candidate to succeed the Scandinavian even if he had seen out his contract.

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However, Sunday's 2-1 home defeat by strugglers Napoli seems to have been the last straw and although club president Sergio Cragnotti said Monday that Eriksson would stay with the club the Swede was significantly silent after meeting his boss.

Since Keegan's resignation Howard Wilkinson and then a combined team of Peter Taylor and Steve McClaren have handled the England team while Eriksson has remained in Rome.

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Zoff resigned shortly after that setback. Eriksson, meanwhile, revealed he had made the decision on Tuesday morning while travelling to Lazio's Formello training camp.

I took the decision this morning in the car on the way to Formello, said the 52-year-old in a press conference. "The first people to know were the players."

Bertolotti to hang up boots

MODENA, Italy, Jan 9: Francesco Bertolotti, the Italian footballer who fell into coma after being attacked by an opponent after a match, is expected to announce his retirement at a press conference on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Bertolotti, 33, is still being treated for injuries sustained after the assault by Como captain Massimiliano Ferrigno after the Third Division match between the clubs in November, won 1-0 by Como.

Bertolotti was admitted to hospital in a coma that night and underwent emergency surgery but has made a good recovery since.

Panucci on-loan to Monaco

MONACO, France, Jan 9: Italian defender Christian Panucci on Monday confirmed he would be loaned to Monaco from parent club Inter Milan for six months, reports AFP.

Panucci, who was due to have his first training session at the principality club on Monday afternoon, had been loaned to English Premiership side Chelsea at the beginning of the season.

The 27-year-old Italian international told a press conference: "I'm delighted to be at Monaco." French league champions Monaco also have an option to sign Panucci on a five-year contract.

German channels secure WC 2002 rights

MUNICH, Germany, Jan 9: The German public television channels ARD and ZDF have agreed to buy some of the broadcasting rights for the football 2002 World Cup from media giant Kirch, Kirch said on Monday.

The financial details were not disclosed, but ARD and ZDF would finance part of the deal by giving Kirch the pay-TV rights for the 2002 winter Olympics and the 2008 summer Olympics, Kirch said in a statement.

ARD and ZDF would retain the free-TV rights for the 2002 and 2008 Olympics.

Under the terms of the deal covering the rights for the 2002 World Cup, ARD and ZDF would receive the rights for 24 of the 64 matches, to be held in Japan and South Korea.

Included in the package were the rights for the opening game, the semi-finals and the final and any match in which the German national team played.

ARD and ZDF would also be given priority status when negotiating for the broadcasting rights for the 2006 World Cup, Kirch added.

ARD and ZDF are our dream partners for live reporting in free TV," said Dieter Hahn, head of Kirch Holding.

On Friday, a newspaper report had said that ARD and ZDF would pay a record 225 million marks (115 million euros, 109 million dollars) for the World Cup 2002 rights.

Malesani fired by Parma

PARMA, Italy, Jan 9: Parma have sacked their coach Alberto Malesani, the Italian First Division club announced Monday, reports AFP.

Malesani, who in November survived a serious car crash, paid the price for a disappointing campaign so far for a team touted to be among the challengers for the championship at the start of the season.

Ten Goran pointers

LONDON, Jan 9 (AFP): Ten things you didn't know about Sweden's Sven Goran Eriksson.

- 1. He is currently writing a book about the psychology of football management.
2. He already owns five properties including a flat in Rome's Piazza del Popolo and an exclusive beach resort in Portugal.
3. He is a very keen tennis player and those who have played him, including former Italian manager Dino Zoff, testify to how much he hates losing.
4. His first marriage, to Suede Ann-Kristin, ended in the 1992. He has two children from the marriage - son Johan, 20, and daughter Lina, 14.
5. His long-term girlfriend is high society lawyer Nancy Dal'Olio.
6. Dad Sven and mother Ulla still live in his home town Torsby in Sweden.
7. He has a great liking for wine and Tibetan poetry.
8. His preferred system is 4-4-2 but he is not a slave to one strategy and has also deployed 4-5-1 and, occasionally, 3-5-2.
9. Eriksson's assistant Tord Grip is known in Sweden as 'one half of Sven-Goran's brain'.
10. Lazio fans greeted him at home games with a chorus of his name to the tune of Brown Girl In The Ring by Boney M.



Italian Pierluigi Collina (L) receives the trophy for the Best Referee of 2000 from legendary German Franz Beckenbauer in Rotenberg on January 9. International Football Federation of History and Statistics (IFFHS) hosted the function. —AFP photo

Berlin honours 2000's best

BERLIN, Jan 9: Rivaldo edged fellow Brazilian Romario for the title of the world's top international scorer in 2000, the IFFHS soccer statistics group said on Monday, reports Reuters.

Its annual awards in Germany also named Carlos Bianchi of Boca Juniors as club coach of the year and a third Brazilian striker, Mario Jardel, as domestic club top scorer for his last season with FC Porto.

Rivaldo and Romario both scored 21 goals in representative matches and international club competitions combined. But the Barcelona player pipped the Vasco da Gama veteran, under the group's rules, for world top scorer, by virtue of having scored one more goal for Brazil.

Iran and Hertha Berlin striker Ali Daei was third with 20. Jardel's 38 goals for Porto in the 1999-2000 season before his move to Galatasaray secured him the top spot in top-flight domestic club games, one ahead of fellow Brazilian Eduardo Esidio's 37 for champions Universitario in the Peruvian league.

Esidio's achievement was all the more remarkable as he was tested positive for HIV two years ago. Hamzah Idris scored 33 goals for Al-Ittihad Jeddah in the Saudi League to finish third in the ranking.

A poll of soccer experts voted Boca's Bianchi club trainer of the year, with Hector Cuiper of Valencia second and Vicente del Bosque of Real Madrid third, beating last year's winner Alex Ferguson of Manchester United into fourth place.

Real were top club of 2000 in the IFFHS ranking, ahead of Istanbul's Galatasaray and Boca Juniors from Buenos Aires.

France's Roger Lemerre was voted top national coach of the year, beating into second Humberto Coelho, who took Portugal to narrow defeat by eventual champions France in the European championship semifinals before heading abroad to train Morocco. Argentina's Marcelo Bielsa was third.

Fabien Barthet of Manchester United and France was voted goalkeeper of the year, ahead of Oliver Kahn of Bayern Munich and Germany and third-placed Francesco Toldo of Fiorentina and Italy.

Referee of the year was the ever-recognisable bald Italian Pierluigi Collina, followed by Swede Andreas Frisk and Markus Merk of Germany.

Hossam a national pride

CAIRO, Jan 9 (AFP): In the sand-speckled back streets of Cairo the mere mention of his name triggers excitement as old men sip rich coffee at pavement cafes.

Egyptian Hossam Hassan is a living legend who today becomes the most capped footballer in the world when he plays in a friendly against Zambia at the International Stadium here.

It will be his 151st appearance for the four-time African champions, one more than another legend, former Germany and Bayern Munich midfielder Lothar Matthaeus.

Hassan has come a long way since winning his first cap in Norway during 1985 and seems set to leave Matthaeus far behind as Egypt have another five matches this month.

Libya visit the Egyptian capital this weekend for an African Nations Cup qualifier before the Pharaohs fly to Tehran for friendlies against Iran and China.

Another friendly in Cairo, against North Korea, has been lined up before Egypt face Morocco on January 28 in a World Cup qualifier that could decide which country goes to the 2002

injury and have a lot to offer. Besides, good strikers do not grow on trees. Brazil would have won the 1998 World Cup had they chosen Romario," Hassan says.

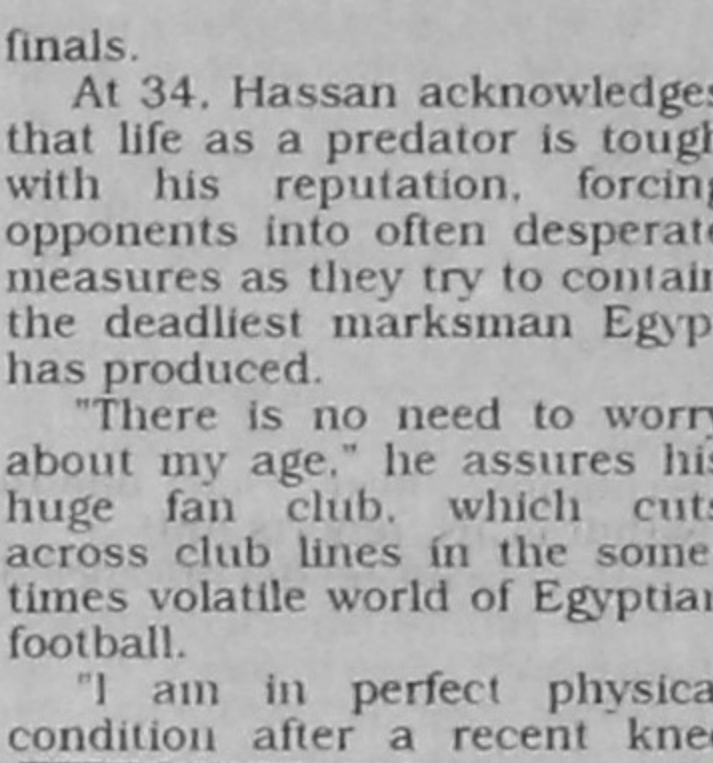
Hossam and twin brother Ibrahim, a defender with a fearsome tackle, joined Cairo giants Al-Ahly at 13 and, apart from short spells with clubs in Greece, Switzerland and the United Arab Emirates, looked set to stay until retirement.

But the Hassans felt unwanted at the end of last season and moved to bitter rivals Zamalek in a transfer deal that replaced politics on the front page of national newspapers.

While reluctantly accepting he is in the twilight of an illustrious career, fun-loving Hossam has set no date for his retirement from international or club football.

"I have not thought of it. When I am bored with football and can no longer give my best, that is the time to call it a day," says the Gianluca Vialli look-alike.

Meanwhile, there are caps to be won and goals to be scored as he needs another seven at international level to equal the record of Hungarian Ferenc Puskas, the Gillingham Major who wreaked havoc almost 50 years ago.



HOSSAM HASSAN

Argentina bribed Peru in WC 1978?

LIMA, Jan 9: Argentina's military junta effectively bribed Peruvian authorities in order to win through to the 1978 World Cup final, alleges an article by an

English writer published Monday in a Peruvian daily, reports AFP.

David Yallop's article in El Comercio daily maintains that Argentina put together a 50-million-dollar package to persuade the Peruvians to allow tournament hosts Argentina to win the match by a four-goal margin to edge out rivals Brazil and claim a place in the final.

In the event, Argentina won 6-0 and went on to beat Holland in the final to win the competition for the first time.

Yallop, whose recent book How they Stole the Game led to legal action by FIFA as well as a ban on publication in Switzerland amid allegations of corruption in the world game, wrote a whole chapter on the match in question and his latest article unearths further details.

El Comercio described the Peruvians' loss as "a wound which to this day has not healed."

Monaco are also chasing down a loan deal for Romanian striker Florin Raducioiu of Steaua Bucharest, though Marseille are also monitoring developments.

Raducioiu, 30, has an Italian passport and has previously played for AC Milan and Brescia.

Another Romanian on the move is 26-year-old striker Sabina Ilie, who was Monday loaned to Germany's relegation-threatened Energie Cottbus from National Bucurest.

cials to broker the deal. And he added that much of the cash was shared among the Peruvian military junta.

Yallop said he had been told by three of the Peruvian squad, who asked to remain anonymous, that they had been offered 20,000 dollars in cash "to ensure the correct result."

The writer described that as "a pathetically small sum given what was at stake."

According to investigations by El Comercio, some of the Peruvians maintained that some of their opponents had taken doping products before the match in the central city of Rosario.

"How they Stole the Game" mentions that there were also doubts over the urine samples of the Argentine players amid allegations that the team's water carrier handed them over to medical officials.

Former Peru star Juan Carlos Oblitas remarked several years ago that "that night was very peculiar."

Peru's goalkeeper on the night Ramon Quiroga, ironically a naturalised Argentine, said Brazil had also tried to exert some pressure, allegedly offering land in Rio if they managed to produce a result which would put the Brazilians through instead.

Another Romanian on the move is 26-year-old striker Sabina Ilie, who was Monday loaned to Germany's relegation-threatened Energie Cottbus from National Bucurest. Ilie, who has won three Romanian caps, had been on loan to National from Spain's Valencia, where his brother Adrian Ilie plays. Cottbus have also taken on two Moroccan forwards - Hamid Termina and Mohamed Lakholm.

Conceicao out

MADRID, Jan 9: Real Madrid midfielder Flavio Conceicao is to have a groin operation and will be out for three months, reports AFP.

The 26-year-old Brazilian international, signed for 4.1 billion pesetas (24.5 million euros) from Deportivo La Coruna in the summer, has since been continually hampered by the injury.