

CBF rewards Sao Caetano

SAO PAULO, Jan 14: Brazilian Second Division side Sao Caetano, who are to replay their Copa Havelange final next week against Vasco da Gama, saw their exploits in the event rewarded Saturday with the news they have won a First Division place next season, reports AFP.

Ricardo Teixeira, president of the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF), said the federation had to recognise that Sao Caetano's efforts in getting to the final meant the modest side founded just 12 years ago deserved a place among the elite.

"How could we keep out of the top flight a side which will, by ending the season one of the top two clubs in Brazil, play next year's Libertadores Cup?" said Teixeira.

However, the Copa Havelange, which involved around 100 clubs, has attracted criticism because of its cumbersome format and is set to be slimmed down next season.

Sao Caetano, from Sao Paulo, will take on Vasco da Gama in a replay of their December 30 final second leg which was abandoned amid chaotic scenes when some 160 people were injured after a fence collapsed.

The first leg ended 1-1.

Ronaldinho, PSG every close to deal

SAINT-ETIENNE, France, Jan 14: Paris Saint Germain president Laurent Perpere said Saturday the deal which would bring Brazilian international forward Ronaldinho "Gaucho" to the French side is close to completion, reports AFP.

"Nothing's signed yet. We're close to completing the transfer. I would really like to get it over and done with," Perpere told AFP prior to the Saint Etienne-PSG match.

Perpere added: "In any case, his (Ronaldinho) arrival during the transfer window seems a bit unlikely to me."

On Friday Parisian radio station Sport OFM had announced that 20-year-old Ronaldinho had signed a five-year contract with the capital club.

Ronaldinho currently plays at Brazilian club Gremio and his arrival looks even more imminent following a Friday meeting between Gremio representatives and the player's agent, also his brother.

The French winter transfer window comes down at midnight on January 31.

French First Division Draw good enough for Nantes

NANTES, France, Jan 14: Nantes could only draw 1-1 at home to Auxerre on Saturday but it was enough to hold on to top spot in the French league championship, reports AFP.

Defeats for Lille and Sedan, second and third at the start of the weekend, helped the western French club open up a gap of three points at the top.

Lille, who lost 2-1 at Troyes, are second three points behind Bordeaux, who drew 1-1 at Guingamp, are in third spot, four points adrift of the leaders.

Defending champions Monaco, who look set to sign Franck Leboeuf from Premier-league club Chelsea, beat fourth-placed Sedan 1-0 to ease their relegation fears.

Meanwhile St Etienne, thrust into the limelight with the false passport scandal, had some cheer to win 1-0 at home to Paris Saint Germain in a midtable battle.

Nantes, the only of the top five clubs to play at home, left it late however, only equalizing late in the game through Romanian striker Viorel Moldovan after Auxerre had scored through Djibril Cisse.

Moldovan, who scored his 10th goal of the season, had only just been awarded the best player of the month award by a panel of football journalists.

In a setback for Nantes however left back Sylvain Armand twisted his knee and attacking midfielder Frederic Da Rocha also got injured during the match.

Lille, who earlier led 1-0 conceded two quick goals to lose at Troyes. Sedan tried their best to come back from a goal by Monaco's Shabani Nonda but just could not get back into the game.

Lyon and Bordeaux drew 0-0 at Lens and 1-1 at Guingamp respectively.

Lens coach Roland Courbis, who saw his 10th place team move further from European qualification, even accused the Lyon president of putting pressure on the referee.

PSG continued their poor patch with their defeat by St Etienne in a high-risk match where Christophe Sanchez scored the winner in the 50th minute after a dubious penalty decision.

Marseille, another big club in difficulty, stopped Toulouse earning its first win away from home with a superb equalizing goal from Djamel Belmadi for a 1-1 draw.

The result meant second-from-bottom Toulouse move three points clear of bottom club Strasbourg, beaten 3-1 at Bastia. Metz, in the third relegation position, shared the points in a 2-2 draw at home to Rennes.



Marcel Dessaily (R), the Chelsea defender, feeling the presence of Arsenal's compatriot Sylvain Wittord during their Premiership tussle at Highbury on January 13. --AFP photo

Premiership

MU party on Walsh blunder



LONDON, Jan 14: Veteran striker Teddy Sheringham moved Manchester United closer to yet another English Premiership title by breaking the deadlock in a 3-0 win at basement side Bradford City on Saturday, reports AFP.

Sheringham struck his 17th goal of the season on 72 minutes after a dreadful error by home keeper and former Manchester United stopper Gary Walsh.

Ryan Giggs stuck the knife in with the second three minutes later to leave United ultimately comfortable winners at Valley Parade.

Luke Chadwick made it three at the death.

Aftwards United boss Sir Alex Ferguson admitted: "It was a good result for us, especially as we didn't look as if we would win."

Bradford boss Jim Jefferies, whose team remain bottom of the table, tried to take heart from what has been a good team effort for three-quarters of the match.

"The team, until the goal went in, was excellent. My only criticism would be that after that unfortunate goal we felt sorry for ourselves... we could have got something out of the game."

Reigning champions United had further good news from Highbury, where Arsenal dropped two home points in a 1-1 draw with Chelsea, leaving Ferguson's team 13 points ahead of the north Londoners.

Robert Pires gave Arsenal the perfect start when he netted after just three minutes but John Terry nipped a second-half equaliser for the Blues.

Mind games, master Arsene Wenger did his best to wind up Arsenal's arch rivals Tottenham by describing this match as the "real" London derby.

"In the last few years we have been fighting with Chelsea for the title and Champions League positions and this was no different."

New England coach Sven Goran Eriksson was greeted with loud cheers as the Swede took in his first taste of Premiership action since his appointment, attending the Upton Park meeting between West Ham United and Sunderland.

And it was the northeasterners who stole the show in a 2-0 smash and grab win as Stanislav Varga and Don Hutchison netted to move Sunderland second in the table 11 points behind United.

United have 53 points from 23 matches with Sunderland on 42 and Arsenal on 40.

Liverpool bounced back in style after their league cup defeat at Crystal Palace, despite leaving strikers Robbie Fowler and off-form Michael Owen on the bench as they trounced Aston Villa 3-0 at Villa Park with former Barcelona man Jari Litmanen running the show.

Danny Murphy punished a mistake by Turkish defender Alpay Ozalan to give the Merseysiders the lead after 24 minutes and Steven Gerrard blasted home the second as Villa's new Colombian signing Juan Pablo Angel watched agghast from the stands.

Murphy bagged the third after the break as Liverpool moved into fourth spot ahead of Ipswich, who host Leicester on Sunday.

Liverpool England international Rodney Marsh said Murphy and midfielder partner Steven Gerrard should be included in Eriksson's first England squad.

"We had prolonged periods in their half of the pitch," said Villa boss John Gregory. "David Ginola wasn't doing it first half (rolling his sleeves up) so that's why I took him off at half-time."

Villa need Angel soon and Gregory was optimistic that he would be on the Birmingham club's books sooner rather than later.

"He's just got to tidy up a few minor details, pass a medical and he should be on the training pitch in the next few days. We need him."

Newcastle, despite the absence of strikers Alan Shearer and Carl Cort, beat Coventry 3-1 at St James' Park with an early header from Gary Speed putting them in the driving seat.

Local youngster Shola Ameobi netted a close range

finish for his first Premiership goal and England midfielder Kieron Dyer added a late third before Stephen Glass deflected in a David Thompson effort as Coventry claimed a late consolation.

Leeds eased fears about dropping into the relegation zone, winning 4-0 at strugglers Manchester City with goals from Norwegian Erik Bakke, Lee Bowyer and Robbie Keane, twice in the final seconds.

Delighted visiting manager David O'Leary said: "Fair play to Robbie (Keane) for coming in and not being trained all week. At 20 he can only get better. The whole product we have here is so talented that when it does go wrong it won't be bad at all."

City manager Joe Royle ruefully reflected: "It's quite symptomatic of our season that the first goal we gave them came with no danger."

"In the second half their keeper, who I thought was the man of the match, makes great saves from Paulo Wanchopp and Danny Tiatto - then the deflection goes in to make it 2-0 and you know it's not your day then."

Meanwhile, Middlesbrough, unbeaten in six matches since the arrival of Terry Venables, hammered hapless Derby County 4-0.

Alan Boksic netted a first half penalty and Ugu Elohigi headed the second before another strike from Boksic and Hamilton Record's first league goal of the campaign completed the rout.

Evertton remain in trouble following a goalless home draw with Tottenham Hotspur which saw them overhauled by Middlesbrough.

There was further bad news for the Liverpool club when it was revealed that captain David Weir could be out for "a few weeks" after damaging a calf muscle.

Tottenham boss George Graham defended his side's defensive display, saying: "We are hit badly by injuries. With the players we had out there, I'm delighted with that result."

Elsewhere Charlton slid below Newcastle into eighth place after a goalless draw at Southampton.

Serie A

Fiorentina flatten Milan



ROME, Jan 14: Fiorentina crushed AC Milan 4-0 in the Italian league on Saturday night to move up two places and oust Juventus from second spot in the table, reports AFP.

The Turin side could however regain their position with a draw against Bologna in the Delle Alpi stadium on Sunday.

In-form Fiorentina earned their fourth victory in five matches, though they drew 3-3 at Juventus last Saturday.

Fiorentina outclassed Milan in all departments with their Portuguese contingent of Rui Costa and Nuno Gomes in particularly scintillating form.

Faith Terim's team opened the scoring through a header by striker Gomes from a Rui Costa freekick. Sandro Cots got the second just after the break with a great shot after good work by Moreno Torricelli.

Enrico Chiesa made it three for Fiorentina thanks to a great pass from, of course, midfielder maestro Rui Costa.

Rui Costa topped his superb performance by scoring the fourth goal himself with a great piece of skill with four minutes to go.

Brescia scored valuable points in their fight against relegation by beating Perugia 1-0 on Saturday.



RUI COSTA



NUNO GOMES

STANDINGS

MILAN, Jan 14 (AFP): Italian league table after matches played Saturday (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):

AS Roma	13	10	2	1	25	8	32
Fiorentina	14	6	6	2	29	19	24
Juventus	13	6	6	1	22	13	24
Atalanta	13	6	4	3	16	11	22
Lazio	13	6	3	4	20	14	21
Bologna	13	6	2	5	18	16	20
AC Milan	14	5	5	4	22	21	20
Udinese	13	6	1	6	22	18	19
Perugia	14	5	4	5	20	19	19
Parma	13	5	3	5	15	14	18
Inter Milan	13	4	5	4	15	16	17
Lecce	13	4	4	5	15	22	16
Vicenza	13	4	3	6	14	19	15
Napoli	13	3	5	5	18	21	14
Brescia	14	2	6	6	14	19	12
Verona	13	2	6	5	16	24	12
Reggina	13	3	1	9	10	25	10
Bari	13	2	2	9	10	22	8

Nobody loves Daum

BERLIN, Jan 14: German football chiefs on Saturday warned disgraced coach Christoph Daum that it was considering barring him from holding a position in German football should he consider coaching again.

Daum, who admitted Friday that he had taken cocaine, had said that he would wait until March before making a decision on his future but had not ruled out a post in the German Bundesliga or one day becoming German national coach.

However German Football Federation (DFB) control committee member Ralf Fluge told Der Spiegel magazine weekly that he would lodge a complaint against Daum should he consider coaching in Germany.

Leading DFB judicial committee member Horst Hilpert told Focus magazine that Daum had failed to live up to the role model required of a coach.

And he warned: "A large array of sanctions could be taken from a fine to the withdrawal of his licence."

Former Bayer Leverkusen coach Daum had been lined up to take control of the German national team in June but was ruled out of contention amid allegations of cocaine-fuelled orgies with prostitutes.

Daum initially denied the allegations but was caught out after analysis of a hair sample suggested he had taken cocaine. A second test proved inconclusive.

But on returning from the United States, Daum told a press conference here Friday: "I admit I have taken cocaine in the past."

"I took the drug in private. There's no question of me being an addict or being ill as a side-effect," the 47-year-old added.

However the fact that Daum took drugs in private did not clear him of wrongdoing, said Fluge. "You're a coach 24 hours a day," he added.

While German football league chief Werner Hackmann said that Daum would be better advised to seek opportunities abroad.

Fan killed in tee-shirt riot

LAGOS, Jan 14: Lagos police shot dead a soccer fan at a match between Nigeria and Zambia after a scramble to grab tee-shirts being handed out by the match sponsors, reports said Sunday, reports AFP.

The shooting of the man before the start of the African Nations Cup qualifier here Saturday led to a mini-riot, the newspaper Punch reported, showing pictures of the dead man.

One policeman was stabbed, a police vehicle damaged. Police used tear-gas and baton charges to bring the crowd under control.

The trouble delayed the start of the match by several minutes. When play got under way, Nigeria eventually won 1-0, despite a series of missed opportunities.

At the end of the match, fans invaded the pitch and mobbed the players, one of them attempting to steal the necklace of Nigerian skipper Sunday Olshe.

Zac under fire

MILAN, Jan 14: AC Milan vice-president Adriano Galliani said Saturday night he had put contract talks with coach Alberto Zaccheroni on hold after the 4-0 spanking at the hands of Fiorentina in the Italian First Division, reports AFP.

Goals from Nuno Gomes, Sandro Cors, Enrico Chiesa and Rui Costa ensured an emphatic scoring in but in truth Milan were lucky to escape an even more crushing defeat.

The talks between Zac and the San Siro giants were already reported to be stalling over a clause which says the contract - which would run until June, 2002 - would no longer be binding on the club if Milan fail to qualify for next year's Champions League.

And the fact that Fiorentina inflicted the latest wound on Milan is doubly brutal for Zaccheroni.

In the days leading up to the match in Florence it emerged that Fiorentina's Turkish coach, Fatih Terim, who himself is refusing to sign an option for next season with his present employers, is the first choice of the Milan boardroom to replace Zaccheroni should there be a parting of the ways.

"It hardly seems appropriate for me to talk about the contract after a performance like that," was the terse reaction of Galliani, who is in charge of the all-giants while club president Silvio Berlusconi concentrates on trying to become Italian Prime Minister in this year's elections. "We will wait for things to get better. We have received a brutal kick but we must go forward."

Zaccheroni himself was magnanimous in defeat. "We have no alibi for this defeat," said the man who two years ago unexpectedly led the Rossoneri to the Scudetto (title) in his first year after joining the club from Udinese.

Despite the rumours that Terim was set to replace him Zaccheroni was generous to his counterpart, saying: "He has stamped his imprint firmly on this team (Fiorentina) which plays just like (Terim's former team) Galatasaray did when we played them last year. When a coach does that he must be a good coach."

Primera Liga

HOLDERS put Real atop



MADRID, Jan 14: Real Madrid had the rare distinction of not playing a match on Saturday but nevertheless moved up a place to top the Spanish championship, reports AFP.

Madrid were second on goal difference behind Valencia at the start of the weekend, but Valencia's 2-0 loss at champions Deportivo La Coruna was enough to put the European Cup winners in front, also on goal difference.

Barcelona meanwhile saw star players Patrick Kluyvert, Josep Guardiola and Rivaldo get on the scoresheet in a 3-1 win at home to Real Valladolid leaving them in fourth place.

Deportivo and Valencia were locked at 0-0 with a couple of minutes left in the game but then Uruguayan Walter Pandiani and Dutchman Roy Makaay, making the most of a defensive mistake, both found the net for a dramatic win.

In truth, the match had hardly been a classic with both sides making mistakes throughout the game.

Valencia's task got harder in the second half when Romanian striker Adrian Ilie was sent off for a second yellow card for deliberate handball in the 65th minute.

At the Nou Camp stadium, Barcelona defender Abelardo had been sent off just before the break though Dutchman Kluyvert put Barcelona ahead in the 51st minute.

Four minutes later however the teams were level when Jose Luis Caminero made the most of confusion in Barcelona's penalty area to score for Valladolid.

Although outnumbered, Barcelona kept going forward and were rewarded when both Guardiola and Rivaldo, who scored his 101st Barcelona goal, found the net in injury time.



Simao (L) of Barcelona being checked by Alberto Marcos of Valladolid during their Primera Liga game at the Nou Camp on January 13. --AFP photo

STANDINGS

MADRID, Jan 14: Spanish league table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Real Madrid	16	11	2	3	37	19	35
Valencia	18	10	5	3	29	12	35
Deportivo La Coruna	18	10	4	4	31	17	34
Barcelona	18	10	3	5	38	27	33
Real Mallorca	17	7	6	4	23	21	27
Rayo Vallecano	17	6	7	4	35	27	25
Alaves	17	7	3	7	26	21	24
Malaga	17	7	3	7	28	26	24
Las Palmas	17	7	3	7	21	34	24
Villarreal	17	6	5	6	20	20	23
Real Oviedo	17	7	2	8	22	28	23
Espanol	17	6	3	8	19	21	21
Real Valladolid	18	4	9	5	20	23	21
Real Zaragoza	16	4	8	4	19	17	20
Athletic Bilbao	17	5	5	7	22	24	20
Celta Vigo	17	5	4	8	21	27	19
Osasuna	17	3	7	7	17	24	16
Numanzia	17	4	4	9	18	28	16
Santander	17	3	5	9	19	29	14
Real Sociedad	17	3	4	10	16	36	13

Beckham not bargaining



LONDON, Jan 14 (Reuters): David Beckham has denied he is holding his club Manchester United to ransom with excessive wage demands.

Newspaper reports over the past weeks have suggested the 25-year-old midfielder wants to quadruple his salary to 100,000 pounds a week.

But in a report in Sunday's News of the World Beckham said he had not even started negotiating with the premier league champions.

"The truth is that no discussions have taken place between me or my representatives and Manchester United," he said.

"Suggestions that I have turned down certain offers and am making bigger demands are not just true. As I have repeatedly said I want to stay at Manchester United for as long as they want me to stay. But for the moment the biggest priority



DAVID BECKHAM

is playing football."

Beckham, who led England for the first time in their last match against Italy in November, said he wanted to enjoy further success with United and hoped to remain as national captain under new coach Sven

Goran Eriksson.

"All this speculation about talks breaking down and deals having been rejected is just nonsense. We have not even sat around a table and discussed anything."

"I also believe -- and I think Manchester United do, too -- that the best time to talk about a new contract is in the summer. I want to reassure all Manchester United fans that I have not fallen out with the club nor will I be greedy."

Other British tabloids quoted United chief executive Peter Kenyon as saying the club would not tolerate wage anarchy.

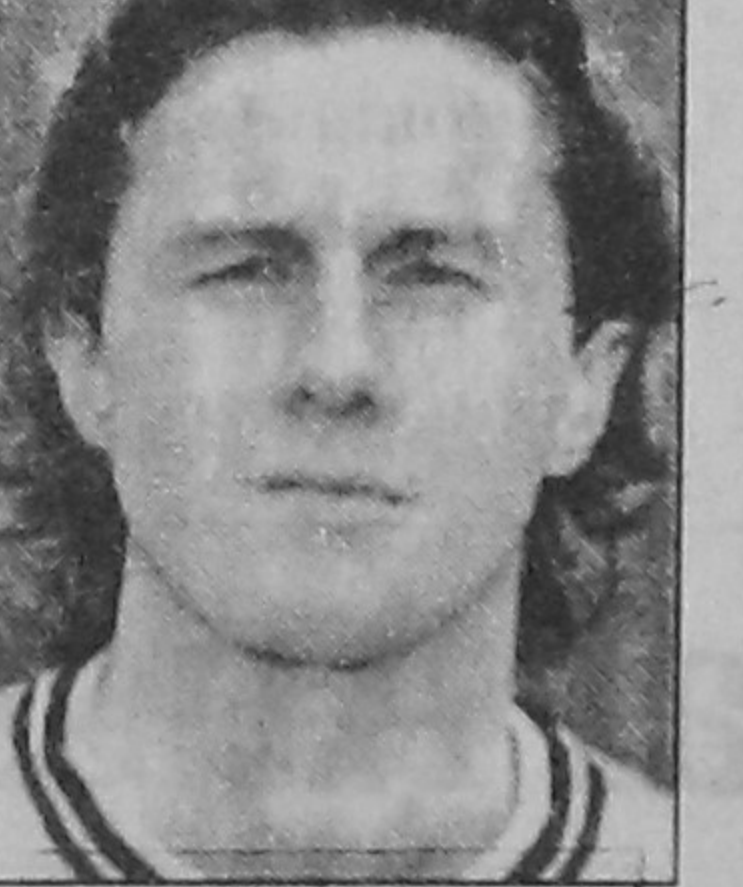
"We are not going to shy away from imposing a limit on salaries," Kenyon was reported as saying in the Sunday People. "The minute there are no limits then there are no rules either."

"That's when you have anarchy and that isn't going to happen here. It can't. We won't let it."

Macca's message to Fowler



LONDON, Jan 14: Unsettled Liverpool striker Robbie Fowler will have to fight for his place to save his Anfield career, former teammate Steve McManaman has



STEVE McMANAMAN

urged, reports AFP.

Fowler's position as a first-choice forward at Liverpool is under threat after his involvement in a late-night scuffle outside a bar and the recent signing of Finnish international

Leboeuf moving to Monaco

MONACO, Jan 14: Chelsea's Franck Leboeuf of France is set to sign for French First Division club Monaco, a source close to the club said on Saturday, reports AFP.

The 32-year-old central defender is expected in Monaco on Monday to finalize the deal.

Monaco president Jean-Louis Campora has already brought on board Italian full-back Christian Panucci in an attempt to shore up one of the worst defences in the championship.

Jari Litmanen.

Fowler was left out of Liverpool's two cup outings in the past week, and McManaman believes it is time for his old pal to get his head down and prove the doubters wrong.

"My advice to Robbie is sit tight, work hard, get your form back and show you're not a quitter - not in a defiant 'I'm going to cause problems' way."

"If Liverpool want to sell him let them say that."

McManaman was out in the cold at Real at the start of the season but has fought his way back into the side and urged Fowler to follow his example.

"I see his situation now as similar to mine earlier this season at Real Madrid.