

Chilavert can't afford to be a sub

PARIS, Jan 15: Strasbourg chiefs are rubbing their hands in despair as the latest twist in the Jose-Luis Chilavert saga continued after their flamboyant 'keeper refused to be a substitute on Saturday.

The Paraguayan international 'keeper, who joined the basement French First Division side in November from Argentinian side Velez Sarsfield, was named by coach Yvon Pouliquen as substitute for Strasbourg's league match away to Corsican side Bastia.

However, fearful of photos of him on the subs bench appearing in the South American Press, Chilavert refused.

The proud Paraguayan, who was voted the top goalkeeper at the 1998 World Cup in France, has however brought more than top level experience to Alsace.

In six matches Chilavert conceded nine goals, and things just got worse when he appeared to be overweight after club officials initially thought he was in good shape prior to his arrival.

His Friday refusal, which he explained as "a question of honour", was backed by his agent who explained: "He (Chilavert) doesn't want photos of himself on the subs bench appearing in South America, where he is star."

"Chilavert as a sub in the worst team in the French league - can you imagine the impact that would have on his image over there?", asked his agent Omar Da Fonseca.

Chilavert, who is known for his flamboyant ability to score from freekicks, arrived on November 1 on a \$6 million-dollar transfer. The 35-year-old 'keeper, who has since managed to return to full fitness, has scored 60 career goals from freekicks alone.

Although declaring that he is "happy" at Strasbourg, talk of a transfer may not be too long in coming.

Lebouf fancies his chances more at Monaco

LONDON, Jan 15: Chelsea defender Frank Leboeuf insisted Monday he has a better chance of winning trophies at reigning French champions Monaco, who have made enquiries about the former Strasbourg star, reports AFP.

There are times when you have to make a choice and Monaco can bring me more trophies," Leboeuf told the Sun. The French World Cup winner, who was substituted at half-time in Saturday's 1-1 draw at Arsenal, has been linked with a move back to his homeland for several weeks although the Stamford Bridge club have not yet received a bid.

But Chelsea have confirmed that an official approach has been made for the 32-year-old central defender and are believed to want 3 million pounds (4.5 million dollars) - 1 million pounds (1.5 million dollars) more than Monaco value him at.

"We have had an approach from Monaco but I haven't heard from them since last week," said Chelsea's Managing Director Colin Hutchinson.

Hutchinson also dismissed claims by Leboeuf that the Frenchman is already on his way to the principality despite French press reports.

"It's news to me that Frank is expecting to be there very soon," he said.

"There is no deal unless they can come up with an offer that is acceptable."

Respected French sports daily L'Equipe said Monday that Leboeuf had already spoken to Monaco coach Claude Puel and had asked where exactly he would fit into Puel's side.

Leboeuf is reported to have said: "I'm satisfied with my stay in England. I've won titles during my stay here but now it's time to do something else and attempt to win some titles with Monaco."

Facelift for Parc des Princes

PARIS, Jan 15: Paris' Parc des Princes stadium will undergo further renovation work this year to bring the 1972 structure up to date and create restaurants for supporters and more space for VIPs, its management company said on Monday, reports AFP.

Work began in September at the 48,000-capacity home of the Paris Saint Germain football club on constructing a building to house VIP guests and to create new spectator seating for sponsors' guests.

Members of the supporters club will be able to use a new restaurant.

The dull-looking concrete stadium facade, built in 1972, is being treated with a product to remove stains caused by weathering and pollution.

"We hope to have a renovated stadium by 2002," said Lionel Dreksler, president of SESE, the company contracted to carry out the work.

Since the construction of the Stade de France in Paris for the 1998 World Cup Final, the Parc des Princes no longer hosts Six Nations rugby matches or football internationals.



A combo of AFP photos showing Real Madrid superstar Luis Figo (R) with the European footballer-of-the-year trophy which was presented to him prior to Real's Primera Liga fixture against Oviedo at Madrid's Santiago Barnebeu stadium and (L), Savio (C), Real's Brazilian playmaker, trying his tricks against Oviedo's Danjou in the same game.

Primera Liga

Figo fashions Real romp

PARIS, Jan 15: Luis Figo was crowned Europe's footballer of the year on Sunday and inspired Real Madrid to a majestic 4-0 win against Oviedo to put his team clear at the top of the Spanish league, reports AFP.

The Portuguese star's performance - and a spectacular volleyed goal from Real's England international Steve McManaman - will have shot fear into the hearts of the pretenders to their European title.

Hector Cuper's Valencia side lost 2-0 to Deportivo La Coruna on Saturday to give Real the

chance to go three points clear at the top of the table with their eighth consecutive league victory.

After being presented with the Balloon d'Or award on the turf at the Bernabeu stadium, the world's most expensive player scored the first goal when he was left completely unmarked to convert a cross from Fernando Morientes.

Watched by football greats Eusebio and Bobby Charlton, Morientes scored the second before Raul slotted a pass through for Pedro Munitis to stroke the ball under Oviedo

goalkeeper Andres Esteban for the third.

The match was capped by McManaman's acrobatic volley, sweetly converted from a long pass from Roberto Carlos.

The strike confirmed how the English international has fought himself back into favour at the club which wanted to sell him last year.

The European Champions League resumes next month after its winter break and judging by their current form, Real will be relishing their match against Lazio on February 12.

Premiership

Ipswich's impressive outing

LONDON, Jan 15: England boss Sven-Goran Eriksson saw Ipswich marksman Marcus Stewart net his 14th league goal of the season as the Premiership new boys moved above Liverpool into fourth place with a 2-0 win over Leicester at Portman Road on Sunday, reports AFP.

Stewart struck 10 minutes from time and James Scowcroft's diving header from a Fabian Wilnis cross made it 2-0 in the final minute.

The team from rural East Anglia and so nicknamed the 'Tractor Boys' have now secured 40 points and this win prompted their fans to chant 'we're staying up', a reference to the fact that their newly-promoted heroes had been favourites to go straight back down again to the First Division.

This result was no more than George Burley's team deserved after persistent second-half pressure and they could have added a third three minutes from time but Jermaine Wright's shot was well saved by Leicester keeper Simon Royce.

Ipswich's young stars - teenage centre-back Titus Bramble, left-sided utility player Jamie Clapham and international keeper Richard Wright - were looking to catch the new national coach's eye.

Stewart, whose goal made him the Premiership's leading scorer with 14, played down his chances of a national call-up.

"I haven't been in squads before and managers probably want to go with people who have done it before," he said.

"I'm 28 and there's a few people in front of me."

The aerial presence of Armstrong and James Scowcroft provided George Burley's side's greatest threat and a 21st-minute header from the former, from a Stewart centre, flashed wide.

Leicester managed to stifle Town's accustomed fluency in the early stages and a tame header from Ade Akinbiyi was the only chance of note in the first 20 minutes.

Wilnis' deflected cross from the right was acrobatically clutched by Royce under his crossbar in the best chance of the first half.

Stewart then forced the keeper to hold a glancing header five minutes before the break.

An incisive burst from the back from Icelandic defender Hermann Hreidarsson led to the first goal.

He won a 51st-minute corner with that run and from Jamie Clapham's delivery, Armstrong flicked on for Stewart

art to volley onto the crossbar from close range.

Stewart then forced Royce to touch a looping header over the top seconds later as the home side attempted to lift the tempo.

Captain Matt Holland then volleyed inches wide from the edge of the area after substitute Richard Crosswell, on for Akinbiyi, had headed out a Clapham free-kick.

Man of the match Royce said: "In the second half they put us under a lot of pressure. To be fair they deserved all three points."



Leicester's Trevor Benjamin (L) is about to take a fall after a collision with Herman Hreidarsson of Ipswich Town during the English Premiership clash at Ipswich on January 14. - AFP photo

St Etienne in trouble

RIO DE JANEIRO, Jan 15: Former French footballing giants St Etienne were accused on Friday of tricking Brazilian striker Alex into using what they said was an authentic Portuguese passport instead of his Brazilian one, reports AFP.

Alex, who is the club's leading scorer with 11 goals this season, has been accused like former teammate Ukrainian Maxim Levitsky of using a false passport and is due to face a French League tribunal later this month.

However, Alex's lawyer Ceslo Sardinha said that club directors had gone away after indicating they were interested in signing him in 1999 to find out if he had any family links in Europe and primarily Portugal. Under French football regula-

tions only three non-European Union players are allowed to play in the same match for the same team.

According to Sardinha they returned with the Portuguese passport.

"They (the directors) told him you can sign here. It is a real passport. There is the French police stamp which confirms its authenticity," Sardinha said. The 28-year-old's lawyer added Alex had not seen the passport until it was presented to him and had not used it since.

"The pressure put on Alex by the club was immense, notably on the part of the director, Gerard Soler," he said.

Sardinha defended Alex being absent from Tuesday's French League hearing into the affair because he had been late in receiving the papers outlining the charges.

Alex and Levitsky, who is now with Spartak Moscow, both fell under suspicion at the start of December after a Toulouse official noticed a change in their nationalities on a team sheet prior to a league game.

The false passport affair was prompted by the revelation that Strasbourg's former Argentinian forward Diego Garay played in the French league last season with a false Italian passport.

The French investigation is the latest twist in an increasing number of cases across Europe of players from outside the European Union attempting to bypass limits on the number of non-EU players allowed in teams.

The most high-profile case involves AC Milan's Brazilian goalkeeper Dida, who is under investigation for using a false Portuguese passport to secure a work permit.

Zamorano in business straightaway

MEXICO CITY, Jan 15: Chilean international forward Ivan Zamorano marked his Mexican football league debut for America with a spectacular hat-trick against Santos in the second league fixture of the season, reports AFP.

A delighted Zamorano scored in the seventh, 28th and 32nd minutes - the first two goals coming through headers - to help America on to a 5-1 win.

"It's a dream start for any footballer. But above all it's important that the team plays well," said Zamorano, who joined America recently from Italian giants Inter Milan.

Zamorano, who was given a huge ovation from Aztec stadium supporters when substituted in the 80th minute, has been recruited in America's bid to win their first league title in 12 years.

Japan's Nishizawa makes Primera Liga debut

BARCELONA, Spain, Jan 15: Espanyol forward Akinori Nishizawa became only the second Japanese player ever to play in the Primera Liga on Sunday when he came on as a substitute in his side's league match against Las Palmas, reports AFP.

Nishizawa, who came on as a substitute in the 73rd minute when Espanyol were being losing 0-1, was impressive and created several potential opportunities but without really breaking through the Las Palmas defence.

After learning of his inclusion on the team sheet for the match in the Canary Islands, Nishizawa had expressed his thanks to players and staff at the Barcelona club.

"I want to thank the whole team for their support and help. I've been given an opportunity and I want to show to supporters, and to my teammates that I'm a good team player."

Although failing to score, Nishizawa's presence on the field is a good indicator of the progress he has made since arriving on loan from Cerezo Osaka in December.

Espanyol coach Paco Flores, who was said to be initially unconvinced about the 24-year-old's abilities and fitness, has been impressed enough recently to include Nishizawa in his plans.

"Little by little I've been improving and I'm almost 100 percent fit," said Nishizawa prior to the match, which ended 1-0 in favour of Las Palmas.

Nishizawa is the second Japanese player to play in Spanish top flight after Shoji Jo, who played last season at Valladolid and scored two goals: a double against Oviedo.

However Jo, who was playing regularly for Valladolid, returned to Japan after his sponsor raised doubts about his continuing playing in Europe.

Diego the kid!

ROME, Jan 15: The rift between Argentinian football legend Diego Maradona and his former Italian side Napoli intensified Monday when the club president Giorgio Corbelli branded the Latin American a child, reports AFP.

Speaking on the Controcampa programme Corbelli said: "Diego is like a child who builds sandcastles on the beach. First he builds it and then with a football he destroys it."

Corbelli laid the blame for the collapse of a projected ambassadorial role for 40-year-old Maradona at the club he led to two Italian titles squarely at the feet of the Argentinian.

Corbelli said: "He did it all himself: first he let it be known that he wanted to come to Napoli then when I met him (in Rome last Friday) he sent me packing."

"He keeps changing his mind on whether he wants to return to Napoli."

Berthold signs for Turkish club

STUTTGART, Germany, Jan 15: Former German international defender Thomas Berthold has signed for Turkish First Division side Adanaspor until the end of the season, his agent revealed Sunday, reports AFP.

Berthold, 36, has been without a club this season since being freed last season by German Bundesliga outfit Stuttgart with whom he had been with since 1993.

A World champion in 1990, Berthold was capped 62 times and formerly played with Italian clubs Verona and AS Roma, and German giants Bayern Munich.

Ajax in Qatar

DOHA, Jan 15: Ajax Amsterdam on Sunday started a week-long training course in Qatar where it is to play a friendly against the national team, reports AFP.

Qatar plays Ajax next Friday as part of its preparations for the Asian qualifiers next month for the 2002 World Cup in Japan and South Korea.

Serie A Bari keep leaders in check



ROME, Jan 15: Italian First Division leaders AS Roma showed the first signs of frailty Sunday with a 1-1 home draw against struggling Bari, allowing second-placed Juventus to cut the gap from eight points to six.

And it could have been worse, reports AFP.

A second-half freekick from Swiss defender Giuseppe Mazzerelli gave Bari lead against a Roma side deprived of injured Argentinian striker Gabriel Batistuta and suspended pair Cafu and Cristian Zanetti.

But Francesco Totti equal-

led not really seem to have their minds on the job."

Bari coach Eugenio Fascetti disputed the penalty award, but was happy with the result.

"It won't help our league position much but it will certainly help morale," he said.

Juventus triumphed thanks to a header from French international David Trezeguet in a match where Bologna's Argentinian forward Julio Cruz missed a penalty.

Juve coach Carlo Ancelotti said: "We have never despaired and now we are playing with conviction."

"This is an important moment for us, we can improve



AS Roma's Vincenzo Montella (R) speeds past Michele Marcolini of Bari during their Serie A fixture at the Olympic Stadium in Rome on January 14. - AFP photo

ised from the penalty 'spot seven minutes later to give Fabio Capello's side some reward in a weekend when all the results went against them.

Juventus prevailed 1-0 at home to Bologna. Fiorentina, who trounced AC Milan 4-0 on Saturday, and defending champions Lazio - 4-3 victors over Udinese - also narrowed the gap on Roma.

"Bari had the better chances," lamented Capello. "I did not recognise my team, who

further and go on and win this championship."

Roma's setback follows a week in which the normally mild-mannered Ancelotti and his French playmaker Zinedine Zidane embarked on what looked like coordinated psychological warfare against the leaders, insisting Roma would lose their nerve when the going got tough.

It only took four minutes for Lazio to open the scoring at Udinese, but it was thanks to

What's eating Milan's two?

MILAN, Jan 15: (AFP) Milan may be the home of Italian style, but its two mighty football teams are rapidly going out of fashion.

AC are currently ranked only sixth in Italy while Inter are only 12th - small beer indeed for two glamour names who were once world leaders.

The House of Silvio - aka AC Milan - was a byword of elegance in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and was the most fashionable name on the planet.

Silvio, full name Silvio Berlusconi, and his loyal assistants Arrigo Sacchi and Fabio Capello put their faith in a Dutch imprint with the likes of Ruud Gullit, Marco Van Basten and Frank Rijkaard transforming the fortunes of an outfit known affectionately as the Rossoneri (red and blacks).

A group that had been on the slide since the swinging sixties once again became the most successful brand in Europe and the world.

The decision to add a splash of orange to the red and black and the imaginative use of

dreadlocks gave a unique image to a team that nonetheless retained some historic elements with the likes of Franco Baresi and Paolo Maldini, ensuring the traditionalists were kept happy.

That Dutch-inspired dynasty won three European Cups and two Intercontinental Cups but since then times have been lean.

Two years ago Berlusconi put his faith in Alberto Zaccheroni to revive the fortunes, and at first it looked as he was having some success, winning the Scudetto - a shirt that is sewn onto the patches of the leading Italian outfit at the end of the season in May.

But Zac's designs are suddenly looking dated and Saturday's 4-0 defeat by a Fiorentina outfit run by Turk Fatih Terim and boasting one of the world's most talented designers in Portugal's Rui Costa showed just how jaded the Zac look is.

Milan vice-president Adriano Galliani said after the match that he was reconsidering whether to offer Zaccheroni a new contract as rumours intensified that the Rossoneri would lure Terim from Fiorentina to give them a new turn-quoise look.

home player Marco Zambroni who miscued a clearance into his own goal.

Udinese dug their way further into the hole when Italian international defender Valerio Bertotto was dismissed for the foul that gave Argentinian Hernan Crespo the chance to make it 2-0 from the penalty spot.

Chilean striker Marcelo Salas netted again for the defending champions but Udinese's Stefano Fiore almost immediately pulled one back from a freekick.

Crespo grabbed his second but further goals from Massimo Margiotta and Argentinian forward Roberto Sosa set up a nervy finale for new Lazio coach Dino Zoff who took the helm from Sven Goran Eriksson after the Swede left to manage the England team earlier this week.

In Sunday evening's battle of the underachievers at the San Siro, Inter Milan and Parma had to settle for a 1-1 draw.

Parma, playing their first game in Arrigo Sacchi's second reign as coach, took the lead just after the half hour mark when Marco Di Vaio headed them in front at the near post.

"I could not have asked more of the boys for the first game," said Sacchi.

But Christian Vieri, under-fire after missing a host of chances in recent matches, put Inter back on terms after 69 minutes after being set up by Turkish teammate Hakan Sukur.

Atalanta's challenge continued to falter when Davide Dionigi put resurgent Reggina on course for a 1-0 win, their third triumph on the trot.

Lecce continued their good form with Croatian Davor Zunic scoring twice in the first half against Vicenza.

Argentinian Aldo Osirio's header made it 3-0 before Gianluca Comotto grabbed a consolation.

A goal from Claudio Bellucci put Napoli in front at Verona only for the home side to hit back for a 2-1 win through Romanian Adrian Mutu and Brazilian Adalton.

Verona's Mutu and Giuseppe Colucci and Napoli's Brazilian Da Silva Matuzalem were all sent off in a stormy climax.

Saturday's 4-0 victory for Fiorentina against AC Milan established them as title challengers and top scorers in the division.

A leader from Portuguese forward Nuno Gomes and second-half efforts from Italians Sandro Colis and Enrico Chiesa and Portuguese playmaker Rui Costa buried a poor Milan side.

Brescia boasted their first victory against relegation with a 1-0 victory over nine-man Perugia with Argentinian striker Andres Yllana scoring the decisive goal from close-range in the first half.

Milan's other big fashion outfit - Casa Moratti - is in an even more parlous state.

Also known as Inter Milan - or the nerazzurri (black and blues) - Casa Moratti has to look even further back to the 1960s when their patriarch Angelo Moratti made them the trendiest name in world football with two European titles and two Intercontinental crowns.

When Angelo's son Massimo took the helm in 1995 hopes were raised that Internazionale would again become the defining image on the globe as twice Moratti junior broke existing world transfer records to lure Brazilian Ronaldo and then home favourite Christian Vieri.

But one look at the figures show that Moratti - whose big-spending five-year reign has only yielded one fairly modest prize in the 1998 UEFA Cup - has failed to revive the outfit despite using nine coaches, the latest Marco Tardelli.

The "black and blue" moniker is looking an apt one as Inter languish behind even modest off-the-peg outfits like Atalanta, Perugia and Lecce with almost half the season gone.

Eriksson a fair man

LONDON, Jan 15: New England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson will dine with Peter Taylor, the man he has replaced, later Saturday after vowing to give every English player a chance of making his first squad, reports AFP.

The Swede is spending his first Saturday afternoon in English football watching the likes of Joe Cole, Gavin McCann and Michael Carrick - touted as the future of English football - as West Ham take on Sunderland at Upton Park.

But after former caretaker manager Peter Taylor signalled his intentions by fielding a young and inexperienced lineup in England's last game in Italy, Eriksson today said that no-one would be excluded from possible selection.

"I'm not going to take out a team just under 30 like Peter Taylor did," he said on BBC's Football Focus.

"The important thing is that we are going to have a good team, not just a young team or

an old team or things like that. I don't want to close any windows. Everything is possible."

Eriksson also reacted to many who have seen his nationality as a barrier to a genuine devotion to the national cause.

He said: "The FA offered me this job - I am very proud of that, of course."

"I said yes, thank you! at once, and I didn't think about (the fact that) I'm foreign. I think the answer is to have a very good team and try to give good results."

Eriksson, who takes over the England reins immediately after resigning from Italian giants Lazio, said he was also looking forward to acquainting himself with Leicester boss Taylor, as well as Manchester United assistant manager Steve McClaren.

He said: "Steve McClaren I haven't met yet. Peter Taylor I met a couple of times and I'm going to have dinner with him tonight and I am sure it will be very easy to work with both of them."

The 52-year-old claimed that he was aware of the extreme demands involved with his new employment.

"Of course it's a lot of pressure on the manager having this job but that means it's a very big job."

"I like the pressure. I like the challenge, and what I saw so far I like."

Eriksson will have his first chance to analyse some of the players who next month could form part of his plans for a friendly against Spain - followed by the crucial World Cup qualifiers against Finland and Albania in May.

Right-hand man Tord Grip has so far been Eriksson's main source of opinion on the Premiership's finest English players - and the coach hinted that Old Trafford's champions would feature in his plans.

"I can tell you that Manchester United impress me as a team and in that team there are many good English players of course."

"But I don't think I should start to talk about individual players."