MADRID, Jan 18; Boca Juniors star Martin Palermo will be officially presented by his new Spanish club Villarreal on Thursday after agreeing a four-and-a-half year deal, the Primera Liga outfit revealed. reports AFP.

The Argentinian international arrived in the Spanish capital Wednesday before flying on to Valencia where he will put the finishing touches to his 8million-dollar transfer.

"I'm happy to come to Villarreal. This club has made a great effort for me to be here. The important thing for me is to repay this by giving everything." said Palermo.

Palermo scored two goals for Boca in their Intercontinental Club Championship victory over Real Madrid last year.

### Kopke to retire

BERLIN. Jan 18: Former German international goalkeeper Andreas Kopke has said he will retire at the end of this season, reports AFP.

The 38-year-old Kopke an nounced his intentions to Klaus Augenthaler, the coach of his club side Nuremberg, during their winter break training camp in Portugal.

Capped 59 times for Germany. Kopke was notably in goal when Germany won the European Cup in England in 1996. He retired from international duty after Germany's elimination at the hands of Croatia in the quarter-finals of the 1998 World Cup in France.

## Leeds need Redebe

LONDON, Jan 18: English Premiership side Leeds are looking to agree a compromise with South Africa over international call-ups for defender Lucas Radebe, reports AFP.

Elland Road chairman Peter Ridsdale has come up with a proposal as South Africa's World Cup qualifying programme clashes with some of United's most vital domestic and European fixtures.

The club has asked for Radebe to miss his country's next match which clashes with the FA Cup tie against Liverpool on January 27, but South Africa could insist he plays under FIFA rules if he is fit.

Ridsdale told the Yorkshire Post: "Hopefully we can agree now which games he will be excused from and devise a suitable structure.

### Wenger to go slow on Edu

LONDON, Jan 18: Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger insisted Wednesday that new 6 million pound (9 million dollar) signing Edu will be given time to adapt to the pace of the Premiership, reports AFP.

Wenger finally secured the Brazilian's signature on Tuesday, more than six months after the 22-year-old Corinthians star was turned back from Heathrow airport in tears after customs officers discovered he was trying to enter Britain on a false passport. Edu has since been granted

Portuguese citizenship which entitles him to an European Union (EU) passport. "Brazilian players can take

four or five months to adapt to the game and the life in England," said Wenger. "We know that from when we

signed Silvinho, also from Corinthians, in the summer last "Silvinho is established now

but at first he struggled to adapt to the pace of the Premiership and the responsibilities you must have to defend

"But we are very happy to have finally signed Edu. He has a huge talent and great potential. He should bring a considerable extra strength to our squad that we have missed since Petit went to Barcelona in the summer.

"But four or five months to us means we could be in May before we see anything like the best of him. I believe Edu will be one for next season really."

## Johnsen undergoes

surgery LONDON, Jan 18: Manchester United defender Ronny Johnsen has had an operation on his knee in an attempt to end his injury nightmare, the club reported Wednesday, reports AFP.

Johnsen, who has been dogged by injuries over the last 18 months, underwent surgery on his left knee in Norway.

"Ronny has had an operation and we're now looking forward to him regaining full fitness." said Paddy Harverson, United's director of communications.

Johnsen's injury problems began following the Champions League final in May 1999.

The 31-year-old Norwegian international needed surgery to treat a condition known as Jumper's knee and only returned at the end of last sea-

son. His injury woes returned in the autumn and his last senior game for United was against Sunderland in the League Cup in November.

## Palermo arrives for Villareal Ronaldinho now PSG's

PARIS, Jan 18: inho has signed a five-year contract. to begin in season 2001/2002, with Paris St Ger-

main, the French First Division

side announced Wednesday,

However the 20-year-old in- would allow Ronaldinho to fulfil Anelka. ternational forward's current club Gremio are said to be stunned by the news, which club president Jose Alberto Guerreiro claims he only learned about from the official PSG website.

The signing puts an end to recent rumours that Ronaldinho, nicknamed Gaucho, who has been tipped as the next Ronaldo, would not be joining the Parisian club.

Ronaldinho came to global footballing prominence after his displays in the Copa America in 1999, at which he finished the competition's top scorer with six goals, and during last year's Olympic Games in Sydney. He was also successful with

Brazil's world title-winning under-17 side in 1997 in Egypt. According to some observers, Ronaldinho will follow in the footsteps of revered compatriots Garrincha and Didi. Stunned Gremio president

Guerreiro told Brazilian radio: "I've just heard the news after reading PSG's website. We are in the middle of negotiations with FIFA (the sport's world governing body) to renew Ronaldinho's contract and PSG have never contacted us.

"If it happens to be final (the contract), it's not our doing. Tell the Gremio supporters not to worry, we'll sort out this prob-

Ronaldinho recently held talks with Gremio as his current contract with the Brazilian outfit is due to end in February. However after being offered a new deal, with a reported 20

percent salary increase in the his European ambitions. Brazil and Gremio first year and 40 percent the

fused to try his luck in Europe. situation and said: "This case The player's lawyer, Sergio will have to go to court, which I Neves, told Brazilian agency regret. Sportpress on Monday that his client was due to re-sign a lim- partnered by France internaited contract with Gremio, with tional and former Real Madrid

Guerreiro, however, was less forward Ronald- second year, Ronaldinho re- positive about the player's

The Brazilian is likely to be a liberty clause attached which and Arsenal forward Nicolas



An AFP file photo of Brazil and Gremio star Ranaldinho Gaucho. French First Division side Paris Saint Germain yesterday announced that the striker had struck a five-year deal with the club.

## UEFA to meet FIFA



land, Jan 18: European football have an urgent

meeting with FIFA president Sepp Blatter to try and find an way to end the row system, reports AFP. It has been tentatively set for

committee here on Wednesday.

"It's a clear message we want system. a good solution," said UEFA chief executive Gerhard Aigner. insists the transfer system has and state our position. We don't venes existing European laws want to be polemic. We want to on the free movement of labour. find a good solution for Euroto be seen," he added.

Despite the hastily called meeting. UEFA warned that

they also plan to meet with European Commissioners to happen it would kill the game discuss their fears over the as we know it," said David Dein, leaders are to planned changes. However in a statement after the Football Association.

Wednesday's meeting there was no mention of splitting with FIFA - a move that would shatover changes to the transfer ter the current power structure simply don't understand the of world football. But UEFA made it clear that

they were furious with Blatter News of the meeting came and FIFA over proposals FIFA shortly after an emergency delivered to the European meeting of the UEFA executive Commission last week about changes to the current transfer The European Commission

"We wish to speak with FIFA to be revamped as it contra-European soccer chiefs

vice chairman of Arsenal and "It is totally impractical and unworkable. The sport would become unmanageable and I

"If this were to be allowed to

rationale," he added. In a statment issued after Wednesday's meeting UEFA said the FIFA proposals were potentially damaging to Euro-

pean football. "The FIFA document in cludes proposals which weaken the two of the key principles for European Football, namely contract stability and the development of an effective system of

compensation," said UEFA. "This document remains pean football. But what we can claim the FIFA proposals, which with the EC and as a result negotiate with the EC remains would allow players to leave continues to undermine the their clubs with just three negotiation process and the months notice, will cause status of the original proposals," added the statement.

## WORLD FOOTBALL BRIEFS

briefs ion Thursday:

**BOSNIAN TRIES OUT FOR** MARSEILLE

MARSEILLE: Bosnian striker Alen Skoro is currently trying out with French First Division side Marseille with a view to a four-year contract, Marseille coach Javier Clemente confirmed Wednesday.

First Division outfit NK Olympija Ljubljana, 19-year-old Skoro will remain in France until the end of the week, said Clemente

seille at the end of last year club Juventus until 2005. before returning to Slovenia.

Meanwhile Marseille sports coordinator Jean-Christophe Cano is reported to be in Argentina negotiating the recruitment of midfielder Lucas Bernardi, 23, from Newell's Old

## ZIDANE DENIES

REAL DEAL PARIS: French international midfielder Zinedine Zidane on Wednesday denied that he had signed an agreement commit-

for Hassan as his team won 3-2.

Jan 18 (AFP): World football ting himself to Spanish giants being sought by Monaco boss Real Madrid from July 2001. The Juventus player, voted

FIFA world player of the year for the second time in December. said on his website: "People who love football and me must (1992-1998). know that contrary to what could have been said on a Spanish site that I have signed nothing with the Madrid club."

The Spanish website SportsYA reported that Real Madrid president Florentino Perez had Currently with Slovenian a document in which Zidane committed himself to Real if he decided to leave the Italian Serie A side for Spain at the end of the season.

Zidane has said he intends Skoro tried out with Mar- staying at Italian First Division

### MONACO AFTER **ITALIANS**

MONACO: French champions Monaco are interested in recruiting Parma midfielder Diego Fuser and Inter Milan's Italian youth international An-French side revealed Wednes- ing for Toulouse in 1998.

sponds to the type of player Cup.

Claude Puel.

AC Milan (1989-1990), Fiorentina (1991-1992) and Lazio

have made an approach to 21year-old Pirlo, who no longer features in Inter coach Marco Tardelli's plan. Pirlo was loaned out to Reggina last season.

### **IPOUA JOINS** MAYENCE

MAYENCE, Germany: Cameroon striker Samuel Ipoua has signed for German Second Division side Mayence from struggling French First Division outfit Toulouse until the end of the season with an option for a further year.

The 27-year-old Ipoua, who Serie A side Inter Milan in 1995. He also played for Torino | fet added. drea Pirlo, sources close to the and Rapid Vienna before sign-

Before signing for Parma he played for Torino (1986-1989).

Monaco are also reported to

for Nice before joining Italian

The 32-year-old Fuser has eroon. Ipoua has scored three played more than 360 games in times for the national side and pension. the Italian league and corre- played during the 1998 World

- AFP photo

## Mancini joins Leicester

LONDON, Jan 18: English Premiership side Leicester City have completed the signing of former Italian international striker Roberto Mancini on a short-term basis, reports AFP.

New England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson tipped off Leicester manager Peter Taylor about the availability of the 36year-old, who was the Swede's number two at Lazio.

The Italian will revert to a playing role at Leicester, although it was not immediately clear whether he has signed on a month's loan or until the end of the current campaign. A Leicester spokesman said:

"There are a few details to be finalised but Mancini will be unveiled at a press conference this lunchtime. The club believe Mancini's experience will supplement

Trevor Benjamin and Richard Cresswell. The Italian could even come into contention for a place in the squad for Saturday's home Premiership match with Arse-

## Scotland eyeing World Club Championship

GLASGOW, Jan 18: Scotland could make a bid to host the World Club Championship if their plans to host Euro 2008 come to nothing, reports AFP.

Scottish Football Association chief executive David Taylor confirmed that if their Euro bid is knocked back, or it is decided not to submit it after all, the Championship would jump to the top of the agenda.

FIFA want to hold the Championship every two years. with Manchester United travelling to Brazil for the inaugural tournament a year ago. The next one will be held in Spain this summer

"If we fail in a bid for 2008, or decide against going forward with a bid, then we will look

top club sides that are involved. "Our view is that we have some great stadia, particularly in Glasgow, and a great football-loving public.

One major event already destined for Scotland is next season's Champions League final, which will take place at Hampden Park on May 15,

## St Etienne sanctions

PARIS. Jan 18: France's minister for Youth and Sport Marie-George Buffet has voiced | August 1999 "represents a misher support for the French carriage of justice which this Football Federation's decision to sanction St Etienne in the league's false passport fiasco. reports AFP.

The First Division side were docked seven points, and president-elect Gerard Soler was banned from holding any official position in football after it was revealed that players Alex and Maxim Levitsky had played with false passports.

"The federation's disciplinary commission has met and taken the right decision, which is aimed not only at players and I think it's totally fair," said Ms Buffet, interviewed after Council of Ministers meeting Wednesday.

"We have to let these inquests run their course within holds a French passport, played the federation, but also the round replay with a fortunate police investigations, and we goal five minutes after half have to await the results." Buf-

held a false Portuguese pass-Capped ten times for Cam- port, was banned for four months with a two-month sus-

> sky, now at Spartak Moscow, head to it but the ball rewas given the same ban for bounded off Vassell's knee and playing whidle holding a false. flew past goalkeeper Steve Greek passport The French league, which

allows only three non-European players on the pitch at any one time in a match, opened the investigation into false passports in December.

## **UEFA** fair-play standings

PARIS, Jan 18: Belarus. Scotland and Sweden fill the top three slots in UEFA's fairplay league for football covering June to December matches, reports AFP.

The country that tops the fair-play league at the end of one of their teams -- usually the side that tops their own na-

further berths in the UEFA Cup preliminary round on August 9 sought to pursue opportunities in music and television. Neither Last year, the fair-play proved out and now he is back awards opened the UEFA Cup

Passport scandal

# Just the tip of the iceberg?

EU passports, if available,

significantly, which unscrupu-

But on Tuesday the passport

Nevertheless, the ruling

scam was exposed, and from

now on clubs will be forced to

be more stringent while re-

comes as a blow to St Etienne

who, after returning to the

French top flight for season

1999/2000 after a three-year

absence, had hoped for a return

to the glory years of the 1970's

chel Platini then formed an

integral part of "Les Verts" ma-

chinery, which won four titles

between 1967 - 1970, and three

between 1974-1976 to make

them the darling of the French

applauded Les Verts return to

the top flight last season, but

recent events have severely

compromised the club's re-

entry into the First Division

Fans from all over France

French football legend Mi-

aware of.

cruiting.

media.

and early 80's.

history books.



which has rocked born players. French football has claimed its first victims, but other highbe allowed on the pitch at any profile casualties could well one time, a Bosman-Inspired follow as the investigation con- ruling which has taken a cruel

On Tuesday the 1976 European Cup semi-finalists St can ease a player's transfer Ettenne were stunned as they from a non-EU country rather dropped three league places to 14th place after being docked lous agents, middle men and seven points by the league's club presidents are only too



ALEX DIAS

However, the sanctions did not stop there - in an affair which could have far-reaching implications for clubs whose reputations, and recent practices, are now being minutely

St Etienne president-elect Gerard Soler was banned for a year for his part in the flasco. while the players in question -Brazilian forward Alex and Ukrainian Maxim Levitsky were each handed four-month renounced his EU passport to bans, of which two months was reappear as Brazilian. suspended.

shockwaves around the league. Other French clubs, including Metz and Monaco, are under the spotlight as league offi-

The lid was blown open on December 2 by the eagle-eyed management of Toulouse, who during a league match against St Etienne noticed discrepancies in the nationalities of both Alex and Levitsky.

the previous team sheet against

Toulouse as Portuguese, had

Alex. who had appeared on

Levitsky, who has since Tuesday's verdict will send completed a transfer to Spartak Moscow, had suddenly become Greek after initially claiming to

be Ukrainian.

PARIS. Jan 18 cials verify the authenticity of complaint to league officials, (AFP): The false the European Union (EU) pass- although valid on its own, was passports flasco ports held by all non-European- acted upon with even more urgency after the first inkling of The French league stipulates passport fraud hit the head-

that only three non-EU players lines. Strasbourg's former Argentine forward Diego Garay, now back in Argentina, was caught by German customs officers in possession of a false Italian

passport. That led to calls by Nancy who were relegated on a slim margin last year, for Strasbourg to face sanctions. The Second Division side also called for



FARID MONDRAGON their return to the top flight

But while league officials brushed off Nancy's ambitious calls, a nationwide passportverification campaign was launched, with all clubs from France's top two leagues being forced to surrender all EU

Consequently, Alex and Levitsky's passports were revealed as false.

The result has left many clubs holding their breath, and although appearing publicly confident. Tuesday's verdict will show that the league means business.

Outstanding cases in the investigation include Monaco's Chilien forward Pablo Contreras (Italian passport) and Metz' Colombian goalkeeper Faryd The subsequent Toulouse Mondragon (Greek passport).

nal verdict was "an affront to

consider the probabilities of the

improbabilities piled one upon

another inherent in Mr Grob-

belaar's case for it to begin to

He added: "I come at last to

case, and it is at this point that

to my mind Mr Grobbelaar's

"There are simply too many

justice".

story falls apart.

be credible."

# seriously at the World Club Championship," Taylor told the Scottish Daily Mail. "That would be a major prize in itself when you think of the continue of the



and Zimbabwe goalkeeper Bruce Grobbelaar lost his marathon legal battle on Thursday to clear

his name of match-fixing allegations, reports AFP. The Court of Appeal in London upheld a challenge by the Sun newspaper to a jury verdict in August 1999 that Grobbelaar

had been libelled. Minister lauds 85,000 pounds (127,000 dol- linited, which ended in a 3-3 was without precedent. Grobbelaar will now lose the lars, 136,000 euros) he was awarded in damages and faces having to pay the costs of the case -- estimated at more than one million pounds.

Lord Justice Simon Brown said the jury's unanimous verdict at a High Court hearing in court can and must correct."

The Sun, Britain's biggest-Former Liverpool selling daily paper, argued that the 42-year-old accepted money for match-fixing while playing for Liverpool and Southampton. The claims were published in a series of damning articles

> in November 1994. The Sun alleged that Grobbelaar took 40,000 pounds to make sure Liverpool lost 3-0 at Newcastle in November 1993. It also said he had blown his

chance of another 125,000 pounds in a January 1994 The Sun's publishers News draw, by accidentally making a was trying to lose.

the newspaper and its former Taylor said. editor, Stuart Higgins, for substantial compensation.

on Thursday.

Daniel Taylor, solicitor for "He stands today condemned

sensational save in a match he by three of the nation's most senior judges as a man who Grobbelaar, who lives in betrayed his team mates, his southern England, had sued fans and the national game."

"It has been over six years since the Sun first exposed his Grobbelaar was not at court duplicity, but today that investigation has been fully vindi-Brown said the jury's origi- cated.

### FA Cup

# Villa oust Magpies



LONDON, Jan 18: Aston Villa booked their place in the fourth round of the FA Cup on

Wednesday with a narrow 1-0 victory over Premiership rivals Newcastle at a freezing Villa Park, reports AFP. Youngster Darius Vassell broke the deadlock for John Gregory's men in a tight third

Former England interna-Brazilian forward Alex, who | tional Paul Merson found space out on the right wing and swung a dangerous cross into

the visitors' penalty area. Newcastle defender Warren Barton, a second half substitute Ukrainian goalkeeper Levit- for a poorly Gary Speed, got a

Villa midfielder Steve Stone said Villa's progress in the Cup could make-or-break their sea-

"We are 13th in the league and have a couple of games in hand, but we know they don't matter because we are not winning games and are starting to struggle," he said.

through and we have now got a home tie against Leicester.' Villa dominated the opening 45 minutes and were unfortu-

"So it's massive for us to go

nate not to go in at the interval with a healthy lead. Vassell, replacing mercurial Frenchman David Ginola who started on the bench, had two excellent chances in the first

half before giving Villa the lead. Newcastle pressed for an equaliser in the second half but failed to trouble David James, who had a quiet night in the

Queens Park Rangers striker Chris Kiwomya scored twice in a 2-1 defeat of Second Division strugglers Luton at Loftus Road to take the Londoners through to the fourth round.

With the scores tied at 1-1,

Kiwomya struck his second in

extra time to earn the second

bottom First Division side a bumper home tie against Premiership giants Arsenal. Sunderland will play Ipswich in the next round after beating

First Division Crystal Palace 4-2 at Selhurst Park. Extra-time goals from Kevin Phillips and Kevin Kilbane took Peter Reid's side through after

the teams went in level at 2-2 after 90 minutes. Non-league Dagenham and Redbridge's home replay with Premiership side Charlton was

postponed due to a frozen pitch.

I love playing soccer and realize

Lalas, the only American to

play in Italy's Serie A for two

seasons with Padova, spent the

last four years of his career in

the United States. He was

capped 98 times with the US

Wednesday when Los Angeles

faces Read Espana of Hondu-

ras in the Champions Cup.

His Galaxy debut will come

"Anvime you can add a

team.

## Lalas back to football



NEW YORK, Jan the 1999 season, it is equally sion that comes from the heart. 17: More than a as difficult to explain why I am year after his re- returning," Lalas said. "All I can that I have a finite amount of tirement. Alexi say is that it is a personal deci-time to do that professionally." Lalas is making a comeback, the American standout having signed a contract Tuesday with

the Los Angeles Galaxy of Major League Soccer, reports AFP. "This is obviously a tremendous opportunity and I am thrilled to be associated with a team that has the potential to do great things," Lalas said.

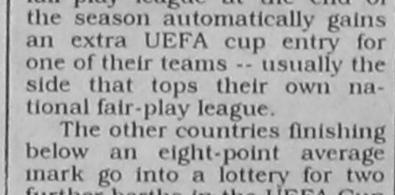
challenge to get back to the level of not only where I was, but also to improve my game." The 30-year-old defender, a veteran of two World Cups, said at the end of the 1999 season that he was burned out and

"As difficult as it was to explain why I left the game after

player who has played in two World Cups and has overseas experience, it is a huge plus for your team." Los Angeles coach Sigi Schmid said. "Alexi's soccer abilities, personality and leadership qualities are things that will help the Galaxy through the tournament and this coming season."



with 151, breaking the 150-cap record of German Lothar Matthaeus. It was a double delight



Norrkoping of Norway.

in football. doors for Rayo Vallecano of Spain, Lierse of Belgium and

ALEXI LALAS

