

Transfer decision put on hold

BRUSSELS, Jan 25: Hopes of a quick solution to the battle between world football rulers and European lawmakers over the transfer system were dashed when talks between the two sides here on Wednesday were suspended until next month, reports AFP.

A joint FIFA-UEFA team and players union FIFPro met with European Commission officials but after three hours of talks the two sides agreed another meeting would be needed and proposed a February 16 date.

"We made progress but as expected negotiations are not easy," said UEFA secretary general Gerhard Aigner afterwards. "But I think both parties are determined to come to conclusions so from that point of view we are satisfied," he added.

The European Commission insists the transfer system has to be revamped as it contravenes existing European laws on the free movement of labour but UEFA, rulers of European football, are concerned that an end to transfer fees and the ability of players to end contracts at will could seriously damage the smaller clubs in the continent.

"The commission is convinced a compromise between clubs, players and supporters can soon be reached," said an EC spokesman. "That will prove the world of football can show good sense and political will."

Aigner admitted one of the key sticking points at Wednesday's meeting was the question of how long a player could be contracted to a club.

"The main subjects are of course contract stability and this is where we are mainly engaged at the moment," he said.

The dispute over how the system should be changed nearly caused a major split between UEFA and FIFA last week.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter had infuriated UEFA when he presented a solution to the transfer changes to the EC without discussing it with them. At a crisis meeting with UEFA Blatter admitted he had blundered and promptly withdrew the proposal.

Instead both sides agreed to base their case over a joint plan given to the EC last October.

Zidane confirms five-year plan at Juve

TURIN, Italy, Jan 25: France and Juventus playmaker Zinedine Zidane confirmed on Wednesday he intended to end his career with the Turin-based Serie A club, according to ANSA news agency, reports AFP.

Zidane, who had earlier been linked to Spanish giants and European champions Real Madrid, said staying at Juventus for the next five years to see out his contract would not be a problem - provided everything was going smoothly.

"I want to stay at Juve, for another five years," said Zidane, whose current contract expires on June 30 2005.

"Then, if everything goes smoothly, I would like to finish my career here," he added.

Rumours, which Zidane later denied, were rife last week that the influential world and European champion had signed a pre-contract agreement with Real Madrid to begin in June 2001.

Zidane joined Juventus in the summer of 1996 and helped the club to the Scudetto two years running, in 1997 and 1998. In 1997 the Turin giants also lifted the European Super Cup.

PSG rope in South American duo

PARIS, Jan 25: Paris St Germain have completed the dual signing of Inter Milan and Brazil midfielder Vampeta and Argentinian Mauricio Pochettino of Spanish outfit Espanyol, PSG coach Luis Fernandez confirmed Thursday, reports AFP.

Pochettino could arrive tomorrow (Friday) but will probably not be at training. Vampeta has momentarily gone back to Brazil but will be presenting him to the fans on Saturday before our match against Lens," said Fernandez.

The 28-year-old Pochettino, a central defender, has signed a three-and-a-half-year contract with PSG, according to Fernandez.

Vampeta, 26, full name Marcos Andre Batista Santos Vampeta, was the subject of a swap deal between PSG and Inter involving PSG midfielder Stephane Dalmat, who arrived Wednesday night in Milan to iron out personal terms.

Khagrachhari football

From Our Correspondent

KHAGRACHHARI, Jan 25: Fourth Class Government Employees Family Tournement Adibashi Development Sangtha 7-0 in the Senior Division football league at the local stadium today.

Ripon Chakma, Mongshi Marna, Tuhin Dey and Chigmoni netted one goal each in the first half of the match. Nikhil Kumer Dey scored hat-trick in the second half.

Primera Liga

Real go further ahead

MADRID, Jan 25: Real Madrid beat Real Zaragoza 3-0 in a rearranged Spanish league match on Wednesday to motor five points clear in the championship, reports AFP.

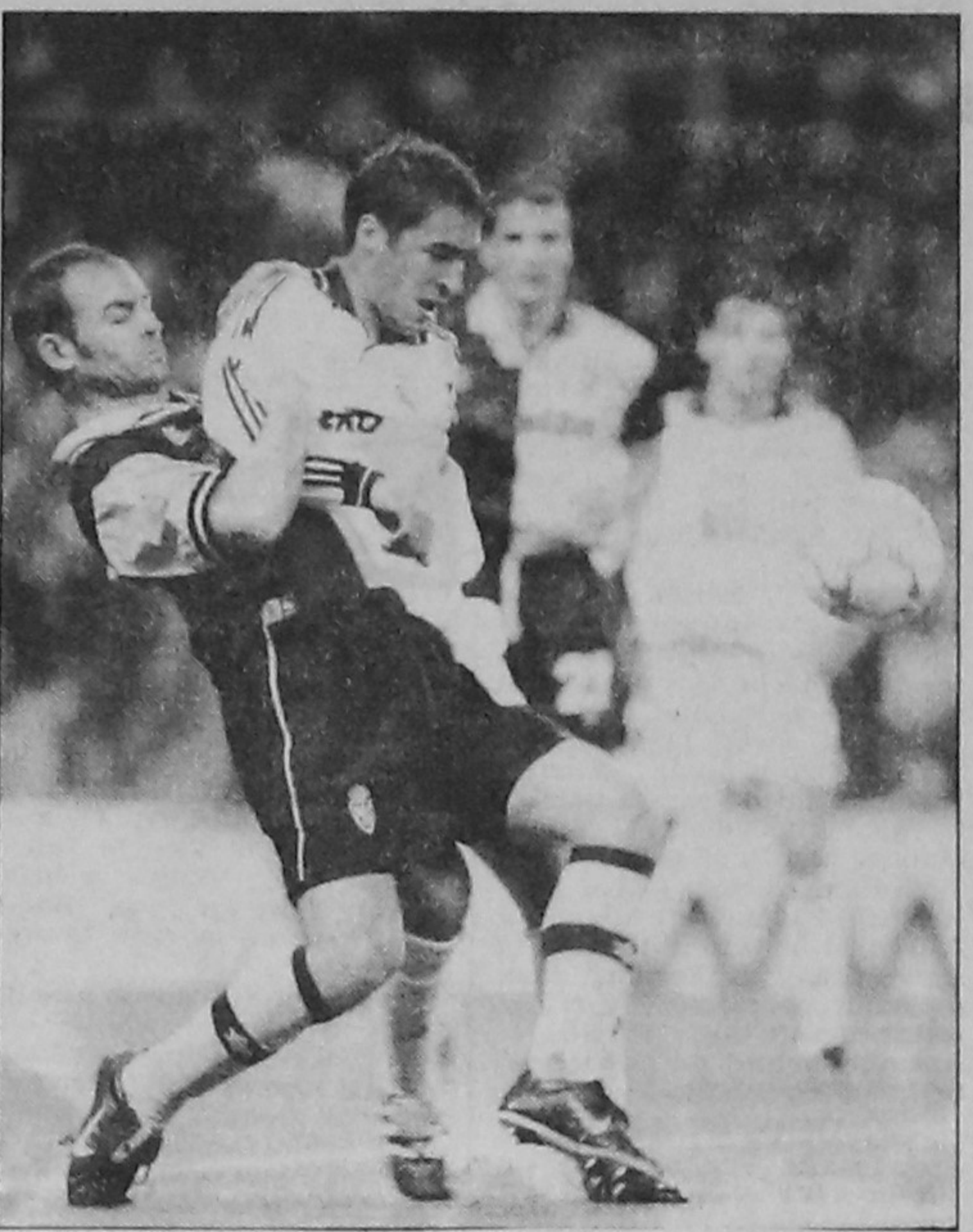
Deportivo La Coruna are in second spot with Barcelona third, six points behind.

The original match was postponed from November when Madrid lost 2-1 in the World Club Cup final against Argentina's Boca Juniors in Tokyo.

Madrid dominated the first half without much luck but they were rewarded shortly after the interval. Michel Salgado found the net on 49 minutes firing left footed from the edge of the box although Zaragoza defender Paco Jemez got a touch.

The second came in the 57th minute through Raul in a move also involving European footballer of the year Luis Figo of Portugal. Frenchman Claude Makelele and England's Steve McManaman.

Then, with just under 15 minutes to go, Brazilian Roberto Carlos fired home a trademark freekick from the edge of the box to finish off the scoring.



Raul (R), the Real Madrid ace, fighting for possession with Real Zaragoza's Paco Jimenez during their Primera Liga game at Madrid on January 24.

Ronaldo fine but cautious

MADRID (Reuters/Intemet) - Injury-stricken Brazilian superstar Ronaldo has said that he is confident that he will make a full recovery from his knee problems.

"Now I don't feel pain in my knee of any sort and that is a very good sign," he said in the Spanish sports daily As.

"I don't want to set myself a date by which I will reappear, because I must not rush things and should take things step by step."

"All I am now thinking of is that I will return to top form and that I will be the same as I once was."

The Inter Milan player tore a tendon in his right knee after playing only six minutes of the Italian Cup final first leg against Lazio last April.

That was his first game since he partially tore the tendon in an Italian league match the previous November.

The second injury was far more serious and led to speculation as to whether the player would ever be able to return to competitive football.

Ronaldo admitted that his morale had been badly damaged by the second injury.

"After six months recovering from the previous problem I got injured within ten minutes of my reappearance and that was really tough."

"It was a terrible blow and left me really depressed for a month afterwards," he said.

In recent months the player has been following a strict regime of physiotherapy and specialist training in an exclusive sports clinic in the south of France.

The striker admitted that he has discovered a new interest in the theatre since his injury.

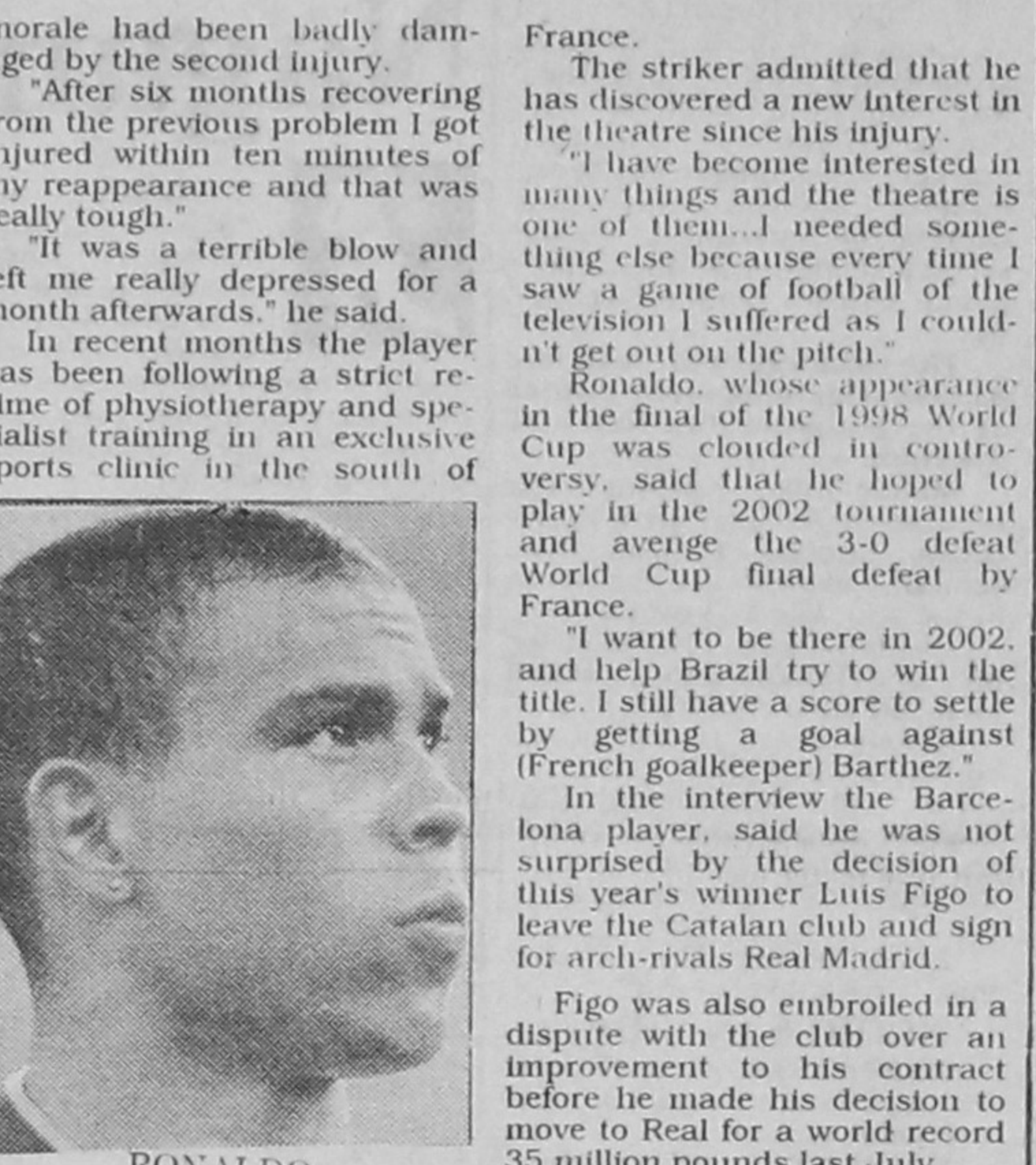
"I have become interested in many things and the theatre is one of them. I needed something else because every time I saw a game of football on the television I suffered as I couldn't get out on the pitch."

Ronaldo, whose appearance in the final of the 1998 World Cup was clouded in controversy, said that he hoped to play in the 2002 tournament and avenge the 3-0 defeat World Cup final defeat by France.

"I want to be there in 2002, and help Brazil try to win the title. I still have a score to settle by getting a goal against (French goalkeeper) Barthez."

In the interview the Barcelona player, said he was not surprised by the decision of this year's winner Luis Figo to leave the Catalan club and sign for arch-rivals Real Madrid.

Figo was also embroiled in a dispute with the club over an improvement to his contract before he made his decision to move to Real for a world record 35 million pounds last July.



RONALDO

Bundesliga preview

Season Part Two set for kick-off

BERLIN, Jan 25: League leaders Schalke 04 kick-off the second half of the Bundesliga season against Hansa Rostock on Friday with grounds for optimism in one of the closest title races in years, reports AFP.

Just four points separate Schalke from fifth-placed Kaiserslautern, and they are only a single point ahead of Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund with fourth-placed Bayer Leverkusen three points adrift.

Schalke's Danish forward Ebbe Sand, the league's top scorer with 13 goals, and coach Huub Stevens of Holland, both extended contracts during the five-week winter break.

If veteran Andy Moller and left-sided Jorg Bohme, the mid-field heart of the side, can keep up their efforts in 2001, Schalke could win their first title since 1958.

The Ruhr side are no stranger to great success. Stevens took Schalke to victory in the 1997 UEFA Cup - their first ever European title and first time of any description since winning the Domestic Cup in 1972.

Schalke would be forgiven for looking over their shoulder at one of the world's mighty teams in Bayern Munich.

The defending champions may have lost one more match than Schalke, five, and have not looked that impressive this season, but evidence of their class is that they are still amongst the leaders.

Victories over both Bayer Leverkusen and Hertha Berlin in a good spell before Christmas put enough points in the bank to make up for some poor results earlier in the season.

A key man in Munich's chances of winning both the European Cup and the Bundesliga title is their controversial captain Stefan Effenberg, Munich, who host VfL Bochum on Saturday, know if Effenberg is playing on top form, the team will follow suit.

He had problems regaining his form after a spell out with Achilles tendon problems but then found his full fitness late last year.

Effenberg landed himself in hot water with the club over remarks concerning the club's stadium and by wearing red

leather trousers to their formal Christmas party.

He was also fined in October after a woman complained of an assault in a nightclub in an argument about a reservation, meaning he has now had almost 20,000 dollars of fines in his career.

Effenberg also caused one of the biggest scandals at the 1994 World Cup and was sent home in disgrace after making obscene gestures to supporters during one of Germany's first round group matches.

Nevertheless he has earned the captain's armband by his commanding midfield performances, particularly in a 3-1 win at Hertha Berlin when he scored a goal and created the others.

Borussia Dortmund, who host league new boys Energie Cottbus on Saturday, are also in a great position to challenge for the title.

Coach Matthias Sammer, the midfield general in their 1997 European Cup triumph, has completely turned around a team which only barely escaped relegation last season.

Berti Vogts, who took over the Bayer Leverkusen job in the wake of Christian Daum's positive test for cocaine, will need his team to vastly improve on their pre-Christmas form.

The Rhinelanders had been top of the league before some disappointing results saw them drop to fourth.

At the other end of the table, VfB Stuttgart, who travel to Bayer Leverkusen on Sunday, are struggling at second-from-bottom though they are through to the fourth round of the UEFA Cup and the semi-final of the German Cup.

The club's sporting director, the former international Karlheinz Forster, said on Friday he was quitting because of lack of money in the club coffers and coach Ralf Rangnick must surely be feeling the pressure.

Friday: Schalke 04 v Hansa Rostock Saturday: Werder Bremen v Munich 1860, Eintracht Frankfurt v Cologne, SC Freiburg v Unterhaching, Kaiserslautern v VfL Wolfsburg, Bayern Munich v

Sahara Millennium Cup

Yugoslavia lift title

CALCUTTA, India, Jan 25: Yugoslavia struck two first-half goals to end Bosnia's hopes of success in the ill-attended final of the Sahara Millennium Cup football tournament on Thursday, reports AFP.

Igor Duljaj gave Yugoslavia an early lead in the fifth minute and Igor Bogdanovic increased the margin just before half-time in what transpired to be a largely disappointing encounter.

What was expected to be a keen tussle between the two most competitive sides in the 13-nation tournament turned into a one-sided affair as Bosnia failed to live up to their pre-match promise.

Only 2,000 spectators turned up at the 120,000-seater Salt Lake stadium to watch the finale of India's biggest football event.

But fans were left wanting as Bosnia, who had surprised South American giants Uruguay and Chile on the way to the final, were thwarted by the sturdy Yugoslav defence after the interval.

Yugoslavia, ranked ninth in the world, lived up to their pre-tournament status as favourites by running circles around the 78th-ranked Bosnians.

Both teams, who tied 1-1 earlier in the competition, greeted each other warmly after the match, which passed off without any incidents.

For Bosnian coach Husnija Arapovic a lack of coherence proved his side's major downfall.

"We had played well over the last two weeks, but just did not click today," he said.

"We had to be at our best against a strong side like Yugoslavia. I was hopeful but nothing went right for us."

Yugoslav coach Ilija Petkovic, who had predicted his team would be transformed in the final, was jubilant.

"It took us time to settle down in a new setting, but we were becoming more confident after every game," he said.

"I knew we had won when the second goal came before half-time."

Yugoslav coach Ilija Petkovic, who had predicted his team would be transformed in the final, was jubilant.

"It took us time to settle down in a new setting, but we were becoming more confident after every game," he said.

"I knew we had won when the second goal came before half-time."

Yugoslav coach Ilija Petkovic, who had predicted his team would be transformed in the final, was jubilant.

"It took us time to settle down in a new setting, but we were becoming more confident after every game," he said.

"I knew we had won when the second goal came before half-time."

Yugoslav coach Ilija Petkovic, who had predicted his team would be transformed in the final, was jubilant.

"It took us time to settle down in a new setting, but we were becoming more confident after every game," he said.

"I knew we had won when the second goal came before half-time."

Yugoslav coach Ilija Petkovic, who had predicted his team would be transformed in the final, was jubilant.

"It took us time to settle down in a new setting, but we were becoming more confident after every game," he said.

"I knew we had won when the second goal came before half-time."

Yugoslav coach Ilija Petkovic, who had predicted his team would be transformed in the final, was jubilant.

"It took us time to settle down in a new setting, but we were becoming more confident after every game," he said.

"I knew we had won when the second goal came before half-time."

Yugoslav coach Ilija Petkovic, who had predicted his team would be transformed in the final, was jubilant.

"It took us time to settle down in a new setting, but we were becoming more confident after every game," he said.

"I knew we had won when the second goal came before half-time."

Yugoslav coach Ilija Petkovic, who had predicted his team would be transformed in the final, was jubilant.

"It took us time to settle down in a new setting, but we were becoming more confident after every game," he said.

"I knew we had won when the second goal came before half-time."

English League Cup

Liverpool romp into final

LONDON, Jan 25: Three goals in five devastating first-half minutes helped Liverpool on their way to a 5-0 victory in their semi-final, second leg clash against First division Crystal Palace at Anfield on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Liverpool won the tie 6-2 on aggregate and will meet either Ipswich or Birmingham in the final to be played at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff on February 25. It will be Liverpool's first major final in six years.

Gerard Houllier's men missed a hatful of chances in the first leg and ended up on the wrong end of an embarrassing 2-1 defeat but with the final beckoning, Liverpool were ruthless.

Palace finished with 10 men after goalkeeper Aleksandr Kolinko was sent off for bringing down Fowler nine minutes from time.

Emile Heskey's thigh injury kept him out of the bench, which meant Fowler led the attack alongside Finn.

Palace were missing former Liverpool favourite Neil Ruddock and Chinese defender Fan Zhiyi.

Liverpool started at full steam. A Steven Gerrard header

was held by Kolinko, a header from Murphy went wide, and then a fine Kolinko save from another Murphy effort had Palace under pressure in the first five minutes.

Palace managed a brief spell of possession but another long-ranger from Gerrard - playing at right-back - and a header by Fowler from Gary McAllister's free-kick kept the Londoners at full stretch.

Palace's lead from the first leg was gone after 13 minutes.

Sami Hysypia's clearance was played superbly into space by Fowler for Smicer to outpace Wayne Carlisle and guide a low shot past Kolinko.

Liverpool were ahead in the tie two minutes later. A poor Palace clearance fell to former Barcelona striker Litmanen whose cross was volleyed home spectacularly by Murphy.

The onslaught continued and after 18 minutes it was three. An excellent back-head by Fowler in the centre circle sent Biscan racing away and the Croatian coolly drilled home his first goal for the club.

McAllister almost made it four moments later when he lashed a 25-yard effort against Kolinko's left-hand post.

The First division side's first shot came on 34 minutes when Simon Rodger unleashed a swerving drive from outside the box that skidded wide of the far post.

But the fourth Liverpool goal wasn't long coming. Murphy grabbing his second of the night six minutes after the break.

Palace defenders hesitated going for a long ball down the right and Murphy took possession before clipping the ball past Kolinko from the corner of the box.

Morrison's should have opened Palace's account after 57 minutes when the ball reached him on the far post unmarked but he completely miskicked with his initial effort.

And when the ball bounced up invitingly to him again, Sander Westerveld blocked his follow up attempt to the delight of the home crowd.

Kolinko received his marching orders for obstructing Fowler as the Liverpool man rounded him and headed for goal.

Matthew Gregg took over in goal and Finnish youngster Mikael Forssell had to be sacrificed.

And Fowler got his goal with three minutes left, beating the substitute goalkeeper from the edge of the box.

Gary McAllister (L) of Liverpool winning the aerial tussle with Crystal Palace's Stephen Thompson during their English League Cup semifinal second leg match at Liverpool on January 24.

—AFP photo

—AFP photo

—AFP photo

—AFP photo

—AFP photo

—AFP photo

—AFP photo

—AFP photo

—AFP photo

—AFP photo

Czech Vladmir Smicer. Danny Murphy and Croat Igor Biscan grabbed the three early goals - two of them made by skipper Robbie Fowler - before Murphy grabbed his second of the night.

Fowler got on the scoresheet himself in the closing stages to round off a comprehensive victory for the Premiership side.

Palace finished with 10 men after goalkeeper Aleksandr Kolinko was sent off for bringing down Fowler nine minutes from time.

Emile Heskey's thigh injury kept him out of the bench, which meant Fowler led the attack alongside Finn.

Palace were missing former Liverpool favourite Neil Ruddock and Chinese defender Fan Zhiyi.

Liverpool started at full steam. A Steven Gerrard header

was held by Kolinko, a header from Murphy went wide, and then a fine Kolinko save from another Murphy effort had Palace under pressure in the first five minutes.

Palace managed a brief spell of possession but another long-ranger from Gerrard - playing at right-back - and a header by Fowler from Gary McAllister's free-kick kept the Londoners at full stretch.

The onslaught continued and after 18 minutes it was three. An excellent back-head by Fowler in the centre circle sent Biscan racing away and the Croatian coolly drilled home his first goal for the club.

McAllister almost made it four moments later when he lashed a 25-yard effort against Kolinko's left-hand post.

The First division side's first shot came on 34 minutes when Simon Rodger unleashed a swerving drive from outside the box that skidded wide of the far post.

But the fourth Liverpool goal wasn't long coming. Murphy grabbing his second of the night six minutes after the break.

Palace defenders hesitated going for a long ball down the right and Murphy took possession before clipping the ball past Kolinko from the corner of the box.

Morrison's should have opened Palace's account after 57 minutes when the ball reached him on the far post unmarked but he completely miskicked with his initial effort.

And when the ball bounced up invitingly to him again, Sander Westerveld blocked his follow up attempt to the delight of the home crowd.

Kolinko received his marching orders for obstructing Fowler as the Liverpool man rounded him and headed for goal.

Matthew Gregg took over in goal and Finnish youngster Mikael Forssell had to be sacrificed.

And Fowler got his goal with three minutes left, beating the substitute goalkeeper from the edge of the box.

Nilis leaves football

LONDON, Jan 25: Aston Villa striker Luc Nilis, who fell victim to a horrific career-threatening injury in September, on Wednesday announced his retirement from football, reports AFP.

The Belgian international has been forced to admit defeat in his fight to regain full fitness after suffering the double fracture to his right leg in the Premiership clash with Ipswich.

The 33-year-old sustained the injury in a collision with Ipswich keeper Richard Wright. Subsequent pictures of the injury, which showed Nilis's snapped leg curved around Wright, shocked the football world.

Nilis, who has been recuperating in Belgium, was told by doctors that he would never retain the level of fitness required for him to return to top flight football.

"For the short period I was employed by Aston Villa I enjoyed every minute and am bitterly disappointed I could not continue to score goals," said Nilis.

"But having taken medical advice I will be unable to continue."

Villa chairman Doug Ellis, who called the injury a "tragedy", paid tribute to Nilis's contribution during his short spell at the club.

"Whilst being covered by insurance, that cannot compensate him for not being able to play for Aston Villa," said Ellis.

"It is also hugely disappointing for Aston Villa, who have lost the services of a world-class striker."

"Luc has been a well-liked member of our playing squad and will always be welcome at Aston Villa."

Man City catch Kanchelskis

LONDON, Jan 25: Manchester City have signed unsettled Rangers Ukrainian international Andrei Kanchelskis on loan, it was reported here Thursday, reports AFP.

Kanchelskis, who played last night for the Scottish champions in a friendly at Dumbarton, has moved to Maine Road with a view to a permanent deal.

Royle signed Kanchelskis for five million pounds (7.25 million dollars) when he was manager of Everton in 1995 - from City's arch-rivals Manchester United.

"Andrej gave me two fantastic seasons at Everton and if he reproduces the kind of form he showed there I will be delighted," Royle was quoted as saying by the Daily Mirror.

"He will give us the balance on the right that we have been lacking."

"I am really pleased that we have managed to land him. He is what I call a real impact player."

Royle believes Kanchelskis is the man to lead the Blues clear of the relegation zone.

If the switch proves successful both clubs have agreed that the deal will become permanent in the summer.

Kanchelskis is set to make his debut at Maine Road next Wednesday in the crucial Premiership clash against Liverpool.

Premiership

Leeds' edge past Villa

LONDON, Jan 25: Leeds ended their dismal record against Aston Villa on Wednesday with a 2-1 Premiership victory at Villa Park, reports AFP.

Villa had looked on course for a fifth successive victory against David O'Leary's side when the on song Paul Merson - in front of England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson - put them ahead mid-way through the first half.

But Robbie Keane set up the equaliser for Lee Bowyer and was involved in the move that led to Ian Harte's penalty winner which earned Leeds only their third away league win of the campaign.

Leeds were well worth the victory which leaves Villa with only one league in the last 11 games despite a late rally by the home side in which Merson twice hit the woodwork.

Keane was a constant menace in this mid-table encounter and showed he has quickly adjusted to life back in the Premiership after his unproductive spell in Italy with Inter Milan.

Gregory left out goal-shy striker Dion Dublin as club-record signing Juan Pablo Angel made his home debut.

The Colombian had only one real opportunity in the entire 90 minutes and is clearly a yard off the pace of the Premiership after his month out of action before joining Villa.

Villa took time to get into their stride with Leeds enjoying the bulk of the early possession.

Mark Viduka was off target with a low shot on the turn, but there were too many misplaced passes from both sides in the opening 20 minutes.

Villa slowly started to build up some momentum and Lee Hendrie was just too high with a 20-yard effort.

Angel threatened for the first time when he broke clear of the Leeds defence after seizing onto a pass from Ian Taylor, but Jonathan Woodgate made up