

WC tickets go on sale Thursday

REUTERS, Tokyo
Around 260,000 tickets will be put on sale for the general public outside Japan and South Korea for the World Cup to be co-hosted by the two countries next year, domestic media said on Saturday.

The overseas applications for the tickets will start from next Thursday, when applications for tickets to be sold inside Japan and South Korea also begin, the reports said, quoting officials from a ticket agency designated by FIFA.

A lottery will be held on May 15 following the April 30 deadline for the overseas applications, if as expected, the applications surpass the total allotment of 260,000 tickets, the reports said.

There will be two categories of tickets within the total 260,000 and fans must choose one.

One category is for a desired team and applies only for the matches in which that team will play while the other is for a particular venue and applies for matches to be played there.

In addition to the 260,000 tickets, a second round of overseas ticket sales is expected later this year, although the number of tickets available is still unknown.

Prize money for World Club meet

REUTERS, Madrid

Prize money totalling over 7,300 million pesetas (40.19 million dollars) will be on offer at FIFA's second World Club Championship to be held in Spain from July 29 to August 12. The Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) said on its website on Friday.

The winners of the tournament will take home 1,500 million pesetas (\$8.26 million dollars) and the runners-up 1,000 million pesetas (5.51 million dollars).

The third and fourth-placed teams will be awarded 700 million pesetas (\$3.85 million dollars) and 500 million pesetas (2.75 million dollars) respectively.

The remainder of the prize money will be divided up equally between the other eight clubs participating in the competition.

Following are the 12 teams for the championship

Asia
Jubilo Iwata (Japan) — Winners Asian Super Cup 1999, Al-Hilal (Saudi Arabia) — Winners Asian Super Cup 2000.

Africa
Accra Hearts of Oak (Ghana) — Winners CAF Champions League 2000, Zamalek (Egypt) — Winners CAF Cup of Cup Winners 2000.

CONCACAF
Los Angeles Galaxy (U.S.) — 2000 CONCACAF Champions' Cup winners, CD Olimpia (Honduras) — 2000 CONCACAF Champions' Cup runners-up.

South America
Palmeiras (Brazil) — Winners Copa Libertadores 1999, Boca Juniors (Argentina) — Winners Copa Libertadores 2000.

Oceania
Wollongong Wolves (Australia) — 2001 Oceania Champions' Cup winners

Europe
Real Madrid (Spain) — Winner of the 2000 Champions League, Galatasaray (Turkey) — Winner of the 2000 UEFA Super Cup.
Spain (host country)
Deportivo Coruna — Spanish champions 1999/2000.
The format will be three groups of four teams with the top team in each group and the best second-placed team qualifying for the semifinals.

The venues are Madrid's Santiago Bernabeu and the Vicente Calderon stadiums as well as the Riazor stadium in La Coruna.

Dragan doesn't want to coach

AFP, Belgrade

Yugoslav international Dragan Stojkovic on Thursday ruled out a possible offer to coach the national team, insisting he would play in Japan for Nagoya until the end of 2001 season before retiring to Paris, a daily reported Friday.

The 35-year-old midfielder said that after July 21, when his contract with the Japanese club expires, he will quit playing, move to Paris and "devote myself to my family," the daily Glas javnosti reported.

"Until the summer, I am a football player, after that, a pensioner," Stojkovic said.

He added that "for now, I am not interested in any other offer."

"I am bored with planes and cars, I want to spend New Year's eve with my family and not in quarantine, I want to have some wine with my friends, without thinking of the next day's duties," Stojkovic said.

Stojkovic, who came to Japan in 1994, has been nominated for the best player in the Japanese professional league.



Singapore's Adel Abbas (R) raises his arm after Mohammad Ahmed Salmen of Bahrain blocks the ball using his hand during a World Cup qualifier in Singapore on February 9. Bahrain won 2-1.

WC qualifier Bahrain scrape past S'pore

AFP, Singapore

Bahrain beat Singapore 2-1 on Friday in a bad tempered World Cup qualifying game that saw three players being sent off.

Earlier, Kuwait finished off the first leg of their qualifiers in style, defeating Kyrgyzstan 3-0.

The win gave Kuwait seven points from three matches and the top spot in Group four going into the second leg which begins in Kuwait from February 22-28.

Bahrain started confidently with Yusuf A'amer Al Sadi scoring in the 15th and 25th minutes to take his personal tally to four from three games.

With a two-goal cushion Bahrain were then content to concentrate on breaking down the floundering and ineffective Singapore attack.

On the hour mark, Singapore coach Jan Poulsen made a triple change, pulling off two defenders for more attack-minded midfielders.

The move paid off with substitute Mohammad Noor Ali finding the target five minutes later. But his goal provoked a free-for-all.

As Singapore players rushed to pick ball out of the Bahrain goal for a quick restart, Bahrain players tried to prevent them from doing so and a fracas broke out.

Japanese referee Matsumura Kazuhiko rushed in to restore order but before play recommenced, three players -- Singapore's Noh Alam Shah and Dals Supait and Bahrain's Abdulla Marzooki -- were given their marching orders.

The situation threatened to boil over again when missiles from the stands were thrown at the Bahrain bench and Marzooki as he made his way to the dressing room.

French Cup Lyon prevail on penalties

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REUTERS, Paris

Olympique Lyon reached the French Cup third round when they beat St Etienne 4-3 in a penalty shootout on Friday.

Lyon went ahead through former France striker Patrick Loko in the 51st minute but Brahim Fellahi levelled seven minutes later.

St Etienne midfielder Fabrice Boudarene wasted a good chance when he shot wide in the 76th minute. The 1-1 deadlock remained through extra time.

Lyon coach Jacques Santani said his team would rather have not been forced into the extra 30 minutes ahead of Tuesday's Champions' League match against Arsenal.

Injury-hit Milan

REUTERS, Milan

AC Milan's injury crisis deepened on Friday just five days before they resume their Champions League campaign with a home tie against Paris St Germain.

Captain Paolo Maldini (muscle injury) and experienced midfielder Demetrio Albertini (swollen right knee) were forced to settle for a light work-out in the gym rather than a full training session while Swedish defensive midfielder Thomas Helveg nursed a knee injury.

Centre back Alessandro Costacurta will be out for around two weeks after limping out of Wednesday's Italian Cup semifinal defeat at Fiorentina with a knee injury while midfielder Massimo Ambrosini is out for the rest of the season with torn ligaments.

Milan have been plagued by injuries all year.

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Scholl best in Germany

REUTERS, Munich

Bayern Munich and Germany midfielder Mehmet Scholl was voted Player of the Year 2000 by Germany's professional players on Friday.

Scholl won 151 of 662 votes in the ballot by the Union of Professional Footballers (UvF).

Midfielder Michael Ballack and central defender Jens Nowotny, both with Bayer Leverkusen, came second and third with 139 and 75 votes respectively.

"This is the nicest prize I've ever won. You have to win the respect of your colleagues and this means a lot to me," Scholl said after Bayern's training on Friday.

The creative midfielder was instrumental in Bayern's campaign for the Bundesliga title and was one of the few players to emerge with credit from Germany's disastrous Euro 2000 performance.



Eintracht Frankfurt's Polish forward Pawel Kryszalowicz is about to fall after being tackled by a Cottbus player in their Bundesliga encounter on February 9.

Bundesliga Eintracht out of danger

REUTERS, Berlin

Eintracht Frankfurt moved further away from the relegation zone with a 1-0 win over Energie

Cottbus in a German Bundesliga on Friday.

It was the second victory for Eintracht since coach Felix Magath was sacked following six defeats in a row last week.

Playmaker Horst Heldt hit the

winner in the 65th minute to enable his side to climb up one spot to 12th in the 18-strong league. Cottbus dropped one place to 13th.

Former East Germans Cottbus, playing in the first division for the first time this season, could not recapture the form that had helped them to a 4-1 win over Schalke 04 last Saturday which knocked the Gelsenkirchen club off the top of the table.

Eintracht said this week that they had approached several possible replacements for Magath, among them former Germany libero Lothar Matthaeus.

Director of sport Rolf Dohmen took the coaching job on a caretaker basis after Magath was dismissed. Eintracht beat Hansa Rostock 2-0 in his first match in charge last Sunday.

Leaders Bayern Munich entertain VfB Stuttgart on Sunday.

In Ranieri style

REUTERS, London

Chelsea coach Claudio Ranieri has ignored the example of his garrulous and expansive predecessors and is keeping his own counsel.

After six months in one of English football's most high-profile jobs, the 49-year-old Italian has gone to ground, refusing to discuss team, tactics or results outside his small coterie of coaching confidants.

Ranieri's appointment, replacing former Juventus and Italy striker Gianluca Vialli last September, was greeted with shock and disbelief in south-west London but he has no intention of wooing back hostile fans or critical commentators, except in carefully-worded articles in the club's own publications.

Ranieri's attitude is in stark contrast to Vialli's open government style of management.

Vialli, Chelsea's most successful coach who took the side to victory in the European Cup Winners' Cup, League Cup and FA Cup as well as to the quarter-finals of the Champions League, enjoyed talking about his team.

A polished and well-educated man, Vialli studied English diligently, paying particular attention to colloquialisms and slang which he trotted out comfortably at news conferences.

But even Vialli appeared relatively restrained compared with his predecessor, Dutch international and former world footballer of the year Ruud Gullit.

Gullit waxed lyrical about the total football he had brought to Stamford Bridge, chatted easily with fans and reporters, became a television pundit and made a fortune out of chocolate and pizza commercials.

Gullit had been brought to London by former England midfielder Glenn Hoddle, who started

the flow of international talent to the Bridge and, while not as articulate as his successor, was always ready with an opinion.

Hoddle went on to become England manager and it was his eagerness to express some rather unorthodox views about disabled people that forced him to resign two years ago.

But Ranieri is different. He had no glittering career on the pitch with which to impress supporters and has no silver-tongued facility in English with which to impress reporters.

In Italian he is perfectly eloquent, humorous and incisive but the comments he made in the early days were clumsily translated, badly interpreted and lost on the British press.

The resulting ridicule, as well as criticism as Chelsea failed to raise their game while he settled in, obviously stung and he clammed up.

"If people want to know why I don't speak to the press, it's because I have decided that if we win or draw it's to the merit of the team so I send a representative of the players. When we lose I shall continue to speak," Ranieri wrote in a recent edition of the Chelsea club members' newspaper.

While other high-profile foreign coaches such as French duo Arsene Wenger of Arsenal and Gerard Houllier of Liverpool are only too happy to air their views before and after matches, Ranieri will say nothing even to a generally sympathetic Italian media.

As Chelsea's form has picked up in the new year, Ranieri has largely been able to stay out of the limelight and leave the talking to players, particularly to his compatriot, diminutive striker Gianfranco Zola, a favourite with Chelsea fans who worked briefly under Ranieri at Napoli.

But the coach was forced out into the open at Leicester last Saturday when Chelsea went down

21, extending an unenviable run of 10 months without a league win away from home and slipping to eighth in the table.

His reaction via an interpreter threw some light on his struggle to get his highly-paid band of international talent, which includes World Cup winning defenders Marcel Desailly and Frank Leboeuf and Netherlands striker Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink, into shape.

"We have to recognise that Leicester were more determined than us," he said.

Chelsea, with a reputation as the glamour club from the fashionable side of London, have long been accused of finding the winning spirit only for the big games.

Last season they beat Manchester United 5-0 at home but lost points to small clubs.

At the start of this season they were touted as championship contenders and UEFA Cup winners but they collapsed in the first round of the European competition to Switzerland's St Gallen and suffered a run of mediocre results which led to Vialli's departure.

Chelsea managing director, Colin Hutchinson, aware the club need to win the premier league and get further in European competition to help fund a huge player wage bill and expansion at the ground, said the side were looking to Ranieri for the sort of leadership that

Vialli, so recently a player, could not offer.

"To take us to another level we felt we had to go for an experienced coach," he said.

The 49-year-old Ranieri has form. He made his name with Sardinian side Cagliari whom he took from Serie C to Serie A.

He then worked at Napoli for two seasons and joined Fiorentina in 1993, winning promotion with them and later the Italian Cup and Italian Super Cup.

Europe in turmoil

Football

REUTERS, Rome

As if coping with the introduction of a new transfer system wasn't enough, the men that run European soccer have another huge problem on their hands — fake passports.

Players the world over, eager to gain entry into the lucrative European game, are claiming to be all sorts of nationalities they are not. Brazilians are pretending to be Portuguese, Uruguayans say they are Italians, others from countries many European fans have never heard of are claiming to be French, Dutch or Greek.

The scandal, which began when a Polish immigration officer didn't like the look of a dodgy Portuguese passport last October, has grown into a major scandal. As many as 1,000 players around the continent could be implicated.

And the tentacles of suspicion are spreading. Almost 80 players in France are being investigated and there are concerns about hundreds more in Italy, England, Spain and Portugal.

Clubs face punishment, docked points or possible relegation. Players face fines or deportation.

Leagues in Europe have different rules governing the eligibility of non-EU players. Some countries demand work permits, others

limit the number of non-EU players each club is allowed to employ. So players, however skilful, from outside the 15-nation EU face a struggle for acceptance and clubs are tempted to turn a blind eye to documentation that is less than perfect.

The latest big club to be touched by the scandal is Inter Milan. Coach Marco Tardelli said on Friday it would be absurd to dock the club points for its alleged involvement.

Tardelli was speaking the day after an official at the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) said Inter and Udinese were the Serie A clubs most at risk in the scandal.

"I hope the passport issue can be resolved quickly and I think it would be absurd to penalise the club," Tardelli told reporters at Inter's Appiano Gentile training camp.

Inter are in trouble for fielding Uruguayan forward Alvaro Recoba as an EU player on the basis of his Italian passport which has since been proved false.

If they are docked points they could be dragged into a fight to avoid relegation for the first time in their 93-year history.

Inter are by no means the only club facing an unpleasant surprise. Spanish media have reported that Brazilian player

Georlan Gomes Bastos, known as Gil, used documents belonging to a dead Portuguese citizen to

play in Spain as an EU national. Gil played under the name Julian Rodrigues Gil for third division side Lorca last season.

Spanish media highlighted a web site which offers what it claimed to be genuine EU passports for \$38,000 dollars a time.

The French Football Federation has led the way in punishing clubs for fielding players with irregular paperwork.

Former European Cup finalists St Etienne were docked six points for using two players charged with holding false passports and now face a fight against relegation.

The German Football Association (DFB), acting on a request from soccer's world governing body FIFA, said it had asked all its clubs for information on players with dual citizenship.

"We have written to all the clubs," said DFB official Volker Nickchen, adding there was no indication so far that any Bundesliga player had an illegal passport.

There are 16 players with double nationality in the German first division, among them Werder Bremen's Peruvian striker Claudio Pizarro, Bayern Munich's Paraguayan striker Roque Santa Cruz and Bayer Leverkusen's Argentine midfielder Diego Placente.

"We trust the documents which were presented to us are genuine," Werder's director of sport Klaus Allofs said when asked about Pizarro.

Wenger for changes

Football

AFP, London

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger called Friday for a complete overhaul of the Football Association's (FA) video advisory panel, which is currently randomly convened to judge on-field disciplinary matters which referees miss.

Arsenal's France midfielder World Cup hero Patrick Vieira was handed a one-match ban Thursday on the recommendation of the video panel.

And although Wenger admits Vieira is relieved not to have suffered a bigger punishment, he also concludes that players taking part in high-profile matches are far more vulnerable to punishment.

The FA sent the video of Arsenal's stormy English Premiership match at Leeds on November 21 to members of the video panel and

asked them to judge whether Vieira should face a misconduct charge on two particular incidents that were not seen at the time by referee Dermot Gallacher.

Vieira was subsequently cleared of an allegation that he head-butted Leeds rival Erik Bakke but found guilty of violent intent against fellow French midfielder Olivier Dacourt.

He now serves a one-match ban against Ipswich at Highbury on Saturday, which is something of an escape as offences of violence should carry a minimum three-match suspension.

Vieira's next match should be Tuesday's Champions League clash away to French club Lyon on Tuesday.

But Wenger, speaking at Arsenal's training ground Friday, asked: "Would he have been charged if he were not on Sky News every five minutes?"

"You have to ask yourself if

players are more likely to be punished if their matches are on TV. For me it can only be right if everybody is put under the same scrutiny."

In France a video panel reviews film of all matches every weekend and reacts accordingly to incidents of misbehaviour.

He said: "I'm not saying that the FA must do that here but what we have now in England are only guidelines, not rules. And it can be very confusing. You just don't know whether you are going to be done or not."

Only a week ago, Wenger won an appeal to quash the 12-match touchline ban the FA handed him earlier this season after an incident reported by fourth official Paul Taylor on the opening day of the season at Sunderland.

Wenger said: "Finally I had a fair hearing but I was still given a fine and that is the first mark on my disciplinary record. I don't like it."

English inquiry hailed

Football

AFP, London

The head of England's Professional Footballers' Association (PFA), Gordon Taylor, on Friday welcomed an investigation into claims that clubs here are fielding illegal players.

Police have confirmed they will be examining passports of 80 players born outside the European Union (EU) and competing in the English Premiership and Football League on dual-nationality EU passports.

And Taylor agreed that questions needed to be asked in order to stop the "open house" situation that currently existed within the English game.

"I do welcome an investigation if some clubs have knowingly complied with forged passports because there's sporting rules here as well as criminal laws at stake,"

he told BBC Radio Five.

"I think you either have an open house or you have rules that protect the game's integrity and at the moment it appears to be open house in England."

Taylor argued that much of the blame for the problem lay at the door of football agents.

He said: "Clearly there's been a racket organised by the agents for money to get passports to make sure they don't have work permits. Or where a team has three or

more non-EU players in the squad then it suits them also to have such a passport."

"I think it has been inspired by agents because there's some big money at stake for them to make. Of course Europe is where the money is so that's where the Eastern Europeans, South Americans and South Africans would rather be."

"If the clubs struggle to get a work permit for the players or they already have enough non-EU players then clearly they could all be involved, and that's why football couldn't do it on its own, it would also need the (British) Home Office."

British sports minister Kate Hoey, Home Office representatives and the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS) will be meeting next week and NCIS officials, working with the Home Office immigration department, will examine the authenticity of European passports held by those players born outside the EU.

Bologna booter killed in mishap

AFP, Bologna

Seventeen-year-old Bologna footballer Nicolo Galli, son of former Italy national team goalkeeper Giovanni, was killed Friday evening in a road accident as he returned home from training, the club confirmed.



French First Division Lens' joint coaches Georges Tournay (C) and Didier Senac (R) address a press conference to announce their appointment following the resignation of Roland Courbis.