

S African FA Cup Maritzburg City stun Ajax Cape

AFP, Pietermaritzburg

Third Division Maritzburg City stunned Premier League side Ajax Cape Town 1-0 late Friday in a South African FA Cup first-round tie.

Ajax, who are owned by former European champions Ajax Amsterdam, won the League Cup midway through the season and were expected to brush aside their lowly rivals in the KwaZulu-Natal city.

But a 30th-minute goal from Daniel Thlageng proved decisive and City had several opportunities to increase their advantage before a large crowd at Harry Gwala Stadium.

The cup is sponsored by a national bank and carries a first prize of 250,000 dollars, making it the richest domestic knockout competition in Africa.



PHOTO AFP

Manchester United's Norwegian striker Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (L) is under pressure from Lucas Radebe of Leeds United during their Premiership fixture on Saturday.

Antognoni's no

AFP, Florence

Florentina legend Giancarlo Antognoni ruled out a speedy return to the club here Saturday following his resignation in disgust at the treatment of former manager Faeth Terim.

Antognoni quit as director-general on Monday, minutes after Turkish coach Faeth Terim also fell on his sword, his position made untenable after the club board openly courted Roberto Mancini as a successor.

"I will not return as long as certain directors are at the club," Antognoni told local radio Saturday, in an apparent reference to club president Vittorio Cecchi Gori and vice-president Mario Scacchi.

Dispelling talk he could return as club president with a new regime, Antognoni, who had enjoyed a 30-year relationship with Florentina, added: "President Vittorio Cecchi Gori has no intention of giving up the club."

Terim, whose Italian and Turkish coaching staff resigned in solidarity, had received little support from the northern giants such as Juventus to stay in Tuscany.

He was considered the most talented player of his generation in Italy and was the playmaker for the 1982 World Cup winning side although he did not play in the final because of injury.

Until Monday Antognoni had always been fiercely loyal to the Florence club. During his playing career he frequently rejected offers from the northern giants such as Juventus to stay in Tuscany.

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S-Pulse's reprisal

REUTERS, Tokyo

Shimizu S-Pulse gained some revenge against Kashima Antlers on Saturday as they outclassed them 3-0 to lift Japan's Xerox Cup, the curtain-raiser for the new season.

The last time the two teams met was on New Year's Day when the Antlers won the Emperor's Cup with a 3-2 extra-time victory over S-Pulse, completing an unprecedented J-League trophy treble.

Brazilian midfielder Alex, J-League's player of the year in 1999, new acquisition Marcelo Baron and Japan's Masaaki Sawanobori scored the goals for manager Zdravko Zemunovic's team during Saturday one-sided affair.

The first stage of the J-League season starts next Saturday, with Antlers and Yokohama F Marinos the title favourites. Antlers claimed the league championship, the League Cup and Emperor's Cup last season.

Gerhard next DFB chief?

REUTERS, Berlin

Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder said on Saturday he was optimistic of being elected president of the German Football Association (DFB) next month.

"I am confident. Nobody has said anything against me and I can see no obstacles," he said.

The former president of German First Division club VfB Stuttgart is the only candidate.

The 68-year-old has been acting as DFB president since Egidius Braun, who is not seeking re-election, underwent heart bypass surgery last year.

The new DFB president will be elected at the governing body's congress from April 28 to 29 in Magdeburg.

Viduka holds M United

Football

REUTERS, Leeds

Mark Viduka scored with a header six minutes from time to give Leeds United a deserved 1-1 draw with Premier League leaders Manchester United on Saturday.

After Luke Chadwick had scored only his second goal for the Manchester side in the 64th minute, Viduka levelled the scores with his 16th goal of the season.

Leeds were then controversially denied a winner in injury time when Manchester United defender Wes Brown slid Lee Bowyer's cross past his own goalkeeper Fabian Barthez.

The linesman ruled Harry Kewell offside, a decision which infuriated Leeds manager David O'Leary.

"I thought it was a goal," O'Leary said. "Wes Brown put it in

the net and he knows he's cost them a goal. They're not looking for an offside decision."

"It's a decision the linesman's given and nobody else, to me it's a shocking decision."

"For the last 20 minutes we looked a side that's really dangerous and I think we should have got the win."

Barthez was earlier involved in a moment of madness when he conceded a 45th minute penalty for kicking Ian Harte in his own penalty area.

Referee Graham Barber chose only to book Barthez and the Frenchman duly atoned by diving to his right to save Harte's spot kick.

Barthez was by far the busier of the two keepers as Leeds went in search of the three points that would have lifted them up to third place in the Premier League.

First, his sliding tackle on Robbie Keane prevented a certain

early goal after Jaap Stam had caused panic with a short back pass.

He then tipped over Harte's dipping free kick from the right touchline and saved smartly at the feet of Keane. The Premier League leaders, missing the injured Roy Keane and Ryan Giggs, finally broke the deadlock with their first effort on target.

Paul Scholes set Ole Gunnar Solskjaer clear, and when goalkeeper Nigel Martyn could only parry the Norwegian's goalbound effort, Chadwick tapped the loose ball home from close range.

Barber booked eight players, five from Manchester and three from Leeds, as a series of niggling fouls continued to spoil the game.

Leeds were finally rewarded for their earlier efforts when Bowyer flicked on Danny Mills' right wing cross and Viduka dived in to head home.



PHOTO INTERNET

Kashima Antlers striker Takayuki Suzuki (R) and Shimizu S-Pulse midfielder Teruyoshi Ito are in pursuit of the ball during their Xerox Cup final at the National Stadium in Tokyo on Saturday.

'I was just being nosey'

Football

AFP, Hull

Leeds United soccer star Jonathan Woodgate denied that he had jumped on an Asian student as he lay on the ground, his trial here at Hull Crown Court was told Friday.

The England international defender told police that he was "just being nosey" when he ran after teammate Lee Bowyer and a group of friends as they ran away from a Leeds city centre nightclub.

But Woodgate said that he had slipped over on his ankle and had not gone into Mill Hill, where 20-year-old Sarfraz Najib was kicked and beaten senseless in January last year.

Detective Constable Christopher Windle said that Woodgate told him he and a group of long-time friends, who he would not name, left the Majesty nightclub after one of them was thrown out for being loud.

"There was something going on with some Asian lads," he was said to have told Windle.

"I saw something but I couldn't remember what it was. The Asians ran, my mate ran and I followed him just to see what was happening, just to see what he was doing. "I was being nosey more than anything. I saw something running after him. I was far behind and I couldn't see anything."

"I ran to the corner and there must have been someone on the floor. I couldn't see who it was, I was so far behind."

Windle said that Woodgate told him Bowyer had run and he had followed him. But he said he did not know the five or six people running in front were Asians.

Woodgate denied to police that he was racist, said Windle.

"I'm just running and I go round the corner and there's someone on the floor," Woodgate told the officer.

Asked how the person had come to be on the floor, Woodgate replied: "No idea. I was that far behind. I couldn't see anything."

He denied he and Bowyer had come round the corner and attacked anyone.

A witness who had identified him as doing the jumping was "mistaken".

He said he had only stayed at the top of Mill Hill for 30 seconds.

As he ran down the road he had slipped and injured his ankle, which had put him at the back of the group. He had then "hobbled back".

Woodgate said he did not see

or hear anything that was going on "because I was that much bothered about my ankle... my ankle was killing me."

Woodgate, 21, of Middlesbrough, Bowyer, 24, an England Under-21 international, of Leeds, Tony Hackworth, 20, a reserve team striker of Leeds and Neale Cavenny and Paul Clifford, both 21, of Middlesbrough, deny causing grievous bodily harm with intent to Mr Najib of Rotherham, South Yorkshire. They also deny affray.

Woodgate, Cavenny and Clifford, with Leeds United player Michael Duberry, 24, also pleaded not guilty to conspiring to pervert the course of justice after the attack in January last year.

Woodgate refused to name the four friends who were with him as they visited pubs, clubs and a lap-dancing bar earlier in the evening.

In later interviews he said he would only answer questions about himself and not others.

Woodgate said in the first pub he had drunk five or six bottles of Mule, a vodka-based cocktail. There were also six football friends there, although again he had refused to name them.

They had gone onto Yates', where they drank pints of Mule and Bacardi Breezer.

At the DVB lap-dancing bar he had not drunk anything because they did not sell those drinks.

"I just stuffed my face with sausage rolls," he said.

The trial was adjourned until Monday.

No salary at Fiorentina?

REUTERS, Rome

Players at managerless Serie A side Fiorentina have not been paid for four months, the club's Portuguese midfielder Rui Costa said on Friday.

Italian news agency ANSA reported earlier that Fiorentina vice-president Mario Scacchi had said players salaries were being paid regularly.

But Rui Costa, responding to the remarks, told reporters in Florence: "It's right that everyone should know that for some time, for four months, we players haven't received a lira."

"And yet we've never stopped playing or training because of it. We've never wanted to cause a fuss over it."

No one at the club was available for comment.

Fiorentina were plunged into crisis on Monday when Turkish coach Faeth Terim and his entire coaching staff quit after a reported bust-up with club president Vittorio Cecchi Gori.

Former Sampdoria and Lazio forward Roberto Mancini is lined up to take over but has hit obstacles related to his contract at Lazio, which is still valid, and his lack of an Italian professional coaching certificate.

Fiorentina have taken just three points from their last 18 and have slipped down the league from third to 10th. They have not won a Serie A match since January 13.

"To say that I'm sad, bitter and unhappy goes without saying," said Rui Costa, who has had an outstanding season.

"What's less obvious, however, is that the years pass and the situation remains the same."

Rui Costa has been at Fiorentina since 1994 when he joined from Benfica. He is widely tipped to move on at the end of this season.

Palace borrow Premiership pair

AFP, London

English First Division Crystal Palace signed two Premiership players on month-long loan deals here Friday.

The London club's manager Alan Smith has secured the services of Arsenal defender Matthew Upson and Ipswich left-back Amir Karic.

England Under-21 international Upson has made 29 first-team appearances for Arsenal but has found his first-team opportunities limited this season, despite injuries to first-choice centre backs Tony Adams and Martin Keown.

Upson has vented his frustration in the British national press during the last 48 hours.

The 21-year-old will go straight into the Eagles' squad for Saturday's home game against Preston.

Slovenian Karic, 27, will also be available for selection if his work permit comes through in time.

Karic has struggled to force his way into the Portman Road first team since his move from Slovenian side NK Maribor.

Roma nearing deal with MU, Yankees

AFP, Rome

Italian First Division leaders AS Roma are forging ties with English Premiership outfit Manchester United and America's most famous baseball team the New York Yankees, the Serie A club's president Franco Sensi told Corriere dello Sport on Saturday.

Last month United and the Yankees agreed a pioneering business alliance and now Sensi claims that the fine detail of a new agreement involving his team is now being discussed.

"In this period we have had contacts with Manchester United and also the New York baseball side, the Yankees, to affiliate and profit from our products," Sensi told the paper. "The negotiations are very far advanced. I think the only outstanding issue to conclude is merchandising."

Sensi admits that in merchandising Italy still has a lot to learn from England and the United States.

In those countries fans have no complex about adorning their bodies in the colours of their favourite teams with replica shirts and baseball caps almost 'de rigueur'.

But in style-conscious Italy — even though the support for football is equally fanatical — the wearing of such items is seen as something of a fashion aberration and even at the stadium a discreetly worn scarf is often the biggest sartorial commitment a fan will make to his team.

Sensi also took comfort from a recent CNN poll that said Roma was the world's fifth most important football club after Real Madrid, Barcelona, Manchester United and Bayern Munich.



PHOTO INTERNET

Brazil national soccer team players jog at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California on Friday ahead of their international friendly against the United States on Saturday.

Double blow to St Etienne

Football

AFP, Paris

Former French footballing giants St Etienne lost their second appeal against having points deducted over the false passport affair on Friday and had their original penalty of seven points restored from the six that they had been penalised in their first appeal.

The French Football Federation (FFF) commission also ruled that Toulouse should not receive the three points they had been awarded last month because St Etienne played their league match in December with Brazil's Alex and Ukrainian goalkeeper Maxim Levitskiy in the team.

The two players were later found guilty of playing with false Portuguese and Greek passports.

The decision puts St Etienne, second from the bottom on 24

points, just behind Toulouse on 25 points, with Strasbourg, sitting on the bottom with 19 points, after also been deducted three points on Friday.

The commission ruled that the replay of the Strasbourg — Metz match on December 21, stopped in the 67th minute when a lineswoman was injured by a flare thrown from the stands, should take place behind closed doors at an unspecified date.

Strasbourg, who had been leading 1-0 when the match was abandoned, have been deducted three points, with both clubs fined 100,000 francs (14,255 dollars).

Both Strasbourg and Toulouse have indicated they will appeal against the respective decisions.

"Strasbourg's responsibility has been recognised. They did not face up to their obligations," commission president Xavier Lebray said.

"The match will be played behind closed doors because this

type of behaviour is unacceptable," he added.

Djetou may join Fulham

AFP, Monaco

The captain of French champions Monaco, Martin Djetou, looks set to join English First Division leaders Fulham from next season, a source close to the Monaco club said on Friday.

Monaco have rejected an initial offer of 75 million francs (10.7 million dollars) from the London club, but has accepted that 26-year-old central defender Djetou can leave the club at the end of the season, the source said.

Fulham are managed by former French international Jean Tigana, who used to coach Monaco.

Acosta leaves his job

REUTERS, Santiago

Nelson Acosta quit as Chile's national coach on Friday, following a disappointing run of results in the country's bid to reach the 2002 World Cup finals.

Acosta offered his resignation and it was accepted by the Chilean Soccer Association (AFC). Chile are currently seventh in South America's 10-team CONMEBOL qualifying group after three wins, one draw and six defeats.

"After he offered his resignation, we accepted according to the terms of the contract," AFC official Marcos Araya told reporters.

The search for a replacement for the Uruguayan coach, who had been in charge since 1996, will begin next Tuesday, officials said.

Under Acosta, Chile reached the 1998 World Cup finals in France and took the bronze medal in the 2000 Olympic tournament in Sydney.

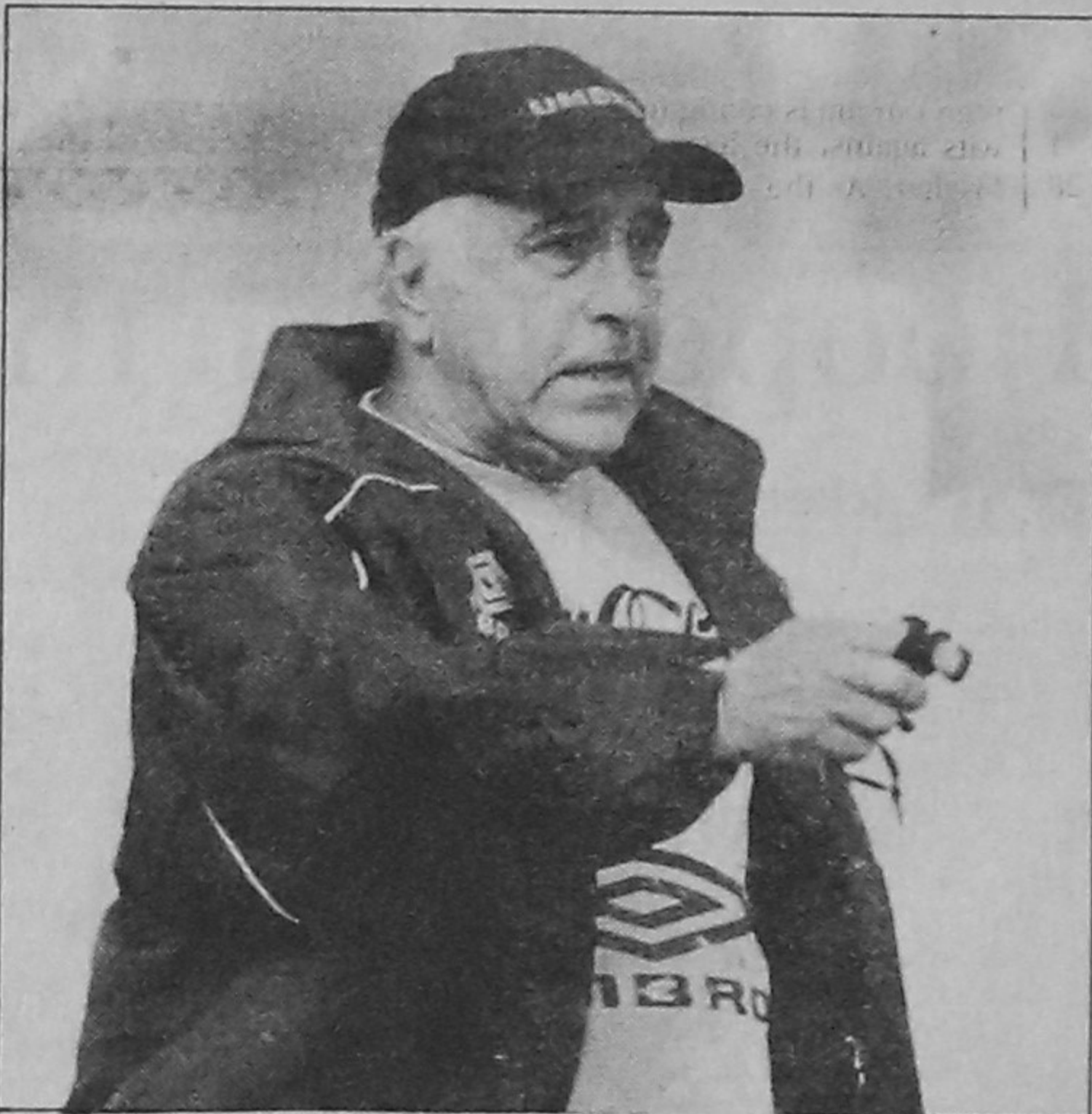


PHOTO INTERNET

A file picture of Uruguayan coach Nelson Acosta who resigned on Friday.

Clough's complaint

Football

AFP, London

Former Nottingham Forest manager Brian Clough has made a stinging attack on Bryan Robson, claiming he is "incredibly lucky" still to be in management.

Clough claims he has never seen a manager receive the level of support Robson has from Middlesbrough chairman Steve Gibson and that the former England captain is being "propped up" by Terry Venables.

Clough is confident Venables will keep the Teessiders in the Premiership and he feels it could be difficult for Robson to slip back into the manager's chair in the summer as planned.

The legendary English manager said Robson should learn all he can from Venables while he remains in charge at the Riverside Stadium.

"Bryan Robson has a huge problem at the end of the season, and it'll show if he's got any credibility left as a manager," Clough told Match of the Day magazine.

"I'm sure that Terry Venables will keep Middlesbrough in the Premiership because he's a highly talented coach — who makes his players laugh while getting them working hard at the right times — unlike Robson when he was in charge."

"I've never known a manager get the kind of support that Robson's enjoyed from his chairman."

"When you think of all the good men of football who are out of the game Robson is incredibly

lucky still to be in work. "He's being propped up by Terry, so what will he learn from that?"

"He should be making mental notes every time Terry opens his mouth over the next few months and trying to get inside his shell."

"Terry doesn't just know the ropes; he made them and he knows the game from A-Z."

Clough does not believe Venables when the former England

coach says he will definitely stand down at the end of the season.

"He says that he's going to go at the end of the season but he's a butterfly who has been known on the odd occasion to change his mind," he said in the Match of the Day magazine.

"Terry can be a bit like one of those fickle women; when he says no it's a definite maybe — probably."

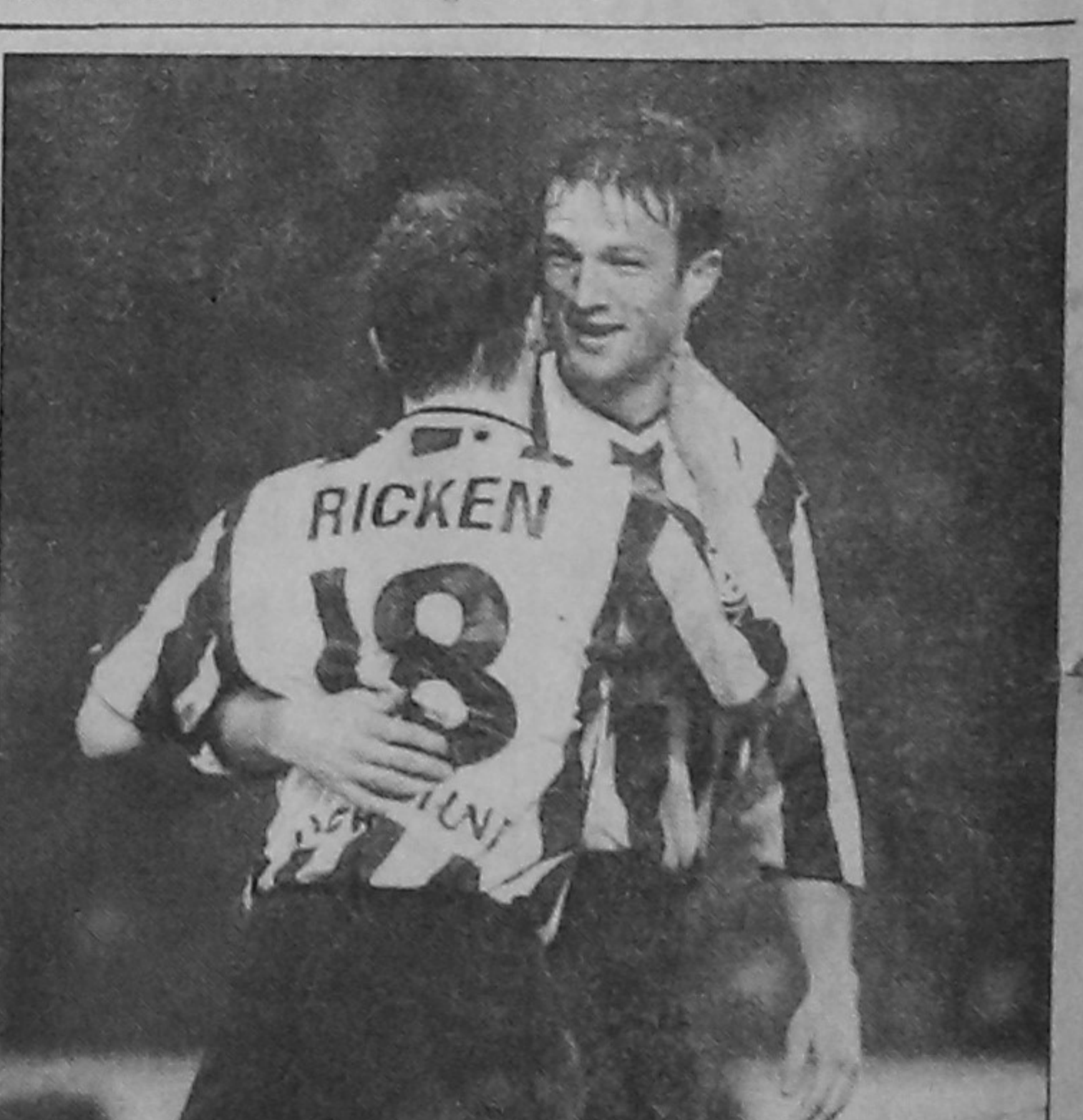


PHOTO INTERNET

Borussia Dortmund's Fredi Bobic (R) and Lars Ricken (L) embrace each other to celebrate the third goal against Eintracht Frankfurt during their Bundesliga clash on Friday. Dortmund thrashed Eintracht 6-0.