# SPÖRT

his side a vital away goal, but squan-

four minutes before the interval

when he burst down Ireland's vul-

nerable left side to put in a neat

the Irish defence as Iran struggled to

get enough players into the box to

although strike duo Robbie Keane

and David Connolly worked hard to

keep the Iran defence on their toes

which meant the home side could

never afford to commit too many

men to attack in the opening period.

half. Mahdavakia was booked for a

foul on Keane as Iranian frustration

at their lack of potency began to

grow and they were left to rue

another missed chance when Karim

Bagheri shot wide from the edge of

the box after an interchange of

made up for it with a pass that

released Connolly into space, but

his fellow striker shot wide with

Ebrahim Mirzapour in goal well

Given was on top form again

when he dived to keep out Bagheri's

54th minute strike and then pushed

the rebound off the toes of Daei for a

threw himself to his right to deny a

sharp volley from Hamed

Mahdavakia broke down the right with 11 minutes left, but again

his cross failed to find a teammate in

a move which summed up Iran's

World Cup dream was about to die, they showered plastic bottles onto

the pitch while Blazevic was left to cut a sad figure just four weeks after

he had confidently predicted that

tonight gave it their all. We're abso-

lutely shattered now, so we just

have to go home and enjoy the party," the keeper told the BBC.

Given played down his role in

"The whole squad of players

Iran would make it to the finals.

Ireland's win.

As the fans realised that Iran's

The Newcastle goalkeeper then

Keane was then booked but he

passes by Karimi and Daei.

Two minutes into the second

support the forlorn Daei.

But the ball was easily cleared by

Ireland rarely threatened

Karimi, however, did well just

dered them.

# Ireland make it to finals

settle into any sort of pattern.

over the Ireland goal.

Veteran skipper Ali Daei shot

wide after just ten minutes with a

weak left footed effort, but the open-

ings for the Hertha Berlin forward

were few and far between as

crosses found their way high and

Iran first threatened Given's goal but

It was only on the half hour that



AFP, Tehran

The Republic of Ireland clinched a place in the World Cup finals for the third time in their history despite losing 1-0 to Iran here on Thursday in the second leg of their European/Asian play-off.

Mick McCarthy's men went through to the finals in Japan and Korea next summer courtesy of their 2-0 first leg win in Dublin on Saturday.

Iran scored in the first minute of injury time at the end of the game when Yahya Golmohammadi headed in a free kick - to inflict the first defeat on the Irish in a competitive game since Croatia beat them in September 1999 in a Euro 2000 qualifier - but it was all too little, too

Once again Ireland were indebted to goalkeeper Shay Given who, just as in the first leg, pulled off a string of fine saves to deny Iran who had the lion's share of the chances to score but were found wanting in front of goal.

Ireland went into the match with their 2-0 cushion, but had to face Iran without influential skipper Roy Keane, who was ruled out through

After the match, McCarthy was in

"It's a dream come true for me and everyone. We've waited a long time for this. They are a wonderful group of players and staff, they deserve it

"I am very happy because we have waited for this day for a long time. I am proud for my family, the country, the supporters.

"We have worked hard for this goal, but I want to thank the lovely Iranian people. I am sorry we eliminated them but very happy we have qualified."

Iran coach Miroslav Blazevic, who coached the Croatia side that beat the Irish back in 1999, said he was prepared to take responsibility for the defeat.

to the World Cup finals," said the Croatian who took his own country to the semi-finals in France in 1998.

"I did my best. If the team hasn't qualified, then I assume it is my fault," added Blazevic.

McCarthy's 57th match in charge of the national team was played in front of 120,000 passionate fans,

some of whom had been in the



Disgruntled Iranian fans at Tehran's Azadi Stadium burn placards after missing out on their country's qualification for the World Cup 2002 on November 15.

around six hours before the kick-off. There were around 1000 Irish fans inside the Azadi Stadium including 20 women - the first time female spectators had been allowed to watch a match in the ground since

the Islamic Revolution in 1979. The expectations of the huge crowd eager to see Iran make it to the finals for the second time in Daei, with ten goals in the earlier qualifiers, headed over the top from right wing cross by Mehdi Mahdavakia.

Then, three minutes later, Daei allowed a long ball to bounce over him into the path of Ali Karimi but the midfielder's header was put wide of the goal with Given beaten.

Karimi was left wondering what he had to do to score - on Saturday,

### Paraguay fire coach

AFP, Asuncion

Paraguay coach Sergio Markarian was sacked late Thursday following his side's 4-0 home thrashing by Colombia on the final day of the Latin American qualifiers for the 2002 World Cup final.

Paraguay automatically qualified for next year's final in Japan and South Korea in fourth position behind Argentina, Ecuador and

But Markarian had been severely criticised for the team's poor recent form which included a 3-1 defeat to Venezuela a week ago, followed by Wednesday's hammering by Colombia which resulted in the team dropping from second position which they had held for most of the

Paraguayan Football Federation (APF) spokesman Federico Frutos said that Markarian and all the technical staff were being dropped.

Frutos added that a possible successor for the Uruguayan included Brazilian Paulo Cesar Carpegiani, who lead Paraguay to the 1998 World Cup finals where they were beaten in the last 16 by eventual champions France.

#### Suker signs for 1860 Munich

AFP. Munich

Veteran Croatian striker Davor Suker has signed for German side 1860 Munich, club officials announced on Thursday.

The 33-year-old, who has played 64 times for Croatia, was the top scorer at the 1998 World Cup finals in France and played for English Premiership side West Ham last

### Serie A preview

## Verona centre of all attention



Verona takes centre stage in the weekend Italian First Division programme as Verona and Chievo clash in the city's first ever Serie A

The landmark fixture would have probably sold out anyway but Chievo's totally unexpected climb to the top of the division in their debut campaign has ensured a 42.000 capacity crowd.

Chievo, now co-tenants with Verona at the Stadio Marc'Antonio Bentegodi but named after their former home - a tiny hamlet to the north of the city where only 2900 people live - have surprised even themselves with a controversial 3-2 defeat by Juventus the only reverse so far in nine outings.

Verona - whose full name is Hellas Verona in honour of the city's historic Greek community - have also made a solid start in contrast to last year when they only avoided relegation by winning a play-off with

The derby has been baptised the 'Romeo and Juliet derby' in honour of the city's most famous feud when the Montague and Capulet families went to war at the end of the 13th

But the city fathers - or in the case of Mayoress Michela Sironi the city mother - have this time taken measures to prevent disorder.

With relations between supporters relatively good it is hoped the vicious fighting commonplace at other Italian derbies will be absent.

Indeed the rapport between fans of both Verona clubs is unusual. Both clubs have the same colours dark blue and yellow - and carry banners featuring ladders, the emblem of the highly-cultured but despotic Scaligeri family that ran the city in the Middle Ages.

Both sets of fans have also made the Bentegodi's Curva Sud their home - an unusual situation for an Italy where usually territory is marked out among rival factions when clubs share a stadium.

At Milan's San Siro for instance Inter Milan's ultras always occupy the Curva Nord and AC Milan's the Curva Sud, meaning there is no turf war at derby matches.

But Chievo fans have accepted their transfer away from the Curva Sud with good grace, accepting Verona as home team has priority.

The links continue at playing level. Verona coach Alberto Malesani - a true Veronese - first made his reputation as the coach who got Chievo promoted to Serie B seven years ago.

And while former Chievo star Michele Cossato plays for Verona on Sunday he will be battling with brother Federico, still with the club known locally as the 'dyke' because of the district's flood barrier on the banks of the River Adige.

Chievo's glory run has revitalised the football scene in Verona which last experienced the feelgood factor unexpectedly - won the only Scudetto in the city's history, no mean feat for a team pitted against Diego Maradona's Napoli and Michel Platini's Juventus.

The other big fixture of the weekend is Saturday night when champions AS Roma host Inter Milan.

If Inter win they go provisionally

New AC Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti makes his Serie A bow at home to Piacenza while another debutant is Argentinian boss Daniel Passarella whose Parma side visit Juventus, winless in six Serie A

Atalanta host bottom club Venezia at Bergamo while Torino visit Fiorentina.

Lecce host Bologna who could also go provisionally joint top with Chievo in the event of the latter losing the derby and Inter failing to

Perugia host Brescia while Lazio make the trip north to face Roy Hodason's Udinese.

#### **FIXTURES** (14:00 GMT unless stated) Saturday: AS Roma v Inter Milan (19:30 GMT)

Sunday: Atalanta v Venezia. Fiorentina v Torino, Juventus v Parma, Lecce v Bologna, AC Milan v Piacenza, Perugia v Brescia, Udinese v Lazio. Verona v Chievo (19:30 GMT)

### Primera Liga preview

# Barca plan no let-off



AFP, Barcelona

In England, there is a saying that a week in politics is a long time but, in Spain, a week in football can be even longer especially at Barce-

A week ago, Barcelona coach Charly Rexach could have been excused for fearing for his future after his side's 2-0 defeat at bitter rivals Real Madrid and then being bounced out of the Spanish Cup 1-0 by Third Division Figueres.

However, an emphatic 4-0 victorv over Valladolid last Sunday moved Barcelona back into second place in the Spanish First Division and removed Rexach off the fans' hit list.

Deportivo La Coruna are still the league leaders with 23 points from 12 games but Barcelona are breathing down their necks, just one point adrift, and a good result at Las Palmas on Saturday could strengthen their challenge.

Last season. Barcelona beat the Canary island club 1-0 in their own Estadio Insular, with the decider coming from the Brazilian international Rivaldo.

After battling against a debilitating series of injuries since the start of the season, Rexach can choose from nearly all of his 24-man first team squad for Saturday's game. This week, Dutch international

Spanish international counterpart Luis Enrique Martinez both trained normally for the first time following recent injuries and only Spanish international defenders Abelardo Fernandez and Sergi Barjuan, both long-term absentees, are unavail-"Everything is fine with my right

midfielder Philip Cocu and his

eg now and I'm keen to play on Saturday," said Cocu. "I know there is talk that the coach may save me for the Champions

League match against Liverpool next Tuesday, but every day if feel better and if I am fit I would like to play," added Cocu. One man likely to be on the

sidelines, recharging his batteries for the trip to Merseyside, is the Argentine teenage sensation Javier Saviola. Saviola scored twice against Valladolid and now has six goals this

season to his name but Rexach is keen not see him burn out too soon. with a long season ahead at home and abroad. Las Palmas are no pushovers at

home, and have already beaten Real Madrid and Celta Vigo by the same 4-2 margin this season. However, the hosts will have to

do without their veteran defender Edu Alonso, who picked up a thigh injury in last Sunday's 2-0 loss at Villarreal, and also their Peruvian midfielder Juan Jose Jayo, who is on World Cup duty.

Deportivo will hope to bounce back after last Sunday's surprise 3-1 defeat at Tenerife, and heap more misery on relegation-threatened Real Sociedad.

The league leaders' coach Javier Irureta has said that he will ring the changes in the wake of the defeat, not principally because of his unhappiness with various players, but to keep some of them fresh for Wednesday's Champions League match against English Premiership side Arsenal.

Spanish international Diego Tristan could make way for Dutch striker Roy Makaay and the mercurial Brazilian midfielder Djalminha is expected to start his first league game after being injured in August.

Statistics suggest that Real Madrid, who are still unbeaten at home this season despite languishing in 11th place, shouldn't have too much trouble despatching Sevilla. who have not won at the Santiago Bernabeu for more than a decade.

#### **FIXTURES** (all kick off times 1500 GM)

except where stated) Saturday: Real Madrid v Sevilla (1730). Deportivo La Coruna v Real Sociedad (1930), Las Palmas v

Sunday: Alaves v Celta Vigo. Athletic Bilbao v Villarreal, Espanyol v Real Mallorca, Malaga v Osasuna, Valencia v Tenerife, Valladolid v Real Zaragoza, Real Betis v Rayo Vallecano (1800)

Barcelona (2000)

#### Peremiership preview

# Tough time awaits Campbell



AFP, London

Emotions are threatening to spill over on Saturday when Arsenal defender Sol Campbell makes his eagerly-anticipated return to White Hart Lane to face former club Tottenham in the north London

Campbell, 27, joined the Gunners in the summer after lengthy negotiations failed to secure a contract extension with Tottenham, the club he joined as a schoolboy.

Tottenham refused to meet Campbell's exorbitant wage demands and many of the Premiership club's supporters felt the stylish England international was holding the club to ransom. The fans who once adored Camp-

bell then turned on their hero when he decided to opt for Tottenham's fiercest rivals rather than move elsewhere - despite having plenty of other offers on the table.

Several supporters' groups have organised demonstrations this weekend and Tottenham officials have responded by stepping up security at the stadium. Up to 4,000 ballons with the word

'Judas' printed on them are to be released when Campbell takes the field while others are planning to turn their backs on the England star. Fake money is to be thrown in the air as the Tottenham faithful take a swipe at Campbell's excessive pay demands.

Relationships between the two sets of supporters have been fragile at the best of times, but Tottenham manager Glenn Hoddle hopes common sense will prevail on

"I want all their (the fans) energy focused on getting behind our team for 90 minutes, because our incentive is to get the three points and go above Arsenal in the league," said Hoddle, himself a Tottenham icon in the 1970s and 80s.

"That surely has got to be much more of an incentive than having a go at Sol.

"If they concentrate wholly on having a go at Sol then they have missed the day - and the day is that if we win we go above Arsenal. "If they are true Spurs supporters

then they will see that themselves, and that will be their number one incentive." added the former England coach.

Arsenal, in fifth, have 19 points from 11 matches, two more than their north London rivals, who are

Manchester United will be hoping to get their championship challenge back on track when they entertain strugglers Leicester at Old Trafford Currently lying sixth in the table,

points at this stage of the season than at any time for 11 years. United are hoping to have France

Alex Ferguson's men have fewer

goalkeeper Fabien Barthez available on Saturday, but the eccentric shot-stopper must first prove he has overcome his ietlag

Barthez, one of several Englishbased French internationals to take part in France's 1-1 friendly draw against Australia in Melbourne last weekend, has been criticised for some questionable performances in the United goal.

He was at fault for Liverpool's third and decisive goal in the 3-1 defeat at Anfield a fortnight ago, and two blunders against Deportivo La Coruna cost the reigning Premier-

ship champions top spot in the first phase of the Champions League.

But the former Monaco man remains defiant, shrugging off claims that he is suffering a dip in form and is low on confidence. "I have never given too much

thought to the criticism I have received from the press," he told MUTV, Manchester United's satellite TV channel. "Most press people have never

set foot on a football pitch and so I consider criticism to be more important if it comes from my fellow teammates, the manager, or people from

"The press is very much a part of a footballer's life and it all comes down to whether you are superb at

one moment, or bad at another. "I have still got five years left at Manchester to decide whether I become the best in the world again, or the worst. You have to take these things calmly and not pay too much

attention to them." he said. In Saturday's early match, second-placed Liverpool can take pole position with victory at Blackburn as table-toppers Leeds play Sunderland a day later.

#### **FIXTURES** (1400GMT unless stated)

Saturday: Aston Villa v Middlesbrough, Blackburn v Liverpool (1200GMT), Derby v Southampton, Fulham v Newcastle, Manchester United v Leicester, Sunderland v Leeds. Tottenham v Arsenal

Sunday: Everton v Chelsea (1400GMT), Ipswich v Bolton (1600GMT), Sunderland v Leeds

### "I am very sad because my team succession weighed heavily on the 'Eerie' in Tehran

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP KOREA APAN

AFP, Tehran "It was eerie," says Susan, one of the first women ever to be permitted entry into the big Azadi stadium in Tehran where some 90,000 Iranian football fans had already taken their seats to watch Thursday's World Cup play-off between Iran and

"We were upset at first beca there were rumours that they wouldn't let us in, just before the match outside the stadium " says Susan an Irish fan in her fifties who arrived

in Tehran earlier in the morning. "But then we entered the stadium, such a huge stadium - unlike the ones in Ireland. Amazing. The masses across us on the other side, the sound of drums, and we were the first women. I felt so tiny, you know. It was eerie," she says and laughs

you, it was really worth it. I feel like I can write a book now: A Day in Tehran," says Susan, who was accompanied by her 28-year-old

Susan and some 20 other Irish

"At home, all my friends were

saying I'm crazy to make the long

trip, and that to Iran! But I can tell

and orange, along with some 250 Irish men, were given a special place in the stadium, separated by iron bars and dozens of security men to protect them from any possi-

The Irish women were officially the first women ever to be permitted to witness a football match in Iran from within the stadium since the 1979 Islamic revolution. Iranian women were still barred from

attending Thursday's game. "The presence of these women in the stadium has been ruled out. said Shahrokh Jahanshahi. the deputy Tehran governor guoted in the conservative Jomhuri-Eslami

The same paper had on Monday said the presence of Irish women at the match may prompt "fierce reactions" from influential clerics. "But we were there, and we were

paper in the run-up to the game

treated very kindly," insists Sandra. another Irish woman in her fifties. "At the end, we had to wait for the Iranians to leave the stadium. It is standard for any match we got to see outside of Ireland. But the

(Iranian) disappointment was in the àir," Sandra says. "Right across us, some of them burnt this huge Iranian flag, and to our left they also burnt this gigantic

banner they had set up reading 'Iran

3-0." she adds.

"Within seconds after the match, anti-riot units with batons were everywhere. There were even some scuffles, but it was dark, we couldn't

"I felt bad for them. Of course it's upsetting. I'd be upset too if we had lost. Well, we did lose, but then

again we made it," Sandra says.

out onto the streets, win or lose, much to the distress of authorities here in Islamic Iran. In October, a total of some 1,000 people were arrested in Tehran during post-match celebrations which frequently sparked rioting and

In recent weeks, and after nearly

every World Cup 2002 qualifying

match, young Iranians have poured

clashes, both in the capital as well as other major cities. Authorities even impounded some 5.000 satellite dishes in Tehran since October 25, with authorities fearing that exiled opposition groups may incite trouble via satellite broadcast from the United

The troubles even led officials, including moderate President Mohammad Khatami, to call on the nation's youth to curb their emo-

"The expression of joy should not cause problems and anger among other citizens," Khatami said in October.

# **Big Phil relaxed** at last



INTERNET, Rio de Janeiro The relief on coach Luis Felipe Scolari's face in the press interview he gave after Brazil's 3 0 win over Venezuela was obvious to all present. Brazil have finally qualified for the 2002 World Cup finals. After the game, 'Big Phil' spoke about a range of subjects, saying that he expected

to take the team to South Korea and

Japan, that the team would do well in the Cup and accepted the praise of the players under his command. The relief was such, particularly

Romario in the World Cup squad. Scolari began by thanking the players for the efforts they made and sending messages to his sons, who he had promised Brazil's qualification. After this emotional beginning, 'Big Phil' spoke about what he has

after the ease of the victory against Venezuela, that little was actually said about the game. The interview began with statements by 'Big Phil' and continued with journalists trying to get his opinion about possible changes in the Technical Commission and the inclusion of

learnt along the rocky road to World Cup qualification. "When I first took over I thought that things would be very different,

but I was quick to appreciate the

challenges and what I had to do and

to change, even concerning my

relationship with the press. I now

intend to relax, have a glass of wine

from the South only then will I start to make plans for the World Cup."

Most of the names on the list for the World Cup squad are already certain according to Scolari. For him, between 70 and 75% of the players at Sao Luis will go to South Korea and Japan, as well as the Technical Commission, which according to him will remain unchanged

Regarding the Technical Commission what can I say except that we are all employed by the CBF and our work is still under evaluation. I personally have nothing against any particular member of the Commission. IN terms of the players, the group is largely defined, but now that the storm has past we can think about which other players we can include in the friendly matches between now and the

Cup. It was not long before the spectre of Romario loomed over the press conference. 'Big Phil' refused to name any players specifically, and denied that he has criticised the Vasco striker, but was nevertheless quite firm in his reply, saying that was as not much public clamour to

include the striker as in the past. " There is a fine line that exists integrating the group. This involves complete dedication, determination and a certain attitude. If I am as stubborn as they say, popular pressure will do little to help any cause. When asked in the right way I will give everything to the game... but the more people force me to adopt a certain posture the more I tend to do

### and eat some of my favorite dishes Beckenbauer tips France, Argentina



AFP, Berlin

German football legend Franz Beckenbauer on Friday tipped France and Argentina as the teams to beat in next year's World Cup. Beckenbauer, who won the World Cup with West Germany as a player in 1974, and as manager in 1990, ruled out both Germany and England's chances of victory in

"What can we hope for after a 4-1 win against the Ukraine?" asked Beckenbauer in his weekly column in Bild newspaper. "Not the title. France and Argentina are clearly ahead of us.

Japan and South Korea.

"Behind these two teams which are above the rest I see us in the same group as the other big nations England, Spain, Italy and even. Brazil who had difficulty qualifying like us," said Beckenbauer, vicepresident of the German Football

Federation (DFB). Germany finally secured their berth qualifying 5-2 on aggregate after defeating the Ukraine 4-1 in the second-leg playoff in Dortmund

But the man nicknamed the

Kaiser during his playing career

on Wednesday.

believes there is still a lot of work to be done with the German team. 'The problem with our team is that it lacks internal stability. Rudi Voller is going to work in the seven coming months so that the team

plays in a more consistent manner."

And Beckenbauer, president of

the German organising committee for the 2006 World Cup, believes Voller should stay on as coach for the coming years. "Let Rudi do the World Cup, that of 2002 and also 2006," added the

Bayern Munich president. Voller told Bild that if Germany had been eliminated by the Ukraine he would mostly likely have resigned, but that he was still not sure whether he will be coach until the World Cup.