name but so far nobody has been in

touch," Santini told the L'Equipe.fr

Frederic Thiriez was quoted as

saying by the daily Le Monde that he

was against Santini's candidacy

Lemerre's reluctance to talk to

France's 1998 World cup-

the press was one of the many

winning coach Aime Jacquet

favours the appointment of France

under-21 coach Raymond

"It seems obvious to me. I'm a

member of the National Technical

Direction (DTN) and have worked

with it for ten years. If Roger goes,

and I insist on the 'if', then I'm a

candidate." Domenech said last

know all the players eligible for the A

team right now. I have trained them

all as youngsters and I have no

problems with leading a squad like

Alain Giresse, who currently

coaches Morocco's FAR Rabat, has

also put himself forward. "I have

always been interested in the job but

I was far from thinking about it," he

co-hosts Japan to the last 16 of the

Vorld Cup, has also been touted.

case there are changes at the top of

the French team but I'm not the only one," he said a few days ago.

Didier Deschamps and former

international midfielder Jean Tigana

are among the other men often cited

in the press but they are tied by their

jobs at Monaco and Fulham respec-

Philippe Troussier, who guided

"I'm among the candidates in

World Cup-winning captain

Former international midfielder

"I'm the under-21 manager and I

Wednesday on his website.

things which antagonised his critics.

because "he had problems commu-

nicating with other people."

Domenech.

But French league president

# Case O'Leary's undoing



AFP, London

Former Leeds manager David O'Leary claimed Sunday had it not been for the court case involving England international defender Jonathan Woodgate and midfielder Lee Bowyer the club would have won the Premiership and he would still be in the hot seat.

The 44-vear-old former Republic of Ireland great was sacked a fortnight ago as the board finally lost patience with him for not delivering a trophy despite spending nearly 100 million pounds.

However O'Leary believes he would be preparing the squad for a fifth campaign had not the club been distracted by the court proceedings involving Bowyer and Woodgate on assaulting an Asian student.

Bowyer was subsequently cleared after a second trial - the first one being declared a mistrial because the student's father gave an interview to a Sunday paper while the jury was out considering its verdict - and Woodgate was found guilty of affray.

"My only regret is that circum-

Celtic boss Martin O'Neill has hinted

that he could leave Parkhead when

his contract runs out in the summer

O'Neill. "The days of someone

staying at a football club for eight or

linking him with Leeds United earlier

this week by insisting that he would

see out his current Celtic deal, but

he admitted on Saturday that he

may not be extending his stay any

years now and I have attempted to

say things as honestly as I can and it

makes no difference whatsoever,"

explained the Irish coach. "People

talk about my contract and, as I have

said before, there was nothing

sinister about that, but when some-

thing like this crops up then people

immediately start to wonder about it.

sit down with [Celtic's majority shareholderl Dermot Desmond and

have a full discussion on it and I am

players and we're going to try and

add to that, whatever sort of budgets

are allowed. Because everything in

football is so short term, what is the

point of planning for four years down

the way when that doesn't happen?

galvanised for each season and we

have plenty of big challenges com-

"The idea is you get players

O'Neill is now trying to keep his

attention firmly focused on the

forthcoming season, with Celtic

looking to defend their title as well as

embarking on their second consec-

utive Champions' League cam-

paign. "There's lots of things here

"We're in the Champions

for us to do." said the former

happy to leave it like that.

"I will, at some stage or another,

"The previous year there was no

"I have been in Scotland for two

10 years are a thing of the past."

"Nothing is forever," reasoned

O'Neill finally ended speculation

Football

**INTERNET, Glasgow** 

further than that.

print what they want

spired against us and prevented us winning the Premiership in the past two seasons," he wrote in his Sunday People column. "We could have done and given

stances on and off the pitch con-

the wonderful Leeds fans the trophy they crave and deserve," added O'Leary, who himself came in for criticism when his book on the trial was serialised two days after the verdicts were handed down.

O'Leary also hit back at the board declaring that allowing the best players to leave the club such as star defender Rio Ferdinand would destroy any chance they had of competing with the likes of Arsenal and Manchester United.

While lack of trophies was given as the reason for the Irishman's sacking the board were also displeased he had stated he would do everything in his power to stop Ferdinand being sold.

"Robbie Fowler kindly told me he had come to the club because of me and my ambition and he said it was the right thing to do to speak out about wanting to keep Rio

"He said both he and Rio came because of what we were building at Leeds and he felt it wouldn't send out good signals if we sold our best

O'Neill staying till 2003

one game but we're going to try our

very best to make sure we get into

the group stages, and of course we

have a championship to try and

O'Leary also denied dressing room discord had been another



DAVID O'LEARY

reason for his dismissal

"I've been stung by the suggestions that dressing room unrest was behind my sacking

"I had a good relationship with the players, but any manager will tell you when you are trying to improve a squad you'll always fall out with people who aren't in the team. Some can be sour but others are fine."

O'Leary said that even though the team had not won a trophy the man who took over from him

legal proceedings against all that.

I am happy at Celtic, I always have

been and without sounding patron-

The most important thing is this:

thought likely to be Middlesbrough's Steve McCLaren - would have quite a task to emulate what he had achieved - a UEFA Cup and Champions League semi-finals being the highlights.

SPÖRT

"Clearly, he'll have to do better

"I thought I did more than okay under the circumstances of horrendous off-field problems at the club, but if my record is going to get the sack then the next guy in had better have some record!'

O'Leary even suggested that he would love to return at some point to the Leeds job.

"I have some unfinished business at Leeds, and my dream is that I can go back to Elland Road as manager one day.

"If that sounds crazy, then people don't understand just how much Leeds meant - and still means - to

"I haven't said goodbye to the Leeds fans because I hope, under different circumstances, I'll come

"My time there was fantastic, an incredible adventure, a real rollercoaster ride."



### Lazio still want Veron

**INTERNET, Rome** 

Lazio are ready to swap two of their Argentine contingent to land Juan Sebastian Veron according to British tabloid reports.

Striker Claudio Lopez says he and midfielder Juan Pablo Sorin are on their way to Old Trafford in a swap with Veron.

He is quoted as saying: " received a call from a club director on Thursday and he sounded me out

### Haka hold **Fulham**

REUTERS, London

Fulham hit the woodwork twice while being held to a goalless draw at home by Finland's FC Haka in the Intertoto Cup on Saturday.

The English premier league club fielded a strong side, including new signing, Argentine striker Facundo Sava, for the first leg of the secondround match but failed to break through at Craven Cottage.

French striker Steve Marlet's 31st-minute strike was palmed on to the crossbar by Haka's goalkeeper Mihail Slawuta

Louis Saha was also denied by the woodwork, his 48th-minute deflected shot cannoning against the crossbar and away to safety.

The second leg takes place on Sunday July 14. Three teams from the Intertoto Cup qualify for the

### Eindhoven snub Arsenal move

Dutch giants PSV Eindhoven turned down English Premiership champions Arsenal's bid to sign midfielder Marc van Bommel after they offered Nigerian striker Nwankwo Kanu plus cash it was reported Saturday.

Arsenal have made 24-year-old van Bommel their top target this summer and his signature became even more urgent after it was learned Friday that Swedish star Freddie Ljungberg would be out for several months because of a hip

However PSV president Harry van Raaij rejected the option of exchanging his outstanding international midfielder for the declining talents of Kanu, who endured an injury-hit World Cup finals.

Raaij told the Daily Mail.

## **Multi-lingual** Man City

REUTERS, Manchester

Manchester City manager Kevin Keegan has no concerns about language problems in his multinational squad -- as all the players speak English.

their mother tongue, including new signings Sylvain Distin, Nicolas Anelka and Marc-Vivien Foe, as premier league newcomers City follow the vogue for seeking transfer value overseas.

"When I look at the nationalities that were all playing together for City last season I couldn't believe it.' said Keegan, who took the club to promotion in his first season in

"I have no worry about the mix of nationalities playing or the fact that a number of them speak French. Those things don't worry me.

"But we have no such problems in the squad. They all speak good English. Lucien Mettomo, Sylvain Distin and Nicolas Anelka speak great English."

# Serie A milestone



INTERNET, Rome

The Italian football federation has confirmed that Cristina Cini will become Italian First Division's first female assistant referee next sea-

A after impressing the federation's referee selection committee during last season's Serie C promotion play-off between Brescello and Sambenedettese.

contain her delight when she was told the news on Saturday. "I am really happy and I want to thank the Mattei," said Cini.

"I am ready to face all of stick that is sure to come my way every Sunday," she grinned, "but to be honest, I don't think I will be treated that differently. If you make the right decisions, people soon forget that

in the Italian lower leagues for some time, but none have ever managed to work their way up to the top until 20 years ago, Luana Ercolessi

for Italy's official refereeing course, but her application was flatly rejected. Ercolessi campaigned against the decision, and will be thrilled to discover that her plight has not been in vain.

Graz's Bundesliga match against SV Ried.

the first woman to officiate in a Champions' league match, while the 25-year-old Caroline Domenech recently won the plaudits for her refereeing display in a showpiece match between Real Madrid and

#### Michel Platini, who is a vicepresident of the French Football Federation and sits on both the FIFA and the UEFA executive committees, is championing Jacques

became the first female to register

Austria became the first country to give a woman the chance to prove herself as a referee at the top level when Nicole Petignan, a 33-year-old music teacher, took charge of Sturm

Nelly Viennot, 37, then became

## to McClaren Football

Leeds look

AFP, London

Football

French Soccer Federation (FFF)

president Claude Simonet says that

"three or four names" are in conten-

tion to replace sacked France coach

mind and I hope I'll be able to solve

the problem between July 14 and

July 20," Simonet told a FFF general

assembly meeting in Lyon on

The general assembly confirmed

Lemerre's dismissal, proposed by

the FFF council, on Friday, 24 days

after the defending champions

suffered a humiliating World Cup

the council had given him a man-

date to select the new coach "after

consultations with the people in

charge of French professional

candidates are already queuing up

officially, or through their support-

Francois Domergue, a former Paris

St Germain manager who last

season guided Le Havre to promo-

Santini resigned as Olympique

"Of course, I'm interested in the

Lyon coach after taking them to the

French first division title last season,

job and I'm very touched when I hear

people like Michel Platini quoting my

but stayed on as club manager.

ers, to replace Lemerre.

He didn't quote any names but

Simonet is in favour of Jean-

Simonet told the assembly that

"I have three or four names in

REUTERS, Paris

Roger Lemerre.

first round exit.

Middlesbrough boss Steve McClaren was installed as the favourite to replace David O'Leary

talking to those members of his team who played under McClaren in the World Cup last month."

On Saturday, Celtic manager Martin O'Neill ended prolonged media speculation by insisting he was not about to succeed O'Leary at Elland Road



STEVE McCLAREN

as manager of English Premiership rivals Leeds by several British newspapers here Sunday.

According to the Sunday People 'McClaren will return from a family holiday in Spain this week to be

offered the Leeds job". Its tabloid stablemate, the Sunday Mirror, said there was noth-

ing Middlesbrough could do to stop McClaren leaving because "he has a 1.2 million pounds (1.76 million dollars) get-out clause in his contract, an agreed figure of compensation in the event of an approach from another top flight club.

McClaren, formerly Alex Ferguson's right-hand man at Manchester United, is currently number three in England's coaching set-up behind Sven-Goran Eriksson and Tord Grip.

And the broadsheet Observer said Leeds chairman Peter Ridsdale was "particularly impressed after

Republic of Ireland great O'l eary was sacked last month after a trophy-less four years in charge despite spending some 100 million pounds (147 million dollars) on players.

The biggest single chunk of that went on England's Rio Ferdinand, who arrived from West Ham for 18 million pounds (26 million dollars) - a world record fee for a defender.

Matters between O'Leary and Leeds are believed to have come to a head when he said he would do everything in his power to keep Ferdinand at the club despite a rumoured 35 million pounds (51 million dollars) bid by Manchester United for his services.

Ridsdale had instructed former Arsenal centre-back O'Leary to make a 15 million pounds (22 million dollars) profit on transfers this sum-

## Spurs eye Nuno

Football

BBC, London

Tottenham Hotspur are hopeful of signing Portuguese international striker Nuno Gomes within the next 48 hours, according to reports. A Florence court placed

Fiorentina, now in Serie B, in administration in June and the club need to sell to help sort out their perilous financial position.

"There could be developments in the next few days," Fiorentina sports director Giuseppe Pavone told the Sunday Express newspaper.

Gomes' former club Benfica have offered to take him on loan, but Fiorentina are only interested in a permanent deal.

"We don't want to loan the player as Benfica want," added Pavone. "We won't change our position on that. We'll sell the player if we

receive a good offer. "We spent about £10m on Gomes. It would not make sense to

loan him out now."

Gomes was a member of the Portuguese World Cup squad that failed to qualify from the group phase of the competition.

And Spurs boss Glenn Hoddle is keen to strenathen his options in attack. Chris Armstrong is out of contract

and has not been offered a new deal, while Norwegian Steffen Iversen has suffered from terrible injury problems during his spell at White Hart Lane.

Sergei Rebrov is out of favour at the club while Teddy Sheringham, now 35, and Les Ferdinand, 36, are in the latter stages of their careers. Spurs have acquired just two

players since the end of the season, signing both Jamie Redknapp and Slovakia's Milenko Acimovic on free

## League, albeit that might only be for Manchester United and I had to take **Guus heads to PSV**



Leicester City boss.

AFP, Seoul

Guus Hiddink returned to the Netherlands on Sunday having completed an 18-month mission to make South Korea Asia's top team

The Dutchman, who said he would start talks Monday with Dutch side PSV Eindhoven, was given a hero's farewell by hundreds of fans and again promised

"It's not goodbye just 'so long'," Hiddink said before a flight to Amsterdam after a ceremony put on by South Korea's Red Devil supporters while a school band played a farewell song.

Since South Korea became the first Asian team to reach the semifinals of the World Cup, which the country co-hosted, with Japan, Hiddink has become the most popular foreigner in South Korea's

He has been made an honorary citizen and given huge bonuses and advertising contracts, a free holiday home, free first class air travel, a luxury limousine and free

He started work with the national squad in January 2001 at a time when the country was worried that it would become the first

World Cup hosts to fail to get past the first round of the tournament. The results of his tough training

"There's been mounting specu-

lation and it's a wee bit like last

season when we had to refute

suggestions that Manchester

"So much so that a very reputa-

ble newspaper had me down as

having clandestine meetings with

United were knocking on the door.

methods were not quick to come but victories over Portugal, Spain and Italy at the finals secured Hiddink's place in South Korean

His contract ran out after the



**GUUS HIDDINK** 

third place play off and despite the offer of a major new deal, Hiddink has insisted he wants to be involved in daily club football. Eindhoven are favourites to

secure his services. "I will meet team officials tomorrow to have discussions about that," he said.

"I think negotiations will proceed well because we understand each other.'

ising it's a great club to be at and I'm

Celtic kicked off their prepara-

happy to see my contract through."

tions for the new season in winning

style with a 4-1 thrashing of

Shelbourne on Saturday. John

Hartson scored twice with Didier

Agathe and Chris Sutton also on the

scoresheet for the SPL champions

Hiddink has promised to stay involved in Korean football as an advisor ahead of the 2004 Olympics and 2006 World Cup. He has insisted that Eindhoven must give him time to work with

Korean squads and also said he

wants to take talented young

Korean players to Europe to improve their experience in tougher leagues. 'I have not made a decision yet on which players I would like to take with me to Europe," he said. "They could be younger than those

in the World Cup squad." Top members of the squad are already looking to European

Young striker Cha Du-Ri is already reported to have made an accord with Bayer Leverkusen in Germany and Seol Ki-Hyeon already plays with Anderlecht in Ahn Jung-Hwan, who was

named Asian player of the month for his role in the World Cup campaign, is also looking for another European club after rejecting a return to Perugia in Italy. Park Ji-Sung, who now plays in

Japan, and Yoo Sang-Cul are also

being tipped for a move to Europe.

"What do I want with Kanu?" van

Eight of them have French as

### Football Female referees and assistant referees have been commonplace

Cini has been promoted to Serie

The 32-year-old could hardly referees' coordinator Maurizio

Freddie feels

treatment from the Sweden medical

staff and returned to England where

Richard Villar performed key-hole

surgery on the cartilage around his

groggy," Ljunberg told Aftonbladet

of action for the next two months at

least, ruling him out of the start of

Arsenal's defence of the Premier

League title and also Sweden's first

creative force in midfield after

Robert Pires' damaged cruciate

ligaments, and scored seven goals

in the last eight games of the sea-

son, including the second in the 2-0

until the final match." continued

Recoba. "But this time we will show

evervone that we are winners by

finishing the job off. I think we have a

good enough squad to compete on

two fronts.

FA Cup final win over Chelsea.

Ljungberg took over as Arsenal's

two Euro 2004 qualifiers.

through his agent Richard Villar.

"Right now I feel dazed and

Ljungberg is expected to be out

hip joint in Cambridge on Saturday.

happy Football

**INTERNET,** London Arsenal midfielder Fredrik Ljungberg is confident the operation he had on his hip on Saturday was a success. "Everything has gone fine," he said. "It hurts after the surgery, but the pain should be gone

in a few days.' Ljungberg played in Sweden's two opening World Cup games against England and Nigeria despite struggling with a back injury, but was forced to sit out the games against Argentina and Senegal after

sustaining the hip injury in training. Ljungberg failed to respond to

## Recoba dreams of **Champs League**

## ¥VEF∢ CHAMPS LEAGUE

**INTERNET, Rome** 

Alvaro Recoba admits he is desperate to enjoy a Champions' League run with Inter this season after missing out in the previous cam-"Last season was a disappoint-

tional. "We must not fail in our initial objective - and that means getting through the Champions League's preliminary round. "Only then should we start looking ahead to the Scudetto. I don't want to play in the Uefa Cup any-

more. I need to be competing

against the top clubs in Europe," he

ment," said the Uruguay interna-

Recoba joined up with the rest of the Inter squad for pre-season training on Saturday after enjoying a well-earned holiday in Sardinia. The diminutive playmaker failed

insisted.

to inspire Uruguay beyond the group stages of the World Cup in Japan and South Korea, but has wasted no time in switching his attentions back to his club. "I want us to try to emulate our league campaign last season up

**ALVARO RECOBA**