



The Daily Star

personal terms and say they made

following this story with intense

interest and can assure them that as

soon as there is any further news

then we will let them know," said

joined Middlesbrough in 1995 and

immediately became a fans' favour-

ite before leaving for Atletico two

He returned on loan to the

Juninho featured in five of

Teesside club in September 1999,

before joining Brazilian sides Vasco

Brazil's matches at the World Cup in

South Korea and Japan last month.

including a late substitute appear-

ance in the 2-0 victory over

disclose the agreed fee with

Atletico, announced the club record

8.15 million pounds (\$12.5 million)

purchase of Empoli striker Massimo

negotiations to sign two more play-

Maccarone last week and are also in

Middlesbrough, who did not

Germany in the final.

ers.

da Gama and Flamengo on loan.

The 29-year-old playmaker first

Allan.

vears later.

"We know how our fans are

Juninho a "very attractive" offer.

UEFA cut down Champs' League



AP, Nyon

In a sudden about-face. European soccer's governing body on Thursday decided to scrap the second group phase of the Champions League as from the 2003-2004 season to reduce the number of matches clubs have to play

The new format still will involve 32 participants playing in eight groups of four in the first round, but it will then revert to a two-leg knockout system, UEFA said.

"We believe this reduction in the size of the competition is in the longer term interests of everyone involved -- clubs, players, fans, broadcasters, sponsors and European football in general," said UEFA President, Lennart Johansson

"It is not easy to change a competition which is recognized as the best club event in the world, but sometimes you need to act for the future. We want to see a better balance in European football, a less congested fixture list for players and clubs and a flagship competition which has the right sporting mix and brand strenath '

UEFA said that recent evidence proved a change was in order.

"At the World Cup there were many injuries because players were worn out." Johansson said. "Also. we've been shown that people aren't able to digest every match shown of television. Many people are confused with the match dates.

"Football has its attraction but we should not overdo it."

The move is an abrupt aboutface from UEFA's decision last December, when it announced it would leave the Champions League's 32-club format untouched

INTERNET

smile again.



Lennart Johansson, the UEFA president, addresses the media in Nyon on July 11.

UEFA Cup.

on players also increased.

at least until 2006. At the time, Johansson said a change. study showed that while general

interest in soccer seemed to have UEFA's flagship tournament started peaked, the Champions League in 1999. Previously there was a was still in demand. "At that time there was not the surviving clubs going into twoenough evidence we should

change, though there were indications," explained UEFA chief executive Gerhard Aigner.

"But since then, we've played some Champions League second phase matches and there have been further developments in the market and with the public. And it became evident this change should not wait until 2006 but go ahead in 2003. "It came in a short period of time

ideas from different sources," but it was obvious we needed to Johansson said. "The clubs them-The second group phase of selves have found that the number of matches needs to be reduced. We consulted about 100 clubs from single round-robin group stage with each and every sector, and they all leg knockout matches similar to the changed their minds.

> "Now we have to wait for the reaction as a whole. But in the end we needed to do something for the

Elite group unimpressed

REUTERS, London

Europe's top clubs have hit out at UEFA's overhaul of the Champions League

The G-14 lobby, which includes Bayern Munich, Manchester United and European champions Real Madrid, oppose Thursday's decision to scrap the second group phase of the competition.

"We are very surprised by the decision," said a G-14 statement on Friday.

"This sudden 'u-turn' is not only in direct contradiction with the decision taken by the UEFA executive committee in December 2001 to maintain the current format, it also ignores the wish of the majority of the clubs having attended the UEFA clubs workshop in February 2002. "We wish to express disappoint-

ment and disapproval with regards to the form in which UEFA proceeded in changing the format of the most important European club competition.

UEFA, European football's governing body, said they will replace the second group phase with an extra two-legged knockout round, although 16 clubs will still progress from the 32-strong first group phase.

for the 2003-04 season.

assembly meeting in Monaco on

tional football should also sacrifice matches in an attempt to ease fixture congestion for top players.

tional calendar indicated by UEFA as the main reason justifying the change, G-14 reiterates that an alleviation of the fixture list may not be conducted on the back of club football only," the statement said.

comparable reduction of dates reserved for national team matches, friendly matches in particular."

Confederations

tournaments before pulling out definitively as the 2005 edition will be staged in Germany as a

Juninho not coming?

Juninho didn't fit into it."

situation

ness, I understand Middlesbrough's

"They have certain limits and

The English premier league club

Having already agreed a fee with

have held talks with Juninho's father

over the last two days about signing

Juninho's club. Atletico Madrid.

Boro officials met Giroldo to discuss

JUNINHO

the midfielder for a third time.

Football

REUTERS, Middlesbrough

Middlesbrough still hope to sign Brazil's World Cup-winning midfielder Juninho despite suggestions from his father that the deal is off

"We have made what we believe is a very attractive offer and have stressed to his father in discussions that we want to bring Juninho back to Teesside. Therefore, we very much hope that he can agree terms with us," Middlesbrough spokesman Dave Allan told the club's Web

site. He was responding to comments in Thursday's Middlesbrough Evening Gazette from Juninho's father and agent Oswaldo Giroldo. Giroldo told the paper: "We have had friendly discussions, but we will

not be making a deal. "The offer they have made is not what we wanted and I will be return-

ing to Brazil. This is all part of busi-

Football

Liverpool have moved a step closer

to signing Lee Bowyer after agree-

Liverpool after telling new Leeds

United boss Terry Venables that he

would not be signing a fresh contract

"We've given Lee permission to

"Terry Venables did have a chat

"Liverpool have made an offer

He has things in his game which

"How quickly the deal goes

that's acceptable to us and the rest is

we need and he can also weigh in

through is now up to him and

Bowyer has been cleared to join

ing a £9m deal with Leeds United.

INTERNET, Liverpool

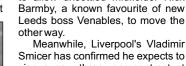
L'pool ready for Bowyer and go through the medical.

stamped.

the moment but discussions are Bowyer will now discuss perongoing. sonal terms with Liverpool boss Houllier's number two added: "He has things in his game which we Gerard Houllier and the deal is expected to be swiftly rubberneed and he can also weigh in with

> goals "He is a quality player."

Liverpool assistant boss Phil Thompson said: "Bowyer is a player Liverpool may even be tempted to allow unsettled midfielder Nick we have admired for some time. "Nothing has been finalised at



Smicer has confirmed he expects to sign a new three-year contract at Anfield - despite the possible arrival of more competition for his place in Bowyer.

He said: "I am happy at Liverpool and I want to stay here. The fact they have asked me to stay must mean am part of the plans.

"Bowyer would be a good signing for the club because he is a good player. I don't know if that means wouldn't play. We'll have to wait and see what happens with that.'

LEE BOWYER

Joao Pinto knows perfectly well

Joao Pinto hit out at Sanchez

'Give Pinto a chance'

who his real friends are and who the people who want him to be happy are," explained the former Ballon d'Or winner. "I just hope that in the future he will be able to carry on pleaded with FIFA to go easy on doing what he loves - and that is playing football.'

ever FIFA decide

against the World Cup co-hosts for er an hour He is now facing a lengthy suspension from world football's governing body, but will nevertheless be

challenge in the 1-0 defeat to Korea,

leaving his team-mates to struggle

receiving from his fellow profession-Last week, his coach at Sporting, Laszlo Boloni, confirmed that the club would not axe the playmaker if was susended for the entire season.

encouraged by the support he is



While big European clubs liked the introduction of the second group phase because it increased the

good of the maiority." number of matches -- meaning more money and more time to play on the UEFA is also now looking into international stage -- the demands changing the format of the UEFA Cup, Europe's other club competi-

alty kick shootout.

"We did not sit in our ivory tower and make decision. We got our

All questions answered

The change will come into effect

The G-14 said they will formulate a response to UEFA's chosen format by the time of their general

August 30. But they insisted that interna-

"With the congested interna-

"G-14 therefore ... requests a

on offer at Elland Road talk to Liverpool," Leeds chairman Peter Ridsdale confirmed. with Lee, but his agent called to say

Europe's no to Then Ronaldo struck. Viewed closely, the sequence was a compendium of the attributes that make him so dangerous: speed, tenacity Cup

AP, Nyon European soccer's governing body declared Thursday it would not be

taking part in the Confederations Cup after 2005. "We don't want to take part in the Confederations Cup. We will be in the Confederations Cup the next two times but not thereafter," UEFA president Lennart Johansson said following an executive committee meeting at the body's headquarters perched on the shores of Lake

UEFA will wait another two

with goals

Football

Liverpool to agree personal terms

nothing has changed.

now in Lee's hands.

INTERNET Portugal midfielder Luis Figo has

> compatriot Joao Pinto as they prepare to announce his punishment for assaulting referee Angel Sanchez in the World Cup clash against South Korea last month.

following his dismissal for a late

and regal majesty. Suddenly his nutty coiffure, a tiara of hair on an otherwise shaved dome, looked less like a relic of the Star Wars bar and more like a crown for the once and future king.

The Brazil mystique is back. Or, as Ronaldo happily put it a few days before his 11th and 12th career World Cup goals, tying him with Pelé for the most by a Brazilian: The nightmare is over

It had originated in Paris, in the hours before Brazil's World Cup '98 final against France. After an ordinary pregame lunch, Ronaldo returned to his room and went into convulsions. "It was a really strong and shocking scene," his teammate Edmundo later testified in an investigation by the Brazilian national congress. Ronaldo, he said, "was ying down and hitting himself with his hands, with his teeth locked together and his mouth foaming. Though an exact cause was never established. Ronaldo. then 21. appeared to have suffered some sort of attack -- a "brainstorm," as the European media called it. He played like a zombie that night, and Brazil lost 3-0, its worst defeat in 87 World Cup games dating to 1930.

Thus began a three-year cycle of pain for Brazil and Ronaldo, the world player of the year in 1996 and '97. While plaving for his club team. Internazionale of Milan, in '99, he tore a tendon in his right knee. Five months later, after rushing through rehab, he ruptured the ACL in the same knee during his first game back. All told, between Nov. 21, 1999, and Sept. 20, 2001, Ronaldo played just seven minutes of competitive soccer. In his absence Brazil struggled as it never had before, losing six World Cup qualifiers and coming perilously close to missing the tournament for the first time. Under Luiz Felipe (Big Phil) Scolari, their third coach in three vears, the Brazilians arrived in Asia as the oddsmakers' fifth choice to raise the Cup, despite the presence of their fit (albeit rusty) star.

Still, the mystique had never disappeared completely. Not long after their 2-1 guarterfinal win over England, the Brazilian players were celebrating in the locker room when, according to one team insider, somebody knocked on the door. It was David Beckham, holding an England jersey. "Hi, sorry," Beckham said. "I just wanted to know if Ronaldo wanted to swap shirts with me." Over in the corner, defender Roberto Carlos furrowed his brow. "Beckham?" he asked.

WELL EARNED BREAK: Superstar Ronaldo teeing off in Rio de Janeiro recently.

with you."

more pressure on his players'

shoulders, Scolari kept reminding

them that for Brazil, finishing sec-

ond "is like finishing last." Before

every game the coach showed the

team a videotape of Brazilian fans

celebrating after triumphs and

despairing after defeats. "There is

nothing better to encourage you,

the goalkeeper Marcos explained.

"than to see Brazilians suffering

announced days before the final

that soccer-playing robots will be

Though scientists breathlessly

Kahn nearly pulled off another

shocker in the final. Three times in

the first half Ronaldo slipped free to

face him one-on-one. Three times

Ronaldo failed to score. Brazil's

Kleberson beat Kahn with a magnif-

icent drive, only to watch it slam off

the crossbar. Shortly after halftime

German striker Oliver Neuville hit

the Brazilian woodwork himself

and by midway through the second

half the two teams seemed headed

for a draw that would have to be

resolved by the much-hated pen-

"Are you sure? I already traded shirts with him." "You must be mistaken," Ronaldo told his teammate after returning with Beckham's jersey. "Beckham just gave me his." Shaking his head, Roberto Carlos opened his equipment bag and fished out an England top. As it turned out, Beckham -- easily the most popular player in Europe -- had traded his game-worn shirt with Roberto Carlos, then retrieved another shirt to exchange with Ronaldo. David Beckham, just another Brazil memo-

> rabilia hound. able to beat the world's best team Yet while the Brazilians had by 2050, let the record show that avoided the upsets that claimed the Germans nearly made it hapfavorites Argentina and France, pen in 2002. After all, the and while Ronaldo had scored a Mannschaft had plowed through its tournament-high six goals through half of the draw with mistake-free the semifinals, even Pelé efficiency, if not the slightest bit of confessed to lingering doubts attacking flair. Only the dominance about the Phenomenon's mental of Oliver Kahn, the impossibly fitness. When confronted by a Teutonic goalkeeper, had saved the horde of 200 jostling, cursing, Germans from elimination in their 1-0 quarterfinal win over a more sweat-marinated reporters at Yokohama's Mitsuzawa Park. deserving U.S. team. Afterward, Franz Beckenbauer, the grumpy Ronaldo was asked time and again if his "brainstorm" would recur. German legend, muttered. "Kahn "Everyone keeps reminding me, apart, you could take all of them, put and I don't know why," he said, the them in a bag and hit them with a smile wiped from his face. "I am stick. Whoever got hit would trying to be calm, to find tranquillity. I deserve it."

am not even thinking of '98." Instead, he said, he was spending hour after hour at the team hotel playing video games -- the same video games that warn that excessive use can cause ... seizures. That wasn't the only suggestion that Brazil was perhaps laying a

trap for itself. "We have to win," said right back Cafú, the captain, who was playing in his record third straight World Cup final. "If we don't, it's going to be a disaster even bigger than 1998." As if to heap

off Kahn caromed off his chest, and in a flash Ronaldo pounded the loose ball into the net.

Rivaldo, a man not known for shar-

ing -- but Rivaldo's shot knuckled

harmless throw-in in the Brazilian

Normally defender Thomas Linke

he backed off, fearing Ronaldo's

speed. Though Ronaldo fell and

Dietmar Hamann In one killer

He would strike again 12 minutes later (after a brilliant step-over by Rivaldo froze the German defense), but the game had been won in those frantic moments when Ronaldo's explosiveness reigned and Kahn's steel finally failed him. "This is the only mistake I made in the seven matches of the World Cup," the disconsolate keeper said afterward, "and that one mistake was brutally punished.

When title No. 5 was finally sealed on June 30 night, Ronaldo and his Brazilian teammates pranced around Yokohama's nternational Stadium in overcoatsized national flags, as canons belched confetti. Thousands of tinv origami birds, a rainbow-hued paper aviary, fluttered down from the stadium roof. To accept the champion's trophy, Cafú climbed atop its teetering glass pedestal -- a delightfully unscripted move -- and held the 11 pounds of gold aloft. The celebration was capped by a 10-plaver Brazilian conga line, led by midfielder Ronaldinho pounding out a batucada on his drum. The players sambaed and sang their way

or any World Cup. Meanwhile, Ronaldo held court for the international media, another sign of his hard-won maturity During his long ordeal away from the game, he married Milene Dominguez, a fellow futebol player who holds the Brazilian soccer-balljuggling record of 55,187 consecutive touches. One shudders to imagine the genetic potential of their two-vear-old son. Ronald, or their second child, due in October. At their current strike rate, they'll someday be able to field their own 11-member team.

through the interview room, surely

the most festive no comment of this

For his part, Ronaldo can't seem to wait. In response to the typically Brazilian postgame question Which is more rewarding, winning the World Cup or ending the 40 days of chastity imposed by Scolari? -- Ronaldo didn't take long to engage in the debate. "Both are very hard to stay without," he said. 'Sex I am going to do in a few moments, but nothing can be so rewarding as the World Cup.' Pause. "Not that sex is not good."

With that he leaned back, closed his eyes and giggled like the teenager of old

rehearsal for the World Cup the following year. The biannual Confederations Cup has been singled out by some

as a competition which could be iettisoned in the future to lighten the load on players, who increasingly complain of physical burnout.

FIFA President Sepp Blatter has dismissed the criticism, arguing that aside from the World Cup the Confederations Cup is the only official competition where national teams from different confederations can meet.

He said FIFA has contractual obligations with sponsors and broadcasters to hold the Confederations Cup until 2006 but added that he was in favor of the competition continuing beyond that date

Four countries are currently in the running to stage the 2003 Confederations Cup and a host will be selected on Sept. 23. The contenders are Australia, France, South Africa and the United States. Also unhappy with World Club

Championships, Johansson added that while he was not forbidding European clubs from participating in it, he was "not very enthusiastic about it." "I'll leave it up to them to decide

for themselves," he said. "It's not forbidden but from a financial point of view it's not contributing anything."

Adams retirement any day

AFP, London

English Premiership champions Arsenal said Thursday they expected veteran centre-back Tony Adams to announce his retirement shortly

Former England international Adams, 35, has been a one-club man, spending all of his professional career with the north London giants while making more than 650 appearances for the Highbury based club.

double for the second time in his career last season but his campaign was dogged by persistent injury problems. Arsenal vice-chairman David

Dein said: "We are waiting for Tony Adams, who we assume will announce his retirement shortly.

"That is his prerogative."

wrong in the past and does not deserve to be crucified for this one isolated incident," insisted the Real Madrid midfielder.

"I know him well as a person. He is a good guy and he has always conducted himself in a proper manner in the past. We all make mistakes and, yes, probably Joao should not have acted in that way. But he is not the only person who made a mistake in that episode," he added.

Figo, who used to play with Joao Pinto at Sporting before he sealed a move to Spain, insisted that he would stand by the forward what-

Football

Taiwo Ogunjobi said.

Former Holland star Ruud Gullit

has entered the race to replace

Festus Onigbinde as Nigeria

technical advisor. "Yes, Gullit is

the latest to signify interest in the

job," Nigerian football association

(NFA) secretary general Chief

Gullit's representative John

INTERNET

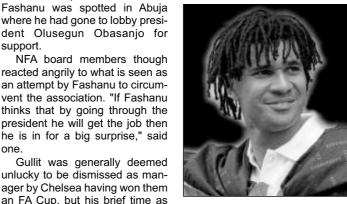
support.



Akiga has made no secret of

his annovance at Onigbinde's truculence since he was sacked as coach following Nigeria's World Cup exit.

Onigbinde has not merely refused the post of technical director that he held before being appointed coach in February, but has also accused the NFA of only wanting to appoint a foreign coach to facilitate their corruption.



RUUD GULLIT

The minister has given the NFA until the end of July to appoint a new technical director. Onigbinde's former assistant Fanny Amun, who led Nigeria's Under-17 side to victory in the World Youth Championship in 1993, is doing the job in a careintervene in the appointment of a taker capacity, but is far from sure technical advisor. It is the duty of to be confirmed in the position.

"He's a player like any other. The situation isn't as worrying as last season when Marius Niculae and Sa Pinto were injured," said Boloni.

"The responsibility of carrying the team from defence to attack is heavy and he was mentally and physically exhausted," added the Romanian

Porto president Dias da Cunha. however, might not take such a lenient stance. "In the case of a severe punishment, we would have to make a tough decision," he warned in the aftermath of the incident

Zico could take

over next week

JOAO PINTO

AFP, Rio de Janeiro Former Brazilian international Zico said here on Thursday he expects to

be named coach of the Japanese national team next week. Zico said he was awaiting the election of Saburo Kawabuchi as

president of the Japanese Football Federation on Tuesday before being named as the successor to Frenchman Philippe Troussier, who resigned as planned after leading the World Cup co-hosts to the second round of the tournament last month.

Zico, who said he would travel to Japan on Wednesday, outlined his plans for the Japanese team which made great strides under Troussier.

"I would like to correct several faults in the match calendar, in the planning and in the location of matches, as well as in the country's involvement in football," he said.

"It will be a great challenge to contribute to the development of a new generation of coaches. And that is my motivation," he added.

Zico, 49, has enormous experience of football in Japan. He came out of retirement to play for club side Kashima Antlers, scoring a hat-trick in his first game in the inaugural J-League season in 1993.

He hung up his boots for good in 1994 and is now Kashima's general manager. The team has won the league title four times.

He said he was first approached about becoming Japanese coach before the World Cup finals, cohosted by Japan and South Korea, which began on May 31

Japan were eliminated by eventual semi-finalists Turkey in the second round.

vent the association. "If Fashanu thinks that by going through the president he will get the job then he is in for a big surprise," said one Gullit was generally deemed unlucky to be dismissed as man-

ager by Chelsea having won them an FA Cup, but his brief time as coach at Newcastle was less impressive, with fans questioning his commitment as he frequently

returned to Amsterdam He won the League and FA Cup Meanwhile sports minister Steven Akiga has said that the appointment of a technical advisor is strictly the business of the FA. "The Ministry will not in any way

the NFA," he said.