

Ivan Colo Colo's for six months

AFP, Santiago

Veteran goalkeeper Ivan Zamorano will return to play in his native Chile after 15 years abroad by signing Friday a six-month contract with champions Colo Colo.

Zamorano, 36, played with Spanish sides Real Madrid and Sevilla, Serie A side Inter Milan, Swiss outfit St. Gallen and American Mexico during his long career abroad.

And he admitted that he was taking a pay cut to play back home. "It's been my life's dream and that of my father and today it's become reality. I feel very emotional," said Zamorano.

He was also top scorer with six goals at the Sydney Olympics tournament where Chile finished third, but hung up his international boots after their failure to qualify for the 2002 World Cup finals.

Jardel cuts his knee

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Sporting Lisbon striker Mario Jardel was taken to hospital after a swimming pool accident at home in his native Brazil on Friday, local media reported.

Jardel, who returned to action with the Portuguese champions in October after bouts of depression, was said to have suffered a deep cut near his knee.

Premiership preview Reds' point of not return

Football

It is being billed as the match that will make or break Liverpool's season. But Reds goalkeeper Chris Kirkland insists his side have nothing to fear going into Sunday's match against Premiership pace-setters Arsenal at Highbury.

Liverpool will kick off the match keenly aware that they have taken only three points from their last eight league games -- a run which has seen them slip from the top of the table to fifth place, nine points adrift of Arsenal.

But after a frustrating draw against Blackburn on Boxing Day, Kirkland denied it was all gloom and doom in the Liverpool camp. "We're very disappointed not to take the three points against Blackburn but we have a big game at the weekend to look forward to and we have to pick ourselves up quickly for that one," he told Liverpool's official website.

"Things are not going our way at the moment but we'll work as hard as we can on the training pitch to try and put things right.

"If we want to win the league then we can't afford to be dropping points like this. We need to start on a winning streak as soon as possible.

"Sunday's game will be tough but we'll be up for it and we'll give it our best shot. There's no point in us feeling sorry for ourselves. The manager and staff are right behind us and we're still all confident that we'll be able to turn things around."

Liverpool boss Gerard Houllier echoed Kirkland's sentiments and insisted he was looking forward to the Arsenal game. "Our finishing has not been as good as it could have been but it is a team which is young. We have to be patient. I trust them, that is the main thing. I believe in them."

Liverpool will come up against an Arsenal side who showed genuine steel in coming from behind to beat a combative West Brom on Thursday and look to be on the verge of the kind of winning run that delivered the double last season.

The Gunners have also been boosted by the return to full fitness of Patrick Vieira. The Frenchman had been struggling with a groin strain recently but was back to match-dominating best against

West Brom. He warned Liverpool that they could not afford to lose on Sunday. "It is a really important game for Liverpool," he said. "They can't lose the game -- that would make it really difficult for them to come back."

"Now our confidence will be really high going into the game because West Brom was a fantastic result away from home. "For me Liverpool are still one of our biggest rivals. They have worked hard over the last few years to bring in some really good players and have the team to win the title. But we want to win it."

Freddie Ljungberg is struggling to shake off the cold which kept him out of the trip to West Brom and remains doubtful for the match.

Francis Jeffers is likely to continue up front after his well-taken goal against West Brom with Dennis Bergkamp again doubtful as he struggles to shake off a knee problem.

Newcastle face Tottenham in Sunday's other Premiership clash and the Magpies are expected to welcome key striker Craig Bellamy back to the forward line alongside Alan Shearer.

Bellamy, who suffered a career-threatening knee injury last season, asked to be rested for Thursday's match against Bolton because of concern about overplaying.

Table with 2 columns: Fixture, Time. Arsenal v Liverpool (1605 GMT), Newcastle v Tottenham (1400 GMT)

Peru yet to find a new coach

REUTERS, Lima

Peru, who have been without a national team coach for more than an year, have again put off naming a new incumbent for the job, local media said on Saturday.

The Peruvian Football Federation (FPF) had been expected to announce a new coach at a media conference on Friday evening but officials said they had still not been able to reach an agreement.

Brazilians Paulo Autuori, coach of Peruvian champions Sporting Cristal, and Paulo Cesar Carpegiani, who led Paraguay to the 1998 World Cup, are the favourites.

The job was left vacant when Julio Cesar Uribe was fired late last year after Peru failed to qualify for the 2002 World Cup.

Uribe has since spent a year at Mexican club UAG, where he was sacked two weeks ago following their quarter-final elimination in the Apertura championship.

Media said that the FPF merely announced changes to the domestic championship.

They said the competition would be increased from the current 12 teams to 16 by 2005, that coaches would be banned from coaching more than one club in the same tournament and that teams could field up to three foreign players in a game.



Peter Withe (L), coach of Thailand, shakes hands with Ivan Kolev, the former's Indonesian counterpart, as he wishes him good luck during a press conference in Jakarta yesterday. The two nations clash in the Tiger Cup final today.

Thai-Indonesian showdown

Football

AFP, Jakarta

Defending champions Thailand trounced Vietnam 4-0 to set up a Tiger Cup final match with hosts Indonesia, who defeated favourites Malaysia 1-0 in the other semifinal Friday.

Thailand had little trouble brushing aside Vietnam despite their unimpressive performances in the qualifying stage, including a 3-1 defeat to Malaysia.

Worawoot Srimaka scored the opener 25 minutes into the first-half, firing home from 12 yards after latching on to Thersak Chaiman's cross from the right. Srimaka scored three goals in the victory over Indonesia in the Tiger Cup 2000 final in Bangkok. Midfielder Naronchai Vachiraban scored a second in the 38th minute, and second-half strikes by substitutes Sakda Joemdee in the 75th minute and Sakda Joemdee in injury time sealed an emphatic victory, even though the Thais squandered several good chances.

"I told the players that we had to play to our potential to win this match and they responded. It was a satisfying performance," said Thailand's English coach Peter Withe.

"We have been getting better as we go along. We are the defending champions of the Tiger Cup and we need to show that we are deserved of this title."

"All my players delivered today and it was even more satisfying because out there today was the future of Thailand," said a beaming Withe.

Vietnam's heavy defeat came as a surprise as they had displayed some of the most entertaining

football in the group stages of the competition, hammering minnows Cambodia 9-2 and dark horses Myanmar 4-2.

Vietnam coach Henrique Calisto said his side's defense had made some major errors.

"When you play against big teams, that is what happens. But it is OK. This is a process to learn," Calisto said.

"We tried to get back into the game after the break but when we missed chances and Thailand scored their third, it was game over for us."

In the other semifinal, Indonesia caused an upset as they defeated a

more elegant Malaysian side with 1-0 thanks to a spectacular header by striker Bambang Pamungkas in the 75th minute.

Pamungkas headed home a cross from Zaenal Arif, to the delight of the 50,000-strong home crowd who had packed into Jakarta's Bung Karno stadium.

Malaysia were impressive throughout the match with their organized and sharp attacks but failed to turn at least four good chances into goals.

Thailand will face Indonesia on Sunday.

Make home sweet

Football

AFP, Newcastle

Newcastle manager Bobby Robson has called on his players to get their Premiership League campaign back on track on home turf after the disappointment of the 4-3 loss to Bolton on Thursday.

The Magpies take on in-form Tottenham on Sunday knowing that they need an eighth successive league win at St James Park to maintain pace with the leaders.

The omens are good as they have won all but one of the nine league games they have played on Tyneside to date this season, the exception being against Leeds on September 11.

And with Liverpool to follow the Londoners to St James' on New Year's Day, they are desperate to collect all the points on offer to maintain their place in the race for a precious top-four berth.

"We're playing very well at home and I hope the players will be angry about what happened at Bolton," said Robson. "We hope we get a stimulus from that, and we'll be ready for it."

"We didn't play that badly at Bolton. We made mistakes, but our football was all right. But we have to look at that game in two ways really. "It was a lost opportunity, there's no doubt about that. We've dropped three points away from home and got four goals put against us."

"We scored three goals and couldn't get a point. We did it at Manchester United, we scored three goals and couldn't get a point,

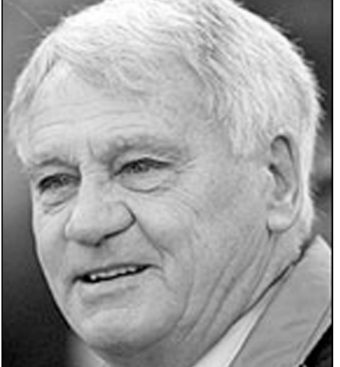
so it's a wasted day in that respect.

"But you could also say, well we've lost nothing because only Arsenal out of the top seven teams managed to win. Everybody else dropped points.

"You've got Liverpool, Tottenham, Manchester United, Chelsea and then Everton will think they have probably dropped two points. Everybody dropped points, and we dropped all three, so nothing's lost in a way."

"We've lost an opportunity, but they'll be saying that at Chelsea, Tottenham, Everton, and Liverpool, so we're all in the same bucket."

Spurs were one of only four sides -- Liverpool, Chelsea and Arsenal were the others -- to win a Premiership game at St James' last season, and although Newcastle got their revenge at White Hart Lane in January, Robson does not want a repeat this time around.



BOBBY ROBSON

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Barca appeal turned down

AFP, Madrid

An appeal by Barcelona against a two-match ban on the Nou Camp stadium for incidents during a Primera Liga match against arch-rivals Real Madrid on November 23 was rejected Friday by the Spanish football federation.

Barcelona's fans vented their fury at former player Luis Figo by showering the Real Madrid playmaker with hundreds of missiles including a pig's head and a whisky bottle.

Sporting commission president Fernando Sequeira said that following a six-hour meeting they had agreed that the incidents were of a serious nature and had reached a middle ground between a one and three match suspension and also fined the club 4,000 euros (dollars).

It is the first time in the Catalan club's history that they have received a ban for incidents during a match.

The game had to be suspended for 10 minutes ending in a 0-0 draw.

Sporting chief demands probe

AFP, Lisbon

Portuguese football is plagued by creative accounting practices and needs to be fully investigated, the chairman of defending champions Sporting Lisbon, Antonio Dias da Cunha, has alleged.

"There are a lot of slush funds, there is a lot of creative accounting in football, there is a lot of dirty money," he claimed in an interview broadcast on private radio TSF on Friday.

"There are investigations that are ongoing that need to be carried out to the end as quickly as possible."

His comments come less than two weeks after the chairman of Vitoria Guimaraes club, Antonio Pimenta Machado, was detained for questioning following allegations he diverted 450,000 euros (dollars) related to the transfer of defender Fernando Meira to Benfica in 2000.

Pimenta Machado, Portugal's longest-serving club chairman, has denied keeping any club money for himself.

Public prosecutor Jose Souto Moura has said investigations into embezzlement of funds go beyond the detention of the Vitoria Guimaraes chairman, but he has declined to say which clubs are under investigation.

Gordon shows Mark a way

Football

AFP, London

Mark Bosnich can still save his career despite being charged with using cocaine and suspended from football worldwide, according to the head of the English players union.

Gordon Taylor, chief executive of the Professional Footballers' Association, said Bosnich, 30, could make a comeback after serving a ban which most people in the game expect to last at least a year.

"The player can undergo rehabilitation and can be classed as clean and come into the game after a period of time -- but that depends on Mark," Taylor said.

His comments came after the Football Association officially confirmed that Bosnich had failed a drug test and that he would face charges of breaching doping regulations and bringing the game into disrepute.

"We have been in constant touch with Mark since this began and we have continued to be in touch with him," Taylor added.

"It is a very sensitive situation. A lot depends on his attitude. Knowing him as I do I can't believe it is the end of the road or the end of his career."

"It's a matter of reassessing the situation and seeing if we can get a new start in the latter stages of his career."

Taylor highlighted former England midfielder Paul Merson, who has battled drink and gambling addictions, as well as having used cocaine, as an example for Bosnich.

The former England midfielder publicly admitted drug use but recovered to continue his career.

"Rehabilitation is possible and things can get cleared up -- but it depends on the individual," Taylor said.

The FA announced the charges against Bosnich on Friday.

"The FA would not normally make any public statements at this stage of a case of this type," the governing body said.

"However, in view of numerous media reports over the past few weeks, the situation required clarification.

"The charges respectively relate

to bringing the game into disrepute and to breaching the FA's Doping Regulations by testing positive for a prohibited substance, namely cocaine.

"Bosnich will be suspended from all football activities until the charges have been heard."

Bosnich, who had already been suspended without pay by his club, Chelsea, has two weeks to respond to the charges.

The club held talks with the player on Friday but have said they will not be commenting further until his case had been resolved.

If he is found guilty, Chelsea are widely expected to terminate Bosnich's two-million-pounds-a-year contract and he is likely to be banned from football for at least a year.

Bosnich is currently undergoing treatment for depression having checked himself into a private clinic after news of his first positive test emerged last month.

The player is one of the world's best-paid goalkeepers, despite rarely playing for Chelsea, where he has fallen behind both Carlo Cudicini and Ed de Goey in the pecking order.

He was once rated as one of the top 'keepers in the Premiership, making his name at Aston Villa before joining Manchester United on a lucrative Bosman free transfer in June 1999.

But his career at Old Trafford, where he once played as a youngster, was blighted by injury and a high-profile bust-up with boss Alex Ferguson which contributed to him ending up as fourth-choice keeper at the club.

He was allowed to leave Old Trafford on a free transfer at the start of 2001 and landed a lucrative deal with Chelsea.

But a torn thigh muscle cost him his place in the first team and Cudicini has since established himself as the first choice while Bosnich, who goes out with model Sophie Anderton, has been spotted more often on the gossip pages of newspapers than the back pages.

Despite his lack of match practice however he still has admirers in the game and Bolton boss Sam Allardyce has reportedly said he would be willing to give him a chance to resurrect his career should Chelsea sack him.

Ferguson fazed

Football

REUTERS, Manchester

Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson admits he does not understand why his team have lost two games in a row despite returning to full strength.

Ferguson was forced to play his fringe players as injuries bit in November and December and the side went 10 games without defeat, including victories over Liverpool and Arsenal.



ALEX FERGUSON

But the return of David Beckham, Roy Keane, Rio Ferdinand and Laurent Blanc has seen United lose their last two games to Blackburn Rovers and Middlesbrough.

"I have only 12 players to pick from, then when all the players come back, we start losing," Ferguson told reporters on Friday. "Whether it is coincidence or not -- it is strange. It is frustrating to lose these games, but it was two difficult away games."

"A lot of teams' home form has been very good this season. We have been caught on counter-

attacks twice. We were in complete control of both matches. When you are in control of games, you have to make sure you have the patience to play."

United have a chance to return to winning ways on Saturday when ex-Old Trafford captain Steve Bruce brings his Birmingham side to his former employers.

"Steve Bruce has done very well," Ferguson said. "There is a lot of enthusiasm about him. He was the same as a player. He was bubbly and I'm sure his team is reflecting that. Birmingham are certainly determined."

"They have a lot of energy and have a great chance of staying in the premier league because they are consistently getting decent results."

"Any team who comes out of the first division always finds it difficult. There have been one or two exceptions like Ipswich, but even they went down the following season."

"It is important to get off to a good start which Birmingham did. Hopefully, they gather experience as they go along. If you have a bad start, you don't have the experience to recover."

Ferguson may rest Keane to allow him time to catch his breath after playing in two games since returning from a hip operation.

Defender Mikael Silvestre is also struggling and the United manager may consider changes to freshened up his side.

"We have to win the next two games," Ferguson said. "Home form is going to be important. I look at the side in terms of freshness. See if we can bring in one or two to make it fresher. We will have to wait and see how Roy Keane is after his exertions yesterday (Thursday)."

"It was his first full game at that level. He did remarkably well but we will have to see how he has come through that."



Andalusia's Jose Mari (L) vies with Chile's Rojas during a friendly match at La Rosaleda Stadium in Malaga, southern Spain, on December 27. Andalusia won the game 3-2.