

China's foreign legion

China head coach Bora Milutinovic draws most of his players from the domestic league, but he does have some overseas options:

FAN ZHIYI (Crystal Palace). Recently extended his deal with English First Division club Crystal Palace to 2003.

Palace paid almost \$1 million for Fan, 30, in November 1998, and he has been a regular in the defense for the past two seasons.

A rugged central defender, Fan has aspirations of playing in the Premier League.

ZHANG ENHUA (Grimsby Town). The 27-year-old defender is on loan with Grimsby Town until April. There have been rumors he will join Fan at Crystal Palace.

He's been a starter since joining the team in mid-December and often plays alongside Fan in the China defense.

YANG CHEN (Eintracht Frankfurt). Yang, 27, had some success with German Bundesliga club Eintracht Frankfurt in his first



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Striker Yang Chen (right) has spent three seasons in Germany with Eintracht Frankfurt.

two seasons, but this season he is without a goal in six games.

He scored three goals for China in the 2000 Asian Cup and is one of the team's better strikers in the air.

XIE HUI (Alemania Aachen). Xie, who turns 26 on Feb. 14, had seven goals in 14 games for German Second Division club Alemania Aachen as play resumed after the winter break.

He played 13 games and scored four goals last season for Aachen, with which he signed in 1999.

The steady striker gives Milutinovic an alternative to Yang and the oft-suspended Hao Haidong.

MA MINGYU (Perugia). Italian club Perugia won a tug-of-war for the midfielder last summer, but only after months of wrangling between the Serie A club and the China Football Association.

Perugia showed interest in Ma, 30, after his previous club, Sichuan Quanzheng, trained in Italy last spring.

Unfortunately, his playing time has been scant in Italy.

— Ridge Mahoney