

AROUND THE WORLD

Friedel-Sommer stalemate in FA Cup

U.S. ABROAD. Brad Friedel and Juergen Sommer, teammates on the 1994 and 1998 U.S. World Cup teams, found themselves on opposite sides in one of England's oldest rivalries.

Sommer was signed by Bolton Wanderers for its match with Friedel's Blackburn Rovers in the fifth round of the English FA Cup and held Blackburn to a 1-1 tie at Reebok Park despite playing with a painful thigh injury.

Sommer, whose contract with MLS's New England Revolution expired at the end of last season, was signed to a short-term contract because Bolton's three keepers were unavailable.

Sommer, who previously played in England at Luton Town and QPR, made two big saves early in the game but was helpless on David Dunn's 40-yard free kick in the 39th minute.

Sommer, who was unable to jump after injuring his thigh early in the game, was given painkillers at halftime and only completed the game because Bolton had no other goalies.

Friedel signed with Blackburn last fall and has led it to contention for promotion to the Premier League.

The teams meet in the Red Rose replay March 7.

Toluca falls on hard times

MEXICO. Toluca, winner of the last three Torneo Verano titles, has fallen on hard times.

The Red Devils, heavy favorites to win the Torneo Invierno, were upset by Morelia in the final in December.

They lost to Olimpia of Honduras in the quarterfinals of the CONCACAF Champions Cup in January.

And Toluca didn't pick up its first win in this year's Torneo Verano until its eighth game.

Uruguayan Hector Hugo Eugui has replaced Argentine Ricardo Ferrero, who had been promoted to Toluca head coach after Enrique Meza left to become Mexican national team coach last September.

Eugui, who was coaching Toluca farm team Atletico Mexiquense, said the Red Devils, last in Group A, were only playing up to 70 percent of their potential.



PASCAL ROSSIGNOL/REUTERS

Early in season, Oscar Fuertes (heading ball) and his Lens teammates led the French First Division.

Lens continues its freefall

FRANCE. Lens, leader for four of the first six weeks of the First Division season, edged closer to the relegation zone with a 2-1 loss to Rennes.

The loss was Lens' fourth in a row and dropped it into a tie for 13th in the 18-team First Division.

The game was interim coach Georges Tournay's first game since replacing Rolland Courbis.

Lens, French champion in 1998, became the seventh team to change coaches when Courbis, the former Marseille coach, quit after a 1-0 loss to last-place Strasbourg.

Lens hoped to hire former Metz coach Joel Muller, but he refused to consider the job until after the season.

Gunners win with unhappy strikers

ENGLAND. Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger believes the Gunners' 3-1 win over Chelsea in the FA Cup has justified his policy of keeping four world-class strikers at the club.

Frenchman Sylvain Wiltord stepped off the bench to score twice to lead Arsenal into the quarterfinals.

Wenger also has Frenchman Thierry Henry, Dutchman Dennis Bergkamp and Nigerian Nwankwo Kanu, although he usually only starts two of them.

Kanu, Bergkamp and Wiltord have all expressed frustration at not being regulars in recent weeks.

"I have four world-class strikers," said Wenger. "That means you always have two unhappy. I'm very happy with Wiltord and very happy with Kanu and with Bergkamp and with Henry. Unfortunately, I can only play two."

Wenger started Bergkamp and Henry against Chelsea and later brought on Wiltord. Kanu didn't play.



IAN HODGSON/REUTERS

Trouble began at Highbury after a confrontation between Arsenal's Robert Pires and Chelsea captain Dennis Wise (left).

"I feel in the longer term it will make a difference and it did today," said Wenger. "When Wiltord came on at 1-1, he brought some runs behind the defenders. I felt we missed that a little bit."

Wiltord scored twice after Chelsea's Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink had tied the score. Henry's penalty opened the scoring for Arsenal.

All the goals came in the second half of an often ill-tempered London derby.

The match turned ugly at Highbury shortly before the interval. Five players were booked within three minutes after a confrontation between Chelsea captain Dennis Wise and Arsenal's Robert Pires.

Tardelli downplays Inter alarm

ITALY. Despite Inter Milan's alarming form, Coach Marco Tardelli insists there's no chance that his club will be relegated for the first time in its 93-year history.

"We're only five points from the relegation zone," said Tardelli after a 1-0 loss at struggling Napoli. "But only one week ago, we were the same distance from fourth position and a Champions League berth."

Tardelli replaced Marcello Lippi after the first game of the Serie A season.

"Clearly, I'm alarmed by the number of points we have," said the former Italian star, "but my worry is solely to do with our chances of achieving what I consider to be our minimum objective this season — finishing in the top four."

Inter is 10th in the 18-team Serie with just six wins in 19 matches.

Inter's form in Europe hasn't been much better. It was knocked out of the Champions League by tiny Swedish club Helsingborg in the preliminary round and was held to a 3-3 tie by Spanish club Alaves in the first leg of their fourth-round UEFA Cup series after leading, 3-1.