

SPORT

MARTIAL ARTS - NINJUTSU

Group in UK seminar

Last month Maltese Ninja Group leader Alfred Galea and two club students, Kevin Caruana and Omar Calleja, attended a two-day seminar in Nottingham, England. The seminar was headed by European Master and head of the Bujinkan Brian Dojo Brian McCarthy (eighth Dan).

On the first day various skills and techniques were on the agenda. Also on the same day, the Maltese ninjas were also present for a grading session, conducted by Mr McCarthy. One student was trying for a first kyu grading, two for ShoDan (first Dan) and one for NiDan (second Dan).

As part of their test these four had to fight black belts and some of the BBD's best instructors, including Galea. The fighting was full contact with no protection whatsoever. Galea (the Maltese Falcon) won all bouts against the four, even though he is still a Fifth Kyu.

On the second day, Galea attended the annual general meeting of the BBD. On this occasion Caruana and Calleja were at their best.

Besides learning unarmed combat, the two, especially Caruana (Sixth Kyu) performed a variation of basic techniques. Students were tested in Kumi Ichi (groundwork - wrestling). Caruana won all his five fights and Calleja (ninth Kyu) won three from five. All opponents for the two Maltese were from higher grades.

At the end of the seminar Galea received some very good news when Mr McCarthy, who was impressed with the Maltese ninja group leader's performances during the seminar, graded him to Fourth Kyu while the Teacher of BBD London & BBD Malta, Mr Whitaker (Fourth Dan), awarded Galea with the title of Senior Instructor of the Maltese Group.



Alfred Galea (left) with Brian McCarthy.

Being about 1,000 years old, Ninjutsu is still active and alive.

Those who would like to join the BBD Malta may phone 0714441003 or Marvic Peregin on 0974837.

Sporting briefs:

IN SPAIN: Barcelona fans looking for a cure for their team's current ills are hoping that a triple-dose of Valencia taken over a 10-day period will bring about a quick recovery. Louis van Gaal's men, who face Valencia in the league and in a two-legged fourth round cup tie, badly need a lift after Sunday's 2-2 draw at Real Sociedad, when they threw away a two-goal lead in the closing minutes for the second time in seven days. Last week Barcelona had seemingly been cruising to a 3-1 win over Salamanca with 11 minutes left before crashing to a 4-3 defeat.

TIGANA: An upset defeat to lowly Cannes on Saturday has put off-form champions Monaco on the verge of a new crisis with coach Jean Tigana condemning his players for their poor attitude. The champions went into the winter break on the back of a 3-0 defeat by leaders Metz and emerged from it with two more slip-ups - both at home. The first came via a penalty shoot-out in their French League Cup tie against division two side Niort and the second, the 1-0 loss to second-from-bottom Cannes, left them trailing Metz by four points in the table.

VENABLES: Former England manager, sold his controlling interest in troubled English first division club Portsmouth yesterday. BBC radio reported that Pompey director Martin Gregory had agreed to pay Venables £300,000 for the stake in order to open negotiations with a US consortium interested in the club. *The Daily Telegraph* had reported earlier that Venables wanted £500,000 to sell a contested 51% stake that Gregory had sold to him for just one pound last February.

FERENCVAROS: The president of Hungarian soccer club Ferencvaros said yesterday his club has received investment offers from two western companies. Istvan Szivos told Reuters the club was considering bids from International Management Group (IMG), which manages golfer Tiger Woods and top tennis player Pete Sampras, and from English National Investment Company ENIC <ENIL>, which has interests in several top European clubs.

BENFICA: have agreed to sell captain Joao Pinto to Spain's Deportivo Coruna for around \$14 million, two Portuguese sports dailies reported yesterday.

Buchwald back

Veteran midfielder Guido Buchwald's return to the Bundesliga was only one of many transfers during a busy winter break as several German clubs brought in reinforcements.

Former World Cup star Buchwald, looking for a fresh start at 37, joined Karlsruhe SC from Urawa Red Diamonds of Japan's J-League on a free transfer.

But most clubs paid huge sums for new players as a total of 11 million marks were spent during the break - twice that of last year.

TSV 1860 Munich were the most active, investing 2.5 million marks in five new players in a bid to improve on their current 15th position when the league restarts on January 30.

Hours before the deadline for the transfers last night, TSV had bought two strikers in Bulgarian

Hristo Yovov and German Bernd Hobsch, two midfielders in Australian Ned Zelic and Moroccan Abderrahim Ouakili and one defender in former Dutch international Gerald Vanenburg.

Leaders Kaiserslautern, seeking to become the first promoted club to win the title since the Bundesliga was created in 1963, spent 1.3 million marks on two Hungarians, international goalkeeper Lajos Szucs and defender Janos Hrutka.

Last season's runners-up Bayer Leverkusen turned to Norway, buying veteran midfielder Bent Skammelsrud from Rosenborg Trondheim.

VfB Stuttgart bought Macedonian international defender Mitko Stokjovski from Spanish side Oviedo while Arminia Bielefeld were set to sign Bulgarian defender Adalbert Zafirov from CSKA Sofia.

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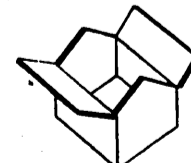
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