

Desailly denies doping claim

Former Marseille midfielder Marcel Desailly on Tuesday strongly refuted accusations of doping before their 1993 European Cup final victory, revealed by a former player.

Jean-Jacques Eydelie, who played in their 1-0 final victory over AC Milan in Munich, said in Saturday's L'Equipe magazine the players received an injection before the match, implying pre-meditated doping.

European football's governing body UEFA have not yet opened an inquiry but have expressed their concern.

Desailly told AFP: "It's not true," adding, as UEFA did on Monday, that dope tests were performed after the match. "The worst thing is that he is making people doubt our victory was fair-and-square. That annoys me frankly."

"In all clubs, players have injections to help them recover or have vitamin products but this is not doping."

And the agent of the then skipper Didier Deschamps, Jeannot Werth, said Deschamps did not want to comment on Eydelie's comments.

Former club president Bernard Tapie said on Monday he would be suing both L'Equipe magazine and Eydelie, while Franck Sauzeau, who also played in the final, said he was considering taking legal action.

Indian, Pakistani captains warned

CRICINFO, undated

India captain Rahul Dravid and Pakistan's stand-in captain Younis Khan on Monday were summoned by Ranjan Madugalle, the match referee, over the verbal volleys exchanged by the players on the third day of the second Test at Faisalabad.

A highly charged atmosphere at the Iqbal Stadium saw Pakistani bowlers - in particular Shoaib Akhtar - and fielders indulge in constant chatting with the Indian batsmen in the last session of play. Shahid Afridi was also warned verbally by the on field umpires on a few occasions.

Pathan was singled out and was often at the receiving end of what appeared to be taunting remarks made by the Pakistanis, frustrated at their inability to separate the Indian sixth wicket pair.

The captains were relieved of a fine, but were warned to maintain the spirit of the game.

2nd Test heading

FROM PAGE 12 Razaqa 10 runs short of his maiden hundred.

Pathan hit nine boundaries and two sixes during his 270-minute stay at the crease.

Kaneria then forced Kumble out of his crease for wicketkeeper Akmal to bring about another stumping. The leg-spinner claimed 3-165.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the fourth day of the second Test between India and Pakistan at the Iqbal Stadium in Faisalabad on Tuesday:

PAKISTAN: First innings 588 (Afridi 156, Inzamam 119, Younis 83, Yusuf 65, Rudra Pratap 4-89, Zaheer 3-135, Kumble 3-150)

INDIA: First innings (overnight 441-5) Shwagat c sub (Farhat) b Razaqa 31

Dravid run out 103

Laxman c Akmal b Kaneria 90

Tendulkar c Akmal b Akhtar 14

Yuvraj c Kaneria b Asif 4

Dhoni st Akmal b Kaneria 148

Pathan lbw b Razaqa 90

Kumble st Akmal b Kaneria 15

Harbhajan lbw b Afridi 38

Zaheer not out 20

Rudra Pratap c and b Afridi 66

Extras: (b-3, lb-15, w-3, nb-23) 44

Total: (All out in 165.4 overs) 603

Fall of wickets: 1-39, 2-236, 3-241, 4-258, 5-281, 6-491, 7-529, 8-553, 9-587

Bowler O M R W

Akhtar 25 7 100 1

Asif 34 6 103 1

Razaqa 28 1 126 2

Kaneria 54 6 165 3

Afridi 24.4 0 91 2

PAKISTAN: Second innings

Butt c Tendulkar b Kumble 24

Akmal not out 59

Younis not out 64

Extras: (lb-2, nb-3) 5

Total: (For 1 wkt in 43 overs) 152

Fall of wicket: 1-52

To bat: Inzamam, Yusuf, Afridi, Razaqa, Malik, Akhtar, Asif, Kaneria

Bowler O M R W

Pathan 9 1 27 0

Rudra Pratap 6 1 33 0

Kumble 12 2 56 1

Zaheer 7 3 12 0

Harbhajan 8 2 16 0

Yuvraj 1 0 6 0

Indira brighten

FROM PAGE 12 SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIRA ROAD: 222-9 in 50 overs (Junaid 37, Proshenjit 41, Rezaul 47, extras 30; Manash 3-42)

ORIENT: 192 all out in 46.1 overs (Masum 45, Bashir 41, extras 18; Siran 2-23, Nazmul 2-35, Nayeem 2-10, Murad 3-19)

Result: Indira Road won by 30 runs.



Nigeria's Wilson Oruma (R) takes a tumble while vying for possession with Ghana's Adu Sarpei during their African Nations Cup clash at the Al-Masri Club Stadium at Port Said in Egypt on Monday.

Super Eagles off the mark

AFP, Port Said

Nigeria defeated arch-rivals Ghana 1-0 thanks to a late Taye Taiwo goal in the opening match of Group D of the African Nations Cup here Monday.

Marseille defender Taiwo netted Nigeria's winner in the 84th minute when he fired home a low shot from 30 metres which beat goalkeeper Sammy Adjei.

The result was a repeat of Nigeria's victory in the quarterfinals of the 2002 edition of the tournament in Mali.

It was a contest in which there were very few clear-cut chances even though Nigeria were favourites to carry the day at the expense of injury-hit Ghana.

It was cautious start by both teams even though Nigeria were

first to take the game to their opponents. However, the Black Stars gradually warmed their way into the match.

Taiwo's bullet free kick shot after 23 minutes tested Adjei, who did well to somehow keep it out as the Eagles began to take full control of the match.

Ghana striker Mathew Amoah also flew a shot 27 minutes but missed the target and four minutes later John Mensah's goal-bound header off a corner was palmed away for yet another corner.

The stadium came to life in the 38th minute when Julius Aghahowa appeared to have put Nigeria ahead but his shot had only hit the sidenetting to the relief of the Ghanaians.

Nigeria stepped up their game just before the interval. Ayila Yusuf toe-poked his shot wide from inside the box while Wilson

Oruma's shot was parried by Adjei but there was no Nigerian player to put away the rebound.

Ghana too had their own chance to take the lead in the dying moments of the first half when Stephen Appiah fired home but Enyeama in goal for Nigeria pulled off a save.

Both teams opened the second half in search of goals with the Nigerians having more of these openings. Yobo, and Martins all came close to getting their names on the scoresheet.

At the other end of the pitch, Enyeama made a point-blank save from Kingston Laryea on 68 minutes while Amoah's header inside the six-yard box missed target soon after.

The game appeared to be heading for the first draw of the championship before Taiwo produced his match-winning shot to give the Eagles full marks.

Henry Barca's next season?

AFP, Barcelona

Arsenal striker Thierry Henry has reached a verbal agreement with Barcelona to join the Spanish champions next season, Catalan newspaper Sport reported on Tuesday.

The headline read: "Henry will come in July," and the Barcelona-based newspaper added there was a "90 per cent chance that Henry would be wearing Barcelona colours next season."

Henry's move, according to the paper, was based on Barcelona having the squad to win the European Cup, the only major title to have eluded him.

The paper emphasised that neither Henry nor Barcelona would make the news official (before the end of the season) and that the player would continue to negotiate a contract extension at Arsenal.

Henry has continually stressed his commitment to Arsenal since arriving in 1999. But he wants to be sure the club can be competitive at the highest level in both England and Europe before signing a new deal, perhaps the last major one of his career.

Five-star Juve

REUTERS, Rome

Serie A leaders Juventus have picked up five of the top awards at the annual Italian football "Oscars", which are based on the votes of their fellow footballers.

Juve's Swedish striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic won two awards, for Best Foreign Player and Most Loved Player.

Winning prizes is always a pleasure, and especially these because they come from your colleagues," Ibrahimovic was quoted as saying in La Gazzetta dello Sport on Tuesday.

His team mates Gianluigi Buffon and Fabio Cannavaro came out top in the Best Goalkeeper and Best Defender categories respectively.

Juventus boss Fabio Capello was voted Best Coach. Capello won the Serie A title with Juve in his first season in charge and this year his team looks even stronger, leading their nearest rivals Inter Milan by eight points after 21 matches.

Juve's dominance was broken by AC Milan striker Alberto Gilardino, who scooped the award for the Best Player in Serie A.

Six-times World Referee of the Year Pierluigi Collina, who retired at the start of this season, capped his career by winning the Best Referee award.

You're staying Ronaldo: Perez

INTERNET

Real Madrid president Florentino Perez made a point of speaking with Ronaldo last Thursday to assure the Brazilian he was part of the club's long-term plans.

Ronaldo has been linked with Manchester United and a return to Inter Milan this month, but AS says Perez spoke with the striker last week and told him: "Be calm. While I am president of Real Madrid you will continue with us. You are very important to this club and we know that you are key to our future sport plans."

"Ignore the rumours. After the World Cup in Germany there will be no danger of your continuity here. I give my word to you."

Eriksson to go after WC

Hiddink could be his successor

Football

AFP, London

Guus Hiddink emerged Tuesday as the favourite to replace Sven Goran Eriksson as England coach following the announcement that the Swede will step down after the World Cup in Germany in June and July.

Despite pressure for Eriksson to be replaced by an Englishman, Dutchman Hiddink, who will be in charge of Australia in Germany, was installed as the bookmakers favourite to take on the most high-pressure job in international football management.

Eriksson's departure was announced late on Monday after a day of negotiations at FA headquarters.

The Swede said he wanted to draw a line under recent events and concentrate on going out with a bang in Germany. "I care passionately about this job and I want everyone to know that," the 57-year-old said.

"I have always enjoyed the incredible support of the fans and I know how important they will be to us in Germany."

"This summer is the culmination of everything we have been working towards over the last five years. Let's go and win the World Cup."

Barwick had been forced to act after Sven was recorded claiming there was a culture of corruption in English football, as well as making a string of unflattering comments about current England fans.

"The FA and Sven felt it was important to clarify his future," the FA boss said. "There has been so much speculation surrounding this matter in recent weeks and months, it was important to resolve it now."

Bolton boss Sam Allardyce, Charlton's Alan Curbishley and Middlesbrough's Steve McClaren, one of England's coaches under Eriksson, will also all be in the running.

But the reality facing the Football Association (FA) is that there is no Englishman who is an obvious choice or can match Hiddink's experience or achieve-

ment, notably in taking South Korea to the last four of the 2002 World Cup.

Allardyce and McLaren have only minimal experience of European club football. Curbishley has none and only McLaren has been involved in the international game.

Eriksson's reign is to be cut short two years before the expiry of his contract following a fall-out with his bosses at the FA that was triggered by a string of ill-judged comments to an undercover reporter from tabloid newspaper, the News of the World.



GUUS HIDDINK

The episode was the latest in a string of incidents which had seen Eriksson try the patience of his employers.

In the run-up to Euro 2004, it was revealed that the Swede had been talking to Chelsea about taking up the vacancy eventually filled by Jose Mourinho.

That episode resulted in Eriksson's contract being extended to 2008, on substantially enhanced terms that mean the Swede will depart in the summer with a pay-off believed to be in excess of three million pounds, equivalent to around 40 per cent of the amount he would have earned had he stayed on.

The governing body also had to grapple with the fall-out from Eriksson's eventual love life and subsequent kiss-and-tell revelations, including the affair with FA secretary Faria Alam that led to the resignation of then chief executive Mark Pollock last year.

Brian Barwick, who replaced Palios in the wake of that particular fiasco, has indicated that he wants an Englishman to succeed Eriksson but other candidates will be considered.

The FA is under pressure from the League Managers' Association (LMA) and the players' union, the PFA, not to take on another foreigner.

But it is safe to assume that an application from Mourinho, for example, would stand a good chance of success and Martin O'Neill, the former Celtic manager, also has a superior c.v. to any of the English candidates.

O'Neill, a former Northern Ireland international, is currently out of the game caring for his wife, who has cancer, and it is not certain he would be interested in the England job.

Sports Minister Richard Caborn said the FA could not afford to rule out foreign candidates.

"You would like it to be an English or British person but you have to acknowledge that football, and much professional sport, is now global."

"If you look at rugby, cricket and tennis they all have or have had foreign coaches as well so it would be wrong to restrict the search just to people from this country."

"If we want success, the most sensible thing to do is to employ the best person."

LMA chairman Howard Wilkinson urged the FA to go for an Englishman.

"My point of view as chairman of the League Managers' Association is we would hope that English contenders for the position have got more than a head start."

Players chief Gordon Taylor said: "It's a bad reflection on the game as a coach and a manager if this country - the strongest in the world for football - can't produce a quality coach and manager."

The PFA supreme added: "Brazil would virtually always go for a Brazilian manager and that is a faith in their own system and that is a system that has proved that probably they are the best of international football."

Proteas win a thriller

FROM PAGE 12 with Jayasuriya hoisting two sixes either side of a four.

Sri Lanka seemed on course for victory with a 107-run partnership between Tillekeratne Dilshan and Mahela Jayawardene for the fifth wicket.

But a succession of late wickets, sparked when Bandara was run out for a duck, left them facing a difficult assignment which they approached badly -- swiping wildly at balls and missing.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the tri-series one-day international between South Africa and Sri Lanka at the Adelaide Oval on Tuesday:

SOUTH AFRICA

Smith st Sangakkara b Muralitharan 28

Dippenaar not out 125

Van der Wath c Arnold b Muralitharan 0

Rudolph c and b Dilshan 11

Gibbs b Perera 68

Pollock c Atapattu b Kulasekara 8

Kemp not out 6

Extras: (b-2, lb-11, w-4) 17

Total: (For 5 wickets in 50 overs) 263

Fall of wickets: 1-72, 2-72, 3-101, 4-220, 5-249

Did not bat: Prince, Boucher, Hall, Langeveldt

Super-sub: Botha for Kemp

Bowler O M R W

Vaas 10 1 55 0

Perera 7 0 45 1

Kulasekara 9 1 35 1

Muralitharan 10 0 45 2

Dilshan 8 0 43 1

Jayasuriya 6 0 27 0

SRI LANKA

Mubarak c Prince b Pollock 4

Jayasuriya st Boucher b Hall 37

Sangakkara c and b van der Wath 23

Dilshan not out 82

Atapattu run out 23

Jayawardene b van der Wath 52

Arnold b Hall 11

Bandara run out 0

Vaas c Botha b Pollock 9

Muralitharan not out 0

Extras: (lb-6, nb-2, w-5) 13

Total: (For 8 wickets in 50 overs) 254

Fall of wickets: 1-11, 2-68, 3-68, 4-117, 5-224, 6-242, 7-242, 8-253

Did not bat: Kulasekara

Super-sub: Bandara for Perera

Bowler O M R W

Pollock 10 1 51 2

Langeveldt 10 0 62 0

Van der Wath 10 1 37 2

Hall 10 1 38 2

Botha 9 0 53 0

Smith 1 0 7 0

Result: South Africa won by 9 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Boeta Dippenaar.

Toss: South Africa.

Umpires: Aleem Dar and Daryl Harper.

Tangail storm into JFA Cup semifinals

SPORTS REPORTER

Four-goal Syed Rafique helped Tangail thrash Kurigram 6-0 to reach the semifinals of the JFA Cup Under-16 Football Tournament at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Liton Barman netted the other goals for the winners.

In the day's other match between Narayanganj and Satkhira ended in a goalless draw at the same venue.

India deny

FROM PAGE 12 intent to host the event, a statement said.

ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed said the level of interest demonstrated the potential of the event.

"The range of locations of these countries also provides the ICC with the ability to schedule the event at a time of year that will optimise its potential," said Speed.

The members have until the end of February to produce full hosting submissions, which will be considered at the next ICC board meeting in Dubai on March 20-21.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Told delay

5 -- Na Na beast

8 Experts speedy

12 Pre-swan steeds

13 Has the skills

14 Santa's home

15 "Scarborough Fair" mint

17 Blueprint

18 Prior to

19 On in years

20 Tobacco-nist's offering

21 Conciliatory bribe

22 Anonymous mouse

23 Bivouacs

26 Topic

30 Hodge-podge

31 Droop

32 Malaria symptom

33 "Non-sense"

35 Noted Fibber

DOWN

1 Entice holder

2 Lab lead-in

3 Other-assistant?

4 Go blue? words

5 Resell for a huge profit

6 Difficult board

7 Whatever amount

8 Cider support

9 Singer brandy

10 Verve Natalie

11 Fax night

16 Barnyard sounds

20 Short beginning

21 Ibis's cousin

22 Shoveled

23 Thick

24 Carte lead-in

25 Thou squared

26 Put into words

27 Early bird?

28 Shuffle-board

29 Ball slick

31 Field a needle

34 Us (Sp.) night

35 Amahl's visitors

37 Delicious

38 From the beginning

39 The Eternal City

40 Domingo rendition

41 Get better

42 Urban or innocent

43 Attempt