



Egypt forward Hossam Hassan (C) is congratulated by his teammates after he scored against Congo in their African Nations Cup quarterfinal match in Cairo on Friday.

Zim cricketers refuse deals

AFP, Harare

Zimbabwe cricketers have turned down fresh offers of new contracts by the sport's ruling body here in the latest twist to the chaos wracking the country's cricket set-up.

The cricketers decided late Friday to refuse fresh deals for salaries the equivalent of 1,200 US dollars down to 450 dollars within three grades of senior, intermediate and junior.

The 25 players are also refusing to play in two sponsored inter-provincial matches scheduled for Sunday.

Their decision came after about 15 of the players were believed by colleagues to be inclined to take the contract offers because after six months without pay plus overdue Test match and ODI fees they were very short of money.

But after getting together formally under their association banner these 15 players changed their minds after persuasion. They all also took the opportunity to reaffirm their decision not to play for Zimbabwe in any representative cricket while chairman Peter Chingoka remains in place.

Details were given to AFP by two of the players Saturday, but they asked not to be named "because we are nervous about possible reprisals".

Their decision also probably means the cancellation of a scheduled tour to Zimbabwe by Kenya later this month.

And it almost certainly means that Zimbabwe will not be able to persuade West Indies to go through with a One-Day International series there in April and May.

The players' decision was passed to Zimbabwe Cricket coach Kevin Curran early Saturday.

The contract saga began Thursday when 14 players were called individually into the Zimbabwe Cricket office to be told what they were being offered.

One said afterwards: "They gave us the figures they came up with and said if we thought we were worth more we should argue why. They said their offers were based on attitude and performance."

Dion Ebrahim, former vice captain and with 22 Tests experience, was not made an offer at all. He was told: "You haven't performed for two years."

Their strike of more than six months is now reinforced. The players will soon be meeting their lawyer Beatrice Mtwewa who has withheld a summons against Zimbabwe Cricket to appear in the High Court and answer claims for unpaid salaries and match fees amounting to about one million US dollars.

Mtwewa was not available to say whether that would now be re-activated.

Murali in the clear

FROM PAGE 12

Muralitharan's feelings became evident in Perth last week when he was photographed making a one-finger gesture to a supporter who had "no ball" written across his chest.

He has drawn an unofficial reprimand for the action.

"I've been to every country, England, South Africa, everywhere. People respect me and enjoy my bowling and enjoy the cricket," Muralitharan said.

"Here I don't know what's happening."

Muralitharan, 33, has a glowing record as one of the world's best bowlers with 584 Test wickets and 406 limited-overs scalps to his credit.

Egypt cruise into semis

AFP, undated



Africa Cup of Nations EGYPT 2006

A double from Ahmed Hasan inspired hosts Egypt to a 4-1 victory over Democratic Republic of Congo here on Friday and a place in the semifinals of the African Nations Cup where they will meet 2002 finalists Senegal, who edged previously unbeaten Guinea 3-2 earlier on the day.

Egypt's other goals came from 39-year-old veteran Hossam Hassan -- his 79th in 175 internationals -- and Imad Motaeb, his third in two games, while the DRC's was an own goal by Ahmed El Saka.

In truth the margin flattered Egypt, who now play Senegal for a place in the final, as the DRC paid for having both their first choice central defenders suspended.

"I think the score was a little bit harsh," said DRC coach Claude Le Roy who also announced he was probably going to quit despite having a contract to June.

"With our suspensions we had to put together a new defence and they made several basic errors. However I believe that the team played a wonderful last 30 minutes."

"Hats off to Egypt. Our adventure is over but theirs continues."

Egypt assistant coach Shawky Gharib praised his side.

"This was their best performance of the tournament so far," said Gharib.

"We stepped up a gear and the players should be proud. We do not have an easy route to the final and we will not underestimate Senegal."

DRC's captain Lomana LuaLua gave the hosts an early alert when within 30 seconds of the start he twisted and turned and fired in a

shot from outside the area, which just curled round the left hand post.

Egypt replied in kind as Mohammed Barakat fired in low from a tight angle which went the wrong side of the post.

The Congolese, though, then let their minds wander as within two minutes both their fullbacks were badly caught out.

First Amr Zaki, alone on the right, had his shot blocked by keeper Pascal Kalemba and then Tarek El Sayed got free on the left but his superb cross evaded the onrushing Motaeb.

It was beginning to look ominous for the DRC as in the 10th minute their makeshift defence was again exposed and a scramble in the six yard box ended with 39-year-old Hassan firing tamely into the hands of Kalemba.

Hassan, scorer of seven goals in the 1998 edition which Egypt won, was linking well with Motaeb and twice the younger striker laid it back to his evergreen partner but the veteran was unable to add to his tally.

LuaLua then got to the by-line and found Biscotte Mbala but the diminutive midfielder spooned the ball over the top.

That miss proved costly as five minutes later Egypt were awarded a penalty when Ndandu Kasongo's late tackle on Elsayed saw referee Modou Soule point directly to the spot.

Although Kalemba went the right way former skipper Ahmed Hassan's spot kick was too powerful and Egypt were in front.

Eight minutes later Kasongo committed another howler letting Ahmed Hassan's long pass drop over him to Hossam Hassan and the captain slotted it home gleefully with a powerful drive.

However seldom has 74,000

people been silenced so abruptly as El Saka deflected a shot from Cyrille Mubiala into his own net in injury-time to give the DRC some hope.

They were nearly caught cold within two minutes of the restart as the defence failed to clear the ball and Hossam Hassan pounced but his shot from close range was brilliantly saved by Kalemba with his feet.

His opposite number Essam El Hadary also had to be at his best four minutes later as he recovered from making a poor clearance to beat out a fierce effort from Zola Matumona.

Le Roy had seen enough of Kasongo by this stage and substituted the unfortunate defensive novice, but it was to be Kalemba again who saved his team as he pulled off a breathtaking one-handed save from Amr Zaki and then bravely blocked Motaeb's follow-up.

However an appalling mix-up in his central defence resulted in Motaeb's goal.

DRC Congo failed to deal with Zaki's run into the area and when the chance arose to clear it they instead passed it to Motaeb -- their pleas of handball against Zaki fell on deaf ears.

There was still fight left in the DRC, though, and Mbala went devilishly close to reducing the deficit in the 65th minute as his curling freekick from the left dropped just onto the top of the net.

Mbala was playing some of the best football and a quite mesmerising solo run took him into the box. He left the Egyptians flustered but his shot rattled off the bar.

Two minutes from time, Hassan added his second and his team's fourth from a direct freekick.

Ronaldo set for return

AP, Madrid

Ronaldo was to play his first match for almost a month when Real Madrid hosted Espanyol in the Spanish league on Saturday.

The Brazil striker, who suffered a recurrence of a right calf injury on Jan. 8, was included in an 18-man squad for Madrid's attempt to cut FC Barcelona's lead in the standings to 10 points.

"Today Ronie is back. Simply, the best center forward in the world is back," Madrid president Florentino Perez was quoted as saying by sports daily As on Saturday.

Madrid has won all its six league and Copa del Rey games since Ronaldo was absent, rising from sixth to third place in the league and reaching the semifinals of the knockout competition.

Injuries have sidelined Ronaldo for eight of Madrid's 21 league games this season. Injury and suspension have also combined to keep him out of all six of his team's Champions League group matches.

No movie on me: Mourinho

AFP, Lisbon

Chelsea's Portuguese coach Jose Mourinho said Friday his life story is not worth immortalising on the big screen as film executives are reportedly planning to do.

"What is there about my life that would be worth making a movie about? The only thing they could do about me is a DVD of about one hour with the titles I have won, the best images, the biggest controversies," he said in an interview with stateradio RDP.

Mourinho joined Chelsea in June 2004 less than one month after leading Portuguese side FC Porto to the Champions League title.

He guided the London-based club to their first domestic championship title in 50 during his first year with the team.

It is our darkest hour, says Cafu

INTERNET, undated

Milan defender Marcos Cafu has referred to his side's current slump as the worst in his time at the club.

Cafu is in his final season in Serie A before returning to Brazilian football in the summer in all likelihood to the club where he first made his name, Sao Paulo, but the international has had a glittering career in the peninsula.

After winning the title with Roma and the Rossoneri, he was hoping to go out in style with a third Scudetto, but injury and his side's subsequent loss of form appear to have ended his hopes of winning another championship.

Cafu returned to action for his first full appearance since November 20 against Palermo on Wednesday night and was one of Milan's few plus points on a disappointing evening, but he is determined to restore his side to their former glories.

"It's the worst period I've known since coming to Milan," he said. "But we have enough quality to resolve the situation and go back to playing the beautiful game that we know how to play."

Cafu will be hoping to feature against Lazio on Sunday night and help cast aside the bad memories of his teammates' last visit to the Stadio Olimpico a 1-0 loss to Roma.

Then the two-times World Cup winner's mind will focus on capturing the most prized honour in the European game that has one major piece of silverware still to elude him the Champions League.

Bangladesh take

FROM PAGE 12

been long and the selectors relied on experience, picking up 11 cricketers with first-class experience. Also, most of the cricketers' visit to Sri Lanka last year would become handy to cope up with the conditions.

Bangladesh will meet Pakistan and Uganda on February 8 and 9 respectively.

The top two teams from each of the four groups will qualify for the Super League for the Cup. The bottom two teams from each group will compete in the Plate Championship.

Bangladesh squad: Mushfiqur Rahim (captain), Mehrab Hossain (vice-captain), Nabil Samad, Sakib Al Hasan, Raqibul Hassan, Kazi Kamrul Islam, Rezaul Islam, Sirajullah Khadem, Tamim Iqbal, Dollar Mahmud, Shamsur Rahman, Sohrawardi Shuvo, Mehdi Hasan and Ishraq Sonnet.

Manager: Golam Mohamed Nawsher, coach: Allister de Winter.

TEAMS GROUP-A: Pakistan, New Zealand, Bangladesh, Uganda. GROUP-B: West Indies, South Africa, Australia, USA. GROUP-C: India, Sri Lanka, Scotland, Namibia. GROUP-D: England, Zimbabwe, Ireland, Nepal.

Money the menace to African football

AFP, undated



Africa Cup of Nations EGYPT 2006

Depending on one's tastes money may either be the root of all evil or make the world go round -- for African footballers it is fortunate if they ever see it and is a blight that threatens

to restrict their progress on the world stage despite a deep reservoir of natural talent.

The national sides' coaches as Guinea's Patrice Neveu said are judged on results, but it would help them immensely if the players were paid, not to mention themselves -- however it has ever been thus in African football.

One could argue that many of the countries find it hard to feed themselves so paying their footballers would seem like a misplaced priority.

However, as several players and coaches have said, the one thing that raises the spirits and morale of the blighted people of their countries is success for the football team.

"This is the only time we can put a smile on people's faces," said Democratic Republic of Congo's inspirational captain Lomana LuaLua about his team performing at the African Nations Cup.

However, there were not too many smiles to be had on his and his fellow teammates' faces during the tournament -- though they played some of the most vibrant

and entertaining football -- because they were kept waiting for the promised payments.

DRC's soon to be former coach Claude Le Roy may not want to as he told AFP "be the richest man in the cemetery" but the 58-year-old Frenchman would not have minded a bit if the DRC authorities had paid his players on time.

Instead his campaign here at the African Nations Cup -- which ended with a 4-1 defeat by hosts Egypt on Friday -- was bedevilled by arguments over when and if the players were going to be paid which he believes cost them dearly in the group stage.

While they managed to overcome a few hours' sleep -- because they had sat up arguing over when the money was arriving -- to beat a demoralised Togo 2-0 in their first match, by the time they came to taking on Cameroon the issue had reached boiling point.

Indeed Le Roy said that his side's poor disciplinary record -- they had two players sent off in the group stage and had three key players suspended for the quarterfinal -- could be laid at the door of the money issue.

"I think that the financial situation undoubtedly had something to do with the lack of discipline. They understandably had other things on their minds," said Le Roy, who himself has been paid just 30 percent of his salary dating back to last June.

Though it may seem as if they

were behaving like spoilt rich footballers when they threatened to boycott the quarterfinal, it is a rather different scenario to that if the English national side delivered similar menaces given the wages they are paid by their Premiership clubs.

"A lot of the players in the squad earn 30 dollars a week," said Le Roy. LuaLua is one of the few DRC players who earns money unimaginable to either his teammates or most of the citizens of his country -- he plays for Premiership strugglers Portsmouth -- but he put into perspective the anger felt within the group.

"People may think it is being selfish at arguing over money when we are here to represent our country."

"However while I am fine as a player in the Premiership, the others all have to put food on the table for their families and without money that is rather difficult," said the 25-year-old.

Desperate situations require desperate measures and in the end the matter appeared to be resolved when the president of the DRC, Joseph Kabila, came through with promises that the money would be forthcoming.

However while it may sound optimistic perhaps next time the teams competing in the African Nations Cup should have as their mantra before they start their campaigns fictional sports agent Jerry Maguire's catchphrase -- 'show us the money!'

Arsenal's Sol missing

Football

REUTERS, London

Troubled England defender Sol Campbell has gone missing after storming out of Arsenal's Highbury stadium when he was substituted on Wednesday.

"I don't know when Sol will return. I have not spoken to him since Wednesday night and I don't know where he is at the moment," Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger told a news conference.

"I think he just needs a few days to clear his head but I don't know if he will be coming in on Monday. I am not worried."

The centre back is on compassionate leave after his shock halftime substitution during Wednesday's 3-2 home defeat by West Ham.

Wenger said then that Campbell felt guilty at being responsible for West Ham's two first half goals and was not mentally up to playing the second half.

Arsenal team mate Robert Pires was quoted in British newspapers on Friday as saying Campbell had an unspecified personal problem.

Momentum with

FROM PAGE 12

But Pakistan hardly missed these two players as they took on the might of the star-studded Indian line-up with confidence personified, rallied from a hopeless situation of 39 for six and turned the tables on the visitors in stunning fashion.

The fact that Pakistan won with plenty to spare even when two of its regular players were missing from the fray tells its own tale.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

A crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words. The clues include: 1 London-er's letter, 4 Trade, 8 Script-writer, 12 Sapporo sash, 13 Inauguration recitation, 14 Long live..., 15 Hidden something, 17 Black flock, 18 Lids, 19 European country, 20 Texas Hold 'Em need, 22 Verdi master-work, 24 Vicinity, 25 Spectator, 29 - de deux, 30 Palatal pendant, 31 Eventual ayes, 32 No longer useful, 34 Crew's assents, 35 Hostels, 36 Refuse, 37 Country home, 40 Nest component, 41 Stage statuette, 42 Glass of lava, 46 Subdiv. of a country, 47 Wheedle, 48 FDR's "Blue Eagle", 49 Erstwhile partners, 50 Grounds for a few notes, 51 Hiatus, 1 Menageries, 2 "Chicago" lyricist, 3 Woe, 4 First-course options, 5 "Star" away, 6 Put away, 7 Third degree?, 8 PC-game figure, 9 Actress, 10 Malfeasance, 11 Uncomplicated, 16 Last few notes, 19 Notion, 20 Mafia bigwig, 21 Speedy steed, 22 Touches, 23 Gilligan's home, 25 It takes the cake, 26 On a trip, 27 Prior nights, 28 Dermatologist's case, 30 Radius's neighbor, 33 Former Houston team, 34 Saharan, 36 In the middle of, 37 Responsibility, 38 Mountain goat, 39 Old Italian bread, 40 Despot, 42 Halloween mo., 43 The bad guy, 44 Coach, 45 Ghiana

A 10x10 grid for a Cryptquip puzzle. The grid contains numbers indicating the positions of letters in the words below. The words are: CT K SKO YJQJ KTQKCI, HT MUJ XUQCVM SKV, VJKVHO, C I YKOM MH, XKGG UCS OHJG XHYKQI, Yesterdays Cryptquip: WHEN YOU'RE SIPPING SOUP, I SUPPOSE SOMEBODY MIGHT SAY "DON'T WASTE YOUR BROTH!", Today's Cryptquip Clue: J equals E.

CRYPTOQUIP CT K SKO YJQJ KTQKCI HT MUJ XUQCVM SKV VJKVHO, C I YKOM MH XKGG UCS OHJG XHYKQI. Yesterdays Cryptquip: WHEN YOU'RE SIPPING SOUP, I SUPPOSE SOMEBODY MIGHT SAY "DON'T WASTE YOUR BROTH!". Today's Cryptquip Clue: J equals E. The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.