

Eto'o declares war against racism

AFP, Istanbul

Barcelona's Cameroon striker Samuel Eto'o, the victim of racial abuse at a weekend game, has appealed for public support in the campaign to stamp out intolerance in sports during an awards ceremony here Tuesday.

"Football is a game, we have to take pleasure from, but with the knowledge that life goes on before and after a match," Eto'o was quoted as saying by Turkish newspapers on Wednesday.

His comments came as he received the best athlete of the year award from the Turkish daily Zaman. "Please give me support to banish violence and insults from sports," he said, describing insults on the football pitch as a "world problem".

Eto'o, Spain's top scorer with 18 goals, wanted to leave the pitch a quarter of an hour before the end of Barcelona's 2-0 away victory against Real Zaragoza in protest at monkey cries from the rival team's supporters.

The Cameroon international was persuaded to stay in the game till full-time by the referee and teammates.

Real Zaragoza announced Tuesday they must pay a 9,000-euro fine for the incident, but said they would appeal the decision made by the Spanish league.

Vaughan, Jones to see surgeon

BBC ONLINE, undated

The surgeon treating Michael Vaughan is confident the England captain's latest injury is not career-threatening.

Derek Bickerstaff, a knee specialist at Sheffield's Thornbury Hospital, was to assess Vaughan and fast bowler Simon Jones on Wednesday.

Asked about speculation that Vaughan's career could be ruined, Bickerstaff said: "I personally would be very surprised if that was the case."

"From initial reports there is nothing which particularly worries me."

Vaughan is struggling with a recurrence of a problem in his right knee, which required surgery in December.

Jones twisted his left knee in practice before the first Test in Nagpur.

Bickerstaff has worked with both players before, having performed the surgery on Vaughan's knee last year and helped Jones after a horrendous right knee injury in Australia in 2002.

Of Vaughan's latest injury, Bickerstaff said: "It is always the type of problem which can flare up. It is disappointing it has flared up again but some of the features are a bit different."

"Unfortunately, it is an area which does not heal itself so it is more of an issue of managing the problem."

"I would be surprised if he needed more surgery but it is almost impossible to say when he will be back."

Hong Kong

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tes later when the tight Bangladesh defence was outclassed by Chan's spectacular header.

Bangladesh captain Joy said after the match that they paid for missing the chances.

"Our strategy was to counter-attack. We had the chances but failed. On the other hand, one silly mistake cost us the match," Joy said at the post-match briefing.

Hasanuzzaman Babloo, the coach in charge in absence of Argentine Diego Cruciani who was banned for the game, thought that the players could not stick to the plan throughout the game.

"We are trying to adopt a new style under Cruciani. It would take some time to play perfectly. They tried to stick to the plan most of the time but lost cool under pressure," said Babloo.

"I hope when we play our next qualifier some months later, we will be a better side. Biplab and Rajani were superb. So were the two substitute Hong Kong forwards. They were the best players on the pitch and the Hong Kong coach decided to bring them in the second half as a surprise. He succeeded," added the former national winger.

Hong Kong's head coach Lai Sun Cheung was not satisfied with the 1-0 scoreline. "We played slow in the first half and could not score early. We lost the ball too many times in the first half because it was too hot. But the boys really did well after the break," said Cheung.

"I think Bangladesh, a strong south Asian team, have improved in these four years. Their goalkeeper was very good and the two strikers really gave us trouble."

Yellow cards: Szeto (Hong Kong) and Farhad, Arman (Bangladesh).

TEAMS Hong Kong: Fan, Sham, Lee (Man), Chiu, Poon, Lo (Law), Szeto, Ambassa, Cheung, YL Chan and HM Chan (Siu Chan).

Referee: Subrata Sarkar (India).



PHOTO: AFP

WHY AM I NOT PLAYING FOR IRAN? Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad shoots a ball as he visits national soccer team during their training ahead of their friendly against Costa Rica in Tehran on Tuesday. The president said that Iran could be the surprise team in this year's World Cup.

Ronaldo has lost his way: Pele

INTERNET, undated

Brazilian legend Pele says Ronaldo could have been a better player if he had not 'lost his way' due to personal problems.

The Real Madrid striker has left his future at the Bernabeu in doubt after criticising the club's fans for a lack of support, and his time with the Liga giants has seen him endure jibes about his weight and lifestyle.

Despite a glittering career to date, including a key role in Brazil's World Cup triumph in 2002, Ronaldo is yet to win the UEFA Champions League and Pele believes a sense of underachievement surrounds the exceptional striker.

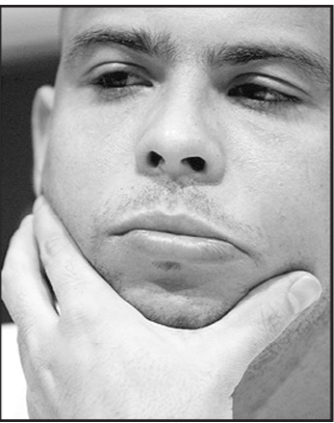
The Real forward, who has been linked with a move back to Italy with both Milan and Internazionale, is keen to surpass Pele's total of 95 goals for the Brazilian national side, but his predecessor as Brazil's darling believes a failure to control his personal life has had an impact on his performances on the pitch.

"Ronaldo has proved to be a good player with all those titles but he tends to lose his way," Pele told Shanghai Daily.

"He could have been an even better player had he not been affected by troubles off the pitch."

"You can't get married one day and divorce only two months later and remain unaffected by it. His personal life is so confused that he isn't able to keep the balance."

Pele has urged his countryman to calm down and consider whether he



RONALDO

wants another change of club at this stage of his career.

"He must take it easy," commented Pele. "Fans are always impatient. It's very normal."

"He may find a better new environment but age is also not on his side."

Commentator Collina!

INTERNET, undated

Former referee Pierluigi Collina will be working at Germany 2006 as a commentator for Italian television.

Collina, widely considered as the world's best official, hung up his whistle at the start of this season following a conflict of interests row.

But the Viareggio-based whistle blower has now been asked to comment on the World Cup Finals for Sky television.

"I'll look to be myself, to talk about what I have seen even if I won't be passing comment on referees," Collina stated.

"The fact that Sky specifically asked me to not talk about referees was the decisive factor in me accepting the proposal by Giovanni Bruno."

"My experience in the world of football gives me the possibility of talking about the game."

"I have spent many years working in the sport and I think I too have something important to say."

Collina was expected to take up a senior role within the Italian referees' association, but he concedes that his future may be on the box.

"For now, my experience with Sky is solely for the World Cup Finals," he said. "However, you never know what will happen next."

Collina has fond memories of the World Cup Finals after he took charge of Brazil's victory over Germany four years ago.

Azzurri appeal to boo boys

INTERNET, undated

Marcello Lippi, Luca Toni and Alessandro Del Piero have pleaded with the football fans of Florence to stop their feud with the Italy squad.

Wednesday's friendly against Germany was to be the first international played at the Stadio Artemio Franchi since 1993, when Arrigo Sacchi's Azzurri were roundly jeered by the home fans, who instead loudly cheered on opponents Mexico.

Many of the supporters from the Tuscan city aim to continue their open hatred of the home team and there are plans for giant German flags to be unfurled over the Curva Fiesole.

"I expect a lot of enthusiasm and support from the people of Florence," insisted Lippi. "We are in one of the most important cities in Italy and Fiorentina are having a great season, but we also deserve the passion of the tifosi."

Viola hero Toni appealed to his own supporters to put this feud aside for one night and embrace the Azzurri colours.

"I trust my fans and don't think there will be any boo boys," assured the striker. "The Nazionale hasn't been back to Florence in a long time and everything will be fine."

Alessandro Del Piero is one of the men most at risk of abuse from the stands, as he is a symbol of Fiorentina's arch-rivals, Juventus.

"I hope that the people of Florence will realise that we are all here with the Italy shirt and not the Juventus colours," added the Bianconeri captain.

The bitterness stretches back to several incidents in the early 1990s, as Fiorentina fans were unhappy with the Federation that they claim was biased against them, while Roberto Baggio's sale to Juve and the presence of ex-Milan Coach Sacchi on the bench further inflamed the atmosphere in that friendly game against Mexico.

Del Piero's WC dream

INTERNET, undated

Alessandro Del Piero remains hopeful that he can play a key role for Italy at the World Cup.

Juventus' mercurial playmaker has recaptured some of his best form this season and will almost certainly have a role to play at some stage for the Azzurri in Germany.

Del Piero's chances of starting for his country appear to have been heightened by an unfortunate but serious injury sustained by Roma captain Francesco Totti.

The capital-born schemer, who would be vying for the same creative spot as Del Piero, is now a major doubt for the finals but his Juve counterpart does not believe his own chances of playing are related to Totti.

"I've always joined the World Cup as an influential player," said Del Piero.

"Now I feel good and hope to keep a good condition for Germany. The best way to arrive at that tournament is with a (Serie A) win at Juve because winning breeds winning."

"I'taly must not start with the idea of the final but just be attentive and not complicate our life - we must do it one step at a time."

"My own role on the pitch does not depend on Francesco's presence or absence."

"I only aim to arrive at the World Cup fit and maybe improve it. I must only think to play in a good way."

"Totti is a champion and we are waiting for him."

Monty first Sikh to play for Eng

PTI, Nagpur

Mudhsuden Singh 'Monty' Panesar became the first Sikh cricketer to play for England when he made his debut in the first Test against India here on Wednesday.

Panesar, 23, found a place in the England squad, thanks to the absence of veteran Ashley Giles who had to undergo hip surgery late last year.

The Luton-born Panesar, who traces his ancestral roots to Ludhiana in Punjab, earned his place in the team on the back of an impressive performance in domestic championship last season when he picked 46 wickets at 21.54.

Panesar overtook 12-142 on his first-class debut for Northamptonshire four years ago but his career suffered a brief slump soon after that.

But 2005 saw him come back into the reckoning and Giles' exit opened the doors for him.

His Test appearance would have triggered jubilation in Ludhiana where his grandparents Hari Singh and Manjit Kaur live.

Ian Blackwell, another left-arm spinner, and Alastair Cook, a 21-year old opening batsman from Essex, were the other two players who made their Test debut today.

India pacer Shantakumaran Sreesanth also earned his maiden Test cap.

Kenya will now

FROM PAGE 16

Bangladesh and Sri Lanka at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium on Wednesday:

BANGLADESH: First innings (Ashraful 136, Iqbal 34, Bashar 29, Nafees 27, extras 33; Malinga 4-57, Muralitharan 3-87, Bandara 2-61) SRILANKA: First innings Vandort c Mashud b Raseel 0

Scoreboard at stumps on the opening day of the first Test between India and England at the Vidharha Cricket Association stadium in Nagpur on Wednesday:

ENGLAND: First innings Strauss c Laxman b Sreesanth 28 Cook b Pathan 60 Bell c Dravid b Harbhajan 9 Pietersen b Sreesanth 15 Collingwood not out 53 Jones lbw b Pathan 14 Blackwell b Pathan 4 Hoggard not out 0

'Galactico' devours it's creator

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

Florentino Perez was elected Real Madrid president in 2000 on the back of a utopian promise to rescue the club from financial meltdown and at the same time sign the world's best players.

Six years on, Real Madrid tops football's rich list as a result of the club's brilliant marketing campaigns and the arrival of players such as Ronaldo, David Beckham and Zinedine Zidane.

However, like Doctor Frankenstein, Perez found that the 'galacticos' monster he created has a will of its own and his experiment has not provided the results he dreamed of.

The big-name signings that Perez believed would allow the club to relive the glory years of the 1950s have ended up putting their own interests first.

They are a group of talented individuals rather than a team, a situation partly due to Perez going through six coaches and three sporting directors in his six years at the helm.

"What has gone wrong is that there is no unity between the players," he said on Monday after resigning. "They have lost ambition, they believe they are spectacular and great and I'm responsible for that."

"We have put together a great squad of players, but perhaps we have brought them up badly in the same way as happens when parents give their children everything they want."

The 58-year-old engineer will rightly take the credit for saving Real from financial disaster.

He used his political connections to secure the sale of the club's city centre training ground and clear

crippling debts with the stroke of a pen. His mistake was to believe he could then throw accepted football wisdom out of the window and try to achieve success by compiling a sticker book collection of the world's most famous players.

Perez credited galacticos such as French World Cup winner Zidane for Real's Champions League victory in 2002 while forgetting that the foundations of the side were built upon less glamorous players such as midfielder Claude Makelele.

The day after Real won their last significant piece of silverware, the 2003 Spanish league title, Perez discarded coach Vicente del Bosque, a man who had steered them to two European Cup triumphs and two league titles in 3-1/2 years.

Perez said Del Bosque's methods were outmoded and unsuitable for a club looking to move forward in the 21st century.

At the same time the Real chief signed the most marketable player in the world to enhance the brand image expected to lead the club to global domination.

Crucially, the arrival of England captain David Beckham was accompanied by the departure of Makelele, the player who had kept the Real ship afloat through his hard work and sacrifice.

"We won't miss Makelele," said Perez. He could not have been more wrong as Chelsea's subsequent success has shown.

None of Del Bosque's successors were able to hold a top-sided squad together while the constant pander to the galacticos undermined the coaches' authority and caused serious rifts in the team.

Although the club tried to rectify some of the problems, Real's recruitment policy appeared to defy logic.

When they failed to sign Arsenal midfielder Patrick Vieira, striker

Michael Owen was brought in from Liverpool.

A year after backing out of signing Argentine centre-back Gabriel Milito because he was thought to have knee problems, Real signed injured England international Jonathan Woodgate who spent the next year on the sidelines.

In the last eight months they have signed three right-sided defenders but still have no proper cover for Roberto Carlos on the left.

Owen's departure left Real exposed up front and instead of buying an out-and-out striker, they replaced him with yet another 'media punta', the out-of-shape Italian Antonio Cassano.

Big-name players such as Zidane and Ronaldo are unable to produce the goods week in and week out and appear to be pacing themselves for the World Cup. Ronaldo is unhappy with his lot and seems set on leaving the Bernabeu.

Beckham cannot be faulted for his effort but he does not have the match-winning skills to carry the side on his own.

Perez, for all his big talk, is an astute operator and on his departure he has pulled a final ace out of his sleeve.

Having backed the players against everyone over the past six years, he has left them exposed for the first time and they will now have to produce the goods on the pitch or be held responsible for their failings.

There is little doubt that there will be a galactico clear-out at the end of the season, but Perez will be hoping that his departing gesture may prompt the team to produce one final filigree in this season's Champions League.

Kiwis widen the gap

Cricket

AFP, Napier

An uncharacteristically restrained century from opener Lou Vincent guided New Zealand to a comfortable 91-run victory over the West Indies in their one-day international here Wednesday.

The home side racked up a formidable 324-6 batting first but the West Indies could only manage 233-8 in their 50 overs, sealing the visitors' fourth straight defeat with one to play in the five match series.

An undefeated 110 from Runako Morton was the highlight of the West Indies innings but it meant little to his team, which never got close to the required run rate.

Morton brought up his century in the 45th over off 142 balls, hitting seven fours while Kyle Mills was the best New Zealand bowler, taking 3-45 from his 10 overs.

Despite their unassailable lead in the series, New Zealand didn't ease off the pressure with Vincent hitting a disciplined 102 and sharing a 156-run second wicket partnership with in-form Nathan Astle.

Vincent, whose usual role is to get New Zealand off to a flying start, played an anchoring role through most of his innings, eventually amassing 104 runs and a six in his 117 ball knock. He was ably supported by Astle, following up his undefeated 118 at the weekend with 81.

"I was really impressed with Lou and how he sat back and allowed his innings to be the basis of our score. It's often harder for a player who has been given a role to create a strike rate to do that," skipper Stephen Fleming said.

After a sedate start in which Fleming and Vincent scored 36 runs off the first 10 overs, the skipper launched an extraordinary attack against the bowling of Ian Bradshaw and Deighton Butler to get New Zealand underway.

After taking more than 10 overs

to reach 10, Fleming (67) had to face only another 10 balls to reach his half century.

His assault started with four boundaries off Bradshaw's sixth over. Butler's erratic first over started with three short balls wide of the off stump, all of which were struck by Fleming over the point boundary for six.

Another boundary off a short and wide ball from a rattled Bradshaw in the next over saw Fleming reach his 50 off 36 balls.

The erratic West Indies attack -- with the exception of speedster Fidel Edwards (0-23) and grafting off-spinner Chris Gayle (3-50) -- was not helped by an ideal batting pitch, some poor fielding and two missed run-outs in the early overs.

The mad scramble for runs in the final stages saw five New Zealand wickets fall for 55 runs in the last eight overs.

The West Indies were always struggling to get into themselves into contention in their innings.

Fleming said he was puzzled by the lack of aggression from the West Indies batsmen.

"I'm not too sure what their tactics were. Whether we were able to take wickets at key times, I never got the feeling that were they coming hard at us," he said.

The Test started in the third over with Chris Gayle (5), who was lbw to Kyle Mills, not offering a shot to a ball which straightened on him. The wickets of Ganga (15) and Ramdin (10) hampered the building of the big partnership required to get within reach of New Zealand's big score.

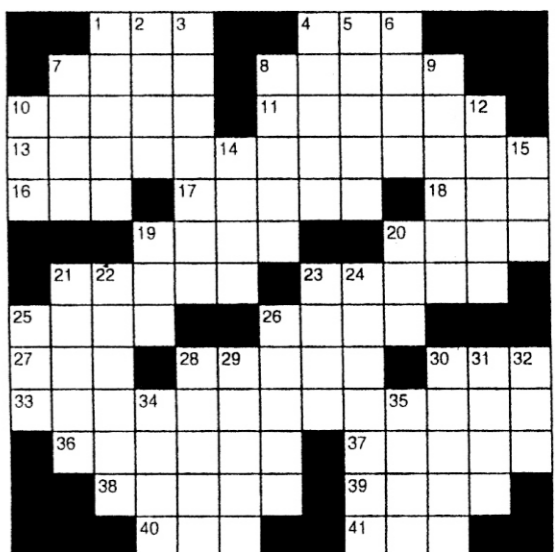
Sarwan (42) and Morton put on 69 runs for the fourth wicket and Morton combined with Chanderpaul put on another 79 runs for the fifth wicket but the visitors never got close enough to the required run rate.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the fourth one-day international between New Zealand and the West Indies at McLean Park in Napier on Wednesday: ACROSS 26 The

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 1 Fello's flight 2 Retriever type, short 3 Unrivaled 8 Conversion station 10 Navajo house 11 Whopper toppers 13 Concise 16 Heavy weight 17 That is (Lat.) 18 Series of skirmishes 19 Buffalo Bill 20 What's My Line? host 21 Seventh-day 22 Christmas gift 23 Convinces 25 Multi-colored DOWN 1 Prepare to e-mail together? 2 Wingleke 3 Bring up a go 4 Gives at 5 Top-notch invitees 6 Erupt 7 Section of London 8 Sweetheart heart 9 Unilateral 10 White House mono-gram 12 Easter mail 13 Restaura-tion 14 Wapiti 14 Puts two and two together? 15 Have a go 16 Scoundrel 20 Hoover, e.g. 21 Congestion locale 22 Stuck Hourglass stuff 24 Grapple 25 de-dux 26 Nothing could be ... 28 Pollster's finding 29 Underwear brand 30 News-stand 31 Gospels follow-up 32 Undoubtedly 34 Melody 35 Combine resources



CRYPTOQUIP C E W V L N F P U F A V K Z S F A P C K Z N V L Y V E F S F H I C K Z N V K G C N W, W V L T C Z I N G V T U I V T U H U F N N A U - H V Y U

Yesterday's Cryptogram: WILL INJECTIONS HELP TO CURE MY MAJOR ALLERGY PROBLEM? I GUESS IT'LL BE WORTH A SHOT.

Today's Cryptogram Clue: W equals Y The Cryptogram 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 equal an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.