

Windies WC tickets go on sale

AFP, Kingston

Organisers on Monday started selling 800,000 tickets for the 2007 Cricket World Cup and said Britain had immediately become the top buying nation outside the West Indies hosts.

The first 3,000 applications came from 50 different countries with Britain, the United States and Australia the top buyers in the early hours, said Chris Dehning, managing director of ICC Cricket World Cup West Indies 2007.

"It is going very well," Dehning told AFP. "We were up at midnight and it was very exciting to watch all the different markets waking up."

The organisers expect more than half of the 800,000 tickets to be sold within the West Indies for the tournament, which starts March 13 and runs through to April 28.

Dehning who is in charge of the World Cup marketing operation said organisers were still hopeful of selling all the tickets. Internet sales on www.cricket-worldcup.com will run through July 31.

There is a general guideline reserving 50 percent of tickets for games for the West Indies market.

But this would be changed for high interest international games such as England v Australia.

England suffer more injury blow

REUTERS, London

England fast bowler James Anderson will miss the Test series against Sri Lanka because of a back injury, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said on Tuesday.

Anderson's county Lancashire has received scans that confirmed that the 23-year-old seamer suffered a stress fracture of the lower back, the ECB said.

He will be out for at least two months and will also miss the five Sri Lanka one-day internationals.

Anderson has not featured for Lancashire since returning from England's tour of India and had been considered doubtful for the Test series against Sri Lanka which starts on May 11.

England suffered another blow on Monday when fast bowler Simon Jones left the field with knee trouble during Glamorgan's C&G Trophy match against Ireland.

Jones, who missed England's tours of India and Pakistan with ankle and knee problems, was also due to have a scan on Tuesday.

England captain Michael Vaughan (knee injury), fast bowler Steve Harmison (shin) and spinner Ashley Giles (hernia) are all ruled out of the first Test at Lord's.

Bits and Bobs

FROM PAGE 12 Lippi's squad does not include players from Roma and Internazionale due to their Italian Cup final showdown this week, while Christian Vieri has also been omitted after doctors reported disappointing progress in the Monaco striker's recovery from injury.

Unfortunately for the 32-year-old, his chances of taking part in another FIFA World Cup now appear slim.

Inevitably, the size of the squad and absence of any players from Roma and Inter ensures Lippi's selection offers only limited clues about the final 23 that will be chosen in a fortnight's time. However, the recall of Inzaghi - his first call-up by Lippi - suggests that he will almost certainly make the cut for Germany 2006.

With Luca Toni, Alessandro Del Piero, Alberto Gilardino and the recovering Francesco Totti all deemed to be certainties for Germany, and Inzaghi also having seemingly squeezed in under the wire, only one place remains for another striker.

The real

FROM PAGE 12

"Once, after he had done some mischief, I asked him to keep running till I came back," said Das. "When I came back after five hours, I was stunned to find him still running."

Das said he hoped India's athletics officials will take note of him.

"I think if they send him to Kenya to train for a few years Budhia could be a serious contender at the world level," he said. "He eats and runs, that's all."

Paediatrician Sunil Sehgal, who specialises in child injuries, urged caution.

"That boy needs to slow down," he told AFP. "His body has obviously got used to running because he is doing it everyday, so there may not be immediate problems."

But he could develop serious cardiac muscular enlargement if he is allowed to run for miles together at a stretch regularly.

Fergie blasts Eriksson



AFP, London

England's World Cup plans were in total disarray on Tuesday after Manchester United boss Sir Alex Ferguson made it clear he would oppose plans to take an injured Wayne Rooney to Germany.

Ferguson described England coach Sven Goran Eriksson's hopes that Rooney would have recovered from a broken metatarsal bone in his right foot in time to feature in the latter stages of the tournament as "a wild dream."

The Scot's sceptical blast poured icy water all over Eriksson's optimistic plan to name Rooney in the squad he will announce on May 15, even if he is certain not to be fit for England's World Cup opener against Paraguay on June 10.

PRIMERA LIGA

Barca ready for party

Football

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona can become Spanish champions for the second successive year if they win at Celta Vigo on Wednesday.

It will be the third opportunity for the Catalan club to clinch the title.

For the last two weekends, Barca have been relying on their nearest rivals Valencia to drop points to clinch the title but the 2004 champions failed to oblige.

Now, finally, Barcelona's destiny is in their own hands.

Valdes dismissed suggestions that they would take it easy and then try to win the title in front of their home fans against local rivals Espanyol on Saturday.

One worry for Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard is that Brazil forward Ronaldinho didn't train on Monday, suffering again from muscle twinges in his legs, but club officials said the World Player of the Year should be fit to play against Celta.

Celta are unlikely to roll over and give Barca an easy victory after having launched a late bid to qualify for the Champions League next season.

They have won their last four games to

"We have to make sure we don't build up people's expectations which is what's happening at the moment," Ferguson said, voicing scepticism about the chances of Rooney, who suffered the injury on Saturday, being any further near ready to play again by the time the World Cup kicks off.

"Sven is going on saying he will take the lad in six weeks and then he will have two weeks to play in the quarterfinals of the World Cup. That is a wild dream."

"It's important Wayne gets a good recovery time. It's folly to say Wayne could be out there in six weeks and then play in the World Cup quarterfinals. If Wayne's not ready he's not going to go."

Ferguson had earlier insisted that he would do everything he could to help England's medical staff get Rooney ready in time to play some role in the tournament.

The United boss also acknowledged that Rooney would be personally distraught at missing out after

suffering an almost identical injury to the one that ended his involvement in Euro 2004, the tournament at which he announced himself to the world as a precociously talented 18-year-old.

"This time round it's even worse because he's more mature and is a more rounded player who has improved dramatically over the last two years," Ferguson said. "So it's a real, real blow."

The only consolation for Ferguson was that the striker would be relieved of the burden of carrying all England's hopes in Germany.

"I said a few weeks ago I didn't want to see this kind of pressure on a lad of 20 years of age," he said. "Other more experienced players such as David Beckham, Steven Gerrard, Frank Lampard, John Terry, Rio Ferdinand and Gary Neville, should be taking the mantle."

"If England don't have Wayne Rooney they will need to look at getting inspiration from other players."

Third-placed Real Madrid, who are two points behind Valencia, travel to Racing Santander on Thursday.

Real will be without their Spanish international goalkeeper Iker Casillas, who was sent off on Sunday during their fraught 1-0 win at Osasuna, so Diego Lopez will start his first league game between the posts for the 29-times Spanish champions.

Julio Baptista, Real's goalscorer at Osasuna, sprained his right ankle late in Sunday's game and is doubtful for the trip north but his place can be filled easily with Zinedine Zidane available again after suspension.

FIXTURES	
(1800 GMT kick-off unless stated)	
WEDNESDAY	
Alaves v Real Betis, Atletico Madrid v Osasuna, Athletic Bilbao v Real Zaragoza, Cadiz v Real Sociedad, Espanyol v Deportivo La Coruna, Real Mallorca v Valencia, Sevilla v Getafe, Villarreal v Malaga, Celta Vigo v Barcelona (1900)	
THURSDAY	
Racing Santander v Real Madrid (2000)	

An untimely call

REUTERS, Paris

Olympique Marseille goalkeeper Fabien Barthez says he missed Saturday's French Cup final medals ceremony because he had to go and answer the call of nature.

The France keeper did not show up to collect his medal for the runners-up after Marseille lost 2-1 to arch-rivals Paris St Germain in the final at the Stade de France.

"After the match I was dying to go, so I went to the locker room," Barthez said in comments posted on his club's website.

"There, I met (Marseille officials) Jose Anigo and Louis Acares and we talked. When I went to collect my medal, I bumped into my teammates who were coming back (from the ceremony)."

"It all went very quickly. I have no problems whatsoever with the Federation or the League."

Barthez, competing with Olympique Lyon's Gregory Coupet for the number one spot in France's World Cup squad, was suspended for six months last year for spitting at a referee.

Sheva cools rift rumours

INTERNET, undated

Milan striker Andriy Shevchenko has denied stories of a rift between himself and boss Carlo Ancelotti.

The latest speculation of possible problems between the pair erupted on Sunday afternoon after Shevchenko's controversial exit from the Livorno game.

After seeing his side go 2-0 up, the Ukrainian international was substituted and reacted by mouthing vulgarities towards the Rossoneri bench.

However, the former European Footballer of the Year has quickly diffused the situation by apologising for his foul-mouthed behaviour.

"I was upset with myself," he stated on national television last night. "I was a little agitated with the fact that I didn't take advantage of two or three scoring chances."

"We've had a hard season and it is clear that we are all a little tired and it's hard to keep in charge of our emotions."

"The game was important and I always look to do my work in the best possible manner. I expect a lot from myself."

"Ancelotti? We didn't speak after the game because there really was no need to discuss anything," he added.

"I really didn't think that this controversy could be born out of what happened this afternoon during the game."

"I have great respect for Carlo as a Coach and also as a man. We have a great relationship."

West Indies extend side

AFP, St John's

West Indies have increased their squad to 14 for the third and fourth limited-overs internationals against Zimbabwe on Saturday and Sunday at Guyana's Bourda Oval.

Left-handed opening batsman Sewnarine Chattergoon, who hails from Guyana, is the only complete newcomer of the three replacements brought into the squad.

Fast bowler Tino Best and left-arm chinaman bowler Dave Mohammed are the other players that have been added.

All-rounder Dwayne Bravo and left-arm medium-fast bowler Ian Bradshaw are the players that will make room from the 13 named for the first two matches.

West Indies captain Brian Lara had indicated last week when he was appointed to the position for the third time that he would like to see more players exposed ahead of the 2007 ICC World Cup in the West Indies.

The selections for the third and fourth matches seem to be in keeping with this policy. It affords Chattergoon his first crack at the international level, and earn Best and Mohammed recalls.

The home team will travel to the Guyana capital of Georgetown on Wednesday, leading the seven-match series 2-0.

Ashrafal goes

FROM PAGE 12

"I don't know where the problem lies. On most occasions I had a good start but failed to capitalise. I think playing for Rainhill will be an opportunity for me to gain consistency. I believe that it is always exciting and challenging to score runs in English conditions," said Ashrafal, who has played some brilliant knocks in both version of the game.

BU end losing

FROM PAGE 12

But we could have won had Emily or Masud Rana utilised two good chances," said Brothers coach Wajed Gazal after the match.

"We were defensive because the opponents were stronger. I hope we play better in our next match against Mahindra," he added.

Boots on the spotlight

Football

AFP, London

If Wayne Rooney's latest injury has got England fans worried, the use of new, lightweight football boots by some of the world's top players could start alarm bells ringing.

Four years after David Beck-ham's foot injury first brought the words 'metatarsal bone' into common parlance, Rooney is facing the same

football boots which, some say, are being designed with fashion more than effectiveness in mind.

"We are becoming more concerned about style now," former England international John Hollins told The Daily Telegraph.

"It is a matter of showing what you have on your feet: green boots, yellow boots, white boots."

Rooney's injury has not only sent shockwaves through the England World Cup squad and its loyal army of

"Any boot needs to be a mixture of protection and performance, however no boot can provide a guarantee against injuries," said a Nike spokesman.

"Medical staff at Manchester United have confirmed that there is no link between the boots and the injury sustained by Wayne."

And Nike boot developer Cedric Collet insisted there was no added risk to the safety of a player by the use of lighter micro-fibres in the boot construction rather than old-style leather.

"Nothing occurred in any of our tests to indicate the player would be at any risk," said Collet.

"The boot was specifically designed for Wayne and has incorporated three different types of protection for his foot."

"Every time we bring a boot out, the safety aspect is improved in some way. The boot is more durable and it keeps the shape around the player's foot."

"In some ways, I think these injuries are more linked to the speed the game is played at now."

Like many similar boots, Rooney's are designed to offer more 'feel' with the ball. But as opposed to older football boots, which players would use for a season, the newer models are often discarded after a few weeks or games.

A number of injuries to key players -- and at crucial times for England in particular -- has placed doubts over the ability of hi-tech boots to protect players from the rigours of British football.

Rooney's England teammates David Beckham, Gary Neville, Michael Owen and Lleyden King have all suffered similar foot injuries.

Newcastle striker Owen is currently fighting to be fit for the finals after injuring the fifth metatarsal bone in his foot, and King is facing a similar dilemma.



PHOTO: STAR FILE

Picture shows Wayne Rooney holding the new lightweight boots by Nike that he will wear during the World Cup.

injury agony ahead of the 2006 finals.

The World Cup hopes of England's most deadly striker are now hanging in the balance after he broke a metatarsal in his foot while playing for Manchester United in their 3-0 defeat to Chelsea on Saturday.

Rooney, 20, has now joined two other England teammates in a race against time to be fit for the start of the World Cup finals on June 9.

However it is the nature of Rooney's injury, the latest in a long line, which has raised questions over

fans, it has also forced his new sponsor Nike on the defensive.

The sports giant has reacted strongly to any suggestions that their boot may be to blame for Rooney's injury, stressing that medical staff at United had confirmed there was no link.

Nike said Rooney -- who helped to design the Total 90 model, which is made from synthetic materials and features laces on the side rather than on the top of the boot -- had already worn them for two weeks.

Lizarazu to retire

Football

AFP, Paris

Former French international defender and World Cup winner Bixente Lizarazu will quit football at the end of this season, the player said Saturday.

The 36-year-old Bayern Munich full-back follows fellow 1998 World Cup hero Zinedine Zidane into retirement after the Real Madrid star announced he was quitting after the World Cup this summer.

"I am following a little like Zidane who announced his retirement just a few days ago. I have been a professional footballer for 18 years and I have decided to stop at the end of this season," Lizarazu told Canal+ television.

"My last match will be on May 13 with Bayern Munich. It's the end of a

long road but also the start of a new one as I am going into television and will have a new job there."

Lizarazu started his career at Bordeaux (1984-1996) before moving to Bayern where he spent the next seven years until July 2004.

He returned to France and played at Marseille for six months before heading back to Bayern, the team he helped to five German titles and five German Cups.

He also picked up a Champions League winner's medal and Intercontinental Cup trophy in 2001.

He played 97 times for France and scored twice with the highlight of his international career coming in 1998 when the French won the World Cup followed by the Euro 2000 title.

Lizarazu quit international football after France's quarterfinal defeat to Greece at Euro 2004.



BIXENTE LIZARAZU

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Monologue component
4 Olympian's hope
8 Be phobic
12 Wish
13 Tom Joad, for one
14 Second-hand
15 Skill
16 Galley supply
17 Hitch
18 "The Egg and I" duo
21 Actress
22 Seesaw
23 He's all wrapped up in himself
26 Larry's pal
27 Moo goo gal pan
30 One of HOMES
31 Spot on a domino
32 Eatery
33 Big bang cause

DOWN
1 0.035 ounce
2 Emanation
3 "I'll" if!
4 Considerable
5 Giraffe's kin
6 Old Italian breed
7 PC place
8 Vitality
9 "I" it
10 Osso buco base
11 Advantage
19 ApPOINT
20 Lamb's dam
23 Shea athlete
24 Grecian vessel
25 Cambridge sch.
26 Cake maker's shortcut
27 Kids' card game
28 Frequently
29 Mauna
31 Big cat
32 Decisive blow
34 Enjoyment
35 Close, but no cigar
36 Majestic
37 Creates origami
38 Labyrinth choice
39 Malaria symptom
40 Judicial gark
41 Walking stick
42 Rara --
43 Cleo's river
44 "Boola Boola" venue

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12			13				14			
15			16				17			
18			19				20			
			21				22			
23	24	25			26		27	28	29	
30					31			32		
33					34			35		
					36					
38	39	40			41			42	43	44
45					46			47		
48					49			50		
51					52			53		

CRYPTOQUIP

E T U V R F I K T X T C V R G T
C B M T Q Q A M V V G N T G F V I A Y
V Y K X G V X V R Y D D B Q K F :
"G N A K T F F U A Y T D A Q B A."
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF A CUSTOMER IS GROSSLY OVERCHARGED FOR AN UMBRELLA, I RECKON THEY'VE BEEN SOAKED.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: V equals O
The Cryptoquip 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.