New dawn for football!

SPORTS REPORTER

The inaugural Professional Football League -- to be called the B. League -- will go through a lot of experimentations until it reaches a stage where real professionalism could be achieved in the game.

As part of Vision Asia -- the programme launched by the Asian Football Federation (AFC) in developing countries -- the Pro League aims to develop each tier of the football in a systematic way and focus on events on- and off-the-field during the league.

The AFC feels that club is crucial for the development of the game so building good clubs and letting them participate in good, strong competitions is a key to success. thinks Brendan Menton, AFC's Director of National Associations and Clubs.

While conducting a media orientation for the B. League, the former general secretary of the Irish Football Association pointed out a number of features of the league that will ultimately help the game in the long run.

According to Menton, the league will be football at the highest level in the country that will bring balance among the big and small clubs as well as creating a link to the national

With the game extended nationwide and provided a lower tier is introduced in time, it would provide the best possible practice for the footballers who would be able to step into the national team without the need of additional preparation, that is to spend long time at camps as so often happens in the country.

Menton, who elaborately

described the pros and cons of the B. League -- due to start in mid-February -- however, reminded that it would take years to give the league a proper professional shape.

The participating clubs, which are mostly derived from social and cultural aspects and engage themselves in multi-sporting events, will have to have a separate identity as a football club within 4-5 years.

They will have to fully comply with all decisions of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) and abide by the code of conduct once they sign to enter the league.

However, this might prove to be a big problem as clubs are used to putting pressure on the governing body of football to fulfil their demands, case in point being the repeated delays before the players' transfer began last Thursday.

The BFF has been given too much power -- it will even decide which club to be promoted and or relegated till a lower division has been introduced -- but many believe that the federation, full of club members and incompetent executives, would not be able to wield the authority properly because there had been evidence of clubs showing little respect to rules and laws.

"To make the league a success, the federation needs to be honest and if it decides to kill its own child, then it's up to the officials. I hope all parties would try to uphold the spirit of Fairplay,"

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England batsman Alastair Cook raises his arms after reaching his century on the fourth day of the third Ashes Test against Australia in Perth on Sunday.

Cook takes Test in Day 5

Cricket

AFP, Perth

Two late wickets in three balls to veteran Glenn McGrath had Australia on the verge of reclaiming the Ashes after an intriguing fourth day of the third Test at the WACA Ground here Sunday.

A defiant century by young opener Alastair Cook kept the tourists in the match and with one day still to play, England were 265 for five in their second innings, still needing another 292 for an incredible win.

Their only other hope of keeping the series alive is to bat out the final day and force a draw.

Kevin Pietersen carried English hopes of saving the series and was not out on 37, with captain Andrew Flintoff having just joined him at the crease on two.

Just when it seemed England would go into the final day with seven wickets in hand after six hours of gritty batting, the determined Cook fell in the third last over of the day as McGrath (2-50) had him caught behind for 116.

England sent in nightwatchman Matthew Hoggard, but the move backfired when he was bowled second ball by a McGrath yorker.

Australia are already 2-0 up in the five-Test series and victory here would see them regain the Ashes they lost in 2005.

McGrath said the Australians were rewarded for persistence late in the day and finally conceded the team knew the Ashes were within

"If we can get one of these two guys (Pietersen and Flintoff) out, (Geraint) Jones coming in "A couple of early wickets and then (Sajid) Mahmood and the other bowlers coming in. If we can get some early wickets, hopefully we can wrap it up.

"We feel probably a couple of wickets away and if we can get them and get the last five wickets, as soon as that last wicket falls we'll start celebrating and the Ashes will be back home.

A little worryingly for the Australians there is the forecast of an early shower or two on the final day.

Cook, who scored a double century for Essex against the touring Australians in 2005, delivered on his pre-match promise to make runs and notched his fourth Test century and his first against Australia.

The left-hander showed great powers of concentration to cope with a searching and extended examination from champion legspinner Shane Warne on another hot and humid day.

He also endeavoured to leave the balls just outside his off stump from the fast bowlers which have been his downfall this series, preferring to accumulate runs mainly through the leg side.

Cook finally reached triple figures after 335 obstinate minutes and 257 balls at the crease, having hit only eight boundaries.

Just when it seemed he would bat through the day he pushed forward and got an outside edge through to Adam Gilchrist, ending 390 minutes

He was disappointed to fall so close to stumps, but said the cause was not yet lost.

"It would be nice if we were still three down." he said.

and 290 balls of defiance.

"We are still in there fighting hard if we can get through the first hour and first session like we did this

Cook's 170-run second-wicket partnership with Ian Bell revived English hopes in the first two ses-

England resumed at 19 for one and the pair defied the Australian attack for more than half the day.

Bell was denied a century when he became Shane Warne's 696th Test wicket from the last ball of the

day's 51st over. The diminutive right-hander had batted with a perfect mixture of patience and strokeplay to frustrate the Australians, but got under a fullish delivery from Warne and drove it straight to Justin Langer at short mid-off.

He had been at the crease for 234 minutes, faced 163 balls and hit eight fours and two sixes.

Bell generally played Warne well, using his feet when appropriate and twice lofting the leg-spinner straight down the ground for six. He did enjoy a life on 73 when

Gilchrist grassed a catch off the bowling of Brett Lee. Paul Collingwood made just five before being caught behind from the

under-utilised Stuart Clark. Warne (1-100) extracted plenty of turn and bowled unchanged from the northern end between lunch and

tea, but endured a generally frustrating day. **SCOREBOARD**

Scoreboard at close on the fourth day of the third Ashes Test between

Australia and England at the WACA Ground on Sunday: AUSTRALIA: First innings 244

(Hussey 74 n o; Panesar 5-92,

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Capello wants Gago, but...

Football

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid coach Fabio Capello spelt out in no uncertain terms on Saturday that he is expecting Boca Juniors' highly-rated midfielder Fernando Gago to sign with the Spanish giants.

"We need Gago but when he's signed I'll talk more about him." said Capello at a press conference. pointedly using the word 'when'

"They (including Real target Gonzalo Higuain in his comments) are young players with a future. They move a lot, get there and are good quality," added the Italian coach

However Boca Juniors president Mauricio Macri arrived in Madrid on Saturday to negotiate the sale of Fernando Gago to Real Madrid

saying he wants over 20 million euros (26.22 million dollars) for the highly rated midfielder. We have to talk everything over

agree the Gago transfer." Macri was quoted as saying in the Spanish media on Sunday. "I told them not to make me travel

unless they were ready to be flexible in the negotiations. "Real Madrid earn 40 times more than us from their television contracts and their income is 15 times higher than Argentine clubs. I hope that such a powerful club will be able to satisfy the expectations of Boca who want 22 million euros for the player." Real,

who signed Argentine strike

Gonzalo Higuain from Boca's arch-

rivals River Plate on Thursday, have

made it clear they see Gago as an

mportant part of their future plans. 'We need him, if not we wouldn't **SEE PAGE 18 COL 4**

Braga ecstatic

AFP, Yokohama

Internacional coach Abel Braga said winning the Club World Cup final was the peak of a carpetbagging career which has seen him at the helm of most big Brazilian clubs

Braga's underdogs pulled off a major surprise when they found a late winner against hot favourites with Real Madrid so that we can Barcelona here on Sunday.

"I'm at the pinnacle of my career," Braga said.

"To beat this joy there are only two things: winning this again next vear, and becoming the head coach of Brazil and winning the World Cup."

The 54-year-old coach said his tactics had won the day after larley robbed Barca's captain to set up Adriano's 82nd-minute goal.

space and they struggled," he said.

"We found more space than they did and we had great team spirit. Some Brazilian media said I would tell my team to play dirty but Barcelona were tackling very

Barca's dream shattered



Substitute

last vear by Sao Paulo. Barcelona had looke finding a way through.

"I can't believe I scored the goal that won the world title," Adriano group is important."

larley, who made the chance when he robbed Barca captain Carlos Puyol near halfway, said Inter had reaped the rewards from their patient play.

year-old Alexandre Pato had an

best to a cross from Gianluca Zambrotta as Barcelona turned up the heat. Ronaldinho coming close when a rebounded shot from the lively Giovanni van Bronckhorst landed in his path.

Former Chelsea striker Gudjohnsen came closer on 23 minutes, heading a Ludovic Giuly cross just wide, and again when he of his cheeky Champions League free-kick against Werder Bremen, Clemer.

Player of the Year award on Monday, dragged an angled shot just left of the goal on 34 minutes. Inter's forwards were getting little past the Barca back four and

defender Indio had one of the Brazilians' best first-half chances. shooting over from close range.

utes in favour of room-mate Luiz Adriano, 19, who nodded the semifinal winner against Al Ahly.

As Inter showed more adventure. Barcelona's patience was

However it was an Inter sub that made the difference when Adriano on for injured captain Fernandao,

Ronaldinho, playing the archbeen kept quiet with some tight marking but came within inches of a late equaliser with his free-kick with

Sao Paulo 4-3 in the two-legged

victory over Liverpool in the final.

Inter became the sixth Brazilian intercontinental champions including the former Europe-South America clash played since 1960.

the blame

Rijkaard takes

AFP, Yokohama

Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard refused to blame his players for their Club World Cup defeat, saying he should have prepared them better for the tournament.

Rijkaard's hot favourites were squeezed out 1-0 by Brazil's Internacional thanks to a late goal by substitute Adriano.

"This isn't a failure from the team this is my failure," Rijkaard said.

"Of course we wanted to win but it was difficult to keep our motivation high and it's difficult to keep pleasing our fans. Maybe we can learn from

Rijkaard said he felt "bitter" about the defeat and hoped Barcelona could bounce back.

The European champions were the last to arrive for the tournamen and repeatedly complained of jet-lag

"It's very difficult route for us to become champions but we need to overcome our difficulties," Rijkaard

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Spectacular Chelsea



Chelsea showed precisely why they are champi-BARCLAYS COming back from going behind at Everton, to come away from Goodison Park

keeps their title hopes intact. Didier Drogba's majestic season continues after he proved the match-winner for his side with a simply stunning volley just three minutes from time. Everton more than played their

with an exhilarating 3-2 victory that

part in what was a fine game as they took the lead though a Mikel Arteta penalty and then again through Joseph Yobo, after Michael Ballack had drawn Chelsea level early in the second With nine minutes left Frank

own with a swerving drive from distance, leaving Drogba to steal the spoils with one of the finest goals seen this season. The first period was a sprightly affair that had more than the occasional spark but it only really

Lampard scored a fine goal of his

caught fire when Victor Anichebe marked his first Premiership start by winning a penalty. In the absence of John Terry, who nursed a back injury in the stand, Khailid Boularouz was handed a recall and it was the Dutch defender at the centre of the game's most

contentious decisions Just past the quarter of an hour mark and Boularouz had an incredulous look of innocence spread across his face as referee Mark Harsley ruled against a penalty when he appeared to push Andy Johnson, having got caught on the wrong-side of his tormentor in-chief. Later and he would not be so fortunate.

With an insipid Chelsea

thwarted when going forward by a pugnacious Lee Carsley and put on the back-foot by Mikel Arteta's insatiable appetite to play the killer pass, it was always David Moyes that looked the more comfortable of the two touchline gen-

As Everton pressed Boularouz

put in an excellent challenge to

deny Johnson, after Anichebe had flicked on, before a peripheral Frank Lampard drove a yard wide on a rare Chelsea counter-attack. Anichebe grew in confidence after a start that betrayed his rawness and in the 36th minute he was celebrating a vital contribution. Boularouz was too tight on the heavyweight hitman and after

conceded a somewhat soft pen-Arteta's spot-kick was befitting of his overall performance, as the Spaniard beat Henrique Hilario with a polished finish to deservedly

being rolled too easily he wrapped

his arms around Anichebe and

put Everton into the lead. A rankled Chelsea looked to hit back as Ashley Cole threatened with an excellent drive narrowly wide, but at the same time, at the other end, Leon Osman belied his lack of inches with a clever header

Mourinho had seen enough and marched down the tunnel with a list of instructions that included introducing Salmon Kalou as Geremi made way.

What was said in the dressing room will remain privy only to those present but Mourinho's rallying call had the desired effect as they drew level within three minutes of the restart.

After Lee Carsley blotted his copybook with a needless handball, Ballack imposed a class on the proceedings previously only conspicuous by absence. His curling free-kick from around 20-

yards was tipped onto the post by the faintest of touches from Tim Howard, only for the American to be handed a bum deal as the ball flicked off his back and into the

The champions spelt blood and

Kalou smacked the post after

Yobo's panicked miskick in

defending a corner had played in Chelsea's substitute no more than five yards from goal. Everton were not, though, to be bullied into submission and after winning a series of corners their aerial pressure was rewarded at the third attempt. Arteta swung from the right and after evading his marker Yobbo's incisive

evading Hilario. Chelsea's bid for parity was primary conducted through the powerful promptings of Drogba and t was the Ivorian that went close to levelling when he sent a blistering drive over after turning Yobo.

header glanced off Ballack before

With the game, perhaps even the title, slipping from Chelsea's grasp Lampard provided a moment of sheer class. The lively Kalou worked the left flank before feeding Lampard 25-yards from goal, who then proceeded to beat Howard with a beautifully arched

Drogba cracked the post with a

brilliant shot on the turn but he was

not to be denied a winner, as class eventually prevailed on

Merseyside. A long punt from

Hilario concluded with Drobga taking the ball on his chest before swivelling and from 25-yards planting a sublime volley past Chelsea were never at their best on what could prove to a critical weekend of the season but in Drogba they have a player capable of delivering the unex-

pected and in Mourinho, a man-

ager with the Midas touch.

"We showed we're a very good swept a scrambled clearance over hopeful effort from long range group of players and everyone in the Substitute Xavi was looking Brazil's Inter-



the Club World Cup final on Sunday Adriano was the hero as he beat the Spanish defence on 82 minutes, dashing the hot favourites' hopes of

first world club crown. Ronaldinho came within inches of equalising with a free-kick but Inter held on to maintain South American dominance of the competition, won

claim the title after their 4-0 mauling of Club America in the semifinals and dominated the first half without

'The match is for 90 minutes. We just waited for our opportunity," he In a cagey opening, Inter's 17-

early chance when he headed a corner over on nine minutes, and could have done better from a Fernandao knock-down shortly afterwards. Gudiohnsen was just second-

Ronaldinho attempted a repeat

hitting it under the wall as the defenders jumped, but the ball went straight to Inter's veteran 'keeper The Brazilian star, tipped for a record third consecutive World

The highly-rated Pato, who scored in his first two matches for ter, was withdrawn after 61 min-

wearing thin and Deco abandoned the patient build-up play to try a

dangerous, volleying at Clemer after almost picking out Gudjohnsen

was picked out on the break by larley and flicked right-footed past Barca 'keeper Victor Valdes. rivals of his home club Gremio, had

iust four minutes left. Inter qualified for the tournament when they won their first Copa Libertadores title in August, beating

Sao Paulo won the inaugural Club World Cup last year with a 1-0

and lack of conditioning.



Brazilian club Internacional goalkeeper Clemer (R) leads his teammates in celebration following their sensational victory over Spanish giants Barcelona in the final of the FIFA Club World Cup tournament at Yokohama on Sunday.