

WEEKEND SPORTS WEEKEND

Carry on, Rizwan

Cricket, they often say, is a way of life. And very often to those once bitten by the cricketing bug (pun intended), little else in this humdrum life can command such undivided loyalty or arouse such strong passions as the dotings of the flannelled fools. Rich as cricketers literature and lore is, stories abound of the eccentric and obsessed "devotee" who has given up king and country, fiancée and fiancés all, only to draw the last drop of enjoyment (though not always satisfaction either by playing or watching the lordly albeit lazy game, which he is never ashamed to acknowledge as his one and only true love.

Rizwan bin-Farouq is one such person in love with this game, though he hasn't had to give up much except perhaps the few spare moments he can manage from his serious job as an international banker.

For followers of the game in Bangladesh, his name would have to be reduced to the more convenient "Rizwan"—what with our penchant for nicknames — to effect easier recognition. For the uniformed, Rizwan is the name of the only Bangladeshi cricketer who has represented another country in international cricket. This he achieved by being selected to represent Hong Kong in the International Cricket Conference (ICC) Trophy (competition for non-Test playing ICC members) held in Holland in June last year.

Rizwan, who started his cricketing career in Dhaka in 1976-77 assisting Surjo Tarun Club to win promotion to the First Division league, a club he later had the honour to skipper in 1980, moved to Hong Kong in 1985 after joining the international cadre of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), giving up his job with the Arab Bangladesh Bank in Dhaka.

Moving to Hong Kong, Rizwan wasted little time in finding a club where he could pursue his "passion". Soon he started playing for the Little Sai Wan Cricket Club (LSWCC) Chinese-sounding one of the independent clubs in that Chinese-filled British colony.

An independent club, in Hong Kong jargon, is a club which does not possess a ground of its own, like the bigger more exclusive country clubs modelled after those elitist establishments back in Mother England.

In his very first season with LSWCC in 1985-86, Rizwan managed to hog the headlines in the local sports pages that caught the attention of the cricket establishment. In 1986 Rizwan got his first major break when he played against the New Zealanders under Jeff Crowe who made a two-day port call while returning home from the Australasia Cup in Sharjah. In the 1987-88 season he was selected to play against the visiting Sri Lankan under-23 side which at the time was led by Test batsman Roshan Mahanama and included several names like Graeme Labrooy and Asankha Gurusinghe who have gone on

to make it big on the Test scene.

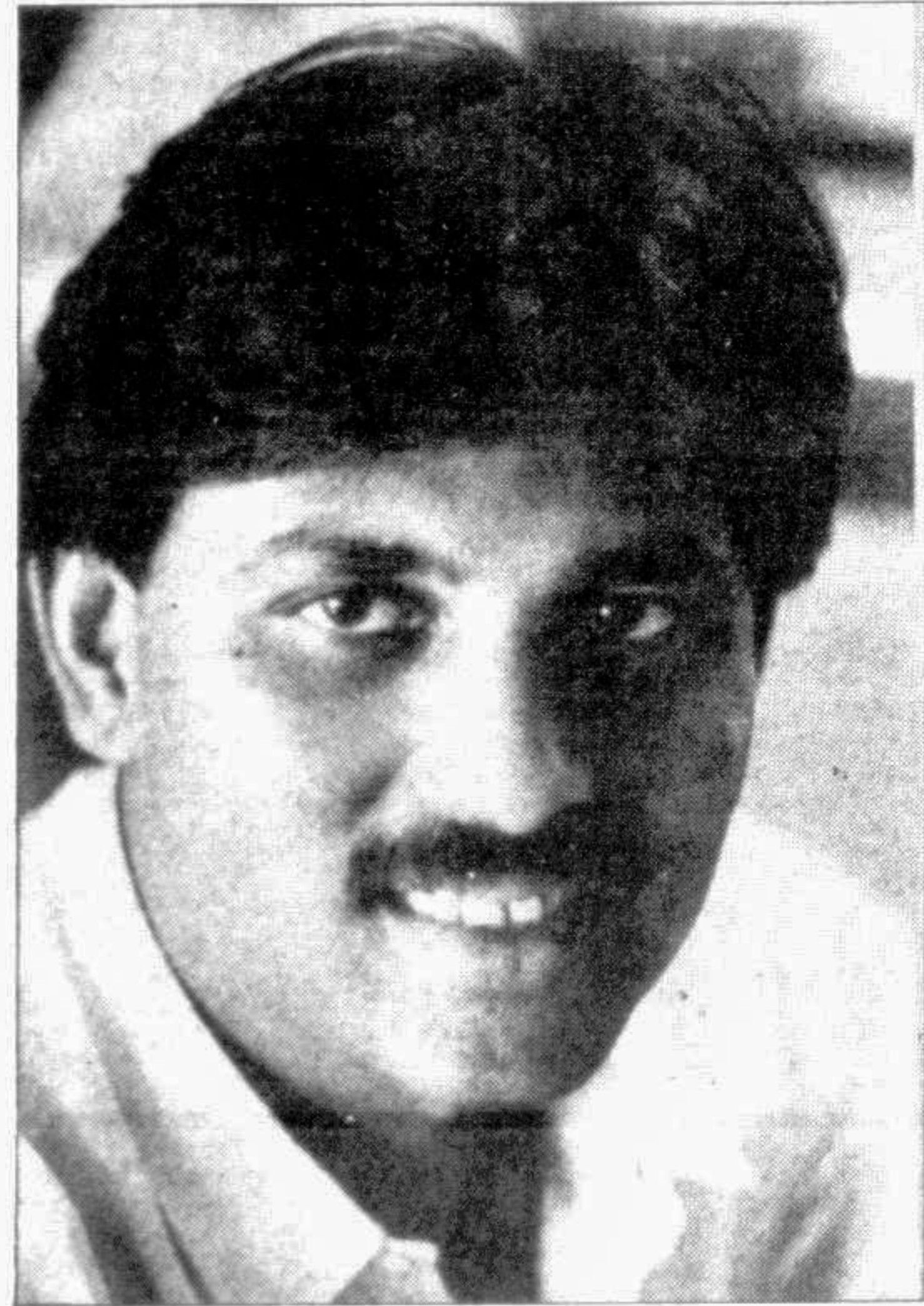
Rizwan acquitted himself in that match at the Mission Road

Returning to the litany of his achievements back home — in Dhaka — Rizwan captained Surjo Tarun in 1980 and rep-

A Star Special on the only Bangladeshi cricket player who has had the honour of representing another country.

resented the formidable Dhaka University in the national championships in 1980-81 and 1981-82. In 1983-84, the dashing right-hander who loved to give the ball a good whack

ground, Kowloon, by topscoring for Hong Kong with a well-made 48, a knock which unfortunately wasn't quite enough to win the day for his side.



Presently on home leave with his wife Rubina — Ina to her friends and son Rayid Isam Farouq, Rizwan has had very little time for either his immediate family or the members of his 'clan' and the huge crowd of friends and relatives. Rather than allowing himself to be bogged down in that typical Bengali routine of glutinous "pilao" and "biryani" meals that any friend or relative returning from abroad is subjected to, Rizwan always found an opportunity or excuse to slip out of the house with his cricket bag and whites to get a game, wherever and whenever he could.

In his short sojourn he has managed to play several games over the past few weeks, from the Rank-Xerox Second Division league to the odd weekend or "Friday Cricket" as he calls it, with such outfits as the Ramblers or the Cricketers. But to his consternation, he hasn't been able to enjoy all his games for a variety of reasons, not the least of which has been his rather indistinguished

foot six Bangladeshi was picked for the Hong Kong Cricket Association President's XI, one of two local selections in the Second South East Asia Cricket Cup tournament which Hong Kong hosted and in which defending champions Bangladesh also participated. It wasn't a very profitable meet for the young man, who is now 33 and married with one nine-month old son. The best that he could muster in that meet was an unbeaten 35 against Singapore.

Ireland hero holds court

AMID the noise and bustle of a north London public house, Ireland's latest and unlikely folk hero holds court. Jack Charlton, the Englishman who has transformed the republic's soccer fortunes, was described recently as "a son of the northeast who could easily have been crowned King of Ireland".

The accolade, from leading television talk-show host Terry Wogan, himself an Irishman, follows an extraordinary four years as Irish soccer manager during which Charlton took Ireland to the quarterfinals of the World Cup this year.

No such hyperbole accompanies his appearance in an Irish pub much favoured by the local expatriate community. But his popularity ensures a full house with admission restricted to regular customers only.

Charlton is due to appear at 8.30. The air is blue with cigarette smoke and football chants vie with a strangled chorus of "Molly Malone."

By nine there is still no sign of the great man. "Give this lot another half hour and they'll have forgotten why they came," one cynic mutters.

Jack Charlton, the Englishman has transformed Republic of Ireland's soccer fortunes. He has been described as 'a son of northeast who could easily have been crowned King of Ireland'... John Mehaffey reports

the gaunt figure who stood implacable at the heart of England's defence in two World Cups, emerges eight minutes later.

After coming to terms with the sound system, Charlton is quickly into his stride with a



Jack Charlton ... I love Ireland wittily, if practised, account of his appointment as Irish manager.

Then follows a tribute to his squad in the mutilated grammar beloved of British

football managers. "The lads have done tremendous," Charlton says to cheers. "Irish football has been upgraded to a standard that no-one wants to play us anymore."

There is further applause when Charlton adds: "The thing I like about the Irish is they like a party."

Then the serious business of the evening begins as Charlton answers questions submitted in advance.

They divide neatly into queries about Charlton's playing career with England and Leeds United and his stint as Irish manager.

Too neatly for some tastes. "I didn't come here to hear about England," one patron gumbles.

But he is in a minority. A packed house listens fascinated to anecdotes about the 1986 World Cup final when England beat West Germany 4-2.

Charlton, who maintains he has never seen a television

performance with the bat. "I couldn't quite get among the runs. Something was missing, I thought," he said.

Asked to elaborate, Rizwan, who finds wicketkeeping too tiring a job these days and would much rather trundle at his gentle medium pace, said: "You see, the conditions in Hong Kong and Dhaka are so starkly different. By conditions I mean the playing conditions, the facilities — they are so lacking here. The grounds in Bangladesh are in such deplorable state; rough, uneven outfields, poor pitches, no sight screens, etc.

"In Hong Kong, they may not be as good as our Bangladeshi boys when it comes to playing the game. We are a much stronger cricketing power, with all those expensive players and the rich budgets of our leading clubs. Yet, in Hong Kong, where it's a purely amateur set-up — I even have to pay about HK\$ 100, almost Taka 500 for every game that I play — the authorities have spared no effort to improve the playing conditions.

"I think we must change our approach if we want to improve Bangladesh's standard. Instead of lavishing (wasting, actually) so much money on a few top players, as they do at Abahani, Brothers Union and Mohammedans, for example, we should spend more on improving the grounds that the league matches are played on. By improving the conditions we can improve the quality of our game. You see, cricket also needs the right atmosphere; it's not just a game you play with a bat and a ball; you have to create the right mood also."

On our present standards, Rizwan said, "yes, our standards have improved. The Bangladesh Krira Shikkhya Protisthan (BKSP) I think has been doing a great job. Some of their 16 year olds are definitely better than we were at that age.

Despite the taxing demands of his job, Rizwan makes time to play every week — on Saturdays and Sundays — in the two separate leagues.

In the 18-team, 35 overs-a-side Saturday league, he plays for the Nomads, one of the top sides whose colours he's been donning for the past three seasons. This season, before leaving for home last month, he had a staggering almost Bradmanesque of 105.4 with an aggregate of 527 runs from 14 innings out of which he was nine times not out.

On the other hand, Rizwan's Sunday league average is a bit more modest by his own standards. He amassed a total of 445 runs from ten innings, once not out, for an average of 49.44 the Sunday league, in which he represents the Little Sai Wan Cricket Club, is played among nine teams and the matches last 50 overs each side.

Doesn't his wife mind having to wash his whites so often only to see so little of him on the weekends?

"Not at all. She loves going to the ground to watch me play. The games are also great social happenings where we get to meet friends, which is otherwise so difficult in a busy city like Hong Kong."

Carry on Rizwan.

replay of a match which has attained legendary status in England, concludes: "It's probably one of the three most remarkable finals of all time."

The questions turns to current soccer heroes, including Tottenham and England midfielder Paul Gascoigne, a media celebrity since the World Cup.

Charlton is diplomatic. "He's a fun-loving guy. He loves life."

Although he slips easily into a reasonable imitation of the Irish brogue, Charlton remains a true son of the northeast of England.

His brother Bobby, the thunderous striker in the 1966 England team, is invariably called "Our kid."

And Charlton says one legacy of his success with Ireland is the reaction of his fellow Geordies. "They've forgiven me for leaving."

His devotion to soccer and his adopted country shine through and none but the most cynical doubt the sincerity of his closing words.

"I have travelled in every little town and every little hamlet and every little village and I probably know Ireland better than any of you. I love Ireland."

What is a neutral umpire?

E. M. WELLINGS doubts whether any human being is truly 'neutral'

ON the much-debated question of 'neutral' umpires I thought I was myself neutral. Until got down to thinking about neutrals, and questioning whether such creatures existed. In which case neutral umpires would be a non-starter.

A country may declare neutrality and, if lucky, avoid a war, but do the inhabitants embrace neutrality? If they are built anything like me, they will be rooting for one side or the other. If I see horse racing — about which I know less than nothing — on TV, I am nevertheless backing one of the geegees, preferably a grey.

About a third of the crowd for a final at Lord's do not hail from either of the countries concerned. Yet I would bet that most of them are rooting for one or other of the contestants.

Nearest to neutrality

If I had to umpire Test cricket the nearest I should come to neutrality would be England v Australia. In all other Tests I would be leaning strongly towards Australia against all comers, and my partisan feelings would probably be greatest in West Indies matches. If their policy was based on headline fast bowling I would be well biased against them.

We can appoint umpires without connections with the two countries involved, but that does not guarantee neutrality. There is a limit to the favouritism shown to his side by a home umpire, probably no limit in the case of an independent. So let us stay with the present system but seek to improve the standard.

The standard during the winter's Ashes campaign must have been bad. Not otherwise would John Woodcock of The Times have been critical during the third Test critical, but concluding that the mistakes evened themselves out between the two sides.

Improvement would come most surely from disciplining the players. On TV we saw Tufnell, in his first Test, creating a scene when denied a wicket for a catch behind. If I had been the umpire I would have decided that Mr Tufnell would have to knock all three down to get a favourable decision from me during the rest of the day.

Even the best umpires can be thrown out of gear by nagging players. Between the wars Frank Chester was the best I ever saw. His decisions were automatically accepted as being certainly right. One hot afternoon I felt sure I had my first wicket via lbw. Not so, and as I walked back Chester said, "Bad luck, it pitched that much outside off stump, and he held up his good hand with a gap of about an eighth of an inch between thumb and forefinger."

From Chester I accepted that as gospel. From anyone else I would have been aggrieved and hard pressed to conceal displeasure. That was the measure of Frank's standing. Yet nagging players got at him in the end. He became fallible after the war and, goaded by Sid Barnes among a few others, he became violently anti-Australia. After 1948, when his work was still adequate, he should not have been appointed for another Australian Test, but he stood again in 1953 and his bias overflowed at Headingley. He gave two extremely bad decisions which guided England to a draw.

When I was being taught the game during and after the Great War, we were told to appeal quietly, and the appealing for lbw and catches at the wicket was to be done only by the two in a position to see, the bowler and stumper. And a bad appeal was more than frowned on.

We can never get back to anything so tranquil and well ordered as that, but the wild dervish appeals must be checked. The proportion of good appeals to bad is surely around one to 30 and that amounts to unacceptable baiting.

I remember, when louder and more widespread appeals were starting (with extra cover

and the like appealing for lbw), the response of Chester to one absurdity. He turned his back contemptuously on the offender.

Bowlers have various methods which umpires must find most irksome and which must tempt them to abandon neutrality. I should have been particularly annoyed by Phil Ridings of South Australia, who used to flick fingers and thumb at the umpire as he shouted.

It will be a slow business to wean players from their unbridled ways towards more human behaviour to ease the pressure on umpires. The first move should be to persuade players that it is in their



Frank Chester, perhaps the best umpire of them — but by 1953, even his 'neutrality' was wearing thin.

interests to keep the officials' sweet. The modern player is a very bad psychologist. He seems to go out of his way to put the umpire's back up. I was always most careful to keep in his good books, greeting him with a cordial "good morning" each day and chatting with him in between times.

I schooled myself never to show a hint of dissatisfaction, nor indeed disappointment when a catch was missed off my bowling. I used to grin at the batsman to let him know that I was not worried, because I felt sure of inducing another mistake shortly. All that seems to me elementary, and I cannot understand players

today behaving so boorishly to their own detriment.

No English monopoly

It is true that England have more good umpires than any other country, because we can give them much greater experience. However, we do not have a monopoly of outstanding umpires. England's best in my time have been Chester and Syd Buller, but there have been very prominent officials elsewhere.

Mel McInnes was outstanding during Ilton's 1954-55 tour of Australia. So were Col Egar and Lou Rowan in 1965-66. Curiously, all three finally went the same way as Chester. By 1958 judgment, and perhaps eyesight also, had gone from McInnes.

The stars of 1965-66 had similarly shot their bolt by 1970, when Illingworth's team began their tour. Egar recognised that and promptly retired from big cricket; Rowan soldiered on and had a most indifferent series.

Two others overseas of obvious merit were Douglas Sang Hue in West Indies and Vin Costello of South Africa during the 1960s. Sang Hue was very good indeed during Cowdrey's tour of 1967-68, at least until the Jamaican crowd vented disappointment on him. That he went to pieces was not surprising. I cannot imagine any independent umpire keeping his cool under the pressure of a gambling, rum-swilling crowd in Jamaica or Trinidad.

While Mike Smith was leading England in South Africa in 1964-65 Costello, from Cape Town, stood out among a bunch of indifferent umpires. Yet he was chosen to stand in only one Test and was then partnered by the worst of the indifferent bunch.

So, I favour the present system, by which, the home country appoints the Test umpires. And it is up to all countries to start a drive to improve standards by tackling first the one factor most obviously militating against good umpiring, the unacceptably bad behaviour of Test players. They should be setting good examples, but do just the opposite.

It's risky business

DOES anyone really believe that West Germany would have won the World Cup final, had Diego Maradona been fully fit? The pain from his damaged left ankle, the trouble with his back, not to mention lurking trouble with his knees, had troubled Maradona for most of last year in an occasionally inspired cripple.

The wonders of cortisone — which can demand a horribly high physical price in ensuing year — seem to be all that has kept him going, though in recent weeks, he has even hinted at parting company with Oliva, the Argentine doctor who has kept him going.

Amazingly, and especially in Naples European Cup matches, Maradona is still capable of rising from the canvas, doing a few brilliant things, and winning a game for his team; as he did with that astonishing solo and beautiful pass to Cantogga, which won Argentina the World Cup match against Brazil last summer.

Victim

But Maradona, love him or hate him, is beyond doubt one of football's victims, even if he has made a fortune from it, and even if his physical profile has not always been a clear one.

One thinks especially of the previous World Cup, in Mexico. For months beforehand we were told that Maradona was having severe trouble with an external cartilage. To and from Buenos Aires he travelled for treatment and opinions. Finally, it was said that he had but two alternatives. Either he had the knee operation, and therefore missed the World Cup. Or he played on in the fear that the knee would blow up.

As we all know, it didn't. Maradona in fact had a superb World Cup, scoring individualist goals against England and Belgium at the Azteca Stadium — not to mention one with the Hand of God — which were among the finest in the history of the competition.

Fate

Maradona has just turned 30 and you wonder how long he can possibly carry on like

this; and what sort of physical fate awaits him in his middle age. You can never quite write him off. He may have an abysmal game, such as he had in Naples when the team squeaked through on a 38-second goal, against Fiorentina. But in the European Cup this season, and even occasionally

But Bernd Schuster, who scored a goal in Atletico's win over Barcelona, was in his younger, Barcelona, days both careless, and lucky. Luck comes into it when you have been cruelly injured by the ruthless Bilbao centre-half Golcochea, whose boots accounted for Maradona, as

Top footballers may earn millions of pounds, but the spectre of crippling injury haunts them throughout their careers. It's a painful existence, and a nerve-racking one, too, on the field. The next tackle could well be the last, the next injury could well spell curtains for a star ... Brian Glanville writes

in the League, he has been irresistible.

All this is to illustrate the extreme vulnerability of a footballer's career; a fact for which even the colossal sums of money earned by stars with Western European clubs cannot compensate. On a recent Sunday, Eric Cantona, perhaps the most gifted and effective centre-forward in France, playing for Marseille against Brest, broke his knee, and will be out for six months or so.

As will Ronald Koeman, the £5 million Barcelona player and Dutch international. Only a few minutes of his club's game in Madrid against Atletico had been played when he so badly tore a ligament in his ankle that he, too, misses the rest of the season.

Before the season even began in Italy, another £5 million player, the centre-forward Davide Fontolan, only just transferred to Internazionale from Genoa, was brutally fouled in a mere friendly game at Viareggio. Inter sent him to France where an expert surgeon told him his knee had to be completely rebuilt. So, he, too, was out for the whole of the season.

Roberto Baggio, the most expensive player in the world at just under £8 million — the price Juventus paid Fiorentina — knows what it is like. As a youngster with Lanerossi Vicenza, and then when he was bought by Fiorentina, dreadful injuries to a knee cost him a couple of seasons. He has fought back. Others are not so lucky, or perhaps so determined.



BRYAN ROBSON ... his career has been marred by mishaps

well as for Schuster. The blond West German

acquired great physical resilience in his later years. After a long wrangle with Barcelona, he was picked up by Real Madrid. When Real got rid of him last summer, he found another billet with its local rival.

Alas, Jorge Burruchaga seems to have closed his career in France. Having scored the winner in the 1986 World Cup final, the world itself seemed to be at his feet.

Career

But it was a knee injury that dished him, that ruined his career with Nantes. One operation followed another. Against all the odds, he fought back to play for Argentina in still another World Cup final; only to be injured again, and lose his place in the Nantes team.

A footballer's career is not only short at the best times; it can be shortened fearfully by injury, even though surgical techniques have now advanced so much, making injuries which some years ago would have put a player out of the game susceptible to treatment. But as England's skipper, Bryan Robson, returns from his umpteenth operation — an Achilles tendon this time — after a splendid career punctuated with appalling mishaps, you realise that football is a gamble. However good you are today, you could be out of the game tomorrow. Singers, actors, pop stars, even tennis players, don't run that kind of risk. Those huge salaries can disappear at the swing of an opponent's boot. Or even with an awkward stumble.