

Draw discomfits Europeans

NEW YORK, Dec 10: European teams began planning their 1994 World Cup campaigns on Monday, many of them more worried about fitting games into their schedule than about the quality of their opponents, reports Reuter.

Worst hit by Sunday's qualifying draw were third seeds Spain, who had the bad luck to land in the only seven-nation group, involving them in 12 games before the November 17, 1993 deadline.

They have to meet Ireland, Denmark, Northern Ireland, Albania, Latvia and Lithuania twice each in their hunt for a top two group place to ensure their presence in the 1994 finals in the United States.

National trainer Vicente Meira was scratching his head sadly after the draw. "This seventh group is going to be too long," he said.

"I can't see how we will be able to fit in all the matches. The Baltic countries can't play at all in the winter which makes it an even bigger problem."

Spain have a 20-team First Division, giving them a crowded league season already.

With the entry of the three Baltic countries, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the admission of Israel into the European section and the World Cup debuts of the Faroe Islands and San Marino, Europe had a record 37 teams in the qualifiers.

As only 12 will reach the finals, the International Football Federation (FIFA) introduced six and seven team groups for the first time.

Second seeds England were another country not enamored by the mammoth programme.

Manager Graham Taylor, whose side must play 10 matches against the Netherlands, Poland, Norway, Turkey and San Marino, said he did not know how the fixture list could be managed.

England have a 22-team a First Division involved in 42 matches as well as two major domestic cup competitions and the European club cups.

"We've studied the programme and we can only see nine possible dates to play our matches as it is," Taylor said. "And if we have a bad winter, we will have big problems."

"With bad weather for four or five weeks, we would find it impossible to finish the programme."

"It won't be good for the

players if we arrange matches late into the summer as they won't get a break. We could arrive in the United States with them playing for 12 months continuously.

"They have the equivalent of an intense cup match every three days. And there is the problems of the release of players. Already managers and coaches are laughing at us when we ask for their players."

Faced with such a crowded schedule, many groups may will start playing their fixtures during the current season for the first time.

FIFA has said group matches can be played from March 1 though they may not be held in June during the European Championship finals in Sweden.

Most major nations were relieved not to have Spain's problem of playing 12 matches.

Italian Federation president Antonio Mattarrese said if Italy had been drawn in a seven-nation group they would have reduced the size of their domestic league from 18 to 16 teams to solve the fixture problem.

Italy play Scotland, Portugal, Switzerland, Malta and Estonia in Group One.

Not everybody was unhappy,

however. French team boss Michel Platini, whose side is unbeaten in almost three years, was confident his team would come safely through a group also comprising Austria, Sweden, Bulgaria, Finland and Israel.

"There are much tougher groups than ours," he said. "Italy have a much harder group than we do and can't afford any mistakes."

"England and Spain are in difficult groups as well. But I think we should get through without too many problems."

South American teams also have larger groups than usual with Brazil facing eight matches against Uruguay, Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela.

The Brazilians, three times world champions and the only country never to have lost a World Cup qualifier, have never before had to play more than six matches to reach the finals.

But they should not have too much difficulty finishing in the top two and reaching the finals.

Two nations not worrying about scheduling were world champions Germany and hosts the United States, who both receive automatic entries into the 24-team finals.



FIFA general secretary Joseph S Blatter (R) and Franz Beckenbauer, former coach of the 1990 World Cup champions German team, draw the final team in the Europe Division of the 1994 World Cup qualifying draw in New York on Dec 8. The selections are displayed on the map behind them. —AFP photo

SA clubs to join African Cup

JOHANNESBURG, Dec 10: South African clubs may play in next year's African Cup competitions, says continental soccer supremo Issa Hayatou, reports AP.

"All Africa wants South African teams to play — but we could not take any action until unity was achieved," the Confederation of African Football (CAF) president told the Johannesburg Star on Tuesday.

The rival South African Football Association (SAFA) and SA National Football Association (SANFA) united Sunday at a meeting near Soweto.

CAF turned down a membership bid by South Africa in Cairo last September due to the split between SAFA and the numerically smaller SANFA.

If South Africa gets the go-ahead, Kaizer Chiefs, the most successful and popular side, will enter the Champions Cup draw.

Another famous Johannesburg team, Moroka Swallows, would play in the Cup Winners' Cup.

League runners-up Mamelodi Sundowns, from Pretoria, and third-placed Fairway Stars, based in the Qwaqwa tribal homeland in the Orange Free States, are the CAF Cup contenders.

US girls whip Britons

CARDIFF, Wales, Dec 10: Frazier beat a hobbling Samantha Smith and then teamed up with Shannon McCarthy to win the doubles Sunday as the United States whipped Britain 9-2 to collect the Maureen Connolly Under-21 tennis trophy, reports AP.

Already sure of victory at 7-1 from the matches on Friday and Saturday, the Americans lost the first of Sunday's final three when Britain's Sarah Loosemore downed Audra Keller 6-2, 2-6, 7-5.

Frazier, who reached the last 16 at the Australian Open and Wimbledon, was comfortably ahead against Smith when the Briton said she could no longer continue at 6-2, 3-0 because of a swollen ankle.

With Frazier and McCarthy teamed, the Americans downed Loosemore and Virginia Humphreys-Davies 6-3, 7-5 in the final match.

It was the Americans 16th victory in the tournament in 19 years.

Ski results

SESTRIERE, Italy, Dec 10: Italy's Alberto Tomba led Norway's Ole Christian Jørgen and Italian teammate Fabio De Cristis after the first heat of the men's World Cup slalom race in this Alpine resort on Tuesday, reports AP.

Tomba skied a powerful, faultless run through 72 gates on the Kandahar course in 1:00.09 minutes.

The Italian skier, who is seeking his third win of this season, led Jørgen by 0.69 seconds and De Cristis by 1.04 seconds.

Another Norwegian, Ole Christian Furuseth, trailed the leader by 1.23 seconds in fourth place.

Swiss Paul Accola, the current overall World Cup leader, was fifth, 1.36 seconds behind Tomba, second in the standings.

Aussie puncher retires

PERTH, Dec 10: World-ranked Australian super-middleweight boxer Lou Cafaro announced his retirement Tuesday, saying a scan had indicated he suffered brain damage during his seven-year professional career, reports AP.

Cafaro, 30, twice held the Australian middleweight title and was Commonwealth super-middleweight champion in 1990-91.

He also challenged unsuccessfully for the World Boxing Council international super-middleweight title, losing to Britain's Kid Milb in January.

Cafaro was rated among the world's top 10 super-middleweights by the WBC earlier this year.

The boxer said he was suffering from memory loss and mental blockouts.

"I don't know to what extent the damage is," Cafaro said in an interview with the West Australian newspaper. "Medical officers tell me I will start to get better soon. I don't know if I will fully recover."

Cafaro said a motorcycle accident last year also could be partly responsible for his problems.

He had a career record of 18 wins and eight losses, but had been beaten inside the distance in his last four bouts.

"It was not one fight that caused the damage, it was an accumulation of fights," Cafaro said.

Cafaro said in the interview that he had little recollection of his last bout. He was stopped in the 11th round of an Australian middleweight title defense by Vito Gaudiosi in Dapto on Nov. 20.

Milan continue to walk tall

LONDON, Dec 10: AC Milan's European rivals may be excused a few sighs of relief that the Italian giants are banned from continental club soccer competitions this season, reports Reuter.

While Italian champions Sampdoria, who play Panathinaikos in a Group A European Cup tie on Wednesday, continue to underperform at home Milan are walking tall.

Banned for one season by UEFA for leaving the pitch before the end of their European Cup quarter-final in Marseille last season, Milan have only domestic glory to play for.

"Milan were extraordinary — very, very good," said club president Silvio Berlusconi on Sunday after they outplayed UEFA Cup hopefuls Torino 2-0 at home. "Until Ruud Gullit's opening goal, I saw the best soccer I've seen all season."

"We've got to accept the difference between us and Milan," Torino's Belgian midfielder Enzo Scifo said later.

Scifo must now try and

raise morale ahead of Wednesday's UEFA Cup tie in Turin against AEK Athens of Greece.

Potential European opponents must also be glad of Juventus's rare failure to qualify for Europe this season.

The second-placed Turin team, one point behind Milan, beat Internazionale 2-1 in a match that left current Juventus and former Intercoach Giovanni Trapattoni well pleased.

Third placed Napoli, four points behind Milan, had such an easy time beating Cagliari in their 4-0 home win that goalscorer and defender Giovanni Francini said afterwards.

"I had more difficulty producing a urine sample for the routine dope test than I had scoring that goal."

Sampdoria, who beat champions Red Star Belgrad 2-0 in the first match of the new league style European Cup semifinals had to make do with a 0-0 draw at Foggia and sank 12 points adrift of Milan in the bottom six in the division.

Red Star, who may prove

jet-lagged after beating Colo Colo of Chile 3-0 in the World Club Championship in Tokyo on Sunday, play a confident Anderlecht of Belgium on Thursday.

The tie is Hungary due to war in Yugoslavia.

Anderlecht, who were held to a 0-0 draw at home by Panathinaikos in their first semifinal match last month, beat Ghent 3-1 on Friday but will be without Belgian international midfielder Marc Degryse, who has a thigh injury.

While Trapattoni was celebrating the defeat of his old team, there was no such joy for John Toshack in Spain.

The former Real Madrid coach took Real Sociedad to the club that sacked him last season but his team lost 4-1.

"We made complete fools of ourselves," Toshack said.

Real Madrid now have 26 points out of 26 this season as they head for their UEFA tie against Neuchatel Xamax of Switzerland in Madrid on Thursday.

Spanish champions Barcelona, who play at Benfica on Wednesday in their Group B

European Cup tie, were given a hand by Tenerife goalkeeper Augustin Rodriguez on Saturday.

The score was 2-2 with only eight minutes to play when Rodriguez went off with a hand injury. Barcelona stormed to the attack and won with three more goals past his replacement in six minutes.

But coach Johan Cruyff, who had wanted to avoid an energy sapping match before going to Portugal, was disappointed by his players who made hard work of their victory.

His former Dutch club, Ajax Amsterdam, suffered their first home loss of the season 2-0 to Vitesse Arnhem just before they play Spain's Osasuna in the UEFA Cup.

In Germany, Borussia Dortmund returned to the top of the Bundesliga for the first time in nine years.

A goal by Michael Lusch gave Dortmund a 1-0 win at Werder Bremen on Friday, and coupled with disappointing draws by previous leaders Eintracht Frankfurt and VfB Stuttgart, put them at the top of a division they last won in 1963.

Narsinghdi trounce Faridpur

Sports Reporter

Five more teams moved into the zonal finals of the eighth national youth football championship for the Suhrawardy Cup played at different venues across the country yesterday.

Hosts Narsinghdi trounced Faridpur 5-1 at Narsinghdi to reach the zonal final where they will face the winners of the Tangail-Madairpur semifinal match on December 13.

Sangram scored a fine hat-trick while Shoib and Tipu chipped in with a goal apiece for the winners.

Chandra scored the consolation goal for Faridpur.

Lalmoinrhat DSA tucked one goal past Panchagarh to earn a passage into the zonal final at Kurigram.

Kalam netted the all-important goal for Lalmoinrhat in a scrappy match in which Wajed of Panchagarh was sent-off by the referee.

Lalmoinrhat will encounter either Kurigram or Nilphamari next Friday.

Goals for Sankar and Ayub took hosts Gaibandha to the

zonal final against Rajshahi DSA.

Gaibandha DSA will play the winners of the Pabna-Natore match on Friday.

Kushitia DSA made short work of Chuadanga 4-1 at Chuadanga.

Sumon notched a hat-trick for the winners.

JU cricket

Geography Department defeated English Department by 69 runs to move into the semifinals of the inter-department cricket championship of the Jahangirnagar University yesterday.

Batting first, Geography made 150 for eight wickets from the stipulated 30 overs.

Al-Amin top scored with 61, followed by skipper Matin with 34.

Abdullah was the most successful bowler for English with four for 18, while Rupam picked up two for 20.

English, in their turn, were bundled out for 81 in 23.5 overs.

Skipper Abdullah followed up his good show with the ball with an unbeaten 27 with the bat.

Rezati scored the other goal.

Chandrashekhar made sure that the losers' account did not remain barren by pulling one back.

Kushitia will play the winners of the Khulna-Magura semi-final on Friday.

Chittagong DSA overcame hosts Habiganj 4-2 in tie-breaker after the match ended in a 1-1 deadlock in the regulation time.

Laxmipur will be their opponents in the final on Thursday.

Hosts Netrakona beat Sherpur 2-1 at Netrakona Stadium to reach the semifinals.

Sukumar and Babul netted for the winners while Taher reduced the margin for the vanquished.

Netrakona faces Gazipur on December 12.

Bagerhat spoiled Barisal's dreams to reach the semifinal at Jhenidah by beating them 5-4 in the penalty shootout when the two teams were locked 2-2 in the stipulated time.

Bagerhat will meet Jhenidah in the semifinal on December 12.

S. Africa calls off Pak tour

JOHANNESBURG, Dec 10: South African cricket officials have called off a projected tour by Pakistan early next year, saying a proposed visit by India later in 1992 took precedence, reports Reuter.

All Bacher, managing director of the United Cricket Board of South Africa (UCBSA), said on Monday the decision to shelve what would have been the first official tour of the republic for 22 years had been taken after "much soul searching" and with much regret.

"The decision to invite Pakistan did not find favour with my executive at their meeting on Sunday and I have informed Pakistan of their decision," he said.

Some board officials had wanted to host Pakistan for a pre-World Cup tour while

others had wanted to keep a promise to India that they would be the first to tour the republic.

The UCBSA has invited India to tour from October to December next year.

Bacher said South Africa would still play Pakistan in a one-day World Cup warm-up match in Australia next February and an official invitation had been extended to Pakistan to tour South Africa in January 1993.

But he added the board had a moral obligation to allow the Indians to be the first to tour because India proposed South Africa's successful application for readmission to the International Cricket Council (ICC) last July.

Bacher also said a Pakistani tour would have disrupted local fixtures and he believed South Africa, as a country, was

not ready for a high-profile tour so soon.

South Africa ended 21 years of isolation from international cricket — barred because of Pretoria's apartheid policies — when they went to India last month for a short tour comprising three one-day international matches.

The board's executive appointed Alan Jordan president of the Northern Transvaal Cricket Union, as manager of South Africa's World Cup squad. Mike Proctor will be coach and assistant manager.

UCBSA vice-president Krish Mackenderji said former Springbok captain Bacher, who was team manager in India, had withdrawn his nomination for World Cup manager as it was felt his work with the board was too important to permit him to be abroad for two months.

Board president Geoff Dakin denied reports that a row between himself and Bacher during the Indian tour amounted to a serious disagreement.

"Of course, we had our differences in the past, but the meeting didn't even discuss the so-called rift between us," Dakin said.

He added Sunday's meeting was held in a spirit of friendship and co-operation "particularly between Ali and myself."

In a crusading bid to clean up the practice of roughing up one side of the ball to aid the swing of pace bowlers, Bacher agreed with Indian officials midway through the tour that neither side should adopt the practice.

But Dakin at the time saw the intervention as an insult to their hosts and publicly disassociated the board from Bacher's comments.

Lakers beat Mavericks

INGLEWOOD, Calif, Dec 10: CA Green and Byron Scott led a balanced offense with 16 points each and the Los Angeles Lakers' defense held Dallas to a club record-low 28-point first half Sunday night en route to a 103-88 victory, reports AP.

The Lakers, 7-0 at the Forum since Magic Johnson announced his retirement on Nov 7, have won 12 of their last 15 games to tie the Golden State for first place in the Pacific Division. Johnson has accompanied his former teammates on the bench for their last five home victories.

Los Angeles, 10-0 this season when it surrenders fewer than 100 points, opened the game with a 20-6 run in the first eight minutes as the Mavericks, who lost their fourth straight game, missed 11 of their first 14 shots.

Milwaukee gave new coach Frank Hamblen his first NBA victory as Moses Malone scored 21 points, Dale Ellis had 17 and Alvin Robertson spurred a decisive third-quarter run.

The Bucks, who finished with 19 steals, won for the first time in three games since Hamblen took over for Del Harris on Dec 4.

David Robinson scored 19 and Sean Elliott 18 for San Antonio, which managed only 28 points in the second half en route to its fourth straight loss.

Sri Lanka in quest of first away Test victory

A. M. Chowdhury

The Sri Lankan cricketers, now in Pakistan, are in quest of their first Test victory away from home.

They have so far played 34 Tests out of which they managed only two wins on home grounds (one each against India and Pakistan), lost 18 and drawn 14.

The babes of Test cricket are yet to come of age. They have had some very talented players in the past, as also in the present team, but are yet to put together all their might in such a way as to pose a serious threat to the other senior members of the Test club. Will they be able to achieve the long cherished feat this time? This is a big question and I wish I could answer it in the positive!

The present Sri Lanka team, as is usual with them, can take pride in some of their stalwarts. Their captain, Aravinda de Silva, is no doubt their best batsman. In 40 innings in 22 Tests his collection of 1539 (at an average of 40.5) runs includes five hundreds and four fifties and his highest 267 not out against New Zealand are very impressive records indeed. His breezy but brilliant 42 in the first innings of the Lord's Test last summer will be fresh in his

memory to boost him during the current series. Aravinda is also known for his positive approach to the game and under his leadership the Lankans can be expected to perform well. He has the services of Arjuna Ranatunga, the most experienced member of the team to back him up.

In Asanka Gurusingha (averaging 41 in Tests), and Roshan Mahanama Sri Lanka have two batsmen of quality who are yet to fulfil the promise of the potentiality they possess. Chandika Hatturasingha, Sanath Jayasuriya and Marvan Atapattu are three very promising youngsters. Young opening batsman Hatturasingha played a glorious innings of 66 at Lord's last summer in the first innings, when he was ninth out in their total of 224. In the same Test, in the second innings, Hatturasingha's contribution to the total of 285 was 25, but the main contribution came from Jayasuriya, who made a good looking 66, his highest in three Test appearances. So naturally Sri Lankan expectations from these two youngsters are high.

The recall of Athula Samarasekera adds strength to their batting. In Hashan Tillekarantne, who has also been keeping the wickets for some time, they have an ag-

gressive batsman. Ashley de Silva is the second wicket-keeper in the team. In Ramesh Ratnayake the Lankans have a fine all rounder; he being the only Sri Lankan to have the distinction of taking five wickets (5 for 69) and score a half-century (52 coming in at No.8 in a total of 224) in a Test, which he achieved at Lord's last August.

The Sri Lankan attack will be led by Ramesh, with support from the other quickies: Champaka Ramanayaka, Kapila Wijegunawardena and the newcomer Premoday Wickremasinghe. In Don Anuratri and Ranjith Madurasinghe Sri Lanka have two experienced spinners, who are likely to be useful on Pakistani wickets.

Apparently the Sri Lankan side appears to be fairly balanced; having all-rounders of the quality of Ranatunga, Ratnayake and Samarasekera is definitely a point of strength, especially in the one-dayers. Their batting, if it gets going may put up a good show; they have the ability going fairly down the line.

The Pakistani squad announced clearly speaks of the intention of finding new faces to blend with the veterans. The recall of Shoaib Mohammad may resolve the tenuous opening problem, which they

have been facing recently. The youngsters Zahid Fazal, Inzamamul Haq and Amir Hanif shall have to fight for one or two batting places which can be said to be open. Experienced Ijaz Ahmed may find it difficult to get in and I shall not be surprised if he is edged out by one of the above-named new prospects. The Pakistani batting with Rameez Raja, Javed Miandad, Saim Malik and Imran Khan looks fairly formidable.

Sri Lanka shall have their batting potentiality well tested by the Pakistani quick attack, which can be said to be as good as any other in present day cricket. Wasim Akram, Waqar Yunus, Aaqib Javed and Imran Khan can frighten any batting line-up. Among the three stand-by fast bowlers, Ataur Rehman is reputed to be most promising. Spinners Akram Raza and Mushtaq Ahmed are there to add variety and guile. The Pakistani selectors would very much like the opportunity of trying out the new faces and Sri Lanka is likely to afford them the chance of doing that.

Sri Lanka's performances record against Pakistan do not hold any bright prospect for them. Sri Lanka's first tour of Pakistan in 1962, which they lost 0-2, is memorable in many respects. In the first two Tests

many of the senior Pakistani players, including Zaheer Abbas and Imran Khan, did not play as a mark of protest against Skipper Miandad's remarks about some senior players during the Australian tour of 1981-82. The first Test at Karachi saw the debut of Saim Malik, who scored an unbeaten century. In the second Test at Faisalabad Pakistan were saved by the skin of their teeth by wicket-keeper Ashraf Ali and Rashid Khan. In the third Test at Lahore, the differences among the Pakistani players were patched up and Pakistan won the match most convincingly, mainly due to Imran's best-ever bowling performance; he took 14 wickets in the match.

Sri Lanka returned to Pakistan in 1985-86 and were beaten 0-2.

In April-May, 1986 the Pakistanis paid their first visit to the Emerald Island and it was during this visit, marred by lot of umpiring controversies, the Lankans registered their only Test victory against Pakistan in the second Test. The series was drawn. Pakistan had won the first and the last was drawn. Thus so far in nine Tests, Pakistan have won five, Sri Lanka one while three were drawn.

During the current visit, there third, the Lankans are

due to play three Tests and five one-dayers. In the Tests the Lankans are likely to face very tough opposition and their dream of winning an away-Test may still remain unfulfilled. But who knows? We may be in for some surprises. At the same time Pakistan may not find it easy either. The present Sri Lanka side appears to be fairly strong and with little luck and application they may put up performances which would improve their image among the Test playing countries.

The five one-dayers hold out prospect for interesting cricket. One-day matches are a different brand of cricket and the Sri Lankans have already surprised quite a few sides, including Pakistan. Whatever the outcome of the one-day series, one can expect positive cricket from the Lankans and thrills and surprises may not be scarce. The Sri Lankan style and approach are best suited for one-day games and since the World Cup is just around the corner, both sides are expected to throw all their might in preparation for it. A favourable outcome to the series would definitely augur well for either of them and hence one thing is certain: tough competitive cricket lies ahead. What else can the cricket lovers wish for?