

European Championship kicks off today

Favourites France meet hosts in opener

STOCKHOLM, June 9: Hosts Sweden and Group One favourites France will each roll out their own super-guns when they face each other in the opening match of the European soccer championship on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

Swedish hopes of glory rest squarely on the strike power of young forward Tomas Brolin, nicknamed "Baby Bomber," while France rely as ever on their unique smart weapon, European player-of-the-year Jean-Pierre Papin.

In a match which looks likely to be dominated by well entrenched defences, the ability of Brolin and Papin to exploit the slightest chink in the opposition's armour could be decisive.

Home coach Tommy Svensson believes his team, boosted by the intimidating roar of 28,000 fans in Stockholm's tiny Rasunda Stadium, could carry Sweden to a first taste of success since reaching the 1958 World Cup final also played in home soil.

Sweden flopped badly in the 1990 World Cup in Italy, losing all three group games, but new coach Svensson has since rejuvenated the team and tightened up at the back.

The Swedes have conceded just two goals in their last six warm-up matches. "On top form, we are capable of beating anybody," Svensson said.

Brolin, who despite his team's indifferent showing in Italy, was showered with praise for his speed, nose for goal and incisive shot, has been in good form this season, helping Parma, to lift the Italian Cup with a victory over Juventus in the final.

Scorer of nine goals in 16 matches for his country, Brolin and his midfield suppliers Anders Limpar of Arsenal and Jonas Thern of Benfica will be the men Platini will turn his side about.

Svensson may not dare breathe the name of Papin, who has struck 13 goals in his 10 last games for France, for fear of panicking his inexperienced central defence of Jan Eriksson and Patrik Andersson.

The AC Milan-bound striker



THOMAS BROLIN

showed he has overcome an ankle injury when he netted against the Dutch in a friendly last Friday as he resumed his prolific partnership with Eric Cantona of Leeds.

After earning themselves the unwelcome tag of title favourites with a record eight wins out of eight in the qualifiers, France have been marking time since and are without a win in four friendlies this year.

Platini may be alarmed by a lack of creativity in midfield, once the great strength of the national side, and the first warnings of holes appearing in defence.

If he is, he does not show it. "There are two ways of approaching this match," he said. "One is to say, oh no, this is the opening match of the European Championship and to feel under pressure."

"The second is to think, oh yes, it's great to be here in front of millions of television viewers. It's good for our image. The second is my approach."



JEAN-PIERRE PAPIN

PROBABLE TEAMS

SWEDEN: Thomas Ravelli, Roland Nilsson, Jan Eriksson, Patrik Andersson, Joachim Björklund, Stefan Rehn, Jonas Thern, Stefan Schwarz, Anders Limpar, Kennet Andersson, Tomas Brolin.

FRANCE: Bruno Martini, Jocelyn Angloma, Basile Boli, Laurent Blanc, Bernard Casoni, Manuel Amoros, Didier Deschamps, Franck Sauzet, Pascal Vahirua, Jean-Pierre Papin, Eric Cantona.

'92 EUROPEAN FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP FIXTURE

Following is the complete fixture of the European football championship beginning in Sweden today, June 10:

FIRST ROUND

Group One:

Wednesday, June 10:

At Stockholm:

France vs Sweden (1815 GMT)

Thursday, June 11:

At Malmö:

Denmark vs England (1815 GMT)

Sunday, June 14:

At Malmö:

France vs England (1515 GMT)

At Stockholm:

Denmark vs Sweden (1815 GMT)

Wednesday, June 17:

At Stockholm:

England vs Sweden (1815 GMT)

At Malmö:

France vs Denmark (1815 GMT)

Group Two:

Friday, June 12:

At Göteborg:

Netherlands vs Scotland (1515 GMT)

At Norrköping:

CIS vs Germany (1815 GMT)

Monday, June 15:

At Norrköping:

Scotland vs Germany (1515 GMT)

At Göteborg:

Netherlands vs CIS (1815 GMT)

Thursday, June 18:

At Göteborg:

Netherlands vs Germany (1815 GMT)

At Norrköping:

Scotland vs CIS (1815 GMT)

SEMIFINALS

Sunday, June 21:

At Stockholm:

Group One winner vs Group Two second place (1815 GMT)

Monday, June 22:

At Göteborg, Sweden:

Group Two winner vs Group One second place (1815 GMT)

Friday, June 26:

At Göteborg:

Semifinal winners (1815 GMT)

Rumi to skipper Bangladesh

Sports Reporter

Rizvi Karim Rumi of the First Division football league



RUMI

champions Abahani KC and Rumman-bin-Wali Shabbir of runners-up Mohammedan Sporting Club have been elected captain and vice-captain respectively of the Bangladesh soccer team for the Group Five qualifying competition for the tenth Asian championship to be held in Bangkok, Thailand from June 19 to 23.

This was decided at a meeting of the selection committee of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) on Monday night.

Meanwhile, the training camp of the squad began at the Mirpur Stadium yesterday.

All selected players, excluding stand-by Masudur Rahman Rana of PWD who had scored 12 goals in the recently concluded league, took part in the practice under the coach Kaikobad Rana. It was learnt, could not attend because of indisposition.

The twenty-five member Bangladesh contingent will leave Dhaka for Bangkok on June 17. The squad includes twenty players, four officials and a doctor.

Hosts Thailand and South Korea are the other participants in the Group Five.

Armed Police Ctg handball champs

CHITTAGONG, June 9: Chittagong Armed Police team became champions of the inaugural Islamia Metropolitan handball league beating Agrabad Pioneers 17-11 goals in the final at the Lalghighi ground here this afternoon, reports BSS.

The scheduled 50 minutes' play ended in a ten-all draw. But in the 10 minutes of extra time Armed Police fully dominated the match and scored seven more goals as Agrabad Pioneers players tired.

Nurul Islam of Police scored 11 goals, Mujibur Rahman four and Rabiul and Morshed one each.

On the other hand Labloo of Pioneers scored four goals followed by Halim with 3, Alam 1, Saiful 1, Mahmud 1, and Shovon 1 goal each.

ATP's top 20

MONACO, June 9: Leading men's rankings issued by the Association of Tennis Professionals on Monday:

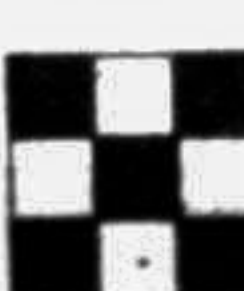
1. Jim Courier (US)
2. Stefan Edberg (Sweden)
3. Pete Sampras (US)
4. Boris Becker (Germany)
5. Michael Stich (Germany)
6. Petr Korda (Czechoslovakia)
7. Michael Chang (US)
8. Goran Ivanisevic (Croatia)
9. Guy Forget (France)
10. Carlos Costa (Spain)
11. Ivan Lendl (Czechoslovakia)
12. Richard Krajicek (Netherlands)
13. Aaron Krickstein (US)
14. Andre Agassi (US)
15. Alexander Volkov (CIS)
16. Brad Gilbert (US)
17. Emilio Sanchez (Spain)
18. David Wheaton (US)
19. Thomas Muster (Austria)
20. Sergi Bruguera (Spain)

WTA's top 20

ST-PETERSBURG, Florida, June 9: The top 20 women's singles players in rankings issued by the Women's Tennis Association on Monday:

1. Monica Seles (Yugoslavia)
2. Steffi Graf (Germany)
3. Martina Navratilova (US)
4. Gabriela Sabatini (Argentina)
5. Arantxa Sanchez Vicario (Spain)
6. Jennifer Capriati (US)
7. Mary Joe Fernandez (US)
8. Conchita Martinez (Spain)
9. Manuela Maleeva Fragniere (Switzerland)
10. Anke Huber (Germany)
11. Jana Novotna (Czechoslovakia)
12. Katrina Maleeva (Bulgaria)
13. Zina Garrison (US)
14. Nathalie Tauziat (France)
15. Mary Pierce (France)
16. Judith Wiesner (Austria)
17. Helena Sukova (Czechoslovakia)
18. Kimiko Date (Japan)
19. Amy Frazier (US)
20. Leila Meskhi (Georgia)

England, US drop vital points



MANILA, June 9: The Russian team led by world champion Garry Kasparov scored a clear 4-0 victory against the Philippines B team in the first round of the 30th chess Olympiad which opened in Manila Monday and attracted a record 104 participating nations, reports AFP.

The surprise of the first round was the failure of England to achieve a clean sweep over Singapore.

The tournament favourites, led by world championship challenger Nigel Short, won 3-1, shedding a point as top board Jonathan Speelman slipped up against a lower-rated player.

The United States, another favoured team, dropped a point against the Philippines C team when their top boards Gata Kamsky and Yasser

Seirawan were held to draws. Other lamed candidates for the Olympiad are Ukraine, the Netherlands and Germany. The Olympiad is the first since the break-up of the Soviet Union, with the individual republics of the Commonwealth of Independent States competing separately. The Soviet Union easily dominated the event in the Post-War period.

RESULTS

The main results in the men's competition, with each match played over four boards, were:

Russia US Philippine B:	4-0
Singapore vs England:	1-3
Ukraine-Egypt:	3-1
Philippines C=US:	1-3
Bosnia-Kazakhstan:	4-0
Austria-Hungary:	1-3
Netherlands-New Zealand:	4-0
Pakistan-Germany:	0.5-3.5
Philippines A Jamaica:	3-1
Armenia-Turkmenistan:	3-1

France-Morocco:	4-0
Czechoslovakia-Mongolia:	4-0
Lithuania-Angola:	3.5-0.5
Hongkong-Estonia:	0-4
China-Luxembourg:	3-1
Greece-Thailand:	4-0
Malaysia-Spain:	0-3+one
adjourned (game)	
Switzerland-Japan:	4-0
Australia-Nicaragua:	4-0
Argentina-South Africa:	4-0

STANDINGS

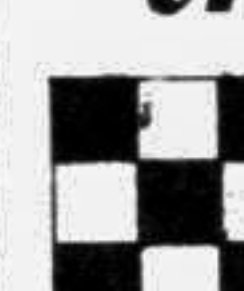
Standing after one round: 1. Russia, Bosnia, Netherlands, France, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Greece, Switzerland, Australia, Argentina (4 points).

The main results in the women's competition, with matches played over three boards, were: Georgia-Mongolia 3-0, Austria-China 0.5-2.5, Slovenia-Russia 0-3, France-Singapore 2.5-0.5. Standings after one round: 1. Georgia, Russia (3 points).



World women's champion Xue Jin of China ponders her next move against an Austrian opponent in the first round of the 30th World Chess Olympiad in Manila Monday. —AFP photo

Bosnians take time out from the war to come to Manila



MANILA, June 9: Chess players from Bosnia-Herzegovina had to flee fierce fighting in their homeland to do battle of a more peaceful kind at the 30th World Chess Olympiad in Manila, reports Reuters.

The war, which has left thousands dead, forced the chess team members to fly in from different corners of the world before they met up in a hotel in the Philippines just before the games began on Monday.

"Our team will have only four players. We are still waiting for two more players to come in from the war in Bosnia," said Ivan Sokolov, a young Grandmaster who hails from war-torn Sarajevo.

Zdenko Kosil, a Croat, Grandmaster, is stuck in the town of Bihać near Nebojsa Nikolic, a Serb, is pinned down in Sarajevo, where Serbian forces backed by the army have set dozens of buildings ablaze.

The chances the two players can still come to about five per cent because they are in towns where the war continues," Sokolov stated.

The composition of the men's team reflects the volatile ethnic mix that has sparked the war in Bosnia. There are two Serbs, two Croats, a Moslem, and another player who is Half-Croat and Half-Bulgarian.

The Bosnians will be facing teams from Slovenia and Croatia, republics that had borne the brunt of the fighting when they seceded from Yugoslavia earlier this year. A team from Yugoslavia was barred from competing by the Philippines in line with stiff UN sanctions prohibiting in-

ternational links with Belgrade for its alleged support of Serbian irregular forces fighting in Bosnia.

Faced with the problem of cobbling together a team in a republic torn by war, the Bosnian Chess Federation worked the telephone lines to form a squad and told the members to fly to Manila in time for the June 8-25 contest.

Predrag Nikolic, the brother of Nebojsa and the team's top player, and Sokolov, who has a Bulgarian father and a Croatian mother, both flew to Amsterdam after tournaments.

in Spain and booked their flights to the Philippines.

Former world junior champion Boran Kurajica, who was teaching chess in the United Arab Emirates, got a telephone message from the Bosnian federation telling him to proceed to Frankfurt to pick up his tickets for Manila.

Emir Dizdarevic, a Moslem Grandmaster, was playing in another tournament in Italy when he also received instructions to go to Frankfurt and then to the Philippines.

If Kosil and Nebojsa Nikolic fail to extricate themselves from the ethnic fighting in Bosnia, they "will have no reserve players because of the war," an official said.

The four who are already in the Philippines will have to play the entire 14 rounds of the tournament without relief.

The women's team led by Grandmaster Vesna Basagic made it to Manila in fully strength.

Walker, who coached the US Olympic track and field team at the 1976 Olympics in Montreal, would be the USOC's first black president if elected in October by the membership at a meeting in Miami Beach.

Walker, currently USOC treasurer and senior vice president for sports at the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games.

Danish Davids dare English Goliaths



MALMO, Sweden, June 9: Denmark are hungry to prove they belong in the European Championship finals and coach Richard Moeller Nielsen believes the intensity of his players' will to succeed is the key to his team's chances, reports Reuters.

With such little time to prepare following their late inclusion when Yugoslavia were expelled, Nielsen refuses to speculate on how well Denmark will fare.

He said on Monday night there was an air of self confidence about his players and they were determined to do well.

"We have a young and very hungry team and it's good for the team to be so hungry," he said from Copenhagen where the squad is still training.

"We have nothing to lose and we want to show it was the right decision to invite us here."

He was less than confident about their prospects in their opening Group One match on Thursday in Malmö against England, who he regards as one of the favourites to win the tournament.

"England have no weak points in their team all the players are every competitive."

Court extends stay for Reynolds

COLUMBUS, Ohio, June 9: World 400-metres record holder Butch Reynolds was granted an extension of a court order on Monday that cleared the way for him to compete despite a two year drug suspension, reports Reuters.

Reynolds was given a 10-day extension by Federal judge Joseph Kinneary on the temporary restraining order. The next hearing is scheduled for June 18, day before the US Olympic trials are due to begin in New Orleans.

Reynolds, the 1988 Olympic silver medalist, qualified for the trials on Saturday by winning the 400 metres in 44.98 seconds at the Kezar Mizuno invitational athletics meeting.

The International Amateur Athletic Federation imposed the suspension on Reynolds after he tested positive for an anabolic steroid in 1990 and rejected his appeal last month.

Reynolds has denied using steroids and blames the positive test on a mix-up at the drug-testing laboratory.

"Players from the English league are the most competitive in Europe. They have so many skilful players and I think they will do very well in Sweden," he said. "We hope to do better, of course, but they are one of my favourites."

"Losing Mark Wright, Gary Stevens and John Barnes will not weaken them too much. England are a country who have the most good, professional players. They have so many good players to select from."

His admiration for the English game led him to describe the match against England as a meeting of David and Goliath.

"It might have been a long

time ago, but Goliath was favourite then and you know what happened. We will play our own game and we think we can do something and really give a good account of ourselves against England."

Nielsen dismissed rumours in the Scandinavian press that some of his team were tired from along season, lacked the motivation to do well in the tournament and would rather be on holiday.

"There will always be one or two journalists who write this kind of thing, but all the players are looking forward to playing," he said.

Denmark, who drew 1-1 with Group Two finalists the CIS last week, failed to qualify

outright by only one point, and won their last five qualifying matches, including a victory against Yugoslavia in Belgrade.

But Nielsen said he kept driving his players on, telling them second place might be good enough because of the political turmoil in Yugoslavia.

The squad arrives in Sweden on Wednesday, with doubts about only one player, Brondby midfielder Kim Christoffe who hurt his knee in the final game of the Danish season on Monday.

Christoffe, who has been capped 11 times, was due to see a doctor on Tuesday and Nielsen said he expected him to be fit to travel.

Winter invites racist graffiti

ROME, June 9: Racist graffiti appeared on Rome walls this week protesting the transfer of Dutch player Aron Mohammed Winter to the Roman soccer club Lazio, reports AP.

Self-styled Lazio fans sprayed some downtown walls with slogans against the 25-year-old midfielder born in Suriname, who is a member of the Dutch national team.

Club officials said they also received irate calls by some fans following the announcement that Winter agreed to play with the Italian major league club in the next league campaign on a four-year contract granting him \$18,300,000 a season.

"It's an intolerable reaction by a minority of extremists," commented a Lazio official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Lazio fans traditionally include fringes of right-wing extremists.

The Italian media bitterly criticized the behaviour of some Lazio fans, and Italy's largest sports daily Gazzetta dello Sport commented Tuesday, "Please stop those beasts."

Winter, who signed his contract with Lazio last weekend, is currently in Sweden to prepare for first game of defending champion Netherlands in the European Championships Friday.

Winter will team at Lazio with newly hired English star Paul Gascoigne and Germans Karlheinz Riedle and Thomas Doll.

Three years ago the strong opposition of Groups of fans forced Udinese to give up the transfer of Israeli forward Ronny Rosenthal from Standard Liege, Rosenthal later joined Liverpool.

David Platt joins Juventus



TURIN, Italy, June 9: Italian First Division football champions Juventus have signed England midfielder David Platt from Bari, the Italian News Agency ANSA

reported on Monday, reports Reuters.

ANSA said Juventus and Bari had concluded a deal in which the Turin team would get Platt while Bari would get midfielder player Angelo Alessio and an undisclosed amount of money.

The agency said the deal was reached in Turin between Juventus chairman Giampiero Boniperti and Bari president Vincenzo Matarrese.

Under the terms of Platt's contract with Bari he was entitled to move clubs if the side was relegated. Platt's transfer was widely expected after Bari slipped into the Second Division last month.

The clubs could not be immediately contacted to confirm the report.

Roma's vice-president Aldo Pasquali said from Italy that Voller, who has just left his family for an Italian girlfriend, would be free to go if he wanted.

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