

Sport

Major's lament

LONDON, Oct 17: Britain's embattled Prime Minister John Major reckons that even the dullist football match can be more exciting than the affairs of state, reports AFP.

Major, writing an article for "We'll Support You Evermore," a football book published on Friday, is frank about his yearning for the national sport.

"I also think how tempting it is to leave the affairs of state behind: Even the darkest of 0-0 draws on a wet afternoon in December can seem attractive in comparison to those red government boxes of cabinet documents."

"When I stand at the Despatch Box in the House of Commons, at the receiving end of a stream of colourful criticism, I realise how the Chelsea players must have felt in the darkest days of disappointment at Stamford Bridge."

Anand's quick exit

TILBURG, Netherlands, Oct 17: Viswanathan Anand, known as the fastest player in world chess, was surprisingly eliminated from the Interpolis tournament yesterday in quick-play tiebreak matches against unseeded Russian Sergei Tribviakov, reports Reuter.

Stunned spectators saw the fourth-seeded Indian play faster than ever and lose both games at the same pace.

Anand had the white pieces in the first match and, after a queen's Indian opening, succumbed with only 10 minutes on his clock.

In the second match with black, Anand's Sicilian game cracked after 17 moves when he lost a pawn and Tribviakov stroled to victory.

In contrast, Britain's Nigel Short, the sixth seed, held his nerve. After two draws in the 30-minute quickplays, he triumphed over Icelandic Marger Petursson in furious 15 minute games with a win and a draw.

Only eight seeds reached the 16-player fourth round starting on Saturday with the return matches, when players switch colour, on Sunday and possible tiebreakers on Monday.

Top-seeded Vassily Ivanchuk of Ukraine remained the favourite but Short, Gata Gamsky of the United States who won the tournament two years ago and Russia's Vassily Smyslov posed major threats.

Cuban spikers out gun CIS

HONG KONG, Oct 17: Olympic volleyball gold medalists Cuba asserted their world dominance by defeating the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) 3-1 in the 100,000 US dollar women Super Challenge Cup here Friday, reports AFP.

Cuba fended off a brave fightback by the CIS to win 15-10, 13-15, 15-10, 15-12 and underline their champion status.

China whitewashed the United States 3-0 in an earlier match in the four-team competition.

In the first competitive outing since the Barcelona Olympics, volleyball's top guns Cuba and the CIS fought out a thrilling duel.

Having conceded the first game Olympic silver medalists CIS trailed 9-13 in the second, but came back strongly simply due to the smashing serves of Yevgeniya Artamonova.

Cuba, however, kept their composure to win the third and fourth games despite being pushed all the way.

With spikers Mireya Luis and Regia Maritz outstanding, the Cubans are now clear favourites to take the winner's purse of 50,000 US dollars.

China, determined to erase memories of their debacle at this year's Summer Olympics, steamrolled past a lethargic American outfit 15-5, 15-9, 15-5.

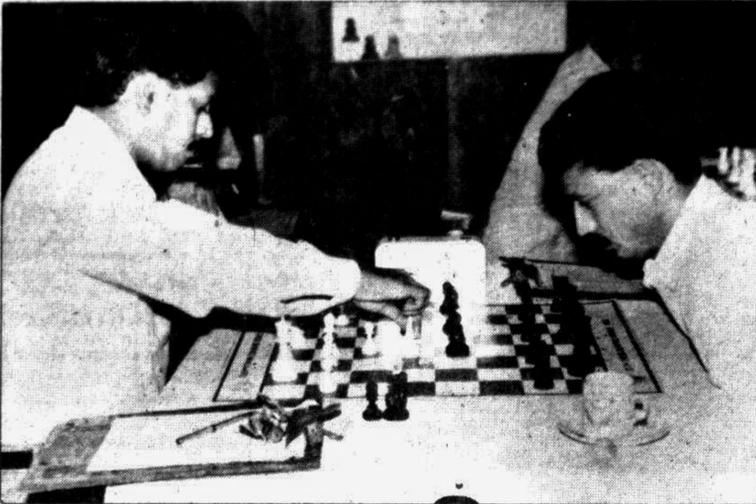
The Chinese, who went to Barcelona as hot favourites to win the Olympic gold, unaccountably lost all their three preliminary group matches to finish seventh of the eight teams in Spain.

All out to make amends for that poor performance, the Chinese women never let up the pressure as they dishevelled out a faultless display of spiking and blocking.

The one-sided contest was over in 65 minutes, but Chinese coach Hu Jin was still unsatisfied with his team's performance.

The real test will be against Cuba and the Russians. The Americans played only three of their Olympic squad for the entire duration of the match and we should not take this result too seriously," Hu said.

China have made only one change to their Barcelona squad with spiker Xu Xin coming in for the injured Li Guojun.



I M Lanka Ravi of India (L) and I M Mahmood Ahmed Lodhi of Pakistan in their ninth round match of the ninth Dr Q M Hossain International Masters' chess competition at the NSC conference room yesterday. Lodhi beat Ravi. —Star photo

Lodhi gets better of Ravi

Sports Reporter



Pakistani International Master Mahmood Ahmed Lodhi, the defending champion of the Quazi Mota-har Hossain International Masters chess, showed his chess acumen in the ninth round to pull off a major victory against Indian IM Lanka Ravi at the conference room of the National Sports Council yesterday.

The Pathan prankster who shares the same rating of 2425 with his Indian opponent, resorted to the Budapest gambit. Ravi made a mistake in the 47th move, Rd1 and there was no looking back for the Pakistani who compelled his opponent to surrender in the 65th move.

Lodhi now has five and a half points.

FIDE Master Ziaur Rahman kept his hopes alive for a second norm for an IM title when he outplayed his depressed Indian admirer and counterpart Atanu Lahiri in a game that lasted 34 moves.

Playing with white, Zia opened with c4. Lahiri blundered in his 17th move, h6. Things turned from bad to worse for the soft-spoken insurance man as he played Ne6 in the 29th move. After 34 moves Lahiri surrendered.

Zia now trails table leader

With Thursday's win, Spassky narrowed Fischer's lead to 7-4 after the two men played to a grueling draw that lasted nearly nine hours the day before. Fischer, who experts say has not played well lately, was clearly upset at the defeat and called Spassky's triumph "a cute win."

Spassky, playing black on Saturday, chose the Sicilian Defence - Taimanov Variation.

The first player to win 10 games takes the dirr 3.35 million first prize, and the loser gets dirr 1.65 million. Draws do not count, and there are no adjournments.

The match started Sept 2 in the Montenegrin coastal resort of Sveti Stefan and moved

to Belgrade at the halfway point, when Fischer had won five games.

The next game is Sunday. Fischer beat Spassky for the world chess championship in 1972, but the International Chess Federation stripped him of his title in 1975 after he refused to defend it.

The 49-year-old American insists the current rematch is for the world championships, but it is not sanctioned by the International Chess Federation.

The match is being played in defiance of UN sanctions against Yugoslavia, now comprising only Serbia and Montenegro, for provoking civil war in the former Yugoslav republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The prize money has been put up by Yugoslav businessman Jezdimir Vasiljevic as part of his efforts to promote Yugoslavia and the Sveti Stefan resort, which he has leased from the Montenegrin government.

he struck the twin blows.

With the Argentines showing imagination in their buildups, the Ivory Coast goal was under a veritable siege in the first 10 minutes.

Fernando Redonodo (Tenerife, Spain) worked the ball through a clustered middle before switching it to the right where Diego Simeone (Sevilla, Spain) relayed the ball to the top of the box. Batistuta was quick on it with his first-timer in the back of the net.

Even before the Africans could recover, the Argentines swarmed with repeated raids and after a sustained melee in the front of the goal, Batistuta showed his quickness and anticipation again with a low grounder off a Jose Villarreal in the 8th minute.

The Argentines eased up the pace a bit, and Ivory Coast picked up steam from there on, with the Africans repeatedly winning the protracted midfield battles.

But the Argentine defence stood rock solid.

Ivory Coast was found wanting in direction — especially in the 15th minute when Serge Alain, left alone with a gaping goal, ballooned his shot.

With the game looking as if it would settle into drawn out midfield battle, Dominique Abou gave the Argentines a chance to ease the throttle and save their energy for the final.

After getting a yellow card from Syrian referee Al Sharief for charging Claudio Caniggia (Rome, Italy), his sustained dissent got him the red.

Abou's exit pricked Ivory Coast's bubble, and the expected fight back in the session slowly died out, especially after defender Ricardo Altamirano struck the third in the 24th.

Barcelona's debt debacle

BARCELONA, Oct 17: City authorities here will be paying for the 1992 Olympic Games until the year 2005, according to a local newspaper, reports AFP.

The budget for the two-week sporting spectacular was overshot by 22 billion pesetas (220 million dollars) and the debts will take 13 years to pay off instead of seven, the Catalan paper Avui said.

The report was based on figures from a special state body which dealt with the financing of the event, the official credit institute.

Argentines meet Saudis in final

RIYADH, Oct 17: Argentina produced flashes of brilliance against Ivory Coast on Friday in an east-4-0 victory in the Intercontinental Soccer Championship, reports AP.

They now meet host Saudi Arabia, 3-0 winner over the United States on Thursday, in the finals for the King Fahd Cup.

Ivory Coast, which was reduced to 10 men in the last 41 minutes Friday, will vie for the bronze with the Americans on Monday.

The quick opportunism of Gabriel Batistuta (Fiorentina, Italy) was a treat to savour as



The wedding ceremony of ex-national women's chess champion Syeda Shabana Parveen (Nipa), second daughter of Syed Abdul Hamid, with Quazi A K M Enamul Islam, son of Quazi Abdul Qudus was recently solemnised in the city.

Son's side faces father's club

SAARBURECKEN, Germany, Oct 17: Bayern Munich vice-president Franz Beckenbauer will have mixed feelings when he listens for the result of his club's visit to Saarburecken in the German First Division on Saturday, reports Reuter.

The German World Cup-winning coach's son Stefan is set to play for the opposition against the league leaders.

Stefan, 23, returns after injury to make his fourth Bundesliga appearance in the newly-promoted team's biggest game.

A defender who has no aspirations to match the libero role that his father made famous, Stefan is playing down the occasion although he first learned the game at Bayern where he played in the youth team.

"As far as I'm concerned, it's important to play. It doesn't matter who we're playing against," he said. "Bayern are just one of 18 clubs."

His father commented: "He has enough ability to get a first-team place in Saarburecken even when he certainly has not been one of the hardest working players."

Fanz will be unable to attend the match because he is working as a television commentator at another game.

"I wouldn't care if he was in the ground," Stefan said.

FA labels Durie a cheat

LONDON, Oct 17: Scotland international Gordon Durie was branded a cheat by the English Football Association (FA) on Friday, reports Reuter.

A three-man FA disciplinary commission decided the Tottenham striker had feigned injury during the Premier League match against Coventry in August.

They found him guilty of misconduct and banned him for three matches, starting from November 2.

Durie left the FA hearing without comment. But Gordon Taylor, chief executive of the Professional Footballers' Association, who represented him, said: "Gordon is devastated by the decision. His reputation has been damaged and there will certainly be an appeal."

Our case was that the video showed evidence of contact between the two players. I feel it is impossible for referees to act as God, judge and jury on the question of an injury to a player."

Tottenham director Jonathan Crystal said the club considered the finding "an unjustifiable slur on one of the country's leading players."

The charge arose after Durie had been involved in a head-to-head confrontation with Coventry defender Andy Pearce. Durie reacted angrily to the original Pearce challenge and as the two players confronted each other Durie suddenly fell backwards and lay motionless on the pitch.

He was later booked by referee Dermot Gallagher who reported to the FA that he considered Durie had been feigning injury.



DURIE



Mary Decker-Slaney (R) from the United States embraces South Africa's Zola Budd-Pieterse (L) after they placed first and second respectively in the women's Elite Mile Race in Sydney on Friday. Decker finished in 4 minutes 22.68 seconds. —AFP photo

'94 World Cup schedule next Tuesday

US to play opener indoors

UNDATED, Oct 17: When the United States opens the 1994 World Cup at home, the Americans will do it in a dome, reports AP.

The US team will play its opening first-round game on June 18, 1994 in the Pontiac Silverdome outside Detroit, the first indoor game in the history of soccer's premier tournament, a source confirmed Friday.

Organisers of the 24-nation, 52-game tournament will announce the schedule on Tuesday. After their opener, the Americans will play twice in the Rose Bowl at Pasadena, California.

Germany, the defending champions, will open the tournament at Soldier Field in Chicago on June 17. The final will be at the Rose Bowl on July 17.

American organisers convinced FIFA, soccer's governing body, to allow both semifinals to be played on July 13. They will be in the Giants Stadium at East Rutherford, NJ, and the Rose Bowl. FIFA had wanted one game to be played July 12, but that would have conflicted with baseball's All-Star game at Pittsburgh.

The Americans, 23rd among 24 nations in the 1990 World Cup, will train for the tournament at Mission Viejo, Calif. Originally, the Rose Bowl was placed in a group with Stanford Stadium and the Cotton Bowl in Dallas, but that plan was altered for television.

"We want to have the US have the opportunity to slot into prime time on TV that Saturday night on ABC," said Scott Le Teller, the chief operating officer for World Cup USA 1994, the group that will stage the tournament.

First-round games will start at 12:30 pm, 4 pm and 7:30 pm EDT, (1630, 2000 and 2330 GMT) a source said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Exact times for first-round games will not be decided until after the draw, to take place at Las Vegas on Dec 19, 1993.

In another break from recent tradition, a second game will be played the day of the opener, a night match in the Cotton Bowl. Because of the shift, Dallas will be grouped with Chicago and Foxboro, Massachusetts. East Rutherford will be grouped with Washington and Orlando, Florida.

The starting times were of concern because of European television, which desires games in its prime time, which is six hours ahead of the United States' East Coast. While the final will start at 9:30 pm in Europe, semifinals will start in Europe at 10 pm and 1:30 am.

Le Moignan led 7-5 in a vital second game full of frantic scrambling and five times had points to win it at 9-8.

Newton saved four of them with cleverly gambled volleying interceptions from close to the front wall, followed by drops or kills.

On one of them Le Moignan put a drop down from within eight feet, and in the third game she always looked to be carrying too much mental luggage from these disasters to recover.

Earlier Susan Devoy, eight times British Open champion and four times World Open champion, played magnificently in what she must have thought was the last match of her famous career.

She beat Cassie Jackman, the world junior champion, 2-9, 9-3, 9-4, 9-4 in a match full of blazing attacking by both women.

"I am delighted with the match result but I am just pissed off that I have to play Michelle Martin again," said Devoy.

Le Moignan, who left the stadium within seconds, could even consider retirement herself. She is 30 next month and the loss, near the end of an outstanding career, may leave a deep wound.

From early in the second game it was clear that she was going to find it hard to make a comeback. Mistakes flowed regularly and she was unusually slow moving to the front of the court.

Newton had worked out a good game plan to capitalise



Kenya's Joseph Cheshire (C) celebrates his victory with runner-up Briton Steve Cram (L) and Australia's Shaun Creighton in Sydney on Friday. Cheshire finished the men's race in 3 minutes 57.2 seconds. —AFP photo