

Booters fine

Sports Reporter

All players of the Bangladesh team are physically fit and undergoing light practice in Japan, according to chief de mission A H Mofazzal Karim, Additional Secretary in-charge of the Ministry of Textiles, who had a telephonic conversation with the Bangladesh Football Federation joint secretary Shah Abul Kashem yesterday.

Mofazzal Karim left Dhaka for Japan last Sunday, a day after the 27-strong left the city.

Bangladesh will play their first match of the two-leg 1994 World Cup qualifiers against hosts Japan on April 11.

Donations for Hira's treatment

Sports Reporter

State Minister for Youth and Sports Sadek Hossain Khoka donated thirty thousand taka for the treatment of young cricketer Asadur Rahman Hira of Victoria Sporting Club yesterday.

Hira, who is now under treatment at the Pain and Paralysis Clinic in the city, is suffering from paralysis and other diseases.

The Sports Minister handed over the cheque to Golam Faruk Apu, a joint secretary of the Bangladesh Cricket Control Board (BCCB).

Cricketer director of the 1992-93 Navana Premier Division league champions Abahani Krira Chakra Mostafa Kamal also donated ten thousand taka yesterday for Hira's treatment.

Earlier last month the BCCB donated twenty thousand taka for the young cricketer's treatment.

Difficult time ahead for Alex

BARCELONA, Apr 6: Spain's seventh ranked player Alex Corretja earned a second round match with American top seed and Wimbledon champion Andre Agassi in the 750,000 dollar Conde de Godo men's tennis tournament on Monday, reports Reuter.

Corretja eased through his first round match 7-6, 6-1 against Dutchman Hendrik Davids on Monday.

Agassi will be difficult. He's tremendous player... the only thing I can do is fight as hard as I know how," Corretja said.

The only surprise on the first day of the event was the 6-3, 6-2 defeat of the number 15 seed, Sweden's Nicklas Kulti, by Belgian qualifier Filip de Wulf, ranked 166th in the world.

None of the big names were in action on Monday. Other top-ranking players competing for the 126,000 dollar singles prize include American Ivan Lendl, Michael Stich of Germany and Dutchman Richard Krajicek.



US President Bill Clinton (C) with the Texas Rangers in the batting cage during batting practice prior to the throwing out the first ball which marks the opening of a baseball season at the Camden Yards, Baltimore on Monday. The Rangers open their campaign against the Baltimore Orioles. — AFP photo

Marseille, Rangers clash in European Cup semis today

Stage set for classic thriller



MARSEILLE, France, Apr 6: Marseille and Rangers, two of Europe's most expensively assembled teams, clash on Wednesday in a winner-takes-all showdown which promises to be a classic, reports Reuter.

There will be no room for calculation when the French and Scottish champions run out on to the Stade Velodrome before an intimidating 40,000 capacity crowd of exuberant Marseilleans.

With the winners guaranteed a place in the European Cup final, gamblers take precedence and one small twist of fate could decide everything.

Marseille and Rangers are level on six points each from four games in European Cup Group A, but under new rules introduced this season, a victory for either side will clinch top place whatever happens in the final matches in two weeks time.

When teams finish the group level on points, the verdict no longer goes to the team with the best goal difference but depends instead on the results of the two matches between the two clubs concerned.

As the match in Glasgow between the two sides finished in a 2-2 draw, victory by either side now will end their rivals' aspirations for another year.

Fans hope and expect that the game will live up to the quality and excitement of the match between the two in Glasgow, a thrilling affair with Rangers coming back from 2-0

down to grab a draw with two late goals.

That match was the turning point of our season," Marseille defender Eric di Meo said. "We saw how good we could be and have not feared anyone since."

Rangers will be without suspended English striker Mark Hateley, who scored in Glasgow, and have a tough

time of year, thrashing CSKA Moscow 6-0 in their last European outing in Marseille.

Jean-Pierre Papin and Chris Waddle may have gone but Rudi Voeller, Alen Boksic and Abedi Pele are a trio who inspire nothing but fear in rival defences.

Rangers have their own weapon which is far from a secret. Striker Ally McCoist hit his 52nd goal of the season in putting his side into the Scottish Cup final on Saturday and the visitors will be looking to him as the man who can send them into a European final for the first time in more than 20 years.

But he will be tightly marked, a job which will go either to Basile Boli or Di Meo.

Marseille, seeking a second European Cup final appearance in three-year, firmly believe they can become the first French team to win a European trophy.

Rangers are just as confident they can stop the Marseille machine. The stage is set for a thriller.

TEAMS

MARSEILLE: Fabien Barthez, Jocelyn Angloma, Basile Boli, Marcel Desailly, Eric di Meo, Didier Deschamps, Franck Sauze, Jean-Jacques Eydelie, Abedi Pele, Alen Boksic, Rudi Voeller.

RANGERS: Andy Goram, David Robertson, Richard Gough, Dave McPherson, John Brown, Trevor Steven, Ian Durrant, Ian Ferguson, Stuart McCall, Pieter Huistra, Ally McCoist.



MARK HATELEY

proposition in the Mediterranean port. Marseille have won their last 14 matches at home in four years of campaigning for the elusive European Cup. One of the victims was no less than AC Milan, ousted from the tournament two years ago.

The French are on superb form, as they tend to be at this

Clinton opens baseball league

BALTIMORE, Maryland, Apr 6: President Bill Clinton opened the 1993 baseball season Monday with a ceremonial first pitch at Camden Yards for the game between the Baltimore Orioles and Texas Rangers, reports AFP.

The left-handed President donned a Baltimore baseball cap and wore his own well-worn glove to the mound, where he tossed the first baseball, a tradition for US Presidents.

Outside the stadium, a group led by black leader Jesse Jackson demonstrated in favour of more opportunities for minorities in baseball management. Clinton called the protest a legitimate issue.

\$50m preparation

KUALA LUMPUR, Apr 6: The cabinet has approved 129.5 million ringgit (about 50 million US dollars) to train Malaysian athletes for the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur in 1998, Youth and Sports Minister Annuar Musa said Monday, reports Xinhua.

Annual told a news conference that 39 million ringgit (15.06 million dollars) of the total would go for recruitment of foreign coaches.

M United magic at Carrow Road

NORWICH, England, Apr 6: Eight devastating minutes from Manchester United transformed the English Championship into a straight fight with Aston Villa after the visitors scored an exhilarating victory over Premier League rivals Norwich at Carrow Road Monday night, reports AFP.

The Manchester triumph ended the title dreams of Mike Walker's men, who have headed the table eight times in the past eight months and who were once eight points clear.

Their lethal spell came midway through the first-half with goals from Ryan Giggs, Andrei Kanchelskis and Eric Cantona and the victory, United's first in five games, emphatically revived their title challenge.

With six dramatic games to go, United are now just one point behind Ron Atkinson's Aston Villa with a superior goal difference.

Norwich, who pulled a goal back in the second-half through former Old Trafford striker Mark Robins, are only one point further adrift — but they have played a game more.

It is a miracle that they have stayed in contention so long on their shoestring resources, but this was a night



RYAN GIGGS

when the gulf in class was never more evident.

Norwich flattered in a lively opening, claiming a penalty when Robins fell under Gary Pallister's fifth-minute challenge but London referee Tony Ward saw no offence.

Two minutes later, he penalised Steve Bruce for tripping the former Old Trafford striker a yard outside the area but Ian Crook lofted the free kick just over the bar.

A booking for Gary Megson for a foul on Kanchelskis merely seemed to signal Norwich's intent to give nothing away.

How wrong can one be? Three goals and eight minutes later, the game was effectively over.

Ferguson's surprise choice in preferring Andrei Kanchelskis to Bryan Robson for the suspended Mark Hughes, and running Giggs down the middle, was swiftly vindicated.

Eric Cantona's perfectly-weighted pass from the centre circle launched a 13th minute cavalry charge of Giggs, Lee Sharpe and Kanchelskis through the middle.

With full-back Mark Bowen not getting forward fast enough to play them off-side, there was no flag and Giggs raced on to fire home his 10th goal of the season.

The second United goal, seven minutes later, stemmed from a broken-down Norwich attack when Ruel Fox failed to make immediate use of Robins' excellent pass.

Pallister and Paul Ince led the clearance to Brian McClair and again a great pass unleashed the break, this time from Kanchelskis who rapped home a short from a very tight angle as he cut in from the right.

Becker to play in Nice Open

NICE, France, Apr 6: German tennis star Boris Becker will play in the Nice Open, recovering sufficiently from a virus that has knocked him out of his last five tournaments, organizers said Tuesday, reports AP.

Becker has been issued a wild-card invitation to the tournament, to be played on clay from Saturday through April 18.

Becker, who fell victim to a virus in February during a tournament in Stuttgart, forfeited this week's Japan Open. He trained Monday at the Monte Carlo Country Club with French star Henri Leconte.

Becker plans to wed Feltus

LIAMBURG, Germany, Apr 6: Tennis ace Boris Becker is engaged to marry his longtime girlfriend Barbara Feltus, a German magazine said Tuesday, reports AP.

The Hamburg-based Stern magazine quoted Becker as saying the couple have been engaged since March 5.

"Barbara is my future wife," Becker was quoted as saying. "We want to have children, a home and a very normal life."

The report, released in advance of publication in Wednesday's editions, did not say when the two plan to marry.

Stern quoted Becker, 25, as saying the couple has thought about him taking off more time from tennis to allow his future wife to pursue an acting career.

The report said Becker is considering moving from Monte Carlo, his official residence, to Paris or London to allow Ms Feltus to attend acting school.

The two have lived together for 16 months, the report said.

Stern quoted Ms Feltus, whose father is American, as saying she has faced racism in Germany since being with Becker, especially after the Olympics in Barcelona when there were reports the couple had split up.

"Some people in Munich spat at my feet and said: 'See, your problem, you deserve it.' Others have said: 'You're only a black floozy, go back to the bush,'" the magazine quoted Ms Feltus as saying.

The report said Ms Feltus, who once worked as a model, was also upset by public reaction to a picture showing her modeling luxury underwear, which was printed by German newspapers.

But Stern quoted her as saying she realized now she has become a public figure through her relationship with Becker.



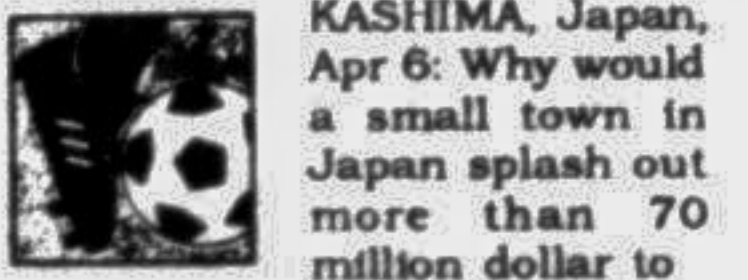
BARBARA FELTUS-FERBST (L) with BORIS BECKER ... together against the world. — Star file photo

Becker, a three-time Wimbledon champion, has not completed a tournament since he was forced out of the Eurocard Open in Stuttgart in February because of a viral infection.

However, he has been practicing in Monte Carlo for the beginning of the clay court season.

"I have at the most five or six more years of tennis, then it is definitely over," Stern quoted Becker as saying.

Zico — the knight in Kashima's dream



ZICO

KASHIMA, Japan, Apr 6: Why would a small town in Japan splash out more than 70 million dollars to buy a retired Brazilian superstar and build a brand new stadium for him?

This drab industrial municipality of 45,000 people on Japan's east coast has no history of soccer. Yet Sumitomo Metal and Ibraki Prefecture, to which Kashima belongs, have set out to create a soccer dream as a way of reviving the area, reports Reuter.

Sumitomo, whose steel plant is the biggest local employer, stunned Kashima residents and the soccer world two years ago when it announced it had signed Zico, then 38, Brazil's most famous player after Pele, for the local team.

In October 1991, the Kashima Antlers Club was formally born with investment from five towns in the area and 43 local firms, many from the Sumitomo Group.

The Antlers Club is one of 10 founder members of Japan's new professional J-league, which kicks off on May 15.

Work began on a new stadium in April 1992 in an area of woods and scrubland, and Antlers will inaugurate it on May 4 in a friendly with Fluminense of Brazil.

The stadium, the country's first custom-built all-seat covered soccer arena, has 15,000 seats and an advanced Swiss drainage system which, for the first time in Japan, will guarantee grass throughout the year.

Giant earthmovers and trucks are still hard at work on the project, which also includes construction of a 3,000-place car park, a big new road and a railway station. Total cost is 8.2 billion yen (71 million dollar), all put up by the Ibaraki authorities.

In the Kashima industrial zone there are about 150 factories but no amusements," said Yasushi Koizumi, an Ibaraki official involved in the project.

dium as a way to revive the area," he said.

"We are known as a town with a tradition of martial arts," said Kashima mayor Takeshi Ikar. "We want to become famous for soccer. Let soccer be the fire to ignite the area and give it new life."

Posters speak of the "Antlers Football Dream."

As in other part of Japan, soccer has become the most popular sport among school-boys in Kashima over the last five years, overtaking baseball, the traditional favourite.

Yet the area has no soccer tradition. The Sumitomo team, on which the Antlers was built, played only in the Second Division of the pre-professional league.

So the club bought not only Zico, on a three-year contract worth 1.5 million dollar, but also fellow Brazilian international Carlos Alberto Souza Dos Santos, six Japanese players and a coach from the Honda team.



Internazionale Milan's Uruguayan star Ruben Sosa faces Sampdoria's defender Marco Lenna during the Italian league match on April 4 in Genoa. Inter Milan snuffed Sampdoria 3-1. — AFP photo

In 88 games for Brazil, Zico scored 68 goals, second only to the legendary Pele. He retired in 1990 and became



ZICO

Brazil's first sports ambassador, a post he gave up on joining the Antlers.

"The start of a professional league is a turning point for soccer in Japan. This is a

challenge for me," said Zico, explaining why he came out of retirement.

"I want to make whatever contribution I can and make Antlers a famous name in the soccer world," he said.

Zico, who turned 40 in March, lives in an expensive area of Tokyo with his wife and three sons, who attend the city's American school. He makes the 105-minute journey to Kashima for games and training sessions and stays in a club flat.

"Before 1991, no-one in Kashima had heard of Zico," said one local shopkeeper. "He has improved our image. Most Japanese used to think of Kashima as just a dreary industrial town but Zico has given them another image."

"I have no interest in soccer and don't understand it so I won't go to games," the shopkeeper said. "But my sons all play at school. The club should have no trouble filling the stadium."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words. Includes a solution for the Cryptoquip puzzle.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers for solving.

CRYPTOQUIP
D J Y V I J M K G G E H B V L
E C N H E N N H V E C C M F G H Y :
" F H B I B G N N L J Y D J I
I K M C H S I H Y C F ! "
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: LAGGARD CAB DISPATCHER JUST LOST HIS JOB BECAUSE HE SPENT TOO MUCH TIME IDLING.
Today's Cryptoquip clue: I equals M
The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.