



Scene from yesterday's Star First Division football league encounter between Eskaton Sabuj Sangha and newcomers Bangladesh Boys.

England, Pakistan placed in same group for '96 WC

LONDON, July 9: England and Pakistan, who contested the last World Cup final, have been drawn in the same qualifying group for the 1996 tournaments, reports AFP.

South Africa and New Zealand, the two beaten semi-finalists from 1992, are also in Group A with the finalists in the competition to be held in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The group, to be completed by two associate member countries from next year's ICC Trophy in Kenya, is by far the toughest of the two. In group B there is India, Sri Lanka, Australia, West Indies, Zimbabwe, and the runners up from the ICC Trophy.

But with four countries to qualify for the quarter-finals from each group, none of the favourites should have too many problems.

Apart from deliberately keeping main hosts Pakistan and India away from each other, there was no seeding element behind today's draw in London.

Sri Lanka, who will also host several games, have emerged in India's group along with Australia, West Indies and Zimbabwe.

Test and County Cricket Board spokesman Ken Lawrence said: "Past results in one-day cricket tend to count for very little, so there would not have been much point in any seeding arrangement, especially, with the World Cup nearly three years away."

With 12 countries taking part, the sixth World Cup will be the biggest yet.

Venues and dates for a total of 37 matches have yet to be decided — but it's a safe bet that most of England's qualifying games will be in Pakistan.

Group A: Pakistan, England, New Zealand, South Africa, associate winners, associate third.

Group B: India, Sri Lanka, Australia, West Indies, Zimbabwe, associate second.

Zoehrer weaves magic behind the wicket

STONE, England, July 9: Reserve wicketkeeper Tim Zoehrer claimed six victims as Australia beat Minor Counties by 58 runs in a one-day game on Thursday, reports Reuters.

Australia, who recovered from 98 for six to reach 230 all out, dismissed the part-timers for 172.

Zoehrer took four catches and made two stumpings and second string seamer Paul Reiffel enjoyed a five for 28 haul.

Half centuries from stand-in captain Mark Taylor and Reiffel had lifted the tourists after an uncertain start to their innings.

Taylor (53) and Brendon Julian (31) added 40 for the seventh wicket, then Taylor shared in an eighth-wicket stand of 61 with Reiffel (50 not out).

Julio retains WBA title

TIJUANA, Mexico, July 9: Elicer Julio of Colombia retained his World Boxing Association (WBA) bantam weight title on Thursday with a split-decision victory on points over Ricardo Vargas of Mexico, reports Reuters.

One judge scored the 12-round fight a 114-114 tie but the other two made it 117-110 and 117-111 in favour of the Colombian.

Boys stay on winning trail

Sports Reporter

Promotees Bangladesh Boys recorded their third consecutive win in the Star First Division football league at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.

The winners led the first half one-nil. Now in the midst of a wonderful run after a stuttering start following their promotion to First Division along with East End this year, Bangladesh Boys yesterday thoroughly deserved the win and could have gone back home with a clean slate had not one of their defenders scored a suicidal goal midway through the second half.

On a slabby ground both teams struggled in vain in their bid to play positive football as the ball got stuck at the shingly patches spread all over the ground.

Eskaton, who are being looked after these days by a British coach, held a little sway over their opponents mainly because of their reliance on long balls — the only way to keep the ball moving on such sticky grounds.

It took Bangladesh Boys some time to change their game plan and the babes, who had earlier tried to initiate moves with short passes, began to look more and more menacing as the game wore on.

Liton put the Senior Division rookies ahead three minutes before the short whistle when he found the net after getting past a couple of Eskaton defenders (1-0).

Spurred on by the advantage that Marseille bribed three Valenciennes players to throw a league match on May 20, said on Thursday, there was an organised campaign to destroy him.

"What I find unacceptable is that to attain this end they do not hesitate to destroy a club and French football, in particular," he said.

Befly on Thursday released to reporters an example of several death threats, he said he had received from Marseille supporters.

The latter, signed "Death Corps Marseille," was headed with drawings of a skeleton and a coffin with the judge's name on it.

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Scindia elected ACI chief

LONDON, July 9: Madhav Rao Scindia, president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), was today elected chairman of the Asian Cricket Council (ACI) for a period of two years, reports PTI.

India take over from the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The Asian Cricket Council at its annual meeting here today decided to form a committee to go into the question of setting up permanent secretariat on the lines of the ICC secretariat at Lord's here.

Scindia, who also attended the two-day meeting of the ICC at Lord's said Australia and New Zealand have suggested slight modification in the itinerary of the World Cup to be jointly hosted by India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The suggestion will be considered by the World Cup Committee of Pakistan-India-Sri Lanka and a final decision will be taken soon, he said.

Scindia said the ICC decided to set up advisory committees. One committee will have six members, one from England and West Indies each and one from the southern African region, Australasian region and South Asian region each.

Its decisions would be recommendatory in nature and the final decision will be taken by the chairman of the ICC.

The second committee will go into the technical aspects of the game. Its members will include some former cricket players including one from India, Scindia said.

Azhar's men in Colombo

COLOMBO, July 9: The 16-member Indian cricket squad accompanied by manager Ajith Wadekar arrived here Friday for a five week tour that includes three Tests and three one-day internationals, reports AFP.

The team led by 30-year-old Mohammad Azharuddin will play a Board XI in their three-day tour opener Monday in northwest Kurunegala before the first Test in central Kandy on July 17.

Twelve members of the squad are visiting Sri Lanka for the first time, the four others skipper Azharuddin, wicket-keeper Kiran More, all-rounder Kapil Dev and batsman Navjot Sidhu toured Sri Lanka in 1985.

The Indian squad: Mohammad Azharuddin (Cap), Sachin Tendulkar (Vice-captain), Navjot Sidhu, Manoj Prabhakar, Woorkeri Raman, Vinod Kambli, Pravin Amre, Ajay Sharma, Kapil Dev, Kiran More, Vijay Yadav, Anil Kumble, Rajesh Chauhan, Venkatapathy Raju, Javagal Srinath, Salil Ankola. Manager: Ajith Wadekar.

For Kapil series win comes first

NEW DELHI, July 9: Indian all-rounder Kapil Dev, who is a dozen wickets short of becoming Test cricket's most successful bowler, says breaking the record is secondary on the tour of Sri Lanka, reports AFP.

"India winning the series is more important," Kapil, who left with the Indian team for Sri Lanka on Friday, told the Press Trust of India in Madras.

"First we should concentrate on taking the series. The record can be achieved if I keep playing," the 34-year-old all-rounder said.

"I don't know when the record will come but to maintain the team's habit of winning is more important."

However, Valder said the 66-page document would be only one of the factors to influence the 91 IOC members when they vote in Monte Carlo on September 23.

"So, pleasing as it is, we shouldn't overstate its importance," he said.

An official spokesman for the Sydney bid said the city was confident that the quality of its technical proposal to the IOC was as good as any Olympic plan ever presented to the IOC.

"If the report is true then we are delighted because we know it's an extremely influential and important part of the bidding process," Hamish Fraser said.

However, a member of the board which ran Melbourne's bid for the 1996 Games, won by Atlanta, also cautioned against over-optimism.

Ron Casey said Melbourne had also received a similar good assessment but this had not prevented Atlanta from winning.

"It's pure politics right up until the ballot is taken... you don't really know until (IOC president Juan Antonio) Samaranch stands there and says, 'The winner is...'" he said in a radio interview.

Sydney, making Australia's third consecutive bid after Brisbane and Melbourne, is in a six-way race with Beijing, Manchester, Brasilia, Istanbul and Berlin.

The inspectors' report, leaked to German news agency DPA, stops short of recommending that Sydney host the Games but makes it clear the city is the most suitable in all areas.

Beijing appears from the assessment to be trailing both Berlin and Manchester.

Lankans ready for Indians



COLOMBO, July 9: Battle-hardened Sri Lanka are bracing themselves for a gruelling three-Test series against neighbouring cricketing giants India, reports AFP.

The Indians led by the once much-maligned Mohammad Azharuddin arrive here Friday on the first overseas tour since their amazing transformation from a team of weaklings to a powerful side in the rubber against England.

Sri Lanka's cricket manager Duleep Mendis believes his young and talented cricketers, who have reeled off a string of solid performances against visiting sides in the past 11 months, would be no push-overs despite India's revival.

We are feeling very confident. It will be a tough series but we are ready, said Mendis who led the island to its only Test win over India in 1985. India has won three Tests against Sri Lanka while four others were drawn.

Sri Lanka, however, are burdened with the added pressure of trying to keep up their morale regardless of the results since another tough home contest against South Africa is lined up as soon as the Indians complete their tour.

Mendis, a former Test captain, is aware of the psychological trap because a poor performance against India could turn out to be the biggest blow to morale ahead of their three-Test clash with South Africa in August.

If we can't do well against India then it is going to be a long, agonising time for us over the next couple of months, said the 40-year-old Mendis who has

also been deeply involved in coaching his players in the past two months.

In a way playing six Tests at a stretch is difficult. But I don't think we can complain because this is a good chance to give our players enough exposure, he added.

Mendis also said he had great faith in Arjuna Ranatunga who has matured wonderfully over the years as captain. Ranatunga himself has said Sri Lanka no longer played to survive. We now play to win.

With both teams well-balanced, the spin armoury of either side could emerge the trump card. India's spin trio of Anil Kumble, Venkatapathy Raju and Rajesh Chauhan, however, have the potential to tilt the balance.

Sri Lanka will bank heavily on spinners. Jayananda Warnawera, a medium-paced off-cutter and Muttiah Muralidharan, a promising young off-break bowler if the matches are to be played on slow tracks.

Mendis, however, hinted that Sri Lanka may have to depend on the seam bowlers than spin as the Indians were known to grope against the moving ball.

We have been working on a strategy. Hope it works. They have shown weakness on fast pitches, he said.

Ranatunga will count on experienced opener Keshav Mahanama, Ananka Gurusinha and vice-captain Aravinda de Silva, who has recovered from an injury he suffered in a recent practice match, for good scores with the bat.

India's 3-0 drubbing of England earlier in the year further highlighted the inherent batting talents of Vinod Kambli and wonder-boy vice-captain Sachin Tendulkar.

Yet, India's war-horse Kapil Dev could grasp the attention from all the others because he needs just a dozen more wickets

to break the 431-wicket world record haul of New Zealand's Sir Richard Hadlee.

Dubbed the Haryana Hurricane 'Dev' has emerged as one of the world's finest all-rounders with 420 wickets and more than 5,000 runs in 124 Tests.

A hard-fought three-Test home series against Australia in August last year marked the island's resurgence ending a dismal decade or Test matches during which Sri Lanka won just two of 37 Tests.

Despite losing to Australia 1-0, the overall performance was creditable since it was the first home series in five years. Test

stays had kept away from the Indian cricket republic due to its internal strife.

Ranatunga, the only surviving member of the team that played in the inaugural Test against England in 1982, did not fall the selectors as he led Sri Lanka to first Test wins over New Zealand in December and England in March.

Playing in local conditions is one advantage for the Sri Lankans. Ranatunga's men can also derive some comfort from the fact that India have never won the last 20 Tests they played on foreign soil.

THE INDIAN ITINERARY

July 12-14: V Board XI at Kurunegala

July 17-22: 1st Test at Asgiriya Stadium, Kandy

July 25: 1st one-day international at Khetarama Stadium, Colombo

July 27-Aug 1: 2nd Test at Singhalese Sports Club grounds, Colombo

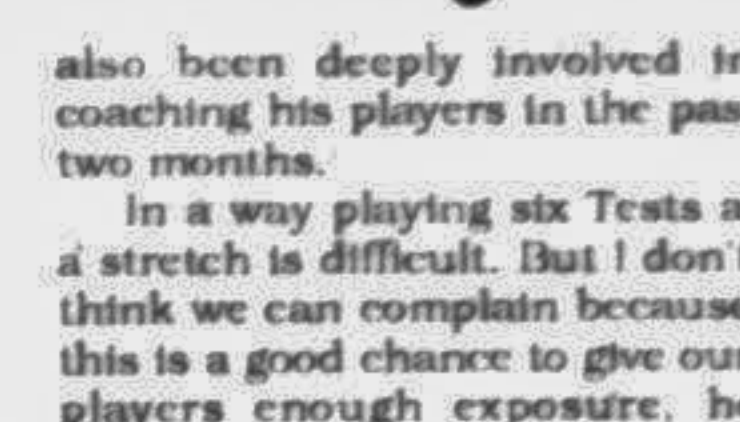
Aug 4-9: 3rd Test at Saravanamuttu Stadium, Colombo

Aug 12: 2nd one-day international at Khetarama Stadium, Colombo.

Aug 14: 3rd one-day international at Moratuwa.

Aug 15: Departure

Sydney's spirit sublimated



SYDNEY, July 9: Australian Olympic bid officials cautiously welcomed on Friday a leaked report by

Olympic inspectors which puts Sydney ahead in the bid to stage the Games in the year 2000, reports Reuters.

Sydney, long tipped as a frontrunner with Beijing among the six bidding cities, offered conditions beyond International Olympic Committee (IOC) requirements, according to the report.

But John Balder, a board member of the Sydney Olympic bid team, said that although gratifying, the importance of the report should not be overstated.

"All along we thought we were putting together a pretty good bid in terms of Sydney's excellent location and facilities generally," Valder told reporters.

"But if the IOC assessment team (which wrote the report) have recognised this too, that certainly reinforces the strength of our bid," he added.

However, Valder said the 66-page document would be only one of the factors to influence the 91 IOC members when they vote in Monte Carlo on September 23.

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An official spokesman for the Sydney bid said the city was confident that the quality of its technical proposal to the IOC was as good as any Olympic plan ever presented to the IOC.

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Beijing appears from the assessment to be trailing both Berlin and Manchester.

The IOC inspectors praised Berlin's strong organisation, nothing that it had the strong support of the government, while it said Manchester, though its bid was impressive,

had not built most of its facilities.

The report, designed to assist the 91 IOC members in selecting venue, cites a number of drawbacks to the Chinese capital, including communication problems, air pollution, insufficient technological equipment and outdated sport arenas.

According to DPA, the report, to be published on July 16, said: "The (Sydney) bid offers conditions... that exceed what the IOC requires. The concept of the (Sydney) Games place the athletes in the centre."

Brasilia's bid is rejected outright by the inspectors' report as insufficient, and Istanbul loses out for a number of reasons, including security.

Inspectors have visited each of the six cities bidding for the Games and measured them against 23 different criteria.

Sydney has emphasised that the Games should be designed with the athletes in mind and has stressed the proximity of all events to the Olympic Village, the city's excellent sporting facilities, the lack of pollution, the pleasant climate and good security.

Communist Beijing sees the Games as a chance to cast off the shadow of its 1989 Tiananmen Square political crackdown and build a more open image. It has pulled out all the stops in its propaganda campaign to win the hosting rights.

The 66-page report, due to be made public next week, showed that inspectors who had visited every candidate city gave Sydney top marks.

Sydney Olympic officials said Friday while they were gratified by the contents of the leaked report, it was only one component that will influence the 91 IOC members when they make their decision Monte Carlo on September 23.

The head of Melbourne's unsuccessful 1996 Olympic bid campaign, Ron Casey, warned it would be foolish if Sydney became over-optimistic.

He said Melbourne had also received a good assessment but this had not stopped Atlanta winning the 1996 bid.

"It's pure politics right up until the ballot is taken," Casey said.

Marseille's plight continues

PARIS, July 9: Marseille's promotions manager was being held for questioning on Thursday in connection with an investigation into alleged match-fixing, Marseille police sources said, reports Reuters.

Claude Ghidalia, who has handled the European champions' publicity interests since 1988, was taken to the city's central police station on Wednesday evening and was being interrogated by officers investigating bribery allegations, they said.

They said Ghidalia was being asked about matters concerning the club's accounts following last week's surprise raid by police on Marseille's headquarters.

Marseille boss Bernard Tapie, who was questioned on Tuesday by Bernard Befly, the judge investigating allegations

Power athletics from July 28

Sports Reporter

The second Power Summer athletics meet will be held from July 28 to 30 at the Army Stadium. All the universities and district associations will be able to take part in this championships directly.

This year's meet will be regarded as a mandatory qualifying criterion for the athletes attending the trial camp for the sixth SAF Games scheduled to be held in Dhaka from December 20 to 27.

The final selection of athletes will be made on the basis of performances in this meet.

Twenty-one events have been fixed for the male athletes while 13 have been billed for women.

Interested teams have been requested to complete their entry formalities with the Bangladesh Amateur Athletic Federation by July 27.

Tight security at hotels for Indian Test squad

COLOMBO, July 9: Police have prepared tight security at hotels and grounds against possible strikes by Tamil separatist rebels during India's cricket tour of Sri Lanka, reports Reuters.

"We want to take all possible precautions," a senior cricket official said on Friday.

Dozens of uniformed and plain clothed police will be on duty at match venues and hotels where the tourists are staying during the one-month three-Test tour, starting on Monday. The Indian team were due in Colombo on Friday.

Journalists and spectators will be searched going into the grounds, firecrackers have been banned and reporters are also being barred from the visitors' dressing room.

Rebels fighting for a separate state in the north and east of Sri Lanka for minority Tamils fought Indian troops sent to the country on a peace-keeping mission between 1987 and 1990.

Test cricket returned to Sri Lanka for the first time in five years last August with a six-week visit by Australia after New Zealand abandoned their 1987 tour when a bomb planted near their Colombo hotel by Tamil rebels killed 113 people.

New Zealand almost called off another tour last November following an explosion which killed four people outside their hotel. It finally went ahead with a revised schedule.

buried in the garden of Robert's aunt.

Marseille beat Valenciennes 1-0 in the match and went on to win the French title.

"What I find unacceptable is that to attain this end they do not hesitate to destroy a club and French football, in particular," he said.

Befly on Thursday released to reporters an example of several death threats, he said he had received from Marseille supporters.

The latter, signed "Death Corps Marseille," was headed with drawings of a skeleton and a coffin with the judge's name on it.

Full of obscenities, it threatened to rape and kill his wife if he did not drop the investigation.

Valenciennes' Christophe Robert has alleged he received money from Marseille midfielder Jean-Jacques Eydelie.

Robert, his wife Marie-christine, and two other Valenciennes players Jorge Burruchaga and Jacques Glassmann, who have also said they were offered a bribe, are to confront Eydelie at Befly's chambers on Friday.

Both Eydelie and Marseille general secretary Jean-Pierre Bernes, who have been recommended in custody, have denied wrongdoing.

Robert's wife, who is also under investigation along with her husband and Burruchaga, said in a radio interview on Thursday she received an envelope containing 250,000 francs (50,000 dollar) from Eydelie at the Marseille team hotel the day before the match.

"Christophe called me and asked me to fetch the envelope," she said. "I thought about it but obviously not enough because I went... we've done a stupid thing and we'll have to accept the consequences."

An envelope containing 250,000 francs was found

Abedi Pele signs for Lyon

LYON, France, July 9: Abedi Pele, the 30-year-old Ghanaian international, joined French First Division side Olympique de Lyon on Thursday from European champions Olympique Marseille, reports AFP.

Pele signed a three-year contract with the Lyon club, managed by French World Cup hero Jean Tigana.

Britain's tabloid Daily Mirror, whose editor David Banks worked here until last year, launched its response to the documentary Thursday, depicting Sydney as a polluted city home to drug users, rapists and drinking dens.

Manchester and Sydney are also competing in a six-way race for the 2000 Olympic Games along with Beijing, Brasilia, Istanbul and Berlin. But Sydney and Beijing are considered favourites.

"A ripple would be a monster wave to a Pommy because they can't swim," Waverley mayor Barbara Armitage said Friday.

Our messengers pull them out of the water on a regular basis and they're either full of

sea water or full of beer, neither of which they can handle.

The row coincides with a leaked International Olympic Committee report which showed that Sydney has made the best case to host the Olympics.

The 66-page report, due to be made public next week, showed that inspectors who had visited every candidate city gave Sydney top marks.

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