

Lankans look up at skipper and his deputy

COLOMBO, Sept 9: Captain Arjuna Ranatunga and his deputy Aravinda de Silva have the almost impossible task of batting for the best part of two days if Sri Lanka are to save the second cricket Test against South Africa, reports Reuter.

Shri Lanka were 278 runs behind South Africa on Thursday's rest day with six second innings in hand.

"It would take an amazing effort from these two even to take the game to a fifth day," South African fast bowler Allan Donald said.

The wicket has become very uneven and it is just a question of time until you bowl an unplayable ball.

"These batsmen are dangerous guys and they are bound to come out with all guns blazing. They've got nothing to lose so you never know."

South African coach Mike Procter said: "Obviously we are in a commanding position but we've still got to get six wickets. We are pretty confident at this stage, but cricket is a funny game."

"I am delighted the way we are placed. Everything seems to work to plan. We were looking for a lead of something like 320 to 350 and 20 overs to bowl before the end of the day. It worked out perfectly."

Those 20 overs proved disastrous for Shri Lanka who were reduced to 49 for four in their second innings.

Hughes plans to go on crash diet

MELBOURNE, Sept 9: Australia's burly pace bowler Merv Hughes is going on a crash diet in a bid to prevent a recurrence of a knee injury which has ruled him out of the forthcoming Test series against New Zealand, reports Reuter.

The big paceman said on Wednesday he intends to lose up to 10 kg (22 lb) before the end of the year following surgery last weekend to remove dead bone in his right knee.

The veteran Hughes was dubbed "sumo" by English fans during Australia's recent Ashes 4-1 success but his weight did not affect his form and he took 31 wickets as the main strike bowler after an injury to his space partner Craig McDermott.

"Obviously I've got a bit of work to do on my weight and over the next three months I can do that without having to worry about playing cricket," said Hughes, who hopes to get his weight down to 100 kg (220 lb).

Australian captain Allan Border said Hughes' absence for the three-Test home series against New Zealand starting in November is a major blow — both on and off the field.

"His general demeanour around the dressing room and character has a big influence on the team," said Border.

Hughes damaged bone in his right knee after wearing away the cartilage between two joints during Australia's triumphant Ashes tour.

Against England, Hughes, 32, joined an elite group of Australian bowlers who have taken more than 200 Test wickets. He finished the series with 208 in 51 matches.

Hughes said Australian Test physiotherapist Ergil Alcott had advised him to lose weight to reduce the pressure on his joints caused by his bulky frame.

Hughes said he will miss the New Zealand series but hopes to return in the next year to take part in the touring South Africans.

"I've been told not to expect to play until after Christmas," Hughes said.

Bad knee forces Malcolm out

LONDON, Sept 9: England fast bowler Devon Malcolm could miss the rest of the county season because of a knee injury, reports Reuter.

Malcolm took six wickets on his recall to Test cricket against Australia at the Oval last month, but has not played for his county Derbyshire since. He is due to make a second visit to a specialist later this week.

Derbyshire captain Kim Barnett said: "It's a bit more serious than we first thought, but I haven't heard the operation or anything like that and Dev still wants to play in the last match of the season."

Hooper to play for Kent

LONDON, Sept 9: West Indies all-rounder Carl Hooper has signed a new deal with Kent that will keep him as the county's overseas player until 1997, reports Reuter.

Kent, for whom Hooper made his debut last season, will also have first option on his services in 1995 should he not be required by West Indies when they tour England.

Points split at Dhaka Stadium

Sports Reporter

Agrani Bank, who had won a name for themselves with a goalless draw against reigning champions Abahani Krira Chakra in the previous match, drew with Mukti Joddha Sangsad in the only match of the Star Premier Division league at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.

The draw leaves Mukti Joddha and Agrani Bank with same number of points — 13 from 15 matches each.

Although the only match of the Star Premier Division failed to produce any results, promotional East End Club beat traditional Wanderers Club by the odd goal in the three at the Hockey Stadium.

The win puts East End in a comfortable position with 15 points from 13 outings. Former Senior Division league champions Wanderers remained on their previous collection of 14 from 13 matches.

TODAY'S MATCHES
Mohammedan vs Arambagh (Dhaka Stadium)
Dharmundi vs BRTC (Hockey Stadium)

Abu Bakr Selim of East End was his side's hero. He scored

both the goals — one in the 23rd minute and the other in the 73rd minute.

Both of Wanderers pulled one back, one minute after Selim's match winning goal.

In the day's second match of the Star First Division league, Farashganj Sporting Club shared points with Eskaton Subuj Sangha in a goalless encounter at the same venue.

With yesterday's draw, Farashganj upped their tally to 16 from 13 matches while Eskaton Subuj Sangha added one more with their previous collection of 11 to be on 13 from 13 matches.

Australian Chris Dittmar, five times a beaten finalist, has also entered, but will not decide whether to play until later this month after recently undergoing a knee operation.

Title holder Jansher Khan is sure to start favourite to win his fifth World Open.

Jahangir to play in World Open

CARDIFF, Sept 9: Jahangir Khan, out of action for seven months through injury, is set to return to the squash circuit for the World Open in Karachi in November, reports Reuter.

Jahangir, who won the last of his six World Open titles in 1988, has been suffering from a back injury for the last 18 months and in 1992 he completed only one event.

His last tournament victory was two years ago, but his name was on the World Open list when entries closed on Wednesday.

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Familiar but not expected

NEW YORK, Sept 9: The faces are familiar — just unexpected.

All four women semifinalists have been there before, but only top-seeded Steffi Graf and No 2

against Michael Chang to move into the semis, where he will face 14th-seeded Alexander Volkov of Russia.

The men's semifinals were to be completed Thursday when eighth-seeded Alexander Medvedev of Ukraine plays No 15

Gabriela Sabatini have been shunted to the sidelines.

After most of the Wednesday's matches were washed away by rain, Sanchez Vicario posted the quickest victory of the night — and the tournament — sweeping through the first three games of her match before her opponent, Natalia Zvereva, called it quits, saving she was ill.

"I was praying, praying for it to be raining at 7:30, which didn't happen, unfortunately," Zvereva said. "I thought that if I would come out tomorrow, I'd have a better chance. But it didn't rain, so I guess I had to just go out and try."

"But after three games, I don't think I was able to give her a good fight, as I always try to do. I do not tank. I had to go out and try."

Chang tried, but it wasn't enough as he fell before an overpowering Sampras 6-7 (0-7), 7-6 (7-2), 6-1, 6-1 Sampras lost just nine points on his serve in the last two sets.

"I had to make something happen," Chang said. "In the last two sets, I think I ran out of gas a little bit."

Sampras has a way of doing that to opponents. He was hitting 125 mph (200 kph) serves and groundstrokes nearly as hard. While Chang matched him stroke for stroke through most of the opening two sets. The eventual loser finally wore down.

"At the start, he was taking it to me, and that's not my style," Sampras said. "I'm not used to being on the defensive. Then I got in a good rhythm and Michael started missing some shots. I think I was a little uncertain at the start. I wasn't sure I should come in or what."

It took Volkov 3 hours, 36 minutes to outlast 12th-seeded Thomas Muster of Austria 7-6 (8-6), 6-3, 3-6, 2-6, 7-5 in a heavy-hitting duel of slugging baseliners. The battle ended at 1:39 in the morning and made Volkov the first Russian to reach the US Open semifinals.

It was a heartbreak loss for Muster, who twice had match point on Volkov's serve in the ninth game of the fifth set.

Cedric Pioline of France and Sweden's Magnus Larsson takes on Australian Wally Masur in a battle of unseeded players.

Gone are top-seeded Jim Courier, No 3 Stefan Edberg, No 4 Boris Becker and most of the other big hitters. The same is true of the women's field, where Monica Seles never entered and No 3 Martina Navratilova, N. 4 Conchita Martinez, and No 5

Wimbledon winner American Pete Sampras pumps his first after breaking compatriot Michael Chang's serve in the US Open men's singles quarterfinal at the National Tennis Centre on Wednesday. Sampras squeezed past the seventh seed 6-7 (0-7), 7-6 (7-2), 6-1, 6-1 en route to the round of last four.

— APP photo

Arantxa Sanchez Vicario were expected to be around when the US Open reached its next-to-last round this year. They are joined by Helena Sukova, and Maleva-Fragnerie, a semifinalist last year, reports AP.

In the men's field, Pete Sampras, the 1990 winner, dominated the final two sets

Powell misses Lewis a lot

NEW YORK, Sept 9: Come back, Carl! Please come back! That's Mike Powell's plea to Carl Lewis.

Although Powell, the world record-holder in the long jump, has dominated the event this year, stretching his two-season winning streak to 26, he misses Lewis, the three-time Olympic gold medalist, reports AP.

Lewis, only one of four long jumpers to surpass 29 feet (8.84 metres), did not compete in the event this year because of a back injury from an auto accident in February. Instead, he confined his competition to sprinting.

"It's time for him to come back to the long jump," Powell said Wednesday in a conference call before leaving for London and Friday night's Mobil Grand Prix at the Crystal Palace.

Reynolds successfully sued the IAAF after he was banned following a positive dope test in Monte Carlo three years ago. The 29-year-old American finished second in last month's Stuttgart World Championships.

US federal judge Joseph Kinney rejected in July an appeal by the IAAF in Columbus, Ohio, against the original judgement. The IAAF has argued that US courts have no jurisdiction over the international body.

IAAF spokeswoman Jayne Pearce confirmed on Wednesday that the federation did not accept the Ohio court decision and said it would appeal to a higher court in Cincinnati.

"I may be putting my foot in my mouth and putting my winning streak in jeopardy, but I want to get him out there. I think we can have some great battles ahead if we can put it together. We're wasting a little time now."

With Lewis having completed competition for the season, his next meeting against Powell won't occur until next year. Powell can't wait.

He said that because of Lewis' absence, he has been short of serious challengers this year in winning 22 consecutive times and has lacked the impetus to seriously challenge his world record of 29-4 1/2 (8.95 metres), set while beating Lewis an end his 10-year, 65-meet winning streak at the 1991 World Championships in Tokyo.

The last time Powell lost was to Lewis at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, and that was only by 1 inches (35 cm). That victory ended Powell's modest two-meet winning streak against Lewis at the sprints.

It also would help the sport, which finished 27th among the nation's most popular sports in a national survey released Wednesday. Ahead of track and field were such sports as billiards and pool, air shows and airplane stunts, rodeo, Little League baseball, and high school football and basketball.

Bright side of Short's loss

London, Sept 9: British challenger Nigel Short can see the bright side of his defeat by reigning world chess champion Garry Kasparov in their title contest opener, his supporters said on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

"Nigel showed that he could play with Kasparov and even outplayed him. He is not disappointed," Short's assistant, who

is a particularly upsetting way to concede a game.

"It is like scoring an own goal at football, kicking the ball into your own net in the last minute," said Grandmaster Raymond Keene.

The defeat was particularly painful since Short had declined Kasparov's offer of a draw on the 38th move — just one move before the flag on his clock fell, signalling his loss by forfeit.

"He (Short) didn't have time to think about the draw offer, but he felt he was a pawn up and so just moved," an insider from the Short camp told Reuters.

Many of the chess experts gathered in London said the early setback was not unusual for Short, who has trailed in each of his previous four qualifying matches and has recovered to win.

Often he has opened with a loss of embarrassing dimensions, but against Kasparov the quality of his play was impressively high, even drawing grudging admiration from the 30-year-old champion.

"He (Short) defended very well ... I hadn't seen rook to 98 (his 37th move)," said the favourite Kasparov, who is Azeri-born but playing for Russia.

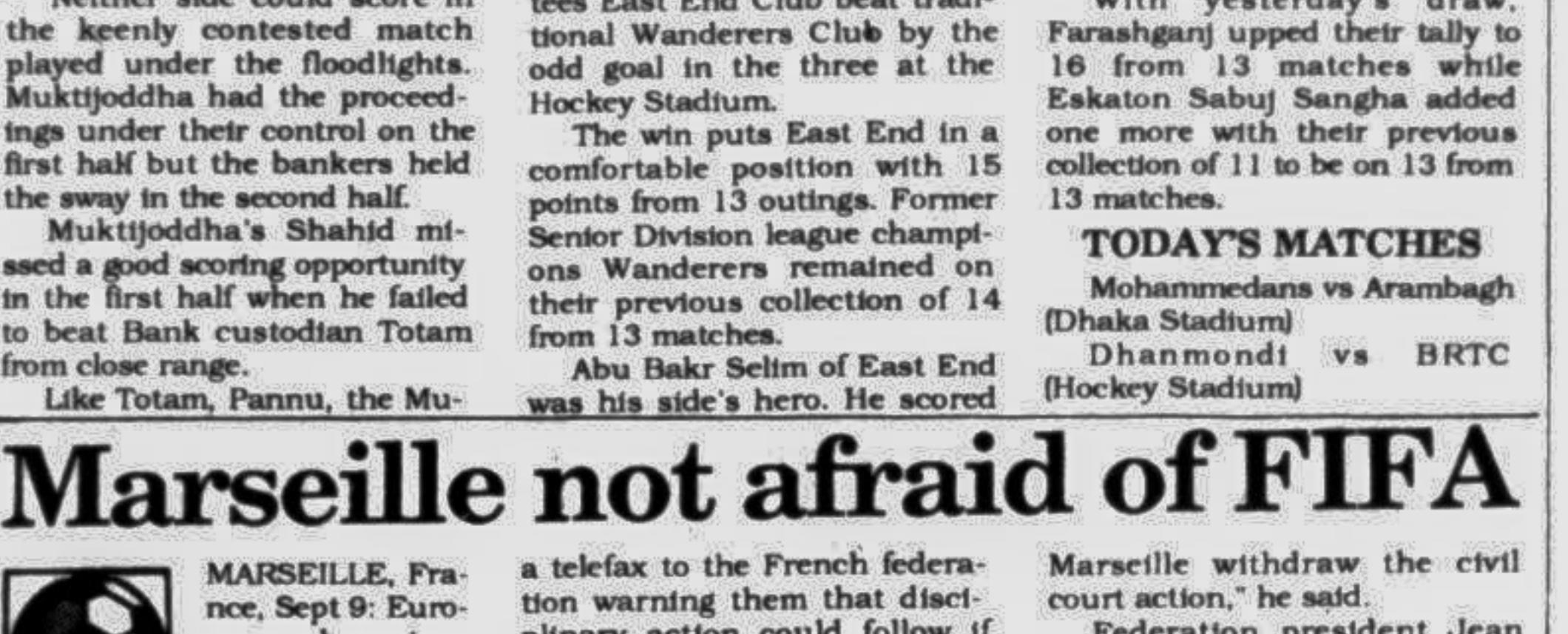
London bookmakers reacted to the game by slightly increasing the odds against Short. Ladbrokes shortened the odds on Kasparov from 1-6 to 13-2 on, and lengthened Short's prospects from 3-1 to 7-2. William Hill made Kasparov a 9-2 on favourite from 1-5 while Short remained a 9-2 underdog.

Short's record of having only one career win to set against 10 losses in tournament play against Kasparov is a major handicap. A victory in any given game.

The next game is scheduled for Thursday with Short having the advantage of the white pieces and first move. The match is over 24 games, and Kasparov has the advantage of retaining his title in the event of a 12-12 deadlock.

Short and Kasparov defected from the world chess body FIDE to play a breakaway final for a prize fund of 1.7 million pounds (2.5 million dollars) put up by The Times newspaper.

FIDE does not recognise the match and is staging an alternative final, putting Russian Anatoly Karpov against Dutchman Jan Timman.



Marseille not afraid of FIFA

MARSEILLE, France, Sept 9: European champions Marseille refused on Thursday to bow to FIFA pressure by withdrawing legal action over their European Cup ban in a move which could see them banned from the French championship, reports Reuter.

FIFA said it could invoke Article 42 of its statutes, whose ultimate sanction is the suspension of the national federation involved, a step which could see all French clubs out of the European Cup and the national team banned from the World Cup.

Marseille financial director Alain Laroche told reporters the club would not drop its appeal in a Bern court against Monday's decision by the European Football Union (UEFA) to throw them out of the European Cup because of a bribery affair.

"The appeal will continue," Laroche said definitely.

Earlier, the International Football Federation (FIFA) sent

a telefax to the French federation warning them that disciplinary action could follow if Marseille did not drop their legal case.

Federation president Jean Fournet-Fayard urged Marseille boss Tapie and his club in a letter to "face up to their responsibilities" though he made no threat of possible consequences.

But if Marseille win their case in the Swiss courts and if the federation, which has been hesitant throughout about sanctioning Marseille in the group of the European Cup and the national team banned from the World Cup.

But FIFA general secretary Sepp Blatter explained later in Zurich that the world body was initially contemplating the suspension of Marseille only.

The French Federation have no other alternative but to suspend Marseille from the French championship unless

the world body's president Joao Havelange has expressed concern at the damage to soccer's image of continuous speculation over the affair which began when Valenciennes players said they were offered a bribe by Marseille to throw a league match in May.

France beat Finland 2-0

TAMPERE, Finland, Sept 9: Goals by Laurent Blanc and Jean-Pierre Papin propelled France to a 2-0 win over Finland and top spot in their World Cup qualifying group on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

France, who play their two remaining European Group Six ties at home, now looking virtually certain of taking one of the two berths from the