

Wins of existential import



Agrani Bank and Lalmitia recorded important wins in the Milnars First Division cricket league yesterday.

At the Pallabi Cricket Ground, Mirpur Lalmitia Club, struggling to avoid relegation, showed no mercy to a distressed Public Works Department (PWD) beating the office team by five wickets.

PWD who were demoted to Milnars league from Navana Premier last season yesterday could manage only 125 from 36.4 overs.

Lower order batsman Ullash top-scored for them with a hefty 32 which featured five hits to the fence and a sixer.

He was followed by Arif who made 23.

Sajjad deposited 19, so did extras. Tail-end Masum remained unbeaten on 15.

For Lalmitia skipper Ashis Malik, Shantu and Atiq figured prominently in the bowling. Shantu had the best bowling analysis claiming three for 24.

Malik too claimed three wickets but gave away 27 runs while veteran left-arm spinner Atiq took two for 19.

Needing 126 from 45 overs for an outright victory, Lalmitia were in a bit of a soup when three of their top order batsmen were sent back by the PWD bowlers.

Ullash who batted bravely during the PWD innings did one better bagging two of the first three wickets that fell in the Lalmitia innings.

Wicketkeeper Titu and Hassan knocked two little useful knocks to put Lalmitia on the winning trail. Titu made 22 and Hassan 15.

Earlier, opener Saifur graced a gritty 18 in the face of an inspired opening spell by the PWD opening bowlers Ullash and Talib.

Biplab on 16 and Malik on nine remained unbeaten as

Lalmitia made 127 for five wickets in 37.4 overs.

Though his side went one step closer to relegation, now towards Second Division, Ullash completed a fine all-round performance taking two for 16 among the PWD bowlers.

Taleb took one for 36 and experienced Fazlu one for 19.

The win leaves Lalmitia with their only second win from seven matches and with just four points in their kitty their fate still hangs in balance.

PWD are at the pit with just two points from seven matches.

Agrani Bank beat City Club by four wickets in day's other match held at the eastern strip of the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium (DCS).

City were put in to bat first and were bowled out for 139 in 43.5 overs.

Munna was the highest scorer of the innings making

30. Skipper Wahid scored 27 while Tapu chipped in with 20.

Nuruddin was bankers' best bowler taking three for 32.

Ripon and Atiq bagged two wickets apiece.

Chasing 140 for a win, Agrani Bank were deep into trouble when four wickets were gone for 40 but Nadim with an unbeaten 41 saved his side from going broke.

He got assistance from Atiq and Sohel who contributed 23 and 26 respectively and bankers collected 140 for six wickets in 42 overs to walk away with a four-wicket win.

At Amin with two for 20 and Sajal with two for 11 were City's more successful bowlers.

Agrani Bank now have six points from seven matches while City despite losing lead bankers in the points table with eight points from seven matches.

SL tour itinerary

NEW DELHI, Dec 29: Sri Lanka will play three Test matches during their five-week cricket tour of India starting next month, it was announced here Tuesday, reports AFP.

The Sri Lankans will also contest three one-day international matches and two three-day matches on the tour from January 13 to February 20, Indian Cricket Board secretary Jagmohan Dalmiya said.

The islanders, who were in India in November to take part in the five-nation Hero Cup, return as replacements for Pakistan, who cancelled a scheduled tour of India citing security reasons.

The Test matches will be played in Lucknow, Bangalore and Ahmedabad. The one-day

internationals will be held in Rajkot, Hyderabad and Jalandhar.

The Sri Lankans begin the tour with a three-day match against the Indian Board President's XI at the Ferozeshah Kotla here from January 13.

Tour itinerary: January 13-15 V. Board President's Eleven, Delhi

January 19-23 first Test, Lucknow

January 27-31 second Test, Bangalore

February 3-5 V. Ranji Trophy champions Punjab, Nagpur

February 9-13 third Test, Ahmedabad

February 15 first one-day, Rajkot

February 18 second one-day, Hyderabad

February 20 third one-day, Jalandhar.

Pakistan due next month

Sports Reporter

A full strength Pakistan cricket team will arrive here next month to play two one-day internationals against a BCCB Eleven at the Dhaka Stadium on January 23-24.

The World Champions are expected to leave by January 25 for a tour of New Zealand.

Saad, Siraj to accompany BCCB XI

Sports Reporter

Former national cricketers Enayet Hossain Siraj and Tanjib Ahsan Saad have been called as the manager and the assistant manager of the BCCB Eleven which will be on a tour of Pakistan from January 1 to January 15, as a part of Bangladesh's preparation for the forth coming ICC Trophy, said a BCCB press release yesterday.

Mahindar Amarnath will accompany the team as coach.

The selected cricketers are: Faruque Ahmed (captain), Akram Khan (Vice-Captain), Athar Ali Khan, Jahangir Alam, Aminul Islam Bulbul, Minhazul Abedin Nannu, Selim Shahed, Enamul Huq Moni, G M Nawsher Prince, Al-Shahriar Rokan, Nasir Ahmed Nasu, Habibul Bashir Suman, Anisur Rahman Anis, Nurul Abedin Nobel, Mizanur Rahman Babul, Shahnawaz Shaheed Shanu and Sajid Hassan.

US tennis coach due Jan 2

Sports Reporter

Veteran US tennis coach James Pyle will arrive in Dhaka on a month-long visit on January 2 to train the country's budding youngsters.

The training programme will begin from January 3 at the National Tennis Complex.

Interested players have been requested to contact the Federation or their respective district sports clubs.

Div II cricket

Sports Reporter

Kathalagan Green Crescent Club beat Dhanmondi Progoti Sangha by a solitary run in an exciting match of the Second Division cricket league at the Jagannath Hall ground yesterday.

Kathalagan batted first and scored 179 runs for the loss of seven wickets in the stipulated 40 overs.

Ibrahim with 57, Zakaria with 39 and Munna with 20 and Gorgy with 20 were the main scorers for Kathalagan.

Rafiq claimed two for 21 and Washak two for 26, among the Progoti bowlers.

Needing 180 for a win, Dhanmondi fell one short of Kathalagan's total managing 178 runs for eight in the allotted 40 overs.

Skipper Rafiq led the abortive victory charge with 39.

Other major contributors for Dhanmondi Progoti Sangha were Piku with 33, Parth with 28, and Habib with 21, while extras numbered up to 31.

Ibrahim took three for 27 and Zaman two for 13 among the Kathalagan bowlers.

Gendaria cricketers beat Rayer Bazar by three wickets in day's other match at the Dhanmondi Cricket Ground.

Batting first, Rayer Bazar made 181. Shariful with 47, Rashed with 24, Rasel with 21 and Azad with 20 were the main scorers for Rayer Bazar.

Gendaria's Nasir four for 38 and Debu took three for 16.

Gendaria cricketers reached their target with one ball to go making 182 runs for the loss of seven wickets.

Mamun top scored with 45. He was closely followed by skipper Debu with 40, Dipu with 37, Mozaffar with 20 while extras amounted to 34.

Sudha of Rayer Bazar took two wickets giving away 22 runs.

Beckenbauer sets time, target

BONN, Dec 29: German soccer legend Franz Beckenbauer is giving himself four months to return Bayern Munich to the top of the Bundesliga, reports AFP.

The 48-year-old former World Cup winning national team captain and coach this week agreed to return as Bayern's coach for the rest of the season.

"Bayern Munich has a special place in football, I want to show with this team that we are the best and I have four months to do that," he told today's Bild newspaper.

Beckenbauer added that as soon as he takes over on January 6 "everything will depend on the training. That will be the basis of reaching our big aim, the league title."

Bad knee proves Wessels' bane Taylor carves a niche in history



MELBOURNE, Dec 29: A decision will be made on Thursday whether Kepler Wessels will be fit to lead South Africa in next week's second cricket Test against Australia after he left the field with recurring knee trouble on the penultimate day of the first Test here on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Wessels came off during the mid-session after straining his right knee and didn't bat at first wicket down in South Africa's innings.

At the close on the fourth day in the rain-soaked opening Test, South Africa were 59 for one in reply to Australia's 342 for seven declared.

Opener Andrew Hudson was not out for 35 and Hansie Cronje, who took the place of the injured Wessels in the batting order, was on three.

Thirty six year old Wessels has a history of knee trouble and the ailment flared again on Wednesday.

"I don't think he'll need surgery, but we are going to try to get him fit for the second Test. I would prefer he didn't take any further part in this Test," said South African team coach Mike Procter on Wednesday night.

"He twisted the knee at the odd time and it just got worse. It's not a very good knee, so we wanted to take all the precautions we could."

"We will have a verdict tomorrow morning on what we plan to do, but obviously the second Test is vital, and he may have to have a cortisone injection (to play), we're not sure," said Procter.

On the upside Procter said Brian McMillan, quickly recovering from a knee injury suffered in the tour game here against Victoria, could be a batting option.

He hasn't done that much. He's bowled indoors, but it (his knee) is getting stronger day by day and we would like him to be fit for the second Test, but we don't want him to come back too quick and jeopardise his recovery," said Procter.

Procter said he was looking for batting practice for his team, in what is almost certainly shaping as an inevitable draw after playing just over 10 hours' cricket in four days.

"I think it's going to be good for the guys to play the Aussie spinners (Shane Warne and Tim May), I think we can get some constructive batting out there."

South Africa lost the wicket of Gary Kirsten in the two hours they had to bat in the drizzle and gloom of late Wednesday after Australia had declared after a staggered 495 minutes at the crease over three and two-third days of the bedraggled Test.

Kirsten gloved a short-pitched delivery from Mark Waugh to be caught in the slips by Mark Taylor for 16 ending an opening partnership of 49 with Hudson.

Hudson and Cronje had to endure some wracking moments facing bewitching leg-spinner Shane Warne in the evening gloom to stay at the crease.

Australia had declared at tea after opener Mark Taylor had been dismissed on the second last ball before the interval for his highest domestic Test score of 170, spread over three and

two-third days.

Taylor's eight and a quarter hour vigil ended when he was bowled by off-spinner Pat Symcox as he attempted a big hit.

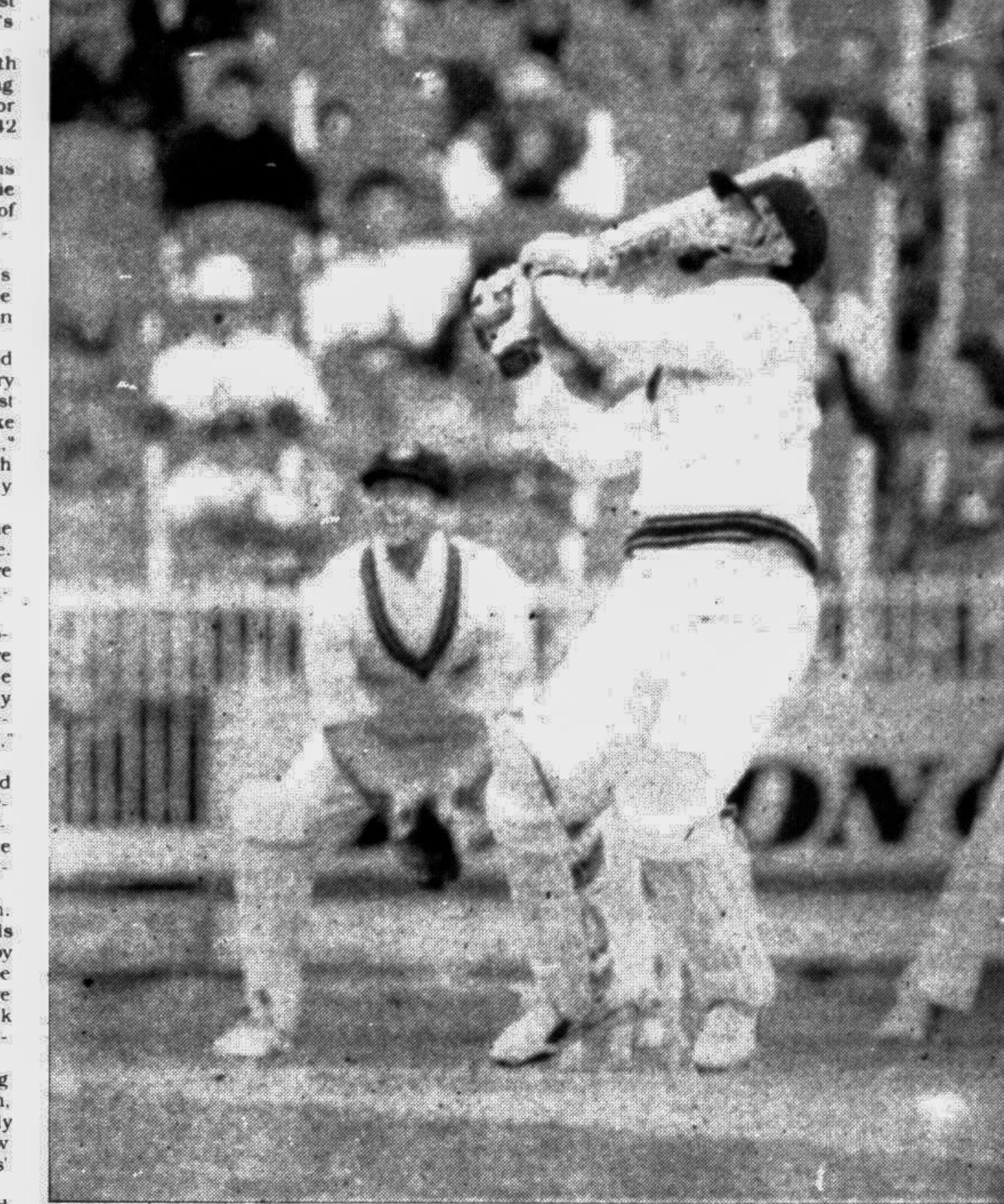
During his stoic innings, Taylor passed 4,000 Test runs and became only the second batsman after New Zealand

with 1-108 off 30 overs.

Darryl Cullinan, fielding at second slip, had the ignominy of dropping three catches in the innings, two off Donald and the other off Matthews.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard on the fourth day of the first cricket Test be-

Warne lbw b De Villiers 0
Boon b Matthews 25
Waugh lbw b Matthews 84
Border c Richardson 2
b Matthews 8
Martyr b Symcox 2
Healy not out 7
Extras (b-2, lb-7, nb-5) 14
Total (7 wkts) 342



Australian batsman Mark Taylor hooks a ball during his innings of 170 against South Africa in the first Test in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP photo

Martin Crowe to score centuries against seven Test cricket nations.

Graceful Mark Waugh looked set for his sixth Test century before he was trapped lbw by seamer Craig Matthews for 84 knocked off 144 balls.

Waugh and Taylor also put on a record 169 runs for the fourth-wicket against South Africa, eclipsing the 168 set in 1952-53 by Neil Harvey and Keith Miller in Sydney.

Matthews, who also picked up the prized wicket of Test cricket's greatest run-getter Allan Border for two, finished with 3-18 off 24 overs while Symcox finished with 2-49 off 16.5 overs.

There was scant reward for spearhead Allan Donald, who had two catches dropped off his bowling and a controversial lbw decision on Taylor off his second ball turned down, finished

tween Australia and South Africa played here on Wednesday.

AUSTRALIA: 1st innings (resumed at 140 for 3)
Taylor b Symcox 170
Slater c Kirsten b Donald 32

South Africa: 1st innings
Hudson not out 35
Kirsten c Taylor b M Waugh 16
Cronje not out 3
Extras (lb-1, nb-4) 5
Total (1 wkts) 59

Fall of wkts: 1-57; 2-58; 3-127; 4-296; 5-300; 6-327; 7-342

Bowling: O M R W
Donald 30 4 108 1
De Villiers 32 6 83 1
Matthews 24 5 18 3
Cronje 13 4 25 0
Symcox 16.5 3 49 2

Overs: 115.5
O M R W
McDermott 5 1 18 0
Reiffel 9 3 20 0
M Waugh 6 1 10 0
May 5 2 5 0
Warne 3 1 5 0

Overs: 28.
Rain and bad light stopped play for the day at 6.44 pm (0744 GMT).

Chelsea bring Newcastle down

LONDON, Dec 29: Chelsea player-manager Glenn Hoddle watched his struggling side edge a 1-0 win over high-flying Newcastle in the English Premiership on Tuesday — then predicted they could escape a relegation dogfight, reports AFP.

The victory, courtesy of Mark Stein's second goal in successive days, was Chelsea's first in 12 games and their first in the league since September 25.

"That win has got to be the foundation of a run of good results," said the ex-England playmaker, who took his team to a hotel on Monday night after their dismal defeat at Southampton. "Now we can get ourselves out of trouble."

"We must make sure that we learn from the mistakes that we made after we beat Manchester United and Liverpool here."

"There was not a lot of difference between yesterday's performance and today's, but today we got ourselves in front and dug in deep."

"The commitment and character the team showed were superb. I thought we were worth more than a 1-0 win."

Newcastle boss Kevin Keegan, by contrast, was not happy and issued a warning to his side that he would not tolerate any more displays like Tuesday's.

"We didn't do enough to get a result, despite having a lot of

the play," he stormed. "We had the majority of possession, but by our standards that was a poor performance."

"Too many players didn't perform on the day. Despite all our possession, we probably only had a couple of shots."

"If my players think they've done enough, they're going to find themselves out of the side."

"A lot of nice things have been said about us and rightly so, but the only game that matters is the next one, against Manchester City. If my players start living in the past, they're going to find themselves out of the team."

Chelsea climbed over Sheffield United and Southampton with their victory, but Saints boss Ian Branfoot was far from downhearted after a 1-1 draw at Manchester City.

"Dave Beasant kept us in the game, but you expect that away from home," he said. "Out win against Chelsea yesterday and a draw today has given us confidence and that makes you start believing in yourself."

Self-belief is one quality Tottenham midfielder Micky Hazard is not short of. The 33-year-old rejected the chance to drop out of Spurs' side and ended up the hero of their 3-1 win at West Ham.

Hazard, who scored and dominated midfield, said: "I may be nearly 34, but I don't want to be treated any differently to anyone else at Tottenham. The manager mentioned the possibility of dropping, but I wasn't having that."

"I want to be in whether it is two games in a year or two

games in two days. He asked if my legs were tired but there was no question in my mind that I wanted to play."

West Ham boss Billy Bonds acknowledged Hazard's role in turning the game after the Hammers had taken an early lead.

He said: "We had a great start, but then started to sit off them and paid for it. Spurs are a great passing side and Micky Hazard was terrific."

Meanwhile, Wimbledon striker John Fashanu was singled out for praise by manager Joe Kinnear after his first goal since his collision with Tottenham's Gary Mabbutt last month in the 1-1 draw at Liverpool.

"He's gone through hell with the Mabbutt business," said Kinnear. "People with less character than him would have collapsed by now, but it's all behind him and he must just carry on and keep scoring those goals."

"He's a good captain, a good leader and bubbly person in the dressing room. We feel stronger when he's in the side and we know that when he's at his best, there are few people around as good as him."

Kinnear took extra delight from the result, as he has yet to lose against Liverpool since he became Wimbledon's manager.

He added: "They're perhaps the luckiest team in the league for me. I've not lost in eight games against them, which is not bad. We rode our luck a little this time, but we had clear-cut chances too."

USA will be the team to watch

LONDON, Dec 29: Kasey Keller believes next year's World Cup will give soccer fans the chance to see the US team at its best, reports AP.

Right now, the 24-year-old goalie says, the team is not performing so well because many of its top players are tied to European clubs and don't get a chance to join their American-based counterparts.

That includes John Harkes, who plays in England for Derby County, and Roy Wegerle, who lines up for Coventry.

And probably Keller, who plays for Millwall.

"We know we are good enough when the whole team is there," he said. "Right now, even when the team's together it isn't really together."

Keller said he was encouraged by the large crowds for US games, including 52,397 for an exhibition against Germany last week in Palo Alto, Calif. The Americans lost, 3-0.

"But everybody knows it's going to be a different-looking team when everybody's there for selection," Keller said. "That won't be until the end of the European season, around April or May."

"Around then people will be coming over here to see who's playing well and who's not playing well."

Keller is playing well. His club has moved up to third in Division 1, just one

point off the lead. Although he has conceded 26 goals, he's playing behind a rocky defense. If Keller had not been there, Millwall would have conceded a lot more.

If Millwall does not make it to the Premier League next season, it's pretty certain Keller will be on the move. Top clubs would be willing to pay up to £2 million for a player of his ability.

So how come Keller's impressive form in England doesn't get him a call up for the American team?

The reason: The United States already has two goalies back home, Tony Meola and Brad Friedel. Meola had an outstanding game when the United States beat England 2-0 in this year's US Cup and Friedel has been targeted by one English club, Nottingham Forest.

Keller, who was No. 2 to Meola at the 1990 World Cup in Italy, doesn't mind that he is challenging two others for the goalie's shirt at the World Cup. He believes he has an even chance of being No. 1.

"I have seen the team play a few times recently and I thought they looked rusty," he said. "They didn't look like they should have done. It's a slight drawback playing over here in England but it can also be an advantage."

"They know that I'm playing a game or even two in every week in a very competitive atmosphere."

Keller has two American

colleagues on the Millwall team. Bruce Murray and John Kerr. Although he has been playing in England for two seasons, he doesn't feel out of touch with the US team.

"Bruce has spent most time with the national team players and he keeps me in contact," he said. "I have seen Wegerle once or twice but not Harkes, because he has been living in the north of the country at Sheffield and now Derby. But Roy sometimes comes to London because of connections with Queens Park Rangers."

Without Harkes, Wegerle, Keller, Murray and Lee, the United States can't hope to match top-flight teams such as Germany and Italy. Odds-makers have listed the United States as a 50-1 shot to win the first World Cup held in the United States.

So Keller believes the US players have something to prove when they line up in the World Cup.

"Everyone is expecting more of us this time," he said. "Not just in the team but everyone in America."

"I guess it was something of a favour that FIFA gave the World Cup to America, knowing the economic advantages there would be with America hosting it. We probably shouldn't have got it but, now we have, we have to prove that we are good enough to be in the tournament."

France fell on its face in '93

PARIS, Dec 29: Champagne has never gone flat as quickly as it did for French football in 1993, reports AFP.

The Marseille match-fixing scandal and the national side's agonising World Cup failure put France on football's centre stage for all the wrong reasons.

What should have been the vintage of the decade was transformed into a hangover that will linger into 1994.

Not until July 17 — World Cup final day — will the trauma of coming within six seconds of qualifying finally begin to dissipate from the national psyche.

Gerard Houllier, though, will never forget the six weeks that wrecked his life.

At the end of September, with just a single point needed from their two final home games against Israel and Bulgaria, the national coach was riding high, qualification the least of his worries as he lobbied for a lucrative contract extension.

By mid-November, lightning, in the form of defeats to last minute goals, had struck the Parc Des Princes twice and left Houllier a broken man.

His humiliation was complete when players revealed that at half-time in the Israeli match, with his side 2-1 up, Houllier had shown them the champagne waiting for the victory celebrations.

Little did he know then, as he told his team to go out and party, that the bubbly would stay permanently on ice, courtesy of the stunning Emil Kostadinov goal that booked Bulgaria a last minute package

to the United States.

Marseille, who beat AC Milan 1-0 to lift the European Cup, were at least allowed a night of celebration in Munich in May.

But within days of ending France's long wait for a first European Trophy, the club was embroiled in allegations that they offered opponents cash to take it easy in a key league match days before the final.

A Valenciennes player, Christophe Robert, admitted taking a bribe, a Marseille player, Jean-Jacques Eydicie, confessed to setting it up.