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GRATITUDE: Brian Lara kisses earth after eclipsing Sir Gary Sobers' 36-year-old mark of 365 on the third day of the fifth and final Test between West Indies and England in St John's, Antigua on Monday. —AFP photo

Stupefied England soldier on



ST JOHN'S, Antigua, Apr 19: Brian Lara wrote his name indelibly into cricket history on Monday as he scored a superlative 375 in the fifth Test against England to break the previous world record of fellow West Indian Gary Sobers, reports Reuter.

The circumstances marked Lara's record innings as one of supreme excellence. He had gone to the crease early on the first day with West Indies on 11 for one. Soon they were 12 for two.

First he grafted. But after the first hour he began to show his superb timing, whipping anything just fractionally short of a length to the leg boundary, crashing half volleys through the offside.

He started the third day on 320, Sobers' record in his sights, and nerves were evident.

He was not helped by 19-year-old partner Shivnarine Chanderpaul who took the major part of the strike, looking for boundaries instead of the singles that would have given it back to Lara.

But Chanderpaul could be forgiven for his lack of experience and his unbeaten 75 was further evidence of a yet another growing talent in the West Indies squad.

Despite a strong police presence, Lara was engulfed by fans after he struck the record breaking boundary and play was held up for several minutes.

But the supporters broke away to allow Sobers to walk through and embrace the young man who had taken his record.

Lara then knelt down and kissed the turf.

"I don't think a better person could have broken my record," said Sobers. "To me Brian is the only batsman today who plays the game the way it should be played."

"You never see him using his pads. He hits the ball with the bat and that's the way it should be done."

"It's a joy to watch a chap like that bat. From the first day I saw him I knew he had the ability."

The softly spoken Lara was modest in his achievement. "I really appreciated Gary coming out into the middle to congratulate me. When I had levelled the record I would have been happy to have shared it with him," he said.

Within minutes of his achievement, radio stations were playing calypsos in his honour and in his native Trinidad celebrations filled the streets.

The test match itself had become secondary — which made England's task of saving the match even more difficult.

But after the two early blows of losing Stewart and Ramprakash, Atherton and Smith pulled the innings together.

Smith showed some signs of recovering his old form with crashing boundaries through the offside as he raced to an unbeaten 68, overtaking his captain who was 63 not out at the close.

Lara's record breaking innings lasted 766 minutes during which he faced 538 balls and hit 45 boundaries.

He admitted he had been nervous when play began. "I started to play a bit loose. Looking back it wasn't necessary."

He said when he pulled the ball from Lewis to the mid-wicket boundary. "It was the greatest feeling I have ever had."

The rewards for his achievement were rapid. A Jamaican real estate developer immediately offered him a half-acre plot of undeveloped land in one of the island's exclusive residential areas.

England: First innings 63. Atherton not out 63. Stewart c Ambrose b K Benjamin 24. Ramprakash lbw b K Benjamin 19. Smith not out 68. Tufnell 11. Extras: (b-2, lb-3, nb-6) 185. Total: (for two wickets) 185.

Fall of wickets: 1-11, 2-12, 3-191, 4-374, 5-593.

Did not bat: J Murray, W Benjamin, C Ambrose, K Benjamin, C Walsh.

Bowling: O M R W. Fraser 43 4 121 2. Caddick 47 2 8 158 3. Tufnell 39 8 110 0. Lewis 33 1 140 0. Hick 18 3 61 0.

England: First innings 63. Atherton not out 63. Stewart c Ambrose b K Benjamin 24. Ramprakash lbw b K Benjamin 19. Smith not out 68. Tufnell 11. Extras: (b-2, lb-3, nb-6) 185. Total: (for two wickets) 185.

Fall of wickets: 1-40, 2-70. To bat: G Hick, G Thorpe, J Russell, C Lewis, A Caddick, A Fraser, P Tufnell.

Bowling: O M R W. Ambrose 12 3 20 0. Walsh 12 2 54 0. W Benjamin 13 5 33 0. K Benjamin 13 4 34 2. Chanderpaul 5 1 22 0. Adams 5 0 17 0.

Bayern woo Trapattini. MILAN, Apr 19: Giovanni Trapattini, the veteran coach of Juventus of Turin, is being wooed by Germany's Bayern Munich, according to a report published Tuesday, reports AP.

Trapattini apparently had what was meant to be a secret encounter with Bayern's president, Fritz Scherer, and the team's other three top men who asked him to join Bayern.

"I am flattered by Bayern's interest in me," Trapattini told La Gazzetta dello Sport.

"We met, but we still have not made any decisions. I have to think about it calmly," he said.

Bayern, present leaders in the German league, recently signed French striker Jeanne Pierre Papin from AC Milan after he had made it clear that he would not accept the role of part-time or substitute player. Papin did not like the idea of having to rotate with other players during the tough Italian First Division campaign and the Champions League.

The four Bayern representatives flew to Italy in a private jet to visit Trapattini at his home Monday afternoon after attempting to secure a deal, reported the Gazzetta dello Sport.

The newspaper carried a photo showing the group leaving Trapattini's home. Trapattini, 55, has coached Juventus for 13 years.

FIFA fines Mexico. ZURICH, Switzerland, Apr 19: The Mexican Soccer Federation was fined 100,000 Swiss francs (70,000 dollars) by FIFA on Thursday for permitting advertising on referees' shirts in domestic league matches, reports Reuter.

The disciplinary committee of world soccer's governing body imposed the penalty after hearing that 10 Mexican referees had worn advertising at First Division matches on March 20.

FIFA general secretary Sepp Blatter said further sanctions would be taken against the Mexican federation if the offence was repeated and the referees would be banned for life if they wore advertising again.

New job for Pele

PARIS, Apr 19: Former Brazilian soccer star Pele on Tuesday became the first sportsman to be named a goodwill ambassador for UNESCO, the United Nations' Cultural Organisation, reports Reuter.

UNESCO director-general Federico Mayor said at a short ceremony in Paris he hoped Pele would be able to help the organisation, especially in its campaign for the prevention of drug abuse among young people worldwide.

"There can be no better ambassador for UNESCO's view of sports," he said.

The 53-year-old Pele said he was delighted to take on the role. "During my entire career, my major concern has been the well-being and dignity of all minorities," he said.

"I have always strived to be a good example for them and to express it by sending messages of support, hope and faith for a better, brighter future."

Beginning of the end

NEW YORK, Apr 19: Radio City Music Hall Productions will produce the July 17 World Cup closing ceremony, a 30 minute show expected to be watched by the biggest audience in television history, reports Reuter.

The ceremony will take place before the World Cup final in Pasadena Rose Bowl, Los Angeles.

A statement issued by the World Cup on Monday said the show was expected to include a performance by a world-class star, hundreds of children, the 24 participating countries, the World Cup trophy unveiling and more.

An Announcement regarding star talent is expected shortly," the statement added.

Swedes to relive sensation

STOCKHOLM, Apr 19: The proudest moment in Sweden's soccer history came on the afternoon of June 29, 1958, when the national team walked on to the field in front of almost 50,000 home fans at the Rasunda Stadium in Solna to face Brazil in the World Cup final, reports Reuter.

A little over 90 minutes later, Sweden collected their runners-up medals from King Gustav, beaten 5-2 by the dazzling South Americans but far from disgraced.

Never before or since have Sweden been that close to being crowned champions of the world.

Instead Sweden have become a world champion at exporting their greatest players to some of the great club sides in the world — a trend that began in the late 1940s, continues to this day and illustrates better than almost anything else why Sweden are always likely to finish among the also-rans at competitions like the World Cup and European Championship.

Without well-paid full-time professionalism in the domestic league, Sweden's top players will always go abroad, making it that much harder for whoever the national coach happens to be to build a team capable of challenging for the top honours.

The trend began when the famous strike force of Gunnar Gren, Gunnar Nordahl and Nils Liedholm — the legendary Gre-No-Li trio who formed the nucleus of Sweden's 1948 Olympic gold medal winning team — moved with great success to AC Milan helping them win the Italian Championship in 1951.

Their "descendants" are doing the same thing with the top Swedes scattered throughout the continent earning the kind of riches unavailable at home.

The individual skills of Napoli's Jonas Thern, PSV Eindhoven's Klas Ingesson, Everton's Anders Limpar, Parma's Tomas Brodin, Martin Dalin of Borussia Moenchengladbach and Henrik Larsson at Feyenoord should — in theory — be enough to propel Sweden through the first round.

But without all-round strength in depth, Sweden's progress after that at the highest level remains uncertain.

Now coach Tommy Svensson has a squad of worthy — if uninspiring — players going to the United States where they will be more than keen to improve on their awful record of three straight defeats and an early plane ride home from Italy in 1990.

In World Cup qualifiers Sweden lost just one of their 10 matches, spearheaded by Dahlin and Brodin who have earned their place among the world's most reliable attackers.

Svensson has the very Swedish characteristic of being level-headed and makes no claims that his side can repeat their 1958 achievement. However, he has made it clear that Sweden's 1990 performance has not left any deep scars.

In the build up to Italy, Sweden breezed through the qualifying campaign without losing a match in a tough group that included England and Poland and the squad had high hopes when they landed in Italy for their first finals since 1978.

But in 10 disastrous days they lost to Brazil, Scotland and, worst of all, minnows Costa Rica and were elimi-

nated without collecting a point.

When they line up against Cameroon in their opening Group B match in Los Angeles on June 19 they will be looking for their first victory in a finals match since they beat Yugoslavia in 1974.

Svensson, 49, has improved his squad since 1992, when Sweden, as host nation, reached the semifinals of the European Championship.

And though the general feeling is that Sweden will not flop as they did in 1990, Svensson knows that with just over two months to go, being ready is more important than dreams of victory.

"We will be prepared for anything," says the coach, who is particularly anxious to get a good result in the team's opening match against Cameroon.

The group promises to be a tough one. For as well as Cameroon, Sweden play Russia and old rivals Brazil who have usually held the upper hand against the Swedes in their numerous World Cup meetings.

As well as beating Sweden 5-2 in the 1958 final, the South Americans also beat them 4-2 in 1938, 7-1 in 1950 and 2-1 in Italy four years ago. In 1978 the teams drew 1-1.

So Svensson has to prepare to face the unpredictable free-flowing soccer of the Central Africans — and the rather more organised free-flowing soccer of the South Americans.

In between those two matches Sweden face a Russian side who play a more orthodox European-style game.

Sweden are preparing for the finals at a training camp at Solna and Svensson has organised a friendly against fellow qualifiers Nigeria, the newly-crowned African champions, as part of his build-up.

Spain on a dreamy trip to US

MADRID, Apr 19: Spain go to the World Cup in the United States with solid hopes of bettering their 1990 performance in Italy, when they went out in the last 16, reports Reuter.

Although only four players in the likely squad have World Cup experience, the team has grown in confidence and competence under present coach Javier Clemente, a 44-year-old Basque who took Athletic Bilbao to two league titles in 1983 and 1984.

Clemente, a forward with Athletic until a knee injury ended his playing days, started his career as national coach in September 1992 with a 1-0 friendly victory over England.

Nearly two years later Spain's record under Clemente reads: played 17, won nine, drawn six, lost two, and includes qualification for the World Cup finals after finishing top of European Group Three.

The first of the two defeats came in a World Cup qualifying game away to European champions Denmark when Spain went down 1-0. They reversed the result in the return leg in Seville to ensure qualification with the Republic of Ireland, at Denmark's expense.

In three friendlies this year in preparation for the World Cup, Spain drew 2-2 with Portugal, 1-1 with Poland and also lost for the second time under Clemente — a surprise 2-0 home defeat to Croatia in Valencia.

In each case Clemente experimented with new starting line-ups and a wide range of substitutes.

Clemente, who has called up a total of 49 players for his 17 matches, has said he has "a strong squad with good technique, not a technical squad with strength."

Among his key players will be goalkeeper Andoni Zubizarreta, midfielders Jose Bakero and Josep Guardiola and striker Julio Salinas, all of Barcelona, full-back Rafael Alkorta and midfielder Fernando Hierro, both of Real Madrid.

Salinas and Zubizarreta played in the Mexico World Cup of 1986 and again in Italy four years ago. Hierro and Alkorta played in Italy.

Zubizarreta, 32, has been Spain's number one goalkeeper for more than a decade, capped 86 times. His safe hands and exhortations to his teammates can be inspirational, though recently he has sometimes looked shaky when coming off his line.

But Clemente is adamant he is the best. "For me, the best goalkeeper, is Zubizarreta, and then come the rest," he said in a recent interview.

"Zubi" will not be able to play in Spain's opening World Cup match against South Korea after being sent off in the final qualifying game against Denmark.

His replacement, Santiago Canizares of Galician club Celta, made a series of fine saves against the Danes and looked capable of consistently doing well at the highest level.

The diminutive Bakero is a midfield dynamo with 25 caps

behind him. Although he has not played regularly in the build up to the United States, his experience and zeal look vital ingredients in Clemente's plans.

Guardiola, nine times capped, will be the starting point for many of Spain's attacking moves.

Only 23, he is a superb passer of the ball and has great vision. When Guardiola is moving forward spraying passes, Spain look capable of beating anyone.

Counterpoint to the young Catalan is the powerful Hierro, whose tank-like thrusts into the opposing penalty area are one of Spain's most potent weapons. Capped 22 times, Hierro has one of the strongest shots in the squad.

Alkorta, 25-year-old Basque with 18 caps, who moved from Athletic Bilbao to Real Madrid this season, is a strong defender both on the ground and in the air who has been used in a centre-back role by club and country in recent games.

He is likely to be flanked by a selection from Albert Ferrer of Barcelona, Salvador Gonzalez "Voro" of Deportivo Coruna, and Francisco Camarasa and Fernando Giner of Valencia to make a formidable back line.

The enigma of the squad is Julio Salinas, who is Spain's current leading scorer with 16 goals in 41 internationals.

A permanent but little-used substitute with Barcelona, he has seen virtually no league action this season. But he has retained Clemente's confidence and played a key part in Spain's qualification for the World Cup finals.

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Quiz 2. Entries close on 23-04-94. Read the instructions carefully. Then tick (x) the answer which you think is correct. Questions include: Who was the youngest player to play in a World Cup? How many red cards were shown in the '90 World Cup? Against whom did Pele score his first World Cup goal? How many qtr-finals went to the tie-break in '86? When did E Germany play in the World Cup finals? Which country will host the 1998 World Cup? Which goalkeeper has played in 5 World Cups? How many goals did P Rossi score in the '82 World Cup? How many World Cup goals did Gerd Muller score? What was Gerd Muller's jersey number? Includes a table for answers and competition rules.