

Foreman takes on Schultz next

DUESSELDORF, Germany. Jan 3: German boxer Axel Schultz will fight the venerable George Foreman for the heavy-weight boxing title in the New Orleans Superdome on April 22, promoter Jean-Marcel Nantz has announced, reports AP.

Schultz, 26, is 20 years younger than Foreman and at 98 kilograms (215 pounds) around 20 kilograms (45 pounds) lighter as he seeks to emulate Max Schmeling, the only German to take the heavyweight title.

The contract signing will take place in New York on Jan. 17. Nantz, a deputy of Swiss-based businessman-promoter Wilfried Sauerland, said here Monday night.

Sauerland said in an interview published in Tuesday's Bild Zeitung he had contacted American promoter Bob Arum offering a bout with Schultz soon after Foreman's sensational 10th-round knockout of Michael Moorer Nov 5 to regain the title Foreman held in the 1970s.

Foreman, who turns 46 on Jan 10, is the oldest title-holder ever, and is recognized as champion by the International Boxing Federation and the World Boxing Association.

The Schultz-Foreman match could end two ways, Sauerland told Bild: "A victory on points for Axel because of his quickness, or a KO for Foreman."

Schultz would be the third German to fight for the world heavyweight title. Schmeling won it in 1930, defeating Jack Sharkey, and Karl Mildener lost to Muhammad Ali in 1966 when Ali was still fighting as Cassius Clay.

"It is a wonderful chance for me to go in the footsteps of a Max Schmeling or a Karl Mildener," Schultz said from his training camp in Frankfurt am der Oder.

Nantz said Schultz would earn \$500,000 for the fight. Arum has said Foreman would get \$15 million for a title defense in the Superdome.

Schultz's record is 21-1-1, and in his last appearance he won a 10-round decision over former WBA champion James "Bonescrusher" Smith. Foreman has 68 knockouts in his record of 73-4.



Blackburn Rovers' Jason Wilcox (R) is stopped in his tracks by West Ham's Tim Breacker during their English Premier League encounter at Ewood Park in Blackburn on Jan 2. Rovers won 4-2. — AFP photo

Blackburn bury West Ham

LONDON, Jan 3: England striker Alan Shearer scored a hat-trick, including two penalties, as Blackburn beat West Ham 4-2 at home to go six points clear at the top of the English Premier League on Monday, reports Reuter.

Shearer ended a trademark run through the defence with clinical finishing for the third goal in the 75th minute, his 23rd of the season, after England colleague Graeme Le Saux had struck a crucial equaliser with a free kick.

Defending champions Manchester United, in second place with 46 points to Blackburn's 50, can cut the deficit to three if they beat Coventry at Old Trafford today.

Tottenham's resurgence continued as they beat London rivals Arsenal 1-0 at home in an evening match to keep them in sixth place and retain their hopes of a place in Europe next season.

Although Arsenal did most of the attacking, their finishing was poor and a 22-minute strike by Romanian Gica Popescu was enough to take Tottenham's unbeaten record to nine games in a row.

Arsenal, who have managed only three points out of a possible nine in their three holiday matches, also had Swedish midfielder Stefan Schwarz sent off after a crude tackle on Jürgen Klinsmann to earn his second yellow card.

England under-21 striker Robbie Fowler hit two as Liverpool beat Norwich 4-0 at home to complete the four-match Christmas and New Year holiday programme with a maximum 12 points, consolidating their third position just one point behind United.

Nottingham Forest climbed back up to fourth with a 1-0 home win over Crystal Palace who have not found the net in their last nine league matches. Gary Bull scored in the 76th minute.

Striker Ruel Fox missed a first half penalty as Newcastle were held 0-0 at home by Manchester City and slipped down to fifth. It was Newcastle's fourth match without a victory.

Chris Kiwomya scored twice to help Ipswich off the foot of the table for the first time since November 23 with a 4-1 home win over Leicester, who took their place at the bottom.

Blackburn's victory extended their unbeaten run in the league to 11 matches in which they have picked up 31 out of a possible 33 points since losing to Manchester United on October 23.

They did not emulate

Liverpool in points over the holiday period only because their home match against Leeds last week was postponed because of a water logged pitch.

Shearer put Blackburn ahead with his first penalty in the 14th minute after he was up ended by West Ham goalkeeper Ludek Miklosko.

But the Hammers, playing with as much skill and commitment as when they beat Forest 3-1 on Saturday, were put back in the match by a fine goal from veteran Tony Cotea, his weaving run on the left ending with his sixth goal in five games.

Sheffield Wednesday, 1-0 up at home to Southampton with a Graham Hyde goal after 19 minutes, failed to bag all 12 points of the holiday period. A 70th minute penalty by England's Matthew le Tissier salvaged a 1-1 draw for the Saints.

Debutant Adam Tanner and Canadian international Frank Yallop also scored for Ipswich, whose first win under new manager George Burley ended a nine-match streak without victory.

Iwan Roberts replied for Leicester who have picked up only two points away all season.

Wimbledon climbed three places to ninth with a 2-1 home win over Everton. Mick Harford scored twice in the opening eight minutes. Paul Rideout replied for Everton.

Shearer's hat-trick

Left back Julian Dicks stunned the home crowd when he put West Ham in front 13 minutes after the interval. But England left back Le Saux, a free kick specialist, equalised with a curling shot from the edge of the box three minutes later.

After Shearer had put Blackburn ahead with his second goal, Le Saux made a crucial goal line clearance in the 78th minute to deny Cotea and equaliser.

Seconds later winger Jason Wilcox was fouled inside the box and Shearer completed his hat-trick, his second of the season, from the spot.

Resurgent Liverpool scored 10 goals in their four wins in eight days with Fowler hitting five to take his tally for the season to 22.

Defender John Seales and veteran Wales striker Ian Rush scored the Anfield side's other goals against Norwich.

In contrast, the Newcastle attack has gone off the boil

Andy Cole, who scored 15 goals earlier in the season, has gone eight matches without finding the net and his side have won only twice in 14 games.

Crystal Palace's Chris Armstrong hit the bar at Forest as the London team extended their scoreless league run to 13 hours 35 minutes. Their last league goal was scored by John Salako in the 85th minute of a 3-0 win over Ipswich on November 5.

Manchester City goalkeeper Andy Dibbles penalty save in the 39th minute kept Newcastle down to just one goal in their last five games. A Fox penalty against Norwich on Saturday.

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Maradona realises the truth

PARIS, Jan 3: Diego Maradona, banned from soccer for 15 months after failing a dope test in last year's World Cup, has confirmed in an interview in the soccer weekly France Football that his playing days are over, reports Reuter.

The 34-year-old Argentine, who is in Paris to receive a special award from the magazine, said he would confine his future soccer activities to the trainer's bench.

France football, which awards the prestigious ball each December to the European-player-of-the-year, decided to give a special golden ball to Maradona in recognition of his contribution to the game over the past 18 years.

In the interview, Maradona attacked FIFA leaders of suspending him after yet tested positive for taking the stimulant ephedrine in the United States.

"When I hear (general secretary Sepp) Blatter and (President Joao) Havelange, these men who think themselves so important, I just want to laugh. I just want to laugh," he said. "For me, they don't exist."

Maradona harshly criticised Argentine federation president Julio Grondona for failing to back him and said there was a mafia operating through soccer to manipulate the sport.

He said international players should get together, as they had in tennis by forming the ATP Tour, to wrest control of the sport from officials who knew little about the game.

Czech Republic in semis

PERTH, Jan 3: Petr Korda overcame rustiness after a two-month break to win a three-set thriller against Pat Cash on Tuesday and lift the Czech Republic to a 2-1 quarterfinal victory over Australia in the Hopman Cup tennis tournament at the Burswood Dome, reports AP.

Korda beat Cash 2-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7-3) just over two hours to give the top-seeded Czech team a winning 2-0 lead over the unseeded Australians.

Jana Novotna earlier beat Kristine Radford 6-3, 6-3 in the women's singles, while the Australian pair won the mixed doubles 6-3, 6-4.

Novotna served seven double faults in the first set against Radford, including four in the sixth game but still managed to hold on to her serve.

Despite Novotna's serving woes, Radford only was able to take advantage and break her serve once in the match.

Stringbean left-hander Korda started slowly against Cash, but finished positively.

"It is difficult getting back into a groove when you have taken two months off, and that's why I lost the first set," Korda said. "My serve let me down."

Former Wimbledon champion Cash, who is making a comeback after undergoing a back operation last year, matched Korda shot for shot throughout a match between two big hitters.

"He hasn't lost anything," said Korda. "His serve was marvelous. He needs to play some tennis, but I think he's going to be very dangerous."

Korda held for 6-6, however, got an early break in the tiebreaker and then kept his nerve.

Courting with controversy

BUENOS AIRES, Jan 3: Argentine soccer superstar Diego Maradona is courting controversy again for travelling to Cuba and France — breaking ball conditions imposed by a court trying him for shooting at journalists with an air rifle, reports Reuter.

Maradona's lawyer Hugo Wortman said on Monday the athlete had been ordered to appear before a judge within two weeks to explain why he had not secured court permission to travel during Christmas to Cuba, where he met Fidel Castro, and to France.

One of the journalists he is alleged to have attacked, Pablo Daniel Telamoni, said Maradona might be jailed for a few hours on his return while his lawyers negotiated new ball conditions.

"It's another sign of his arrogant behaviour towards the courts," Telamoni told Reuters.

But the 34-year-old Maradona's attorney said it was "out of

the question Diego will go to jail." The player sought permission to travel but did not get a reply, the attorney said.

Court officials were not available for comment. An Argentine prosecutor is



Diego Maradona seeking a four-year jail term for Maradona for allegedly shooting at journalists with an air gun last February as they besieged his home for an interview. His bail was first set at 40,000 dollar then reduced to 20,000 dollar. The case is expected to come to sentencing in March.

Maradona, hero of Argentina's 1986 World Cup win, currently serving a 15-month playing ban for failing a drugs test at last summer's World Cup in the United States, was due in Paris today to pick up the golden ball award normally given only to European players.

He spent Christmas and New Year's day with his wife and two daughters in Cuba, where they were pictured hugging and exchanging gifts with Castro.

On leaving Cuba on Sunday, Maradona told reporters, "I believe I would give my life for Fidel" — a comment unlikely to endear him to Argentine President Carlos Menem who is the Cuban leader's loudest critic in Latin America.

Maradona returns to Argentina later this week to start a new job as coach of Racing Club, a once-mighty team which has failed to win a championship for the last 28 years.

Sampras, beware of Becker

PERTH, Jan 3: Boris Becker is convinced he can make a serious challenge for the Australian Open men's singles title he last won in 1991.

The German tennis star also believes he has a realistic chance of regaining his world No. 1 ranking — because he has a more relaxed approach, report agencies.

"The last two Australian Opens I played I wasn't in the best shape, and I missed last year because my wife was having a baby," Becker said Tuesday at the Hopman Cup teams championship, where he is partnering Anke Huber on the second-seeded German team.

"Being a father has done me only good," he said. "It takes the pressure off my profession a little bit."

"I took some time off from playing tennis, but I didn't take time off training, so I'm feeling very good and hopefully I can play some excellent tennis."

Becker, 27, believes his association with American coach Nick Bolletieri has injected a new lease of life into his career.

Bolletieri will fly into Melbourne next week to fine-tune Becker's bid for a sixth Grand Slam title. The Australian Open begins on Jan 16.

"We feed off each other's

experience," said Becker. He has 30 years in tennis and can teach me one or two things in tennis I didn't know before. Also, our personalities get along very well.

"At this stage of my career it's probably hard to change many things in my game, but in other areas it's important to get a new inspiration and outlook, and he has brought that back into my game."

American Pete Sampras has held the top spot virtually uninterrupted since April 1993, but Becker believes he and Andre Agassi are well-placed to challenge for the title if they

start the year well. "In the second half of the year he got injured and couldn't really play, while Andre and myself picked up our game. It was more exciting for everyone," said the world number three.

The key is to play consistent and good tennis over 12 months. Andre and myself played good for six to seven months, but in order to challenge people we have to do what we did in the second half of 1994 for the whole year."

Becker has called a temporary casefile with Australian Open organisers over the proposal to cut the time between points from 25 to 20 seconds.

At the Sydney indoor in October, Becker claimed the change would put the players' health at risk in high temperatures and even threatened to withdraw in protest.

Compromise has since been reached and Becker also played a dead bat to inquiries about his future Davis Cup intentions, currently the subject of fevered speculation in Germany.

Everyone has been talking except me," he said. "There is no further news."

A decision has also been delayed on Goran Ivanisevic's fitness for the Australian Open.

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Slow start for Kafelnikov

ADELAIDE, Jan 3: Top-seeded Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia overcame a sluggish start Tuesday to beat South Africa's Marcos Ondruska 7-6 (7-5), 6-1 at the Australian hardcourt tennis championship, reports AP.

The 20-year-old Kafelnikov, the tournament's defending champion, was down 4-5 in the first set with Ondruska serving when the South African lost his service in a break point that included five consecutive net-cords.

Earlier, Hendrick Dreekmann of Germany scored an upset straight-sets first-round victory over second-

seeded South African Wayne Ferreira. Dreekmann, a tall 19-year-old, downed Ferreira 7-6 (8-6), 6-2.

Third-seeded Jim Courier of the United States beat Jakob Hlasek of Switzerland 7-6 (7-2), 6-1.

Kafelnikov, who plays a heavy topspin game from the baseline, said he was nervous playing his first match in a month.

"The pressure was on me 100 per cent," he said. "The first match of the year is always difficult, but I am sure the quality of my game will get better and better with every match."

Dreekmann, a French Open quarterfinalist last year, said

he had to overcome early nerves against Ferreira.

"I thought this was going to be a tough match against a top 20 player and I felt a little nervous at the start of the match," he said.

He said the nerves settled after he managed to break back twice in the first set.

Courier also had a tough first set against Hlasek, who was forced to play the qualifying tournament because his agent failed to lodge an entry form for the event.

"It was a tough match for me because he had three matches under his belt to get used to the balls and the conditions."

Japan, Mexico, ROK to bid for 2002 World Cup

ZURICH, Jan 3: Japan, South Korean and Mexico lodged bids to stage the 2002 World Cup finals before the December 31 deadline, FIFA announced on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

The three countries must confirm their candidatures before February 28 after examining the world governing body's official list of requirements, FIFA added.

FIFA is to decide on the venue of the first World Cup of the next millennium in June 1996 but leading officials have long suggested it should go to Asia for the first time.

Volker sets first of 1995

HONG KONG, Jan 3: Sandra Volker of Germany set the first world record of 1995 when she clocked 27.86 seconds in the women's 50 metres backstroke at the World Cup short course meeting in Hong Kong on Tuesday, reports AFP.

She beat the time of 27.93 seconds set by Angles Martino of the United States in Sabadell in Spain on 28 December 1993.

FINA, the World Swimming Federation, recognized world records for the 50m backstroke, 50m butterfly and 100m individual medley at their Rome congress last September.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words. Clues include: 1 Go no further, 4 Journalist, 5 Spigot, 6 The O'Hara estate, 12 Poi base, 13 But — on forever, 14 Trojan War hero, 15 The third man, 16 Perfect pitch?, 18 Relievers' place, 20 You (Sp.), 21 Listening device, 22 Pub order, 23 Casual wear, 26 Manassas, to the Yankees, 30 What Kind of Fool —?, 31 Cartoonist, 32 Barcelona bear, 33 Earliest edition, 36 Finger paint, 38 — the ramparts..., 39 — disant, 3 Hurler, 4 Fertilizer?, 5 55 Across? river, 6 Son of —, 7 Old hand in D.C., 8 Loafer adornment, 9 Leaving on — Plane, 10 Comedienne, 11 Pink-slipped, 17 Calm before the storm, 19 Faux follower, 22 Diving bird, 23 Holyfield, Solution time: 24 mins.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with letters X, J, Q, O, M, K, O, T, K, C, K, G, Z, U, K, U, M, K, C, P, Z, C, D, O, K, U, Z, K, A, O, K, C, X, T, U, I, Y, U, D, K, J, M, G, C, K, U, Y, R, I, I, U, K, C, I, U, X, P, K, Z.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I READ A PIECE ABOUT WELLS, BUT I'M AFRAID IT WAS TOO DEEP FOR ME. Today's Cryptoquip clue: X 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.

Tender Notice. Local sealed tenders are hereby invited by the Bangladesh Power Development Board for the procurement of materials for the following: The expenditure will be booked against ADP 1994-95 Budget for Chittagong Hill Tract Electrification Project (2nd phase). Table with columns: Sl No, Tender No., Description of materials, Cost of tender documents, Opening of tender date. 1. Pur-227/94 AAC 'ANT' (Ins.) Tk 500/- 16-1-95. 2. Pur-228/94 ACSR 'RABBIT' Conductor Tk 500/- 16-1-95. A complete set of tender documents may be purchased by interested bidder not before 28-12-94 on submission of written application and upon payment of non-refundable fee for Taka mentioned above against each tender in the shape of Bank Draft/Pay Order favouring Director of Purchase, PDB, Dhaka. 2.5% bid bond of the offered price shall be submitted along with tender. Tender will be received up to 11.00 AM on 16-1-95 and will be opened at 11.30 AM in presence of the intending bidder or their representative, if any. No tender shall be sent by post or sold on the opening date and no Telex/Fax offer will be acceptable. Biddul/Jan-792 (5)/94-95 DFP-14836-31/12 G-24 Director, Purchase PDB, Dhaka