

Azhar hits out at Hadlee

BOMBAY, Feb 25: Indian skipper Mohammed Azharuddin retorted angrily today to Sir Richard Hadlee's disparaging remarks about the Indian team and said "A man of his calibre should not say such things," reports PTI.

Azhar, who arrived here today, was reacting to the one-



SIR RICHARD HADLEE

time world Test bowling record holder's comments in a newspaper column in New Zealand that "India cannot win abroad. India's home wins have no significance," after India had lost their first two matches in the quadrangular series Down Under to the home team and South Africa and were eliminated from the tournament.

Azhar pointed out that, "It (Hadlee's criticism) applied to New Zealand also. They have won nothing outside their country. At least we have won the World Cup (1983) and the Benson and Hedges World Championship (1984) besides other tournaments. We have also won some series outside India."

"His comments are very disappointing," Azhar told reporters on arriving here from New Zealand via Singapore early this morning.

When asked what went wrong for India in the quadrangular tournament organised to celebrate New Zealand's cricket centenary, the Indian captain said, "Our batting failed to click in the first two matches. After a long time our batting came unstuck."

His views about the batting failure were shared by team manager Ajit Wadekar.

"We batted badly. We just could not get going and in a short tournament like this the tremendous pressure on us," the Indian skipper said.

When asked whether the Indians would have liked to have played more practice games in New Zealand prior to the tournament, Azhar said, "I don't think so as we have all been playing," a view not shared by Wadekar.

The Indian manager felt that some more matches would have helped the Indians get acclimatised better especially after the delayed flight from India due to which the team reached New Zealand 20 hours after leaving the Indian shores.

Regarding the Indian shortcomings in fielding, Azhar felt that they were the same as before while Wadekar felt that a lot of improvement was needed in this department.

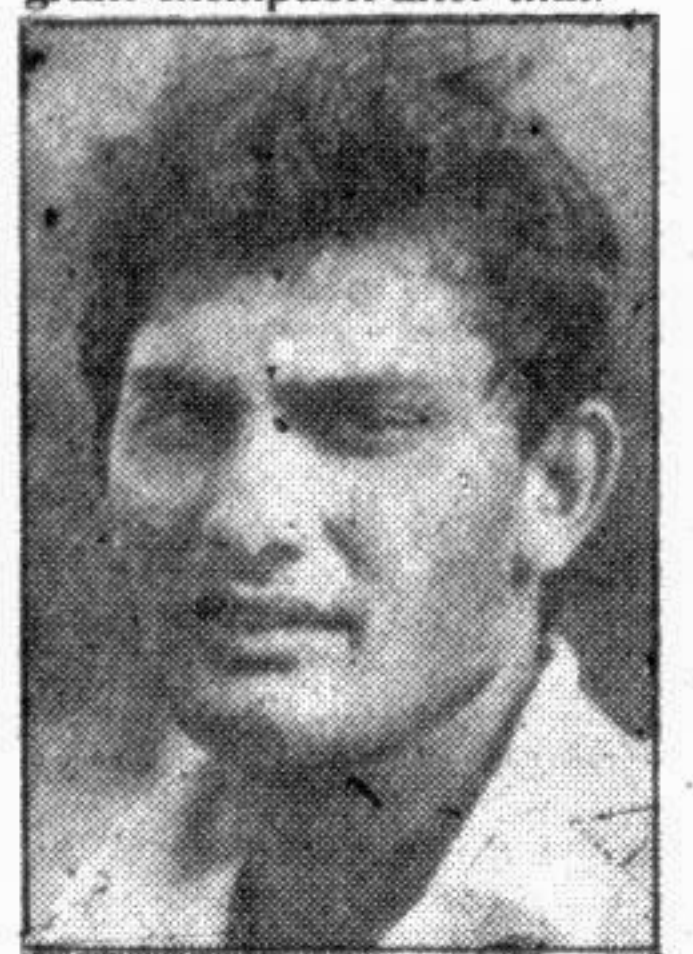
"It is not easy for players who have reached this level to improve much on pick-ups, throw-ins and sliding stops. They have to be inculcated at school level. I am going to make this point in my report," Wadekar pointed out.

BCCI GETS SERIOUS
 Meanwhile another report from Delhi added: the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has taken various steps to revamp and 'strengthen' domestic cricket.

At a meeting of the board's working committee here yesterday, its secretary, Jagmohan Dalviya, told reporters that it would be obligatory for all Test cricketers to play in all Ranji

Trophy and other first class matches when they were not busy playing for the country.

He said the previous requirement of at least two matches had been done away with and non-playing in a domestic level match would have to have 'valid reasons' certified by the concerned state association. And only the board president would have the power to grant exemption after that.



AZHARUDDIN

This step, Dalviya said, was not a vindictive one but part of an effort to strengthen the game at the domestic level.

Other steps include the insistence on the availability of proper infra-structural facilities before holding a Ranji Trophy or other first class match at a particular venue.

He said the board's policy was not against taking the game to various parts of the country, it was to ensure that proper facilities were available for holding matches.

In this connection, the board secretary said all state associations would be expected to have proper ground covers and rollers by May 31 latest and the board would subsidise 75 per cent of the cost.

Another step was the introduction from this year of new day/night tournament which aims at providing a sufficient depth of talent from which the national team can be selected.

Abahani end season on winning note

Sports Reporter

Defending champions Abahani Krira Chakra ended their Green Delta Insurance hockey league campaign with a 2-0 win over Ajax Sporting Club in one of the two matches billed for the Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Abahani, who lost their super league opener against arch-rivals Mohammedan Sporting Club, will now have to wait for the outcome of today's match between leaders Mohammedans and Dhaka Mariner Young's Club to know whether they have any championship hopes.

Mohammedans who are yet to lose a match in their previous 57 league engagements over the last four seasons, need only a point to clinch the league title for the seventh time when they play Mariner Youngs in the last league match, beginning from 3 pm.

Zahid Hossain gave the Dhanmondi outfit a 10th minute lead yesterday from a short corner before centre forward Mahboob Harun doubled the margin 18 minutes into the second half.

It was Abahani's fourth win in the six-team super league while Ajax suffered their third defeat on completion of their five league engagements.

In the other match of the day, Usha Krira Chakra earned a convincing 4-0 win over lowly Sonali Bank.

The winners led the breathers 3-0.

Irteza Qader, Rafiqul Islam, Pakistani Asif Ahmed and Rana Mujahid were the scorers for the winners.

TODAY'S MATCH
 Mohammedan SC vs Mariner Youngs Club (3 pm)

China still not sure

HONG KONG, Feb 25: China will decide on June 1 whether to bid for the 2004 Olympics, the country's top sports official said here, reports AFP.

Wei Jizhong, general secretary of the Chinese Olympic Committee, also said if regulatory action would be taken for banning China's controversial swimmers from the Pan Pacific Championships in Atlanta in August because of drug abuse.

Wei said the controversy over China being excluded from the Swimming Championship by the United States, Canada and Australia would not affect any planned bid for the 2004 Games.

Beijing was beaten by Sydney for the 2000 Olympics and Wei said the formal decision on a bid for the next available Games would be announced on June 1. Beijing is expected to be rivaled by Cape Town.

The official, who is in Hong Kong for a sports award ceremony Friday, criticised the United States, Canada and Australia for the Pan Pacific ban saying, "they did not act in the spirit of the Olympics."

The countries acted on mounting international suspicions about drug taking by Chinese sportsmen after 11 athletes, including seven swimmers, tested positive at the Asian Games in Hiroshima, Japan last October.

In an interview with the China-backed Wen Wei Po newspaper, he said China did not harbour ill-feelings against the countries.

"China will not take any retaliatory action against these countries because it is not in the spirit of the Olympics," Wei commented.

Wei said, "There was no damage done to China even without participating in the championships as it is only an invitational event."

He said the United States should "not over exaggerate its power," adding the world governing body for swimming FINA did not agree with the ban.

Japan to submit bid to host 2002 World Cup

TOKYO, Feb 25: Japan will soon present its bid to host the 2002 World Cup soccer finals to the International Football Federation (FIFA), officials of the Football Association of Japan said Saturday, reports AP.

Junji Ogura, secretary-general of the association, will present Japan's bid on Monday to FIFA president Joao Havelange at his headquarters in Zurich, they said.

He will also convey a letter from Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama in which the Japanese leader promises to work to prepare stadiums, transportation and communications facilities and meet other conditions set by FIFA, according to Kyodo News Service.

Japan, South Korea and Mexico are also competing to host the event. South Korea has already submitted its bid.



Action from yesterday's Green Delta First Division super league encounter between Usha KC and Sonali Bank at the Hockey Stadium. Usha outplayed bankers by 4-0. — Star photo

FA fines, bans Cantona

ST ALBANS, England, Feb 25: Fierce French striker Eric Cantona was on Friday banned from playing soccer for seven months and fined 10,000 sterling (15,900 dollars) by the English Football Association for his two-footed attack on a spectator, reports Reuter.

A three-man disciplinary committee suspended the Manchester United player from all football activities until September 30 after finding him guilty of bringing the game into disrepute.

Cantona told the committee he was deeply sorry for last month's attack on a Crystal Palace fan that was seen by millions on television.

He sat stony-faced with his arms folded and said nothing after the verdict was announced at a news conference. Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson was equally reticent but the club's lawyer said he thought the ban was a "bit harsh."

The ban goes beyond the measures taken by Manchester United who told the former French captain in January he could not play for the club again this season. The Premier league champions also fined him two weeks' wages—20,000 pounds (31,800 dollars).

The FA fine was the equivalent of a week's wages for Cantona, whose career has been bedevilled by clashes with authority.

"I don't think he got off

lightly. His particular sin was going into the spectator's area," FA chief executive Graham Kelly said afterwards.

Cantona jumped into the crowd with both feet flying after a spectator ran down to the touchline to abuse him when he was sent off for a foul English soccer has been tarnished by crowd violence, allegations of bribery and drugs problems this season.

Police on Tuesday charged the former French captain with common assault. He is to appear in court on March 23.

The Football Association, announcing its ban, said it had taken account of a number of factors—Cantona's previous record, the provocation he faced from the fan, his expression of regret and assurances of good behaviour in future.

"We are concerned about the increasing level of abuse that footballers seem to have to suffer—we don't think it is acceptable, we don't think it is part of the game," Kelly said.

He considered Cantona's apology sincere, "he has come along today and has said there will be no repetition of this sort of incident. I think he recognises the gravity [of it]," Cantona's French lawyer, Jean-Jacques Bertrand, had said he feared the star could receive a permanent worldwide ban.

Neither the club for Cantona will appeal but United, champions for the past two years, were upset by the decision.

"I think it is a bit harsh," Manchester United lawyer Maurice Walkins said. He said Cantona would continue to be paid by the club but would not receive any bonuses.

"He expressed his regret deeply and sincerely," Walkins said of the disciplinary hearing.

This is the second major English soccer inquiry in two days. On Thursday the Premier league found sacked Arsenal manager George Graham received a "bung" (payment) of 425,500 pounds (677,300 dollars) from an agent as a result of his purchase of two Scandinavian players.

It stopped short of saying Graham had broken any regulations or of announcing any sanctions on the manager, sacked by Arsenal on Tuesday after they were informed of its findings.



French soccer star Eric Cantona sits under the emblem of the English Football Association while attending a press conference after his hearing with the FA in a hotel on Feb. 24. Cantona received a six-month ban from playing and a ten thousand pound fine. — AFP photo

Princess Anne bites dust

DUBAI, Feb 25: Britain's Princess Anne, her face covered with sand, finished 16th in a gruelling horse race across the desert sands of Arabia on Friday, reports Reuter.

"It was her first experience in such a desert race and the princess thoroughly enjoyed it despite cold winds," said one of her aides. "She felt pretty comfortable."

The princess, wearing a scarf to protect her face, set off for the 35 km (21 mile) desert challenge endurance ride in the United Arab Emirates with Dubai's Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, one of the world's leading racehorse owner-breeders, and 31 other participants.

The daughter of Britain's Queen Elizabeth showed little signs of fatigue and was joking with her aides after the race, which lasted more than an hour under unusually cloudy skies, winds and in temperatures of 25 Celsius (77 Fahrenheit).

The princess, who had arrived in the UAE late on Wednesday on a private visit, was among seven women taking part in the race. She rode one of Sheikh Mohammad's horses.

Sheikh Mohammad withdrew just before the finish and one of his daughters finished the race for him.

US beat Denmark 7-0

WINTER PARK, Florida, Feb 25: Michelle Akers had three goals and one assist Friday as the US women's soccer team defeated Denmark 7-0, reports AP.

Mia Hamm added two goals and two assists for the United States, who outshot Denmark 15-4.

Denmark played without their leading scorer and captain, defender Bonny Madsen, who broke her leg last week.

The game was one of a series of international exhibitions the United States will play in preparation for the 1995 Women's World Cup, scheduled for June in Sweden.

Off-ring win for Holyfield

LAS VEGAS, Feb 25: Former world heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield received a split decision on Friday in his battle to end his medical suspension and fight again, reports Reuter.

The Nevada state athletic commission, which regulates boxing in the state, lifted its medical suspension of Holyfield, clearing the way for other states to allow him to fight again, but it did not rule on whether he could fight in Nevada.

The commission issued its medical suspension when Holyfield was hospitalized im-

Thai retains IBF crown

BANGKOK, Feb 25: Thailand's Rattanaol Sor Vorapin unleashed his powerful lefts Saturday to knock out Jerry Pahayahay of the Philippines and retain his International Boxing Federation mini-flyweight crown, reports AP.

The scheduled 12-round bout was over after 22 seconds of the third round.

Fighting his ninth title defense, the Thai cautiously probed Pahayahay's defenses in the opening round, then fired several powerful lefts in the second.

In the third, another of Rattanaol's powerful lefts floored the ninth-ranked challenger, who stayed down for the count.

The 22-year-old Rattanaol has held the IBF crown for the past three years, while the Filipino was taking his first crack at the title.



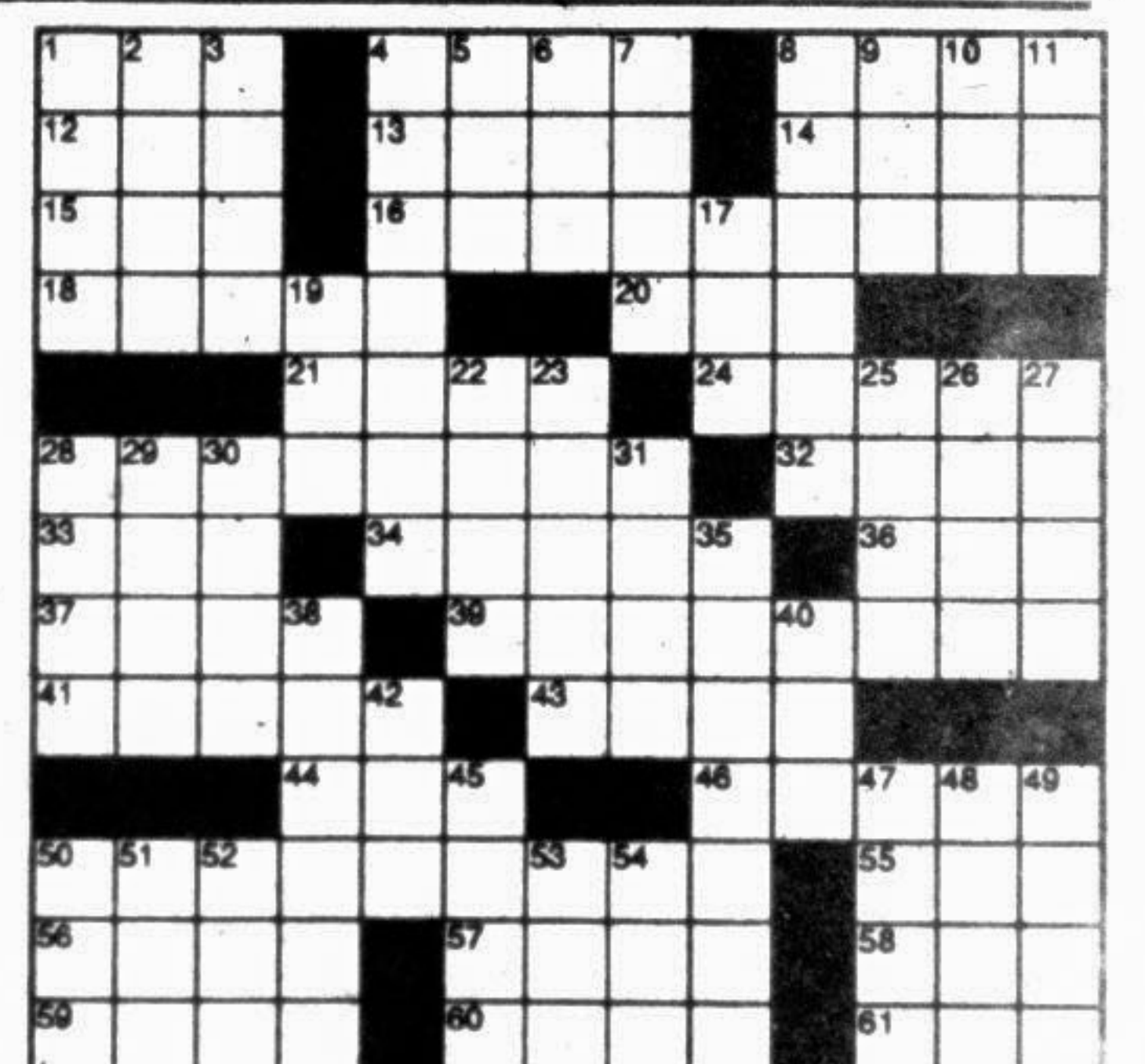
Sumo grand champion Takanohana (L), 22, gives an announcement of his engagement with Keiko Kono (R), a TV presenter eight years older than himself, during a press conference at a Tokyo hotel yesterday. Their wedding will be held on May 29. — AFP photo

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ACROSS | 41 Plague | 19 Have a bug |
| 1 Dandy | 43 Blow from a whip | 2 Disconcert |
| 4 Sartorial woes | 44 Section of L.A.? | 1 Admitting customers |
| 8 Goldbrick | 46 Bach played one | 3 Rind |
| 12 Mimic | 50 Cotton pile fabric | 4 Gorges |
| 13 State for sure | 55 Story | 5 "— Got a Secret" |
| 14 Capri, for one | 56 Lotion additive | 6 Candi-date, e.g. |
| 15 Zukler follower | 57 "A Death in the Family" author | 7 Convince |
| 16 17th-century Spanish painter | 58 Altar | 8 Convertible to cash |
| 18 Chou— | 59 Asparagus servings | 9 Columbus sch. |
| 20 Whom Uncle Sam wanted | 60 Weevil's target | 10 Pub potation |
| 21 Cartoonist's supply | 61 Proscrip- | 11 Shriner's chapeau |
| 24 De-squeaked | | 17 Wildlife conserva-tion park |
| 28 Mere wish, without follow-up effort | | 38 Individuals abbr. |
| 32 Capitol cap | | 42 Place-kicker's pride |
| 33 History chapter | | 45 Attempt |
| 34 Glacial pinnacle | | 47 Smooth-talking |
| 36 Clamor | | 48 Verdi work |
| 37 Barbecue entree | | 49 Night light |
| 38 Speed | | 50 Cistern |
| | | 51 Student of 31 Down |
| | | 52 Prune |
| | | 53 Conceit |
| | | 54 Sushi candidate |

Solution time: 28 mins.

CAMP	MILD	JAB
OMAR	ARIA	OVA
PATOBRIEN	HOB	
FEES	TINNY	
APAIL	LENO	
SENT	PREACHER	
TRI	CLEAN	AGO
OUTBOUND	WRAP	
AITS	SHADE	
SPODE	PERTI	
WAD	RYANONEAL	
AVA	IAGO	ELMO
KEY	EWES	SLIM



CRYPTOQUIP
 V R H E L F B E F L N I
 F V J N X - Q F B E F E D U R F H N :
 "G I L X I O , Q B U G J L R D F ."
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: THE OFTEN-DISCUSSED IDEA OF GOING SKIING IN ALASKA LEFT US COLD.
 Today's Cryptoquip clue: G equals F
 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.