

Exhibition hockey

Sports Reporter

The Foreign Players' XI, comprising Pakistani players who featured in the just-concluded Green Delta insurance First Division hockey league, edged past the Dhaka Eleven in a charity match at the Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The local selection, boasting almost all the national players, was far from being fazed by the presence of messers Shahbaz Ahmad and co. and raced to a 2-0 lead only 15 minutes into the game through Mahboob Harun and Rafiqul Islam, who notched the third treble in the Senior Division super league.

However, once the Pakistani stars settled down, the match, played at an entertaining pace, started slipping out of the Dhaka Eleven's grips.

Shahbaz, the celebrated Pakistani centre forward, put behind a somewhat subdued showing in the last league match for eventual champions Mohammedan Sporting Club and produced a glimpse of his class, orchestrating almost every move, often breaking into penetrating runs down the middle.

Shahbaz's international, PIA and very recently Mohammedan teammates Tahir Zaman and Mohammed Irfan were equally impressive as the Foreign Players' XI took control.

Tahir Zaman scored twice while Irfan and Mumtaz Haider, the temperamental centre forward who donned Dhaka Mariner colours this year after a couple of seasons with Mohammedans, sounded the board once each to carve a win for the foreigners.

Mohammed Sadeque, the national centre forward, netted the third goal for the local selection, which leaves for Calcutta to play in an invitational tournament on March 3.

Atiq sends Ajax on a spin

Sports Reporter

Muhammed Atiqzaman's hatrick led Agrani Bank to an improbable two-run victory over Ajax Sports Club in one of the two Yamaha First Division cricket super league matches at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.

The Agrani Bank off-spinner dismissed three with the last three balls of the penultimate over as Ajax, cruising at one stage on 177 for four in 42.1 overs in their chase of the 195-run winning target, lost five wickets for only five runs to end their innings on 192 for nine.

Ajax's quest for a victory all ways, appeared well on course after the two openers gave them a solid start, collecting 56 runs in 12.5 overs. The middle-order fared equally well until Atiq began his magic.

Opener Rafiqul Islam and wicketkeeper Azim Ahmed, who was the first of Atiq's hatrick victims, jointly top-scored with 46 runs each while Saiful Azam, the skipper, and Sajjad Hossain chipped in with 20 and 28 respectively.

The young offie finished with fantastic figures of four for 34 in nine overs.

Earlier in the morning, a defiant unbeaten 78 from Kamrul Huda held the innings together as the bankers, sent in to bat, overcame a shaky start to post a fighting total of 194 for seven in the regulation quota.

It was Agrani Bank's second successive win in the six-team super league while Ajax suffered their first defeat following a win in their super league opener.

Sher-e-Bangla Cup soccer

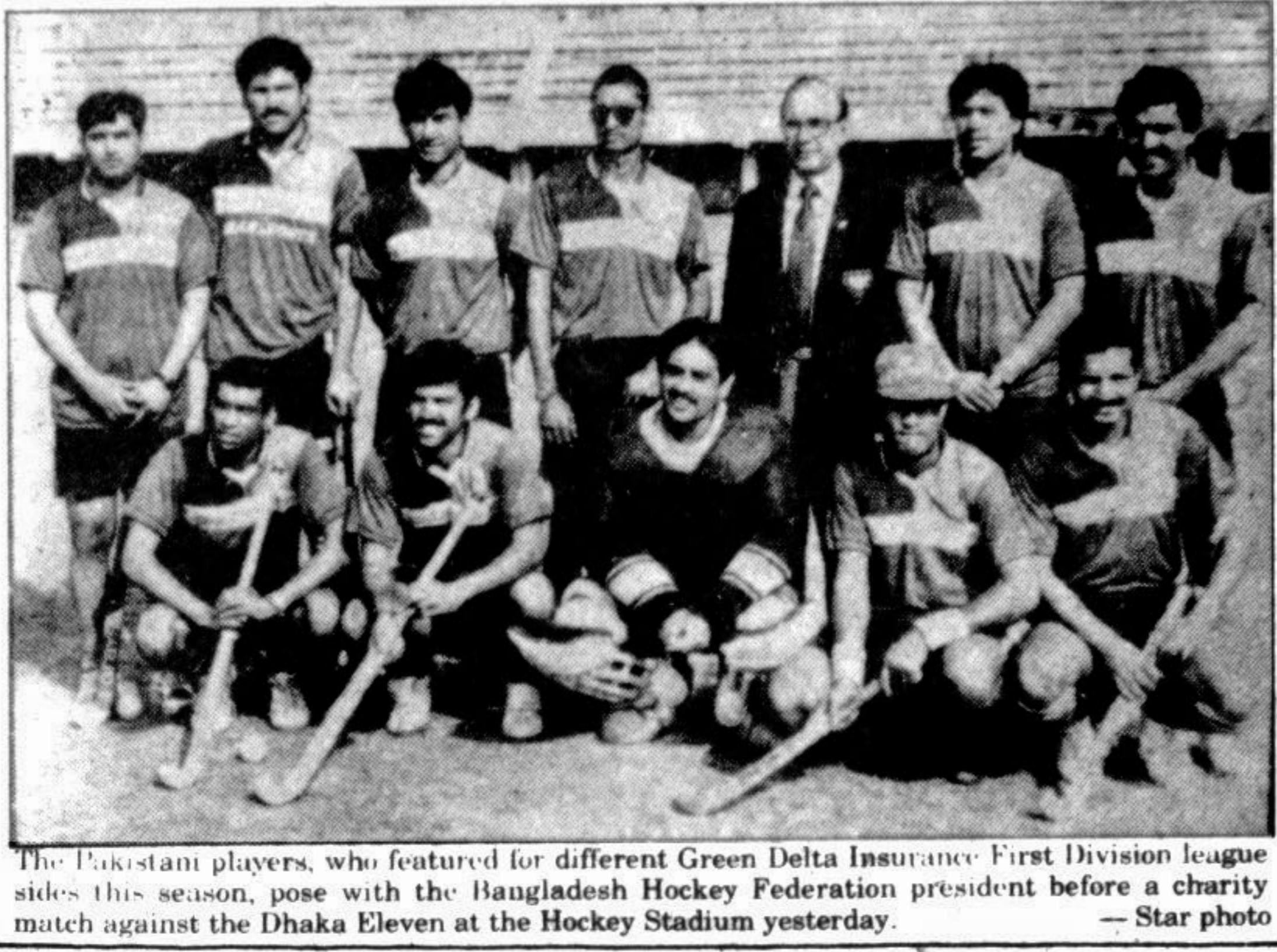
Sports Reporter

Bangladesh Army and Sylhet qualified for the 12-team final leg of the 19th Sher-e-Bangla Cup national football championship when they won their respective zonal finals by identical lone goal margins at different venues yesterday.

At Habiganj, in the Zone Four final, Selim struck the match-decider five minutes from the final whistle to earn Sylhet a sensational victory over the hosts.

In the Zone Nine final at the Mirpur Stadium, Army's fleet-footed striker Shah Alam hotched the all-important goal in the 60th minute against Bangladesh Police to ensure his side's berth in the final round.

Army and Sylhet have now joined Narayanganj, Cox's Bazar, Bhola, Kushtia, Bogra and Nilphamari in the final round to be held in Naogaon from March 16.



The Pakistan players, who featured for different Green Delta Insurance First Division league sides this season, pose with the Bangladesh Hockey Federation president before a charity match against the Dhaka Eleven at the Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Fresh faces in Aussie squad for Caribbean tour

Taylor sure of success



SYDNEY, Feb 27: Australia will use the lessons they learned while touring Pakistan last year to make a success of their upcoming cricket tour of the West Indies, captain Mark Taylor said Monday, report agencies.

Taylor urged his players to adopt a positive attitude at all times on the subcontinent and the Australians returned with reputations intact despite losing the three-Test series 1-0.

Australia will take a relatively young 15-man squad when they leaves on Tuesday for Barbados, the venue for the first of five limited-overs internationals they will play against the West Indies and the site for the first of four Test matches.

Batsmen Michael Slater, Greg Blewett, Justin Langer and Ricky Ponting are all 25 or under, but Taylor said he was confident they will be able to counter the four-pronged pace attack that has kept the West Indies at the top of world cricket for 15 years.

"Our young guys won't have the experience against their sort of bowlers but they just have to keep going the way they've playing," Taylor told reporters.

"They've been picked because of the way they play and it's important they stick to that formula," added Taylor.

Blewett played two Tests in the Ashes series against England, scoring a century in each match, while Ponting and Langer have yet to play at Test level.

Slater, at 25 the eldest of the quartet, will face his sternest test as an opener since his Test debut two years ago.

Taylor said he did not expect a repeat of the spiteful on-field exchanges which marred the 1991 series and prompted Sir Clyde Walcott, then president of the West Indies Board of Control to publicly chastise the players for their poor conduct.

"It will be a very tough tour, no doubt about it, both sides will be going full on," Taylor said.

"But I don't foresee any problems. (West Indies captain) Richie Richardson has got his side in pretty good control, they play good tough cricket like we do. I think it will be a fair series," Taylor added.

Taylor said Australia were looking forward to the one-day series.

"We've won something like 17 of our last 21 or 22 one-dayers, so we've been going well and there's no reason we can't keep it going over there," he said. "Winning is a good habit to get into."

Taylor said Australia were looking forward to the one-day series.

"There's no reason we can't..."

MARK TAYLOR



Japan confirms WC candidacy



ZURICH, Feb 27: Japan formally joined arch-rivals South Korea in the race to host the 2002 World Cup soccer finals when it confirmed its candidacy in a ceremony at FIFA headquarters today, reports Reuter.

Shunshiro Okano, vice-president of the Football Association of Japan was accompanied by Junji Ogura, secretary-general of the 2002 bidding committee as he handed over confirmation of the bid signed by the association's president Ken Naganuma to Sepp Blatter, chief executive of world soccer's governing body.

A letter from Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama endorsing Japan's bid with a pledge from the government to provide support as required by FIFA, was also handed over.

Okano said: "Mr Blatter wished us good luck in our bid. Everything is going smoothly. We will be offering FIFA 15 stadiums with the hope that all will be used."

Mexico, the other candidate, made a surprise bid to host world soccer's most prestigious tournament they staged in 1970 and 1986.

A FIFA spokesman said the central American country had not yet formally confirmed the bid, but could do so by mail or fax before Tuesday's deadline.

South Korea officially submitted their bid last Wednesday.

South Korea is convinced they are best qualified to host the 2002 cup as they have reached the final rounds four times, while Japan had never survived the qualifying stages.

Both nations have already staged major sporting events. South Korean can point to the successful hosting of the 1988 Olympics although Japan was the first Asian country to stage the Olympics in Tokyo in 1964.

With the contest between the two Asian industrial giants getting increasingly acrimonious, the Asian Football Confederation's general secretary Peter Velappan proposed as a compromise that the two rivals co-host the tournament.

But FIFA rejected the idea outright with Blatter saying: "Who would qualify as hosts? Who would be responsible for security? The questions seem endless."

Japan started preparing their bid to host the finals as early as 1986 and boosted their chances with the introduction of their new professional J-League in 1993.

Okano said the J-League had turned out to be a success beyond expectations.

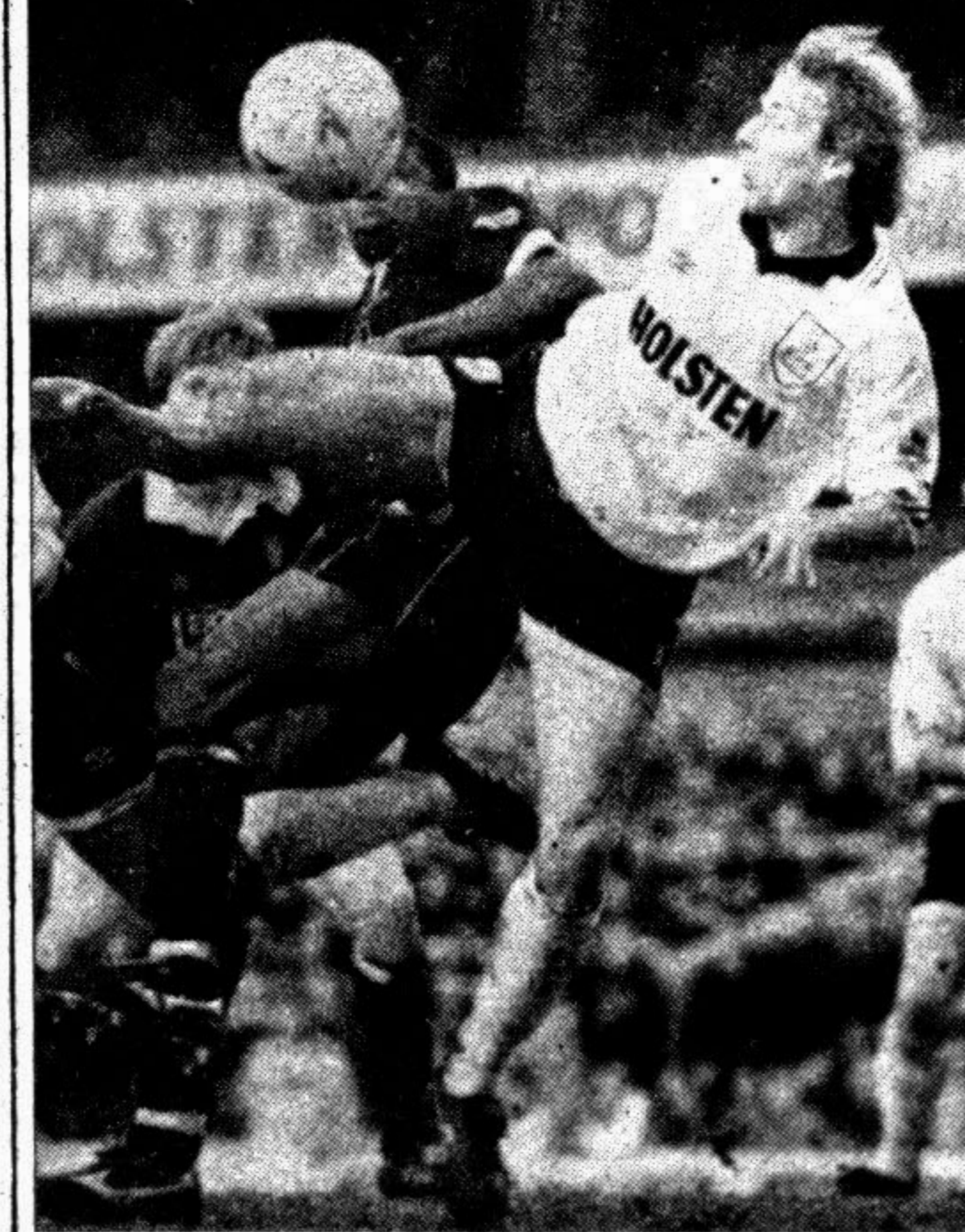
We never expected it to be so successful, so soon. From the 10 teams in 1993, it was expanded to 12 the following season. For the coming season which starts in March there will be 14 sides. Eventually there will be a maximum of 16 teams."

South Korea's hopes of co-hosting the tournament with North Korea with whom they have been technically at war for more than 40 years, did not find favour with FIFA with Blatter commenting: "I can't see the two Korea's being at peace by 1996 when the selection will be made."

Stadium inspections will begin in September and the choice of host will be made by the executive committee in June next year.

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Tottenham Hotspurs' Juergen Klinsmann goes for a volley during an English Premier league match against London rival Arsenal at White Hart Lane on Feb 25. Spurs lost 2-1.

India Test cricketers on a mission

CALCUTTA, Feb 27: Leading Indian stars including skipper, Md. Azharuddin and vice captain, Sachin Tendulkar, will be seen in action in a double wicket cricket day and night tournament to be held at the Eden Gardens on March 9, reports PTI.

The match is being organised by the Rotary Club of Calcutta as part of its platinum jubilee celebrations and to raise funds for welfare activities of the club, a spokesman of the organisers said here today.

Sixteen players, which includes almost the entire Indian team, will be playing as eight pairs. The pairs will be divided into two groups, with two pairs qualifying for the semifinals after the round robin league.

The group matches will be for four over a side and semifinals and final six overs, the spokesman said.

The eight pairs are Md. Azharuddin/Anil Kumble, Sachin Tendulkar/J. Srinath, Vinod Kambli/Venkatapathy Raju, NS Sidhu/Utpal Chatterjee, Chetan Sharma/Ashis Kapoor, Manoj Prabhakar/Venkatesh Prasad, Ajay Jadeja/Prashant Vaidya and Sanjay Manjrekar/Rajesh Chouhan.

The proceeds from the match will be used for building a rupee one crore Rotary Sadan, an integrated complex for children in central Calcutta, the club spokesman said.

Zagalo goes gaga over youngsters

RIO DE JANEIRO, Feb 27: Brazilian national team manager Mario Zagalo praised his new core of youngsters Sunday, predicting the South American nation's first Olympic gold in Atlanta and a fifth World Cup in France, reports AP.

"This new generation is the best crop in Brazilian soccer in the last 20 years," Zagalo told the Rio daily O Globo for its Sunday edition.

Zagalo, who served as assistant coach to Carlos Alberto Parreira during the World Cup and took over the team afterward, won Championships as a player in 1958 and 1962 and one as manager in 1970.

Brazil twice have made it to the gold medal game of the Olympics, only to be beaten by France in 1984 and the Soviet Union in 1988. The 1996 Olympics will be played essentially as an under-23 tournament with three "wildcard" exemptions.

Zagalo, still euphoric after Wednesday's 5-0 thrashing of Slovakia, Brazil's first match of 1995, especially singled out for praise 19-year-old midfielder Souza of Corinthians, 22-year-old forward Juninho of Sao Paulo and Flamengo's 21-year-old forward Savio.

Playing with seven members of the 1994 World Cup champions, the "youngsters," referred to by Zagalo were flamboyant and acrobatic in Wednesday's romp.

Little Friends earn promotion

Sports Reporter

Little Friends Club confirmed their promotion to next year's Second Division football league along with Gandaria Famous when they posted a convincing 2-0 victory over Maghbazaar Kishalaya in one of the two Pragati Insurance Third Division super league engagements played at the Outer Stadium yesterday.

Playing their last match of the eight-team super league, Little Friends made light of Maghbazaar with Ritam Lal and Ziaur Rahman scoring in each half.

With this win, Little Friends collected 16 points from their seven engagements while Gandaria Famous, who have one match to spare, also have 16 points and will meet Moghbazaar KC in the last league match today.

Meanwhile, in the other match of the day, Dipali Juba Sangha edged past Sunrise SC by the odd goal in three.



Players and officials of Bangladesh Rifles, who won the Top Five championship, organised to celebrate volleyball's centenary.

Viali sinks Sampdoria



ROME, Feb 27: Gianluca Viali scored a late solo goal to give Juventus a 1-0 win over Sampdoria.

on Sunday as the league leaders rode their luck to restore their six-point advantage over Parma at the top, reports Reuter.

The veteran centre-forward, whose goals helped Sampdoria to the 1990-91 title, struck against the run of play in the 79th minute.

He held off two challenges before shooting on the run past former Italian teammate Walter Zenga.

Viali's 11th goal of the season left Sampdoria to rue three chances that winger Attilio Lombardo squandered from close range earlier in the second half.

Earlier on Sunday, second-placed Parma temporarily cut the Juventus lead to three points as two goals from an inspired Faustino Asprilla lifted his side to a 2-0 win over Lazio.

The Colombian showed a welcome return to form, using his graceful skills and sharp acceleration to outwit Lazio's defenders.

The Juventus-Sampdoria result left the top two positions unchanged. Juventus, 48 points from 21 matches, are still six ahead of Parma on 42.

The league is developing into a two-horse race with third-placed Roma on 37 points, eight behind Juventus. Lazio are fourth on 34 points. Milan have 33 points and Sampdoria, Fiorentina and Cagliari all have 32.

Roma struggled to break down relegation-threatened Reggina's stubborn defence before easing to victory with second-half goals from Giuseppe Giannini and Abel Balbo.

Argentine Gabriel Batistuta scored a hotly contested equaliser off a quickly taken 75th minute freekick to spare Fiorentina's unbeaten home record in an ill-tempered 2-2 draw with Internazionale.

The match was marred by eight bookings and the dismissal of the visitors Pierluigi Orlandini, together with soccer legend Giacinto Facchetti. Italy's second-most capped international, making his debut on the bench as Inter's team manager.

Earlier Fiorentina's Portuguese playmaker Rui Costa had cancelled out Nicola Berti's 33rd minute opener for Inter with an unstoppable 20-metre shot, only for Orlandini to threaten Fiorentina's unbeaten record in Florence with a goal.

AC Milan warmed up for Wednesday's European Cup quarter-final home leg with Portugal's Benfica with a 3-1 victory over lowly Cremonese.

European champions AC Milan, who slumped to their worst league defeat in 12 years when they lost 4-0 at Lazio last Sunday, took out their frustrations on the strugglers.

Croatian Zvonimir Boban headed them into a second minute lead and Giovanni Stroppa and Daniele Massaro scored later.

Racing 2, Celta 0. At Santander, Esteban Torre scored in the 35th minute and Russian Dimitri Radchenko added one in the 38th to move Racing one point (7.5-11) one point ahead of Atletico and just out of the relegation zone.

Barcelona 2, Compostela 1. At Compostela, Jordi Cruyff put Barcelona ahead 1-0 in the 11th minute and Aitor Beguiristain made it 2-0 in the 55th before Francisco Llorente scored Compostela's lone goal in the 79th.

Zaragoza 1, Valladolid 0. At Zaragoza, Uruguayan striker Gustavo Poyet scored his seventh goal of the season in a 1-0 victory that moved Zaragoza (12-4-7) past Betis into fourth place.

Sporting 1, Betis 1. At Gijon, Maria Cabrera Menendez gave Betis (8-11-4) the lead in the 43rd, but Sporting (5-8-10) rallied on Pier Luigi Cherubino's goal in the 52nd, keeping it 18th place, just behind Atletico on goal difference.

At Valencia, Antonio Poyatos scored twice, in the 15th and 35th minutes, to spot Valencia (8-8-7) to a 2-0 lead. Enrique Fernandez Romero added a third goal seven minutes into the second half before Sociedad (6-10-7) rallied. Inaguil Idiaquez and Luis Perez scored a minute apart to get Sociedad with a goal in the 61st, but Alvaro Cervera squelched the comeback with a fourth Valencia goal three minutes later.

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Zamorano keeps Real clear

MADRID, Feb 27: Chilean striker Ivan Zamorano scored in the 75th minute Sunday to give Real Madrid a 1-1 draw with Athletic Bilbao, and enable them to keep their four-point lead atop the Spanish First Division, reports AP.

In a rain-soaked San Mames Stadium in Bilbao, defender Genar Andrinua gave Athletic the lead only a header in the 44th minute.

But Zamorano's 19th of the season, a header off a cross from Jose Emilio Amavisca, tied the game and linked Real's record to 14-7-2 and 35 points, four more than Barcelona, who moved past Deportivo La Coruna into second place.

Barcelona beat lowly Compostela 2-1 on Saturday to improve to 13-5-5 and move a point ahead of Deportivo (11-8-4), who lost 1-9 to RCD Espanol in Barcelona on Sunday.

In other games Sunday, it was: Tenerife 2, Sevilla 1; Valencia 4, Real Sociedad 2; Atletico Madrid 3, Oviedo 3; Racing Santander 2, Celta 0; and Albacete 0, Logrones 0.

Espanol 1, Deportivo 0. In Barcelona, Luis Gonzalez scored in the 13rd minute to lift Espanol and drop Deportivo into third.

Atletico 3, Oviedo 3. Zamorano, who had won his last three WBC middleweight title fights in one round, almost did it again, charging Benn through the ropes after only 35 seconds with an early knockdown.

But Benn just wouldn't stay down. In a fight seemed like a Rocky movie for real, the British fighter, roared on by a sellout crowd of 12,500 fans, turned it around and floored McClellan twice in the 10th for a seventh successful defense.

But what happened after the second knockdown started off dramatic and ended up tragic.

McClellan, blinking in discomfort and clearly dazed, appeared to wait until the referee had finished the count. Then he got up and walked back to his corner.

With no stool waiting, he sat on the floor, pressed his head against the post and then slumped unconscious to one side.

Medics and doctors were quickly into the ring and gave him the comfort of a neck brace and oxygen to bring him round. While Benn celebrated a huge turnaround victory, McClellan was carried out of the ring on a stretcher and taken to the hospital.

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From ringside to bedside



LONDON, Feb 27: Gerald McClellan was supposed to win in one round and add another title to his impressive collection.

He wound up the loser and fighting for his life in a hospital.

His mother Stacey McClellan, his girlfriend Angela Brown and his aunt Linda Shorter arrived in London late Sunday night from the United States to be at his bedside, reports AP.

But Stacey McClellan told reporters at London's Heathrow Airport there was nothing they could do but wait. The three women looked stunned and close to tears as they were driven away from the airport in a chauffeur-driven auto.

In a tragic ending to a brutal fight Saturday, super-middleweight McClellan collapsed in the ring seconds after he was knocked out in the 10th round by WBC titlist Nigel Benn.

After surgeons removed a blood clot from his brain, the 27-year-old American remained on life support.

"It turned out to be not just a boxing match but a war," said Benn's trainer, Peter De Freitas.

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