

WEEKEND SPORTS WEEKEND

A Marriage Ordained

Tawfiq Aziz Khan

IT is commonly believed that no creature on earth has the prior knowledge of his birth, death and marriage. These are matters of providence. Only the Almighty, the most merciful, the most beneficial knows about things to come, how they would come and when they would come.

Finally, curtain has been brought down on one of the mysteries of modern-day sports that has been boggling the minds of thousands of admirers and well-wishers of Imran Khan, the cricketing legend. His announcement of marriage with a foreign girl must have come as a shock and surprise to hundreds of young girls of Pakistan who had dreamt of getting married to, until the other day, one of the most eligible bachelors in the world. But as soon as they will come out of their stupor, all of them will be relieved because handsome Khan has neither obliged nor disobliterated anyone of them. So, all of them should be happy (or unhappy?).

Imran's marriage to Jemima has triggered off some controversy in his own country. Some of the so-called religious leaders have criticised his decision to marry a non-Muslim or to be more precise — a Jew. Some of them were happy that she has been converted to Islam, believed to be an act of 'Sawab'. But Imran's onetime comrade Sarfaraz Nawaz dubbed the marriage as a 'Jewish conspiracy.' What a thought-provoking idea!

Imran Khan, has been a person of substance as we know him through his words and deeds.

A highly-educated, tremendously sophisticated and supremely dedicated human being, he has singlehandedly built a Cancer Research Centre in the name of his late lamented mother in Lahore. Currently he has embarked upon another important project of imparting basic education to the children of his home province. Many will think that he has been doing all these social work to enter

politics of Pakistan. But we are no strangers to sub-continental politics. Does anybody need to do such hard-work to be in politics in this region? Not all. These social works which entail tremendous physical as well as mental strength to perform successfully only point to the willingness and good intentions of a person who is truly dedicated to the well-be-

people in Pakistan who firmly believe that in the near future he will emerge as a strong contender to the power and popularity of Benazir Bhutto and that in this game the strong Pakistan military may come handy to Imran because of his definite links with the Gen Hamid Gul, a former intelligence officer of Pakistan Army. Imran has always denied such stories.

Since his withdrawal from international cricket he has worked very hard to establish the Shaikut Khanum Cancer Hospital which is now a reality and only of its kind in Pakistan. The £ 12 million hospital is rendering unprecedented service to the poor people of Pakistan. His commitment to the building of this hospital in the name of his mother was so deep that any mother's son should lower his head in shame who does not remember his mother as this Pathan does.

Even with his sophisticated educational background which saw him through Atcheson College, Lahore, Royal College School, Worcester and finally at Keble College, Oxford, the 'brown sahib' remains still today a very shy and modest person. Throughout his 21-year cricketing career he was hardly seen to be over-enthusiastic even at times of rare glory.

Described by pundits as the best of the four all-time greats (Sir Richard Hadlee, Ian Botham, Kapil Dev and Imran Khan), he has always been chased by beautiful girls in his hey days wherever he went. He had his favourite night club in London where he used to pass time with beautiful models.

Yet who would have known that he would marry a girl half his age? Think of it, when Imran was 21, Jemima was a new-born baby. Could he have connived it? Silly. Cupid has played an unusual role in this marriage.

At 42, Imran Khan has achieved many rare distinctions as a cricketer and as a social reformer. He is a very private person and is entitled to privacy. His marriage is his business. Many have raised eyebrows and questioned the wisdom of the Khan for marrying a girl half his age. But then there are thousand and one instances where such marriages have successfully withstood the test of time and there are instances when a normal match did not work. It all depends on both the groom and the bride and of course much of it depends on luck too. Isn't Dilip Kumar a good 22 years older than Saira Banu? Here is an example of another Pathan which can be emulated by Imran.

We can only wish the newlyweds all the best and remind Imran of the saying "Better late than Never."



Among Pathan tribesmen



ing of his fellow human beings. Imran has shown the world that apart from being a highly successful, topclass cricketer he is also a social worker of the highest order.

In recent times Imran's name has been associated with Pakistani politics. There are



With fashion models in London



Gemima Goldsmith

Trying time for Bagan

HALDIA, May 18: Local giants Mohun Bagan, champions for the last three years, face a daunting task to retain their supremacy when the 19th Lifebuoy Federation Cup, the premier club tournament of the country, gets underway simultaneously at their star players deserting them in the inter-club transfers. Mohun Bagan appear less formidable this year raising doubts about their potential to maintain their monopoly in the twelve-team tournament, reports PTI.

Star strikers I M Vijayan, Jo Paul Ancheri and the nippy medio Aqueel Ansar would no longer be wearing the famed green and maroon jerseys having shifted to other clubs, leaving Mohun Bagan to depend mainly on local talents to defend their title.

The migration of their three Nigerian recruits — Chibuzor, Christopher Kem and Bernard Operanomie — to Bangladesh have only compounded their misery.

Strong contender East Bengal, who have been in fine form of late, set the juggernaut rolling on the inaugural day of the tournament taking on Indian Bank at the picturesque Kanchenjunga Stadium at Siliguri while another local giant Mohammedan Sporting open their campaign against Salgaekar here tomorrow.

Olympian Chandan Singh would inaugurate the Siliguri leg of the prestigious tournament, while another international Subroto Bhattacharya gets that honour in this port town in the presence of the state Sports Minister, Subhas Chakraborty.

The twelve teams have been divided into four groups and the two top teams of each group would qualify to the quarter final league, while the first semifinal would be staged in Calcutta on June one, Siliguri would host the second semifinal the following day. The final would be held at the giant Salt Lake Stadium in Calcutta on June five.

This is for the first time that the Federation Cup tournament would be staged at the different venues ever since its inception in 1977 at Ernakulam in Kerala State, giving a chance to Siliguri and Haldia to hold such an important meet for the first time.

The torrential rains that lashed the state had kept the organisers worried. But the mild sunshine for the past two days has brought back the smiles.

Atlanta Games' lottery plan acknowledged

ATLANTA, May 18: Although opponents of the Georgia Lottery say it's a bad idea to link games of chance with the Olympic Games, they acknowledge that the combination is a juggernaut they can't stop, reports AP.

The head of a group that fought establishment of the lottery said Thursday he won't try to block a plan to offer tickets to the 1996 Atlanta Olympics as lottery prizes.

Officials of the Georgian Lottery Corp. and the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games have confirmed they are discussing such an agreement. Under the plan, the lottery would buy tickets to the Games before May 1, when they will go on sale to the public, and use them as prizes in an instant-win lottery game.

"We'll speak out against it, but I don't have any way to stop it with the power of the government behind it", said Emmett Henderson, executive director of the Georgia Council on Moral and Civic Concerns.

"I have a problem with the whole thing of the state government being in the gambling business... by identifying it with noble things like education and the Olympics. They're not telling the whole story," Henderson said. "They're gambling a virtue, not a vice."

Georgia voters in 1992 narrowly approved a state-run lottery with profits earmarked for school improvement.

ACOG and lottery officials said Thursday they are still working out the details of the proposed Olympic lottery game.

"Obviously, we're optimistic, but it's still preliminary," said lottery spokeswoman Gwen Hopkins.

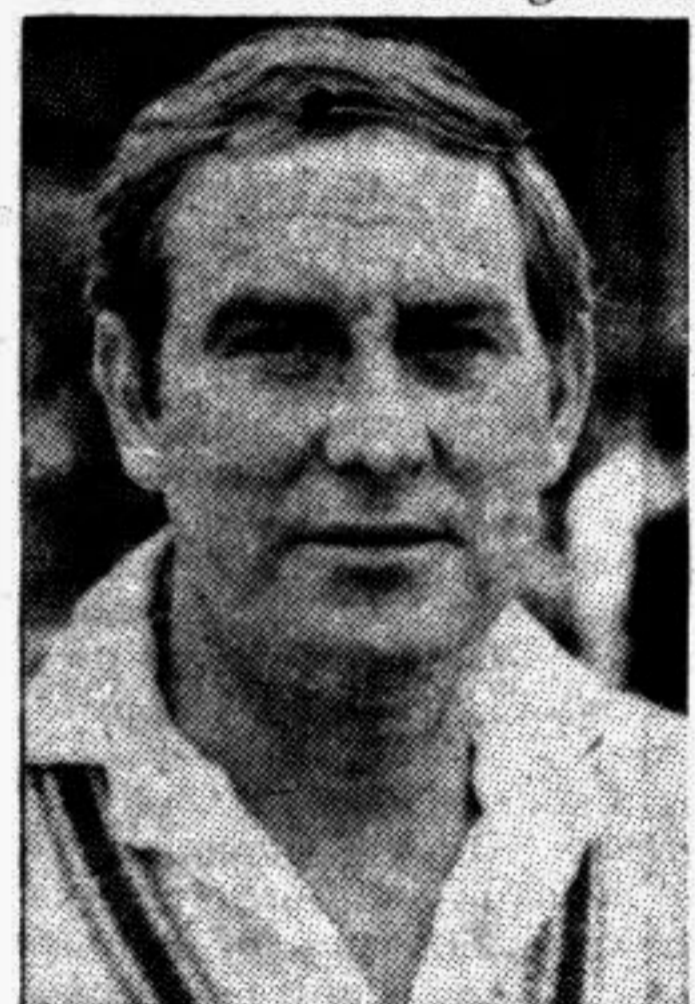
ACOG has bountiful supplies of tickets for some sports, such as soccer and baseball, that traditionally are a tough sell in the Olympics. Those tickets could be offered as lottery prizes, and some high-demand such as for the opening ceremony and track and field finals — could be grand prizes.

ACOG officials emphasized that the Georgia Lottery benefits a good cause — education.

Illingworth irate

LONDON, May 18: England cricket supremo Ray Illingworth has been stung by criticism of his man-management skills by a sponsor who is not renewing a one million pounds sterling (dollar 1.57 million) deal, reports Reuter.

Patrick Whittingdale, head of a London fund management



firm, explained his decision to end the sponsorship by launching a thinly-veiled attack on Illingworth for his treatment of captain Mike Atherton and pace bowler Angus Fraser.

Whittingdale's money has been used since 1991 to help both England senior and A teams prepare for their tours. Whittingdale said: "Atherton has been treated appallingly in

the last two months. He has been made to grovel to retain the England captaincy. I also feel that criticism through the media of players from a distance is very bad management.

"Nor has the treatment of Angus Fraser been acceptable. I have been very close to Angus and saw the grand effort he made to get back from injury. His reward was to be told he was overweight."

"You are not going to get a highly motivated team under a captain who is undermined in the public view. I really don't think that under the current management we are going to go forward."

"Scolding your players through the press is very bad man-management in my opinion."

Illingworth, chairman of selectors and team manager, reacted to Whittingdale's remarks on Wednesday by saying: "How long has he been involved in the game on the inside? How long have I been involved?" he asked.

"I don't want to get into a slanging match. All I'm prepared to say is that we've had a lot of good sponsors over the years who are still with us and they don't try to run the game."

"Any sponsorship is welcome, of course, but not at any cost. What I feel is most irritating is all the criticism we're having and we haven't started yet."

Top 20 in World Cricket

From Mithu Zafar in Australia

AUSTRALIA'S series win against the West Indies not only confirmed her prowess as one of the most



Steve Waugh

balanced Test teams, but also displayed the batting and bowling talents of its individual players. Steven Waugh's magnificent double hundred in the final Test took him past Jimmy Adams as the number one batsman. He now holds a batting average of 47.23. His twin brother, Mark also silenced critics with a scintillating century and, along with Steve, built one of the most fascinating partnerships in Test cricket. He did not figure among the top twenty last time, but now is saddled in number 10. Both Michael Slater and David Boon have gone down the list, having played relatively unimpressive innings throughout the innings. Mark Taylor has lost his position among the top twenty, but given his talent and tem-

perament he is sure to be among the best sooner or later. In terms of batting average, Adams (72.8) is miles ahead of the rest. Brian Lara is a distant second with 55.68 and, like

Inzamam-ul-Huq, Sachin Tendulkar, Graham Thorpe and Salim Malik, retains his old position.

There has not been any appreciable change in the ratings for bowling. The top eight bowlers remain intact in their existing places. However, the star bowler during this period has been Paul Reiffel. He has jumped to the ninth position from 24th.

This was largely due to his wonderful display with the leather during the Australia-Windies series. Glenn McGrath, despite his vastly improved rating, could not hold on to his position. Although Curtly Ambrose is

still the number one bowler, he has lost some valuable points and is now closer to Waqar Younis (859). Vaas of Sri



Curtly Ambrose

Lanka still heads the bowling average with 18.92, closely followed by Younis with 19.16.

BATSMEN

1. S. Waugh (Aus)
2. J C Adams (WI)
3. Inzamam-ul-Huq (Pak)
4. B Lara (WI)
5. S Tendulkar (Ind)
6. G Thorpe (Eng)
7. S Malik (Pak)
8. M Atherton (Eng)
9. M Slater (Aus)
10. M Waugh (Aus)
11. G Kirsten (SA)
12. D Haynes (WI)
13. W Cronje (SA)
14. R Richardson (WI)
15. A J Stewart (Eng)
16. G Hick (Eng)
17. H Tillakaratne (SL)
18. A Flower (Zim)
19. D Boon (Aus)
20. M Azharuddin (Ind)

BOWLERS

1. C. Ambrose (WI)
2. W. Younis (Pak)
3. H Streak (Zim)
4. F de Villiers (SA)
5. S Warne (Aus)
6. A Kumble (Ind)
7. C Walsh (WI)
8. W Akram (Pak)
9. P Reiffel (Aus)
10. V Raju (Ind)
11. C McDermott (Aus)
12. A Donald (SA)
13. B McMillan (SA)
14. K Benjamin (WI)
15. C J Vaas (SL)
16. A Fraser (Eng)
17. D Gough (Eng)
18. C Matthews (SA)
19. M Hughes (Aus)
20. P DeFreitas (Eng)

Big guns move on smoothly

ROME, May 18: Austrian Thomas Muster celebrated the 600th match of his career on Wednesday by defeating Dutchman Jan Siemerink 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 in the second round of the Italian Open to maintain his unbeaten record on clay this year, reports Reuter.

Eighth-seeded Spaniard Sergi Bruguera, winner of the past two French Opens, continued his preparations for this year's tournament which begins in less than two weeks by defeating Jacco Eltingh, another unseeded Dutchman, 6-2, 4-6, 6-4.

Six seeds had fallen in the first round, including number one and defending champion Pete Sampras, who was beaten by Frenchman Fabrice Santoro in straight sets on Tuesday.

But the remaining big guns began to fire on Wednesday, third seeded Croatian Groan Ivanisevic cruising into the last 16 with a 6-4, 6-3 win over American Vince Spadea.

Seventh seed Muster, who has already won four clay court titles in 1995 and arguably the world's best player on the surface, pulled the match around after finding himself a set and a break down at 2-1 before a suspension for rain.

The Austrian, playing with his usual commitment and aggression, immediately broke fellow left-hander Siemerink when the match resumed after the delay.

He broke again in the 10th game and then had few problems in taking the decisive set to clinch his 24th consecutive win on clay.

"I'm prepared for that," Muster said.

First round defeats for Sampras, Jim Courier and Mats Wilander make Muster the only former Italian Open champion left in the draw. He won here at the Foro Italico in 1990.

Big serving Ivanisevic, a beaten finalist here in 1993, looks in good shape ahead of the French Open, an event in which he has never been beyond the quarter-final stage.

"People say I'm becoming a clay specialist and I am really enjoying playing on clay," he said, explaining his recent good form on the slower surface. "I feel good mentally and physically playing on it."

Second seed Michael Chang looked as if he would follow Sampras out of the tournament when he trailed Spaniard Tomas Carbonell 6-2, 2-0.

But the former French Open champion reeled off the next nine games and eventually ran out a 2-6, 6-2, 6-3 winner.

Andrei Medvedev of Ukraine beat US Davis Cup player Richey Reneberg 6-4, 6-4 to set up a third round meeting with Ivanisevic. Today's match will be a repeat of the German Open final last week when Medvedev enjoyed a crushing victory.

Italian Corrado Borroni, appearing in the main draw of an ATP event for the first time, followed up his first round win over Russian sixth seed Yevgeny Kafelnikov by beating fellow qualifier Roberto Carretero of Spain 7-6, 7-6.

Borroni will now play Sweden's Stefan Edberg, the 12th seed.



Italian Filippo Casagrande sprays champagne on the podium after winning the 5th, 182-km stage between Porto Beranati and Torretto Lido of the Giro d'Italia cycling tour on May 17. Casagrande edges past Dane Rolf Sorensen and Dutch Erik Breukink. — AFP/UNB photo