



TWO ADORED BAD BOYS: Super star Diego Maradona discusses a point with French idol Eric Cantona during a press conference in Paris on Sept 18 that unveiled plans for a worldwide soccer players union. — AFP/UNB photo

Bosman's final countdown!

LUXEMBOURG, Sept 19: Belgian footballer Jean-Marc Bosman will find out here on Wednesday if his five-year crusade to have UEFA's transfer rules declared illegal will be successful, reports AFP.

Bosman has been fighting a UEFA rule which entitles a club to claim a "training and promotion fee" if a player, even if he is out of contract, moves to a club in another European Union country.

In 1990, the rule led to the eventual collapse of Bosman's planned move from RC Liegeois to French Second Division Club, Dunkirk. The 31-year-old claims it goes against the free circulation of workers within the EU, one of the pillars of the 15-member community.

An Olympian Olympic Park

ATLANTA, Sept 19: A glittering pavilion, including an 8,500-seat amphitheater and a high-tech refuge for athletes and their families, will crown the Centennial Olympic Park, reports AP.

AT and T, already contributing about 40 million dollars as a major sponsor of the 1996 Summer Games and the park, unveiled plans Monday for the complex. It is the biggest of several attractions planned by corporate sponsors at the 21-acre park, which is now under construction.

Covering 1 and a half acres at the northern end of the park, the main feature of the AT and T structure will be a Global Olympic Village, which will have areas for athletes' families to watch the competition on television or just get away from the crowds.

Athletes from other countries — especially those whose families cannot accompany them to Atlanta — will be able to place long distance calls and get translation assistance.

"These young athletes tell us again and again how vital it is during training and competition to be able to reach out to their loved ones for support," said Peter de Tagvo, AT and T's Olympic director.

The village also will include areas for the public, including a technology exhibition, and for the media, organizers said. NBC, which holds broadcast rights for the Atlanta Games, will have a studio on site.

AT and T would not disclose how much it is paying for the park project.

Diego's dream in bloom



PARIS, Sept 19: Diego Maradona launched an international soccer players' union at a meeting on Monday, reports Reuter.

The former Argentine World Cup captain said the Aim of the International Association of Professional Footballers (AIFP) was to "promote and safeguard the interests of all professional footballers in the whole world at the professional as well as social level."

Maradona, banned from playing until the end of this month after he failed a dope test at the 1994 World Cup finals, added: "We don't want Mr (Joao) Havelange (the international football federation president) or anyone else out. We just want the players to participate in everything that is being decided in soccer and in which the players so far had no say."

Maradona had been mooting the idea of a players' union for a long time but he said it had eventually materialised after talks with former French captain Eric Cantona, another black sheep of international soccer.

"Our priority will be the players, all the players," Cantona said.

The Manchester United striker has also been banned from playing until next month after he attacked a Crystal Palace fan in an English Premier league match last season.

"Football needs people to run it and football needs players. What we want is to create a dialogue between the two. We want it to be a peaceful dialogue because football is not war," he said.

"We want every decision that is made about football to be made with us and I'm surprised that such a union has waited for so long to emerge," Cantona added.

The moody French striker said the fact that the AIFP was launched at the initiative of two of the game's bad boys would not undermine its credibility.

"It is not just the two of us. There is a group of 15 players and we are in this group. We hope to represent soon thousands of players," he said.

Around Maradona and Cantona were, among others, Italian internationals Gianluca Vialli and Gianfranco Zola, Belgian goalkeeper Michel Preud'Homme, Frenchman Laurent Blanc, Liberia's George Weah, Brazil's Rai and Sweden's Tomas Brodin.

"We soon hope to have Hristo Stoichkov, Ruud Gullit and Lothar Matthaeus with us," said Maradona, who was elected president of the new organisation.

The idea of an international union for professional players was first launched at the 1986 World Cup finals in Mexico by Maradona, Spain's Jorge Valdano and Emilio Butragueno, who were protesting against early matches.

Cantona said the timetables and the tight schedules imposed on players would be one of the main issues the new union would deal with.

"We are forced to play 60 matches a year and it shows on the TV screens at the end of the season," he said.

But all the players said the union was only in its early stages and they had not yet decided which issues to discuss with soccer authorities.

"We are going to approach all the officials involved and see how we can cooperate," said Maradona.

Cantona declined to say how the union would be financed and where its headquarters would be.

Maradona was due to leave Paris today to attend a charity match in Istanbul. He is scheduled to resume playing with Argentina's Boca Juniors on September 30 in Seoul.

Meanwhile, football's governing body FIFA said Tuesday it had not yet officially recognised the new international footballers' association set up by Diego Maradona and other stars in Paris on Monday.

"We have not received any document concerning this new association," said a FIFA spokesman in Zurich.

He said FIFA wanted to know more about the structure and objectives of the association before making a decision, especially as players were already represented at different levels of the administration.

English summer ends



LONDON, Sept 19: Mike Gatting's attempts to contrive a win in Middlesex's final match of the season against Somerset were thwarted by the rain on Monday, the closing day of the English County Championship, reports Reuter.

It mattered little in the final tide of affairs with Warwickshire already having clinched the title for the second successive season on Saturday and Northamptonshire's hopes of sneaking ahead of Middlesex in to second place disappearing in the rain at Hove.

Gatting desperately tried to engineer a result at Taunton, deploying batsman Mark Ramprakash and wicketkeeper Keith Brown as his opening attack in an effort to gift Somerset enough runs to set a target.

The home side duly added 221 in 39 overs to reach 323 for seven before declaring and setting Middlesex 350 to win.

Opener Paul Wekes hit an enterprising 79 but Middlesex were checked when off-spinner Jeremy Batty took four quick wickets. They had reached 262 for six when rain played the final hand.

Northampton were unable to make even a bid for a result when the weather prevented a ball being bowled on.

CHAMPIONS' CHART

English County Championship

Winners: Warwickshire Runners-up: Middlesex Third: Northamptonshire Fourth: Lancashire

Fifth: Essex

NatWest Trophy

Winners: Warwickshire Beaten finalists: Northamptonshire

Semifinalists: Glamorgan and Yorkshire

Benson and Hedges Cup

Winners: Lancashire Beaten finalists: Kent

Semifinalists: Worcestershire and Somerset

Sunday League

Winners: Kent Runners-up: Warwickshire

Third: Worcestershire Fourth: Lancashire

The final day of their match against Sussex and they had to settle for third place in the championship.

Beijing keen to host swimming meet

LONDON, Sept 18: China, who pulled out of the last swimming World Cup, have offered to stage a meeting in the next series in January, event organisers said on Monday, reports Reuter.

Paul Bush, British representative on the World Cup committee, said national federations involved in running the series were considering the unexpected offer.

French coordinators for the annual short course series, which will be contested next January and February, said a decision would be made when all had given their views.

China last staged a World Cup meeting in Beijing in 1994.

Row over mini skirts!

HARARE, Sept 19: Angry female students are upset after university officials banned them from wearing mini skirts and shorts while the All-Africa Games are going on, reports AFP.

College authorities are reportedly worried that the students, who are helping out in the athletes village, could provoke the competitors if they revealed too much.

With temperatures soaring the girls must wear long skirts.

"This is dictatorial. The rule is out of touch with the spirit of the Games as people are supposed to wear sports attire but we are expected to be draped in these long skirts," complained one female student.

FIFA rankings

ZURICH, Sept 19: (AFP) FIFA football rankings published on Tuesday (August position in brackets):

Table with 2 columns: Country and Points. Brazil 68.42, Spain (3) 59.69, Germany(4) 59.28, Norway (2) 58.86, Italy (6) 58.10, Argentina (5) 57.80, Denmark 57.51, Russia 56.75, Mexico (10) 54.93, Switzerland (11) 54.41, Bulgaria (12) 54.40, Portugal (9) 54.17, Colombia 53.53, Romania 53.14, Sweden 52.84, France (18) 52.83, Netherlands 51.25, USA (19) 50.09, Czech Rep(27) 49.32, Ireland (16) 49.26, Egypt 48.95, Uruguay (20) 48.68, Zambia(26) 47.57, Scotland (23) 47.56, Ghana (24) 47.53, England(22) 47.04, Tunisia(25) 46.83, Poland 46.75, Turkey (31) 46.43, Greece 46.30

Samaranch visits

Olympic sites

GAINESVILLE, USA, Sept 19: International Olympic Committee president Juan Samaranch continued his tour of 1996 Olympic venues Monday, praising the sites for rowing, canoeing and kayaking events, reports AP.

"This is one of the best I've seen in my life," Samaranch said, surrounded by Atlanta Olympic officials and local organisers.

McRae in second

Colin McRae on Saturday underlined his intention to win the World Rally Championship with a superb display of driving, finishing Day Two of the Rally of Australia in second place says a press release.



McRae and co-driver Derek Ringer, last year's winners of this event, are now set for a fierce showdown with the man who has won this rally on four previous occasions — Finland's Juha Kankkunen. Kankkunen currently leads the British driver by 17 seconds.

McRae's performance was the high point of an otherwise disappointing day for the 555 Subaru world rally team — with the retirements of both Carlos Sainz and Possum Bourne.

Sainz and co-driver Luis Moya holed their radiator when they hit a fallen tree branch on rally's longest stage — the 45km Stage Eight. They nursed the car 32km to the end of that stage and through the next before their engine finally failed at the start of Stage Ten.

Magic in Mutola's feet



HARARE, Sept 19: Maria Mutola won the 800m gold medal in the All-Africa Games here Monday and then celebrated in unique style by extending her victory lap all the way to the stadium's presidential box, reports AFP.

After cruising to victory, she did the traditional lap of honour and then veered off the track and mounted the steps to the presidential box to receive the congratulations of Mozambique President Joachim Chissano.

Track officials, who had never witnessed anything like its before, were thrown into confusion.

There was also confusion in the results service.

The 22-year-old gave a performance of polished front running to win from teammate Argentina Paulino and Kutre Dulech of Ethiopia in an unofficial time of 1 min 56.99 sec.

But when the officials' result came through, it was only 2:01.06 however Mutola, by far the biggest track star to appear here after a host of top African athletes decided to give the Games a miss, was delighted at simply taking the gold.

"I'm always proud to represent my country because they need someone like me to succeed. It gives them hope," she explained.

The only blemish on the season was her controversial disqualification in the World Championships in August for stepping out of her lane.

Mutola was the first black African to win a world title when she ran to victory in Stuttgart two years ago.

But she might never have found fame had it not been for Mozambique's poet laureate Jose Craverinhas, who spotted how fast she could run on the football field.

He suggested she try athletics and was Mozambique's 400m and 800m champion merely weeks later.

Her success blossomed since she secured a scholarship to the University of Oregon, thanks to a grant from the Olympic solidarity fund, which provided the right kind of coaching.

Okkert Brits, way ahead of the rest of the field, secured the pole vault gold medal on his second jump and said: "I'm bored to death."

The South African, the third man in the world to clear 6.00m made 5.5m, enough to win gold, then failed at 5.80m.

But Brits would not have been so bored if he had seen the official scoresheet.

The official result stated he had cleared 5.95m — the same height he cleared to beat five-times world champion Sergey Bubka of Ukraine in Berlin earlier this month. Kersey Gardenne of

over," Onyali told reporters at the Games. "It is unfair, we are harassed."

Onyali won the 200 metres final in 22.75 seconds to clinch a sprint double at the Games. She also ran in the 4x100 relay, which Nigeria won.

Onyali said a dramatic rise in drug testing for Nigerians began in 1992 after several of them tested positive for banned substances.

On Monday, Onyali got into trouble with doping officials when she took water from her pack after the 200 race and before submitting her urine sample.

MEDALS TABLE

Partial medals table on Monday at the end of Day Six of the All-Africa Games in Harare. Not all medals are included because of problems with the results computer. (tabulate under gold, silver, bronze, total):

Table with 4 columns: Country, G (Gold), S (Silver), B (Bronze), T (Total). South Africa 24 26 15 65, Nigeria 20 11 12 43, Egypt 19 13 17 49, Kenya 8 7 10 25, Algeria 7 7 14 28, Tunisia 5 6 10 21, Zimbabwe 4 3 9 16, Senegal 4 3 5 12, Gabon 2 0 4 6, Ethiopia 1 5 6 12, Mauritius 1 4 5 10, Mozambique 1 1 0 2, Sierra-Leone 1 0 1 2, Burundi 1 0 0 1, Ghana 0 4 2 6, Ivory-Coast 0 3 1 4



The victorious Nigerian sprinters Mary Onyali (c), Calister Ubah (R) and Kate Jheagwan who finished a unique one, two, three in the 200 metres final of the All-Africa Games acknowledge the fans in Harare on Sept 18. Onyali won the gold clocking 27.75 sec. — AFP/UNB photo

It was a perfect finish to a season that saw Mutola retain here indoor world title in March.

She also ran a 1,000m world record in Brussels this year before claiming the IAAF individual Grand Prix title in Monte Carlo earlier this month, earning her 100,000 dollars.

Mauritius came second and Sameh Farid of Egypt third to win the minor medals.

Nigerian sprinter Mary Onyali accused track officials around the globe of harassing Nigerian athletes over alleged dope use.

"They are testing us like hell, in Europe, in the United States, here in Africa, all

Table with 4 columns: Country, G, S, B, T. Cameroon 0 2 4 6, Lesotho 0 1 2 3, Burkina Faso 0 1 0 1, Central Africa Rep 0 1 0 1, Madagascar 0 0 4 4, Angola 0 0 3 3, Namibia 0 0 2 2, Congo 0 0 1 1, Swaziland 0 0 1 1, Tanzania 0 0 1 1, Uganda 0 0 1 1

China hopes against hope



JAKARTA, Sept 19: Chinese competitors will have no problem passing drug tests at the Asian Athletics Championships despite a new doping scandal for the country, a Chinese sports leader said Tuesday, reports AFP.

Chinese runner Du Xiuji was tripped of her World Student Games silver medal after failing a test at the Games in Fukuoka, Japan last month, the International University Sports Federation (FISU) announced in Brussels.

But Huang Zhi, secretary general of the Chinese Athletic Association, told that he expected no drug problems at the Jakarta championships from Wednesday to Saturday.

"I think we should pass because we are very strict with the doping. We should pass the control," Zhi said.

FISU said it had been informed by the Mitsubishi Kagaku bio-clinical laboratories in Tokyo that traces of the stimulant strychnine had been found in Du's sample after the 400m.

"So, following the FISU medical regulations, FISU has disqualified the athlete," the governing body said in a statement.

Du retains the 200m gold medal she won two days before the 400m, a FISU official said, having provided a negative sample for that event.

The failure came at a bad time for China as it expects a strong performance at the Asian Championships — where it is led by Wang Junxia, the world 10,000m record holder — in a new attempt to forget its drug failure nightmare at the Asian Games in Hiroshima last year when 11 Chinese competitors failed tests.

But an athletics official in Beijing denied that the fifth Chinese competitor to be caught using drugs this year

proved China had failed to bring drug use under control. "It's an isolated case and Du Xiuji is not a member of the national team, said an official who insisted recently instituted laws cracking down on drug use would be enforced.

Meanwhile, Indonesian business tycoon Mohamad (Bob) Hasan was Tuesday elected unopposed to a sec-

ond four-year term as president of the Asian Amateur Athletics Association (AAAA).

Contenders from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia withdrew their nominations and Hasan commented.

Hasan said the AAAA was considering offering incentives to winning athletes in an attempt to make the Asian Championships more prestigious.

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ANNALS AT A GLANCE. Highlights of the English County Championship season: Highest individual scores: 255 Aravinda de Silva (Kent) v Derbyshire, 254 n.o. Andrew Symonds (Gloucestershire) v Glamorgan, 235 Mark Ramprakash (Middlesex) v Yorkshire, 230 n.o. Steve James (Glamorgan) v Leicestershire, 228 n.o. Darren Bicknell (Surrey) v Nottinghamshire. Best innings bowling: 9-19 Mark Ilett (Essex) v Northamptonshire, 9-41 Peter Hartley (Yorkshire) v Derbyshire, 9-43 Dominic Cork (Derbyshire) v Northamptonshire, 9-76 Jagavall Sinath (Gloucestershire) v Glamorgan, 8-47 Chris Cairns (Nottinghamshire) v Sussex. Best match bowling: 15-83 Chris Cairns (Nottinghamshire) v Sussex, 14-105 Mark Ilett (Essex) v Northamptonshire, 14-177 Alan Walker (Durham) v Essex, 13-93 Dominic Cork (Derbyshire) v Northamptonshire, 13-150 Jagavall Sinath (Gloucestershire) v Glamorgan. Highest team totals: 781-7 dec Northamptonshire v Nottinghamshire, 696-6 dec West Indies v Hampshire, 692-8 dec West Indies v England, 670-7 dec Worcestershire v Somerset, 662-7 dec Essex v Hampshire. Lowest team totals: 46 Northamptonshire v Essex, 59 Northamptonshire v Surrey, 67 Leicestershire v Warwickshire, 83 Leicestershire v Worcestershire, 85 Durham v Kent.

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