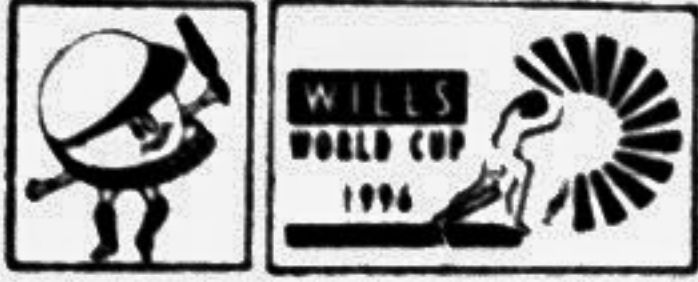


Convincing inconvenience



ISLAMABAD, Feb 1 (AFP): Roger Twose cannot be accused of playing in the World Cup under a flag of convenience.

Rather, perhaps, one of inconvenience. Playing for a New Zealand side beaten black and blue by all-comers over the past 12 months cannot be a comfortable experience.

The Englishman, however, is no trigger-happy mercenary for hire.

Twose has been playing cricket in Kiwi country for seven years. His girlfriend is a New Zealander. His sister lives there and he has bought a home in Wellington.

Even more convincing, he will lose money by making the switch.

As he explains: "Financially it's no contest but going to New Zealand isn't a matter of finances. It's whole-of-life decision, not made purely on cricketing grounds."

Twose — a nephew of former England wicket-keeper Roger Tolchard — leaves behind a lucrative contract with English champions Warwickshire, where he has blossomed over the past few years.

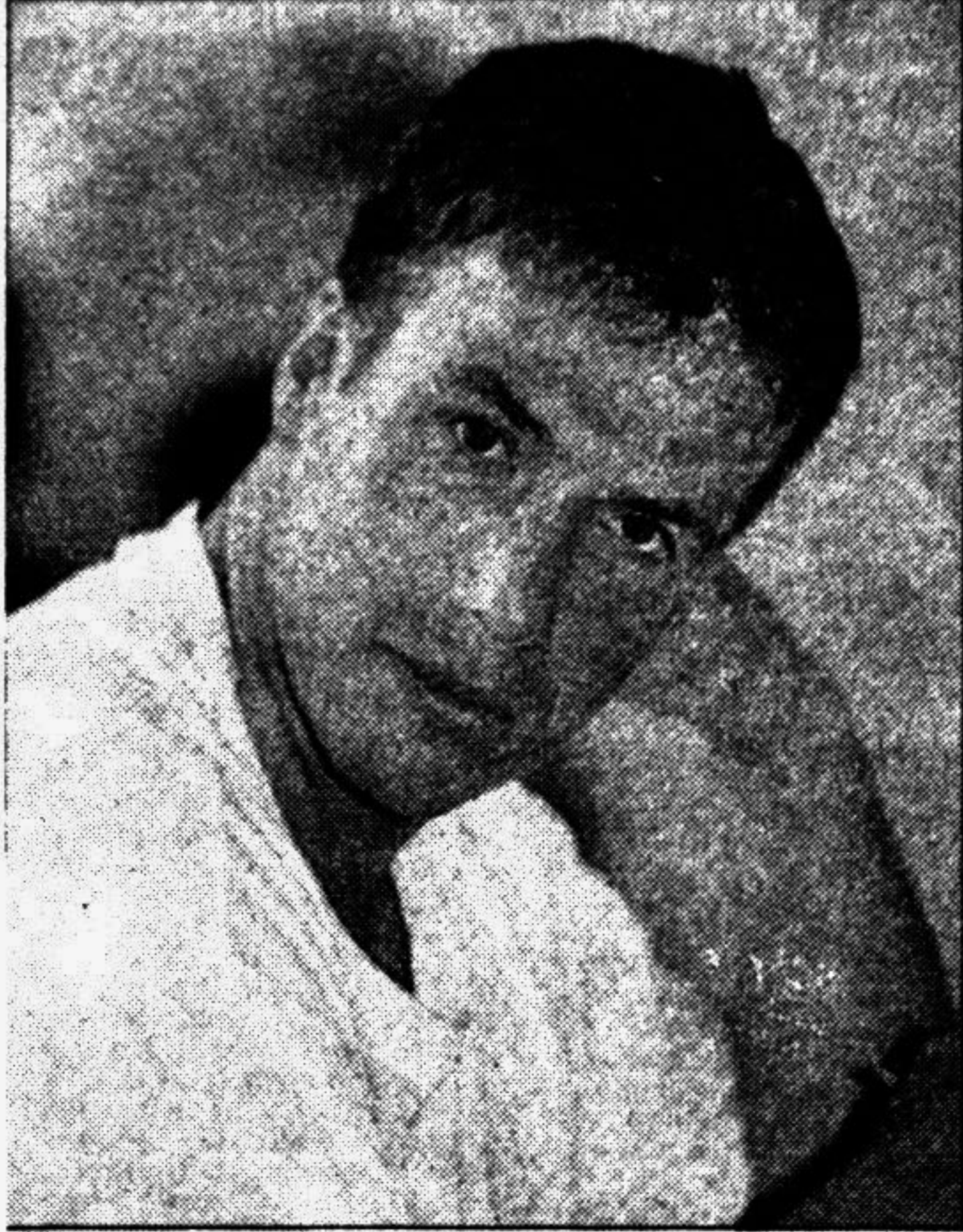
A left-handed opener, he is also a committed accumulator of runs (around 4,000 of them in his last two English seasons). Nothing very pretty about him, but hard to root out. Just the sort of foil the likes of stroke-makers Stephen Fleming, Chris Cairns and the untested Nathan Astle.

And, on balance, a better player than Brian Lara.

That was Twose's tongue-in-cheek greeting to the great West Indian when he arrived at Edgbaston after his world record Test innings of 375 against England. On his dressing room peg Lara found a note: "For the world's second-best left-hander."

Twose then scored 227

against Glamorgan in the first match of the season, while Lara could only manage a highest level, including a creditable 59 and 37 in the one-off Test against Pakistan



ROGER TWOSE

century — but within weeks Lara had the last laugh with an unprecedented 501 not out against Durham.

At international level, Twose began his career controversially but is learning fast.

Picked for the New Zealand squad to play in India, his first contribution was to call Sanjay Manjrekar a cheat during the one-day cricket international in Nagpur after the fielder caught Chris Cairns while previously close to the boundary rope.

But he then put together the odd score lower down the order suggesting he will be able to compete at the

in Wellington and an important 41 that helped the side level the one-day series.

That was followed by 94 as an opener and a 214-run opening stand with Craig Spearman in the second Test against Zimbabwe in January.

If Twose does make the team for New Zealand's World Cup opener, he will appropriately — play against England.

Twose, whose father and brother both played for his native Devon, will relish the experience. "It will be a special game," he says, "I was born in England — in a car in Torquay in 1968 — and I love the place."

IFA Shield soccer Mohammedans in semis

Sports Reporter

Striker Imtiaz Ahmed Naqib struck twice as Mohammedan Sporting Club stormed into the semifinals of the 101 IFA Shield football championship with a thumping 3-0 victory over Nepal police at the Kanchanjanga Stadium in Shilliguri, India yesterday.

According to a faxed message received here last night, Mohammedans, playing in Group B in the prestigious meet, became the first team to confirm their place in the last four with two successive wins.

The black and whites, who had earlier beaten TATA football Academy 2-1 in their inaugural match on January 27, came up with more motivation yesterday to roll up a helpless Nepal outfit.

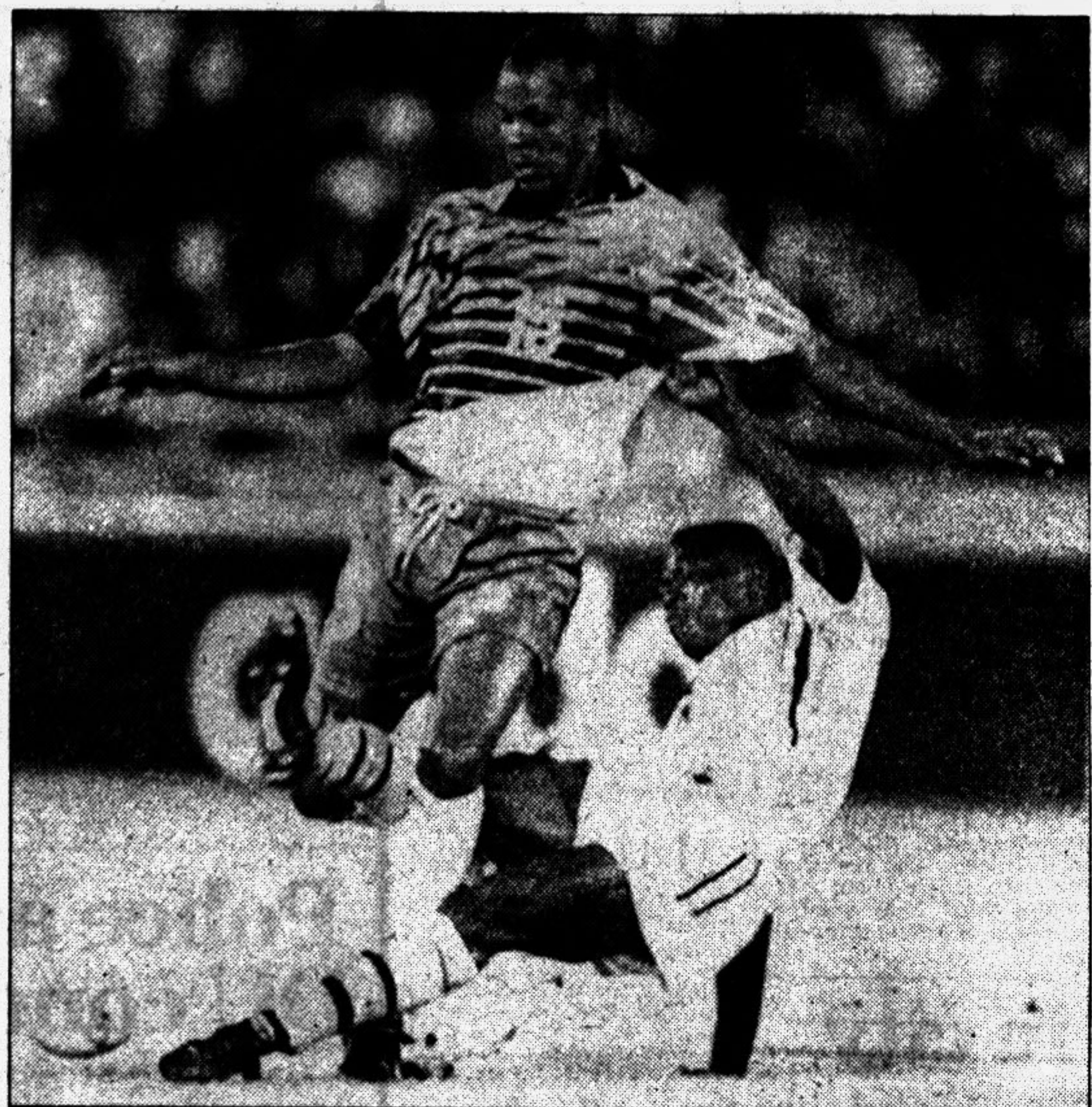
Naqib opened the winners account in the 39th minute, stabbing the ball home from close while Masud Rana, the handsome national mid-fielder, doubled the margin at the stroke of the lemon break for a 2-0 lead.

Naqib then blasted his second goal in the lop-sided affair six minutes from the final whistle to complete the Nepal rout. It was his third goal in the tourney.

Mohammedans, who have been placed in the same group with East Bengal, TATA Football Academy and Nepal Police, will play their last group league engagement against favourites East Bengal tomorrow.

Although the final league match will be of little significance for Mohammedans, but for East Bengal, who suffered a humiliating 4-0 defeat at the hands of TATA in their previous match, it is a matter of survival. They must win for a place in the semifinals.

However, East Bengal, a scintilla in the Indian football scene, have re-ropped two Bangladeshi players — Monem Munna and Mizan — in a desperate bid to win the crucial match.



Ghana's Samuel Kuffour enforces a nasty tackle against South African Doctor Khumalo in the semifinal match of the African Nations' Cup in Johannesburg on Jan 31. South Africans rushed to finals with the score 3-0. — AFP/UNB photo

Faustino's fate yet undecided

NEWCASTLE, Feb 1: The future of Faustino Asprilla remained shrouded in doubt here on Wednesday after Newcastle refused to confirm they had signed the controversial Columbian striker from Italian side Parma, reports AFP.

The 26-year-old Asprilla appeared to be on the verge of signing for the Premiership leaders last week but reports have surfaced in England and Italy that the 6.7 million pound move (about 11 million dollars) was dead.

A Parma press spokesman earlier denied reports in the Italian press that Newcastle were backing out of the deal.

He said: "There is no problem as far as we are concerned. Asprilla signed a contract with Newcastle and therefore he will play in England." But Newcastle chief executive Freddie Fletcher emerged from a lengthy board meeting at ST James's Park to deliver a tense "no comment."

A spokesman for the British department of employment did confirm they had received a request for a work permit for the player.

"Newcastle submitted an application for a work permit for Asprilla on Monday and we are working on that," said a spokesman.

S Africa, Tunisia set for final

JOHANNESBURG, Feb 1: Two goals from "Shoes" Moshoeu and another by Sean Bartlett

earned debutants South Africa a place in the final of the African Nations' Cup with a 3-0 victory over 10-man Ghana here on Wednesday, while giantkillers Tunisia continued to confound tipsters as they ousted fancied Zambia 4-2 in the other semifinal, reports AFP.

Moshoeu scored twice, to make him second top scorer, on four behind Zambia's Kalusha Bwalya, and Sean Bartlett hit the other.

Ghana's Coventry striker Nil Lamptey was also sent off for tackle from behind with four minutes left to further weaken the West Africans.

It was a match of contrasts. Ghana rarely looked four-times champions and a dominant South Africa hardly looked a nation only recently readmitted into the international arena.

Ghana missed their injured playmaker Torino's Abedi Pele, who was ruled out with a left ankle injury by the quarterfinal.

But South Africa were unchanged and looked assured and confident in front of 80,000 spectators at the FNB Stadium.

In the ninth minute, midfielder Eric Tinkler hit a screaming freekick just wide of keeper Simon Addo's left hand post as South Africa began to get on top.

Hgwever, a schoolboy er-

ror by Lucas Radebe, who hit a ball across the defence straight into the path of Anthony Yeboah, could have been costly.

But, fortunately for Radebe and South Africa, Yeboah had trouble controlling the ball and shot wide of Andre Arendse's left-hand post.

Then Moshoeu opened the scoring with a spectacular overhead kick in the 22nd minute following a corner from Doctor Khumalo, which bounced off Mark Fish's chest.

A minute after the goal, Mark Williams shot from a Bartlett cross from the right flank just wide of the post, and Bartlett had a header tipped over in the 37th minute, but he was ruled offside.

Moments after the start of the second half, South Africa hit a killer blow.

Radebe hit a long ball into the path of Bartlett, who despite the attention of two defenders, hit a crisp shot to the top left hand corner of Simon Addo's goal for their second.

From then on, the match slipped away from Ghana with the usually rampant Yeboah, well man-marked by his Leeds United teammate Radebe, almost invisible.

Bartlett, who unfortunately may miss the final after Leeds' Phil Masinga comes back from suspension, squandered a golden opportunity from six yards with half an hour to go.

Defender Mark Fish, the target of top European clubs, had two chances, and keeper

Simon Addo, who saved Ghana from perhaps a 5-0 thrashing, pushed a Tinkler freekick on to a post with 20 minutes left.

Yeboah hit the side netting late on, but it was all one-way traffic.

Then Moshoeu slipped through Ghana's defensive line, and with just Addo to beat, took his time to carefully slot the ball into the net with two minutes left.

Away in Durban Adel Sellimi (2), Zoubeir Beya and Kaies Godhbane scored for Tunisia, and Dennis Lota and Hillary Makasa got the goals for Zambia.

Tunisia equalled their best performance — in the 1965 final, Tunisia lost 3-2 to Ghana after extra-time.

Before the tournament, Tunisia were not expected to qualify from their group which consisted of Ghana, Ivory Coast and Mozambique.

Delighted Tunisian coach Henri Kasperczak, a French-born Pole, said after the win: "We deserved our victory today. The young new blood is writing a new chapter in Tunisian football."

"To reach the final is to realise our dream. From here we can only get better. To win will be the ultimate reward."

The win will help wipe away the memory of humiliation by media and spectators two years ago when hosts Tunisia failed to get through their group when they were tipped to reach the final.

Zambia, who seemed lethargic and lacking in

ideas, had the consolation of reaching their third semifinal since 1990.

But Danish coach Roald Poulsen, who said overconfidence was part of their downfall, added: "We let in at least two silly goals and the third one just after half-time killed us. Credit must go to Tunisia who defended well and attacked on the break at speed. We just couldn't cope."

Sellimi scored in a superb move out of the blue after 15 minutes.

Striker Mehdi Slimane shrugged off two defenders to cross from the by-line, and Sellimi, closely marked by Harrison Choongo, got the faintest of touches to guide the ball inside James Phiri's right hand post.

Then on 28 minutes, Beya put Tunisia further ahead with his second goal of the tournament.

He struck a perfect freekick from the left into the top right hand corner of Phiri's goal.

Tunisia were well on top during the half as further efforts from Sellimi and Soufiane Feki were blocked by Phiri.

However just before the first goal, Zambia's Dennis Lota missed a great chance to put his side ahead.

Kalusha Bwalya, the tournament's top scorer with five, fed Lota on the right, but Tunisian keeper Chokri el Ouair did well to narrow the angle and block the shot.

Then Andrew Tembo missed a golden opportunity to pull on back as he miscued from 10 yards.

Organisers now at odds



HONG KONG, Feb 1: Sri Lanka's position as co-host of this month's cricket World Cup hung in the balance today as players and officials voiced fears for their safety after Wednesday's bomb blast which ripped through Colombo, reports Reuters.

Australia — one of the favourites to win the competition hosted jointly by Sri Lanka, Pakistan and India — would decide next week whether to withdraw from the Sri Lankan leg of the Cup, the Australian Cricket Board (ACB) said today.

Sri Lanka will host four teams — Australia, Zimbabwe, West Indies and Kenya — in the month-long tournament which starts on February 14 with games in Colombo and Kandy, in Central Sri Lanka.

However, Zimbabwe said the massive explosion, which killed 80 people and injured 1,400 on Wednesday, would not affect their participation in the Cup.

Several Australian players today expressed their concerns, one saying it was likely that Australia would now forfeit its February 17 match in Colombo unless other countries also refused to go there and the tournament's schedule was changed.

"I think that's probably the likely scenario," opening batsman Michael Slater told Australian television.

Pace bowler Craig McDermott, who has recently received a death threat from Sri Lanka, told Australian television, "Maybe it puts all games in Colombo in jeopardy, not just Australian games."

ACB chief executive Gra-

ham Halbish said security implications following the bombing would be discussed at its scheduled board meeting next Monday and Tuesday.

Halbish said the ACB was trying to gather as much information as possible from all available sources, including the Australian government, Sri Lankan authorities and the World Cup organisers.

"We'll provide a full briefing to our players at the training camp in Brisbane," Halbish said, referring to the three-day camp starting next Tuesday. "Our standard policy is that we will continue to monitor the security information."

Zimbabwe, who are currently touring New Zealand, were not concerned by the blast in Central Colombo, manager Denis Streak said.

"We've come from a war-torn country," Streak said. "Hopefully security will be good, we don't see it as a major problem. We're not going to get too concerned about it. You could get run over by a bus in the street — it's just one of those things."

Zimbabwe meet Sri Lanka in Colombo on February 21.

Sri Lanka team manager Duleep Mendis said his team, who have just completed an Australian tour, were notified of the blast during a farewell dinner in Sydney on Wednesday.

"It's very sad... I know the World Cup will go on and the matches are in Colombo — but it's up to them (the players) to decide," he told Australian television.

Australian players last week met to discuss concerns for their safety during the one-day tournament after the controversial home Test and one-day series against Sri Lanka and Pakistan over the

past three months. Wicketkeeper Ian Healy said in Sydney's The Daily Telegraph newspaper that the blast had put "the Sri Lankan leg of the World Cup in jeopardy, that's for sure."

"The bomb blast is not real surprise to me. It is why we were concerned in the first place," Healy was quoted as saying.

ICC chief executive David Richards told The Times in London today that he could not guarantee a player's safety and that security arrangements would be discussed again.

"It is obviously a volatile environment and some unpleasant things are happening, but I believe the committee is giving it as much professional attention as is needed," he said. "No one can give anyone absolute guarantees."

In recent years, bomb blasts in Sri Lanka have resulted in frightened players and international teams cutting short their tours.

In November 1992, five New Zealand players were allowed to return home on "compassionate grounds" after four people were killed by a suicide bomber outside the team's Colombo hotel.

In April 1987, a bomb explosion near the New Zealand team's hotel killed more than 100 people resulting in the tour being abandoned after just one match.

"We're just monitoring what's happening and will act accordingly if any instructions come through from the ICC or the World Cup organising committee," New Zealand cricket general manager Tim Murdoch told Reuters today.

New Zealand has no games scheduled in Sri Lanka.

BRTC's bumpy ride through Lalmatia

Sports Reporter

Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) Sporting Club earned full points in the Sonali Bank Second Division football league with a 2-1 victory over Lalmatia Club at the Mirpur Stadium yesterday.

Strikers Gias and Hameyet scored one goal each for the winners in the 4th and 33rd minutes while Khokon reduced the margin for Lalmatia in the 8th minute.

With yesterday's win, BRTC earned 21 points from 11 matches while Lalmatia remained with their 12 points from as many matches.

Two other matches of the day ended in draws. Jurain Janata and Basabo Tarun Sangha shared points with a 1-1 draw while the match between City Club and Avjatrack Malibagh was tied goal less.

This was the eleventh league encounter for all the four teams from which City Club earned 18 points, Avjatrack have 17 points while Jurain and Basabo earned 15 and 9 points respectively.

Seeds spend safe day

TOKYO, Feb 1: Top seed Monica Seles, showing no after-effects of the shoulder injury which forced her out of the doubles, cruised into the quarter-finals of the Pan Pacific women's indoor tennis tournament today, reports Reuters.

Seles, playing her first match since she won the Australian Open, defeated unseeded Romanian Irina Spirlea 6-4, 6-2 in 65 minutes.

Spirlea, 21, double-faulted at the end of the ninth game of the first to give Seles a decisive break and the Yugoslav-born American then coasted to victory.

Seles takes on eighth seed Iva Majoli of Croatia in the next round. Majoli defeated Brenda Schultz-McCarthy of the Netherlands 7-6 (8-6), 7-5.

In other second-round matches, 15-year-old Swiss Martina Hingis had an easy win over Ai Sugiyama, beating the unseeded Japanese 6-0, 6-3.

TODAY'S FIXTURES

Premiers Division cricket

Bangladesh Biman vs Kalabagan (K) (DS)
GMCC vs Wari Club (DCS)
Yamaha First Division

cricket league:
Ajax SC vs Khelaghar SKS (CCG)

Sonali Bank Second Division football league:
(Venue: Mirpur Stadium)

Mirpur Chalantika vs Rayer Bazar (11:45 am)
Adamjee SC vs Little Friends (1:15 pm)

Gandaria Famous vs Mahakhali Eleven (2:45 pm)

Progoti Insurance Third Division football league:
(Venue: Rajuk ground)

Kadamtala Sangsad vs Aminbazar KS (2 pm)
T&T Club vs Matuail JS (3:30 pm)



Swiss teenage sensation Martina Hingis makes a well-stretched backhand return against Ai Sugiyama of Japan in the second round of the Toray Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo yesterday. Hingis won the match 6-0, 6-3. — AFP/UNB photo

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