

### Murali expresses gratitude

**COLOMBO, Apr 19:** Sri Lanka's controversial off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan took out a newspaper advertisement today to thank fans who had supported him after Australian umpires no-balled him for throwing reports AFP.

Muralitharan, regarded as one of the best spinners in the world, in an advertisement in the Sinhala-language Lanka deepa said he received hundreds of thousands of letters from fans and was grateful for their encouragement.

"To the print and electronic media and the hundreds of thousands of fans who sent letter encouraging me and the team I am very grateful," Muralitharan said.

"I am sorry I am unable to thank them individually."

The Sri Lankan cricket board had said that although Muralitharan had a unique wrist action he was not a cheat.

However, Muralitharan was called by Australian umpires earlier this year, causing a major stir.

### Steffi denies any wrong-doing

**STUTTGART, Apr 19:** Tennis star Steffi Graf maintained her innocence as German prosecutors who filed tax evasion charges against her father vowed on Thursday to press ahead with their inquiry into her conduct, reports Reuter.

The Wimbledon champion, whose father Peter and one of his former advisers were charged on Wednesday with evading taxes on 42 million marks (27.9 million dollars) of her income, said she just wanted to concentrate on her tennis and had done nothing wrong.

"Any attempts to raise any doubts about this will come to no other conclusion," she said in a statement released to the Mannheim Morgen daily in her home region of southwest Germany.

Mannheim chief prosecutor Peter Wechsung said he was still investigating whether Graf, who put all her financial affairs in the hands of her father, had failed over several years to provide a valid tax declaration.

"We have no evidence of any active (criminal) involvement by Stefanie Graf," he said. But he said his investigators would look again carefully at the statements she had made before deciding whether to bring charges against her.

He indicated that the signature on at least one of her tax forms might have been done by a machine for reproducing autographs.

Graf made no mention of that but denied she had given any false information to tax authorities.

"I hope that the original accusations against me will be dealt with by the relevant authorities and not by certain members of the press," she said. "I would like to be able finally to concentrate on my tennis once again."

Lawyers for Peter Graf said they had asked for a review of the arrest warrant, which has kept him in investigative custody in a Mannheim jail since last August.

But Wechsung said: "We believe that the reason for arrest namely that he may flee, is still valid."

He applied for the warrant to remain in force when he filed charges against Peter Graf and his ex-adviser Joachim Eckardt accusing them of evading or trying to evade some 19.6 million marks (13 million dollars) in taxes.

A spokesman for the Mannheim court which will handle the case said it was still unclear when a trial could start. The accused face up to 10 years in jail if found guilty.

### Pippig released

**BOSTON, Apr 19:** Boston Marathon winner Uta Pippig left the hospital Thursday after spending three nights undergoing tests and treatment following her record third consecutive victory in the race on Monday and said she would soon resume training, reports Reuter.

"I just should relax a little bit more and I can run again," the top-ranked women's marathoner told reporters.

Pippig overcame dehydration caused by diarrhoea and menstrual cramps to claim a come-from-behind victory in the 100th Boston Marathon, overtaking Kenya's Tegla Loroupe in the final mile (1.6 km).

The German medical student, looking healthy and smiling, said she was aiming next for the marathon at the Olympic Games in Atlanta this summer.

Pippig said she considered dropping out of the Boston marathon and said she never expected to win.

"If I lose, I would try to make it as close as possible ... 30 seconds, 29 seconds, and then when I took the lead it was more than I ever expected," she said.

"If you are an emotional person and you have a fantastic crowd, you can fly," she said.

Her coach and companion, Dieter Hogen, said pressure win the race and from the media contributed to her illness and led to her stay at Boston University Hospital.

Hogen said they planned to spend a few days in the Boston and were looking forward to a four-month vacation following the Olympics.

## CONCERN OF AN EX-CRICKETER

**INTERVIEW**  
**Sports Reporter**  
In a world of evolution marked by rapidly changing patterns, the game of cricket has still remained committed to a particular trend or two. Professionalism is one such aspect that has had a holistic impact on the noble and traditional game and its intensity can only heighten in the days to come.

More than anywhere else, in the complex and diverse structure of cricket today, the need of professionalism is felt in the managerial job. Saddled with the twin burden of making the team perform better all the time as well as stand responsible for every failure, he is an unenviable yet an essential job. Unfortunately this reality is yet to dawn on the cricket bosses here.

Moreover, when most of the cricketing nations are taking this particular aspect very seriously as a means to improve their standard, the never-ending trend of choosing and chopping managers in our country is still a common phenomenon.

And, with the last ICC debacle still haunting millions of sports lovers in the country, the Bangladesh Cricket Control Board (BCCB), the governing body of local cricket, is yet to censure the failed Kenya mission.

"No doubt, cricket in our country has come a long way. We have our Talents, but what we still miss is a long-term motivational manager to make



In the first international match in Bangladesh between MCC and North Zone at Rajshahi in December, 1976, ASM Faruq is sitting third from right.

while elaborating our prospects in cricket said, "Being a cricketer I'm proud of the recent successes achieved at home by our boys. But there is a lot more to be done for the betterment of our cricket."

Replying to a query, the lanky middle-order batsman of yesteryears defended, "I'm not blaming anyone in particular. When I was in the Board we had faced the same problem. But the quota system of choosing managers must be stopped for the sake of cricket." A joint-secretary of the BCCB during the era of KZ Islam in 1982, he was also the chairman of the selection committee till 1991 before the present ad-hoc body came into being.

A living witness of many spectacular events in the annals of the country's cricket, Faruq emphasised on the need for devoted and sincere persons to guide the national side at the international level.

### Kent hope to have Hooper back

**LONDON, Apr 19:** Kent said on Thursday they were hoping that overseas star Carl Hooper would be available to return for the start of the new season after all, reports AFP.

The 29-year-old all-rounder was recalled to the West Indies squad for the current Test series against New Zealand by new coach Clive Lloyd, but was left out of the 13 for the first Test and is now believed to be back in England.

Kent secretary Stuart Anderson said: "We were trying to reach Carl in the Caribbean to find out what his situation is. Now things have moved quicker than expected, and we are hoping to see him back with us in the near future."

Hooper missed last season because of Test duty in England and then pulled out of the World Cup due to "personal and health reasons."

### Botham speaks his mind

**LONDON, Apr 19:** Ian Botham, bitter at being beaten in his attempt to become an England selector, on Friday attacked successful candidate Graham Gooch, reports Reuter.

Former England captain Gooch and David Graveney, chief executive of the cricketers' association, were chosen by the first-class counties, MCC and minor counties on Thursday to fill two vacancies on the selection panel.

Botham, quoted in the Daily Mirror newspaper, asked: "Is there any reward for loyalty in this world? I spent the best part of 20 years answering the call of my country."

"When riches were spread in front of me to tempt me away to rebel tours of South Africa I always said no."

But Goochie went and took the money. Okay, he served a three-year ban, returned to the England team and not only became our record run-getter but captained us 34 times.

"I have great respect for him as a brave opening batsman. At times he carried England but I can't pretend it doesn't hurt to be beaten by someone who didn't always put his country first," said former England skipper Botham, who retired from the game in 1993.

Botham is also bitter about what he claims was a "dirty tricks" campaign to prevent his election.

The Lord's dirty tricks department did their best to derail my attempts to help revive English Test cricket by dragging the red herring of my Daily Mirror contract and TV work across the issue," he said.

There is just no way selection meeting secrets would have been divulged when it could affect England in a Test.

The public know the passion with which I have played for England. I care just as much now and it hurts deeply that people are mocking us and describing us as third raters on the Test circuit."

### Remarkable

**REYKJAVIK, Apr 19:** Father and son Arnor and Eldur Smari Gudjohnsen will create soccer history next week when they play for Iceland in a friendly against Estonia in Tallinn, the Icelandic daily Morgunblaðið reported on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Arnor, 35, plays for Swedish First Division side Orebro, while 17-year-old Eldur-Smari is on the books of Dutch club PSV Eindhoven.

### Div I h'ball

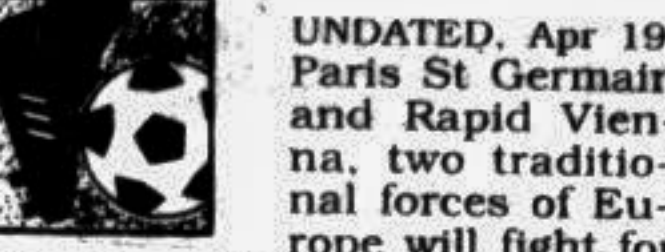
**Sports Reporter**  
Christian Youth Club out-gunned Nawabpur Sporting Club 27-9 in the lone Ashraf Real Estate First Division handball league encounter at the Dhaka Stadium handball court on Friday.

The winners led the first half 18-5. Abdul Quddus scored highest eight goals while Dulal and Lenat added six and four goals respectively to the Christian Youth tally. On the other hand, Sudhir scored six goals for Nawabpur.



Action from yesterday's Ashraf Real Estate First Division handball league encounter between Christian Youth Club and Nawabpur Sporting Club at the Dhaka Stadium handball court which the former won 27-9.

## PSG, Rapid enter final



**UNDATED, Apr 19:** Paris St Germain and Rapid Vienna, two traditional forces of Europe will fight for the Cup Winners' Cup after seeing off challenges from Deportivo La Coruna and Feyenoord in their respective semifinal, second leg fixtures on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Paris St Germain threw off their losing semifinalists tag by beating Deportivo Coruna of Spain 1-0 to reach the final after three successive failures in three years at the same stage.

A goal from Patrice Loko in the 58th minute took PSG through on an aggregate score of 2-0 and into a May 8 clash with Rapid in Brussels.

The match lacked excitement and inspiration but the result, sending PSG into their first ever European final, was enough to send the 44,000 fans at Paris' Parc des Princes stadium into jubilant celebrations and ironic choruses of "Viva Espana."

Paris St Germain had flopped in successive semifinals in the UEFA Cup, Cup Winners' Cup and European Cup in the last three seasons, failing to win a single match.

Deportivo Coruna had started menacingly enough. Javier Manjarin almost cancelling out PSG's first leg advantage when he headed against the bar in the ninth minute.

But there was precious little else from the disappointing Spanish side with Brazilian World Cup star Bebeto largely by-passed by the play, as he was in the match in Spain.

PSG seemed paralysed by fear themselves, doubtless haunted by their previous failures, and created few goal scoring chances though Pascal Nouma should have put them ahead in the 24th minute.

Laurent Fournier made a great run down the right and found Nouma completely unmarked on the left side of the box. The big striker had time to control the ball and advance but he failed at and blazed it over the bar.

Fournier had a good chance to score himself just after the interval but wasted it trying to cross to Patrice Loko, who was marked.

PSG finally got the goal they so badly wanted when Youri Djorkaeff played a through ball into the box for Loko to turn past his marker and slam it low to the right of Spanish keeper Paco Liano.

PSG trainer Luis Fernandez,

who raced on to the pitch to celebrate with his players when the final whistle went, said: "It's a historic day for the club. We're only 25 years old and we're already in our first European final. I couldn't be happier."

"We had a good result from the first leg but we had to hold on to it and consolidate it. The players were great — they went looking for this victory."

French side to qualify for a European final this week after Bordeaux reached the UEFA cup final on Tuesday but Nantes failed to make it a Grand Slam, bowing out to Juventus in the European Cup on Wednesday.

Fernandez added: "We were nervous in the first half. At halftime I told my players they had to shake it off. It was Loko's goal which finally liberated us."

"Rapid will be another difficult team. They're relatively unknown but a team which beats Feyenoord must have qualities. I've already had them watched in the Austrian league. They are a surprise but we must take them seriously."

Deportivo coach John Toshack said: "There were only five or six chances in the two matches but the difference

### IAAF annals ratified

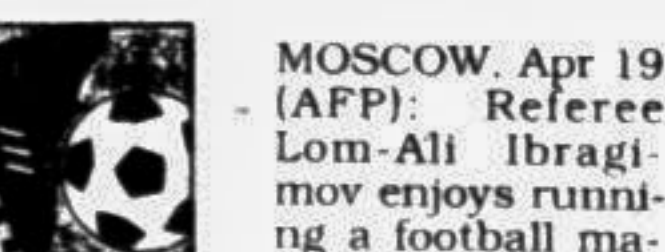
**MONACO, Apr 19:** The International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) said on Friday it had ratified the women's pole vault record of 4.41 metres set by Emma George of Australia in Perth on January 28, reports Reuter.

The IAAF also ratified the indoor women's record of 4.28 metres set by Caijun Shun of China and the 1,000 metres indoor time of two minutes 32.08 seconds achieved by Maria Mutola of Mozambique.

Mutola went on to better that record, achieving 2:31.23 on February 25 in Stockholm. The IAAF said they did not have all the documentation for the more recent record but it should be ratified in the next few weeks.

Three men's indoor world records were also recognised — Namibian Frankie Fredericks' 200 metres in 19.92 seconds and the 3,000 and 5,000 metres double of Ethiopia's Haile Gebrselassie in 7:30.72 and 13:10.98 respectively.

## A Russian ref's tale



**MOSCOW, Apr 19 (AFP):** Referee Lom-Ali Ibragimov enjoys running a football match so much that he is willing to risk a bullet in the head just to stay in shape.

Ibragimov, 44, who lives with his wife Taisia and their four children in Grozny, takes daily morning jogs through the besieged Chechen capital despite the danger of being shot by a sniper.

"If you live in Grozny, you see bombs being dropped, artillery shells and sniper bullets daily," Ibragimov said in an interview after refereeing the Spartak-Rotor match in Moscow.

"You try not to think about it every time you're out on a street, but of course you can never get used to the bombings and killings."

Ibragimov became a referee 10 years ago, after playing five seasons for the local First Division club Terek.

"Like most people in football, I wanted to remain loyal to the game even after retiring as a player. So I became a referee," he said.

His career choice has paid dividends, he has been rated one of Russia's top 10 referees for three successive years.

Ibragimov said that being part of the game has actually helped him in his regular travels to and from Chechnya.

"Crossing the border, I've never had any problems from either the Chechen or the Russian guards," he said.

### MLS result

**DALLAS, Apr 19:** John Kerr scored a goal and assisted on one, leading the Dallas Burn to a 3-0 victory over the Kansas City Wiz in a US Major League Soccer game Thursday night before 8,541 in the Cotton Bowl, reports AP.

Jason Kreis opened the scoring three minutes into the second half off assists from Kerr and Ted Eck.

Washington, Rodriguez, a second-half substitute, added an insurance tally in the 72nd minute, and Kerr chipped in the caper in the 85th, assisted by US Olympic player Brandon Pollard.

In a scoreless first half, the Wiz outshot the Burn 6-4. The Burn managed only four shots on goal in the second half, but three went into the back of the net.

Dallas improved to 2-0, and Kansas City fell to 1-1.

on important points to move the Swedish baseliner back and forth. He took one break lead when his backhand drop struck the net cord and went in, putting him up 2-1.

Enqvist broke back to even up at 2-2, but again, he had to storm to the net to pick up Woodforde's exquisite drop at 15-40 in the seventh game. The Australian calmly followed with a forehand passing shot for a clean winner, going on to take the first set.

Neither managed to break the other, though with Woodforde saving three break points and Enqvist saving four in the second set. After the score went to 5-5, the Swede collapsed fast.

Enqvist failed to bank in his first serve in the 11th game, and his three consecutive backhand errors gave Woodforde a triple break opportunity.

Woodforde's lob went wide on the following point, but he hit a deep return to force Enqvist into a forehand error, scoring the only break in the second set and virtually ending the Swede's hopes.

World number one Pete Sampras, who was stretched to beat Magnus Norman of Sweden Thursday, needed yet another tough time to beat Guy Forget of France 3-6, 6-3, 6-4.

The American top seed will take on Woodforde in the semifinal Saturday, vying for a second straight title following his victory in Hong Kong last weekend.

**Chavez's wake up call**  
**TOLUCA, Mexico, Apr 19:** World super-lightweight champion Julio Cesar Chavez says he'll move his training camp to Lake Tahoe next week in the wake of the killing of his longtime friend and sparring partner, reports AP.

"My team and I decided to go Lake Tahoe because we are still very upset by what happened to Baby," Chavez told reporters Thursday, referring to his late friend, Jesus "Baby" Gallardo. "In Toluca I can't be at peace."

Retired middleweight boxer Jesus "Baby" Gallardo was shot killed last Tuesday night along with a state government official. No one had been arrested in connection with the slayings as of Friday.

Gallardo 32, and Chavez had been training in Toluca, 55 kilometres west of Mexico City. In 1987, Gallardo was a title challenger for the super-middleweight crown.

was that PSG scored twice. I thought we deserved a 0-0 draw but PSG are a complete side with good players and I wish them luck for the final."

Toshack, rumoured in the Spanish media to be in a shaky position at his club, declined to discuss his future.

In Vienna, Rapid stormed into the final with a 3-0 victory over Feyenoord, helped by another outstanding performance by striker Carsten Jancker.

Rapid qualified for their second shot at a European title with a 4-1 aggregate win. Jancker scoring twice to add to his equaliser in the first leg.

He also set up the third goal for teammate Christian Stumpf as Rapid settled the issue by scoring three times in the first 34 minutes.

"We really wore Feyenoord down and they had no strength left after the break," said Rapid trainer Ernst Dokupil.

The home side took the lead in the second minute when Jancker stabbed home a corner by Dietmar Kuehnbauer from close range.

The visitors managed to lift their game briefly and Dutch international Ronald Koeman was only inches wide in the 31st minute with a 40-yard shot.

But Rapid quickly countered and a well-timed header from Jancker sent Christian Stumpf clear in the 32nd minute, a neat lob left Feyenoord goalkeeper Ed de Goeij stranded and sent the capacity crowd into rapture.

"We played an excellent match. We were determined not to settle for a 0-0 draw," Stumpf said.

Rapid put the game beyond doubt in the 34th minute when Jancker scored his second goal of the match and sixth of the tournament, driving the ball home from an Andrei Stetsko cross.

"The early goal boosted our confidence," Jancker said, adding he was looking forward to meeting Paris Saint Germain in the final.

Rapid goalkeeper and team captain Michael-Konsel was an unsung hero, keeping Feyenoord star Keman at bay throughout the second half and making sure none of the Rotterdam team's 13 shots translated into goals.

Elated after their responding win, Rapid players insisted victory in the final was not beyond them.

"We are the underdogs, we have nothing to lose. We want to reach for the stars in Brussels," said defender Peter Stoeger.

## Date stays on course



**TOKYO, Apr 19:** Australian doubles specialist Mark Woodforde eliminated third-seeded Thomas Enqvist today to earn a semifinal berth at the Japan Open, reports AFP.

Woodforde, who shocked the Swede in January's Australian Open quarter-finals in straight sets, repeated the performance with a 6-4, 7-5 victory.

"That was a big match," Woodforde said of his performance in Melbourne.

"He was expected to win that one, because he is ranked higher. So he was a little bit worried about something happening today, which did, I think he was on his back foot, and I was always controlling."

Woodforde said this is the best start to a year that he has ever had.

"I realised that it's no fluke — you are not just lucky to make it through that far. I believe now that I'm a little bit better than a good player, not just a doubles player, so that definitely helped me," he added.

On the women's side, local favourite Kijimuta Date lived up to her pre-tournament promise by reaching the final when she downed her compatriot and doubles partner, Ai Sugiyama, 6-1, 6-3.

In the final, Date will take on either defending champion Amy Frazier of the United