

# Maldini the magnificent

ROME, May 7 (Reuters): AC Milan's Paolo Maldini comes from one of Italy's most illustrious soccer families but genes alone did not make him one of the world's top defenders.

He will lead the national side at Euro 96 but says in a recent advertisement: "Just because my name is Maldini doesn't mean I was born a soccer player."

If someone breaks into the penalty area with the ball at his feet who do you think is going to stop him... my father?"

Father is Cesare, a former Milan and Italy captain who played 14 times for his country and has twice coached the country's under-21 side to the European title and is taking them to this summer's Atlanta Olympics.

He was also deputy to national coach Enzo Bearzot when Italy won the World Cup in 1982.

Maldini junior, who as a child dreamed the unpardonable family sin of playing up front for Juventus, has more than lived up to his daunting soccer legacy.

"All of my kids have given me satisfaction but Paolo has achieved more than I did, fighting off a heavy inheritance. He has clearly overtaken me," said Cesare Maldini.

There is not much that the 27-year-old Maldini, who played 12 matches in his father's under-21 team during the late 1980s, has not achieved in 11 seasons at Milan.

The graceful left-back has won three Serie A titles, one European Cup, two Intercontinental Cups, two Cup Winners' Cups and two European Super-cups.

With Milan's Franco Baresi retired from the international scene, Maldini is now Italy's most experienced player with

## Power lines to go before 2000 Games

SYDNEY, May 7: Sparked by an American executive's criticism of Sydney's unsightly power lines, the city is moving the cables underground in time for the 2000 Olympics, reports AP.

Five kilometres (about three miles) of overhead power lines and their massive steel-framed towers will be removed at a cost of about 32 million US dollars (40 million Australian dollars), Olympic officials said Thursday.

Dick Ebersol, president of NBC Sports, said during a visit to Sydney last August that the power lines were Sydney's only blemish. NBC has paid a record 715 million US dollars for the American television rights for the Sydney Games.



67 caps, having played in the teams that finished third and then runners-up at the 1990 and 1994 World Cups.



PAOLO MALDINI ... complete footballer. Makes defending look elegant.

# Balakov, Bulgaria's brain



Portuguese sojourn and he left for the new challenge of VFB Stuttgart in Germany on a two-year contract worth 3.5 million

marks (2.31 million dollars). Last year ended with him voted as Bulgaria's player-of-the-year for 1995.

After a bright start at Stuttgart some disappointment crept in to some of his mid-season performances, but the 30-year-old has too much talent to disappoint for long.

Currently the owner of 51 caps who has scored seven goals for his country, he is as ambitious as he is modest.

He is among the few members of the Bulgarian team who work hard not only in a match but also during training sessions.

He may be a quiet man compared to the better known Hristo Stoichkov, but his impact on his team can be every bit as important.

## BKSP in Nirman schools cricket final round

### Sports Reporter

Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan (BKSP) qualified for the final round of the 14th Nirman schools cricket tournament by virtue of making it to the Dhaka zonal semifinal with a four-wicket win over Government Laboratory High School at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

In a low-scoring encounter, BKSP, needing only 107 to win in 35 overs, sailed home losing six wickets and more than 12 overs to spare.

Opener Masud Parvez scored highest 31 of 43 balls inclusive of five boundaries while Mintu added an unbeaten 22 off 28 balls with four fours.

Earlier, put into bat, Govt Laboratory boys were bundled out for only 106 in 31.1 overs. Thanks to Mr Sandries, who contributed highest 21 to their account.

BKSP's new-ball bowler Sanjay captured three wickets for 18 runs while Imon, Shimul, Zakir, Kabir and Masud took one wicket each.

Both the Dhaka zonal semifinals will be held today with BKSP facing Maple Leaf International School at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium and Scholastica meeting Mirpur Bangla High School at the Residential Model School ground. All the four teams have already ensured their berths in the final phase like to begin in the capital from May 18.

### Azlan Shah Cup

### Brits baffle

### India

IPOH, Malaysia, May 7: Britain were made to struggle today for their 2-1 victory over defending champions India in the six-nation Sultan Azlan Shah Cup hockey tournament, reports AFP.

Chris Mayer scored the second goal for Britain in the 67th minute of the match after India's Prabhakaran Lakshman cancelled Britain's lead in the 50th minute. Russell Garcia opened account in the 46th minute.

India, who fielded their back-up squad for this tournament scored in the 14th minute through Rajneesh Mishra. However, umpire Gary Marsh disallowed the penalty-corner, as the ball was not properly stopped.

Britain, who had conceded eight goals in two matches, piled on the pressure with the young Indian side with their incisive passes but Indian keeper Edward Aloysi was superb between the posts.

Both teams stepped up the pressure and did more attacking in the second half.

India, who also lost their two earlier matches, were unaffected when Garcia put Britain ahead in the 46th minute.

They counter attacked and equalised four minutes later when Sukhbir Singh Gill made a swift run from the right flank for Prabhakaran to connect the cross.

But a lapse in the Indian defenders' concentration in the dying minutes of the match allowed Britain's John Shaw to capitalise. Mayer tapped in the pass to give Britain their first victory.

### Wang's superb double

BEIJING, May 7: Chinese world record holder Wang Junxia ran the year's fastest women's 10,000 metres to qualify for the Olympic Games today, the official Xinhua news agency said, reports Reuter.

Wang pulled away early to clock 31 minutes 01.76 seconds, well ahead of the previous year's best of 31 minutes 04.99 seconds by Portugal's Fernanda Ribeiro and the winning time at the World Championships in Gothenburg, Sweden, last year, Xinhua said.

The 22-year-old Wang who set the world record of 29 minutes 31.78 seconds in Beijing in 1993, was ranked fifth in the world last year at 31 minutes 23.24 seconds. She did not compete in the Gothenburg Games.

After chalking up the year's fastest time in the 5,000 metres on Sunday, Wang ran the first 8,000 metres of today's heat in eastern China's Nanjing city in 25 minutes 01.11 seconds and the final lap in 64.77 seconds.

"My goal is to beat last year's world best," she told Xinhua. "I believe I can do better in tomorrow's final."

Her coach Mao Dezhen said Wang had been asked to run a fast heat within 73 seconds per lap, but declined to reveal their plans for the final.

However, Wang seemed unhappy with her time, saying she had misread her time at the 13th lap and had slowed slightly.

### Gwen gets into top gear

ATLANTA, May 7: Gwen Torrence followed her spouse's advice to perfection, and the result was an American record.

"My husband (Manley Wailer) told me to run a 22.7, and that's what I did," Torrence said Friday after clocking 22.70 seconds during a 200-metre heat of the USA Mobil Indoor Championships before a sparse crowd at the Georgia Dome, reports AP.

# Sport

## Steffi's Roman romance



ROME, May 7: Dressed like a diva, world number one Steffi Graf breezed back into the Eternal City after a nine-year absence from the Italian Open on Monday, determined to conquer the hearts to tennis fans on and off the courts, reports Reuter.

The 26-year-old German has not set foot in the Italian capital since one newspaper labelled her "la brutta" (the ugly one) when she beat Argentine Gabriela Sabatini in the 1987 final.

At the time, the comments provoked a media backlash in Germany with one newspaper suggesting tourists boycott

On Monday, Graf sent a message to her critics, appearing at an unscheduled news conference in an elegant, jet-black Armani blouse with flowing ankle-length skirt.

"Yes, I've finally come back to defend my title nine years after winning it," Graf said, although she also admitted she was not as strong as she had once been. And she added: "This time I want to explore the city. That's why I'm dressed like this."

**In a bizarre twist of fate, Graf's Roman return coincides with the first time Sabatini has missed the tournament in more than 10 years.**

Sabatini, a crowd favourite for her cover-girl looks and Italian ancestry, withdrew last week complaining of an abdominal muscle strain.

Graf has traditionally missed the Italian Open in favour of home-ground tournaments in Hamburg and Berlin.

However, this year, the world number one is desperately seeking clay court preparation for the French Open title she is due to defend later this month.

Despite winning three of the last four Grand Slam events — the French and US Opens as well as Wimbledon — and boasting a 100 per cent

tournament record in 1996, a persistent back injury has deprived Graf of match practice on clay.

"With my back I can't train as much as I used to. This is my first tournament on clay, a surface on which I've only practised five days this year," she said.

"Physically, Steffi Graf is not as good as she once was, even if the way I play, my tactics and mental approach to games, couldn't be better."

Graf blamed her gruelling three-hour 20-minute defeat to Japan's Kimiko Date in a non-tournament event, the team-based Federation Cup, in Tokyo last month on lack of fitness.

"At the end of that match, my whole body was cramping," she said.

Graf refused to answer



STEFFI GRAF ... back in Rome after nine years.

## Coaches ready for action against dopers

SYDNEY, May 7: Leading international swimming coaches are planning a possible coup against the sport's world governing body FINA if it fails to tackle drug cheats properly, a leading Australian swimming coach said today, reports Reuter.

The World Swimming Coaches Association (WSCA) has created a new body as a vehicle for protest against systemised drug use, association spokesman Forbes Carlile said.

He said the association had a membership of 500 professional coaches based in about 40 countries, including Australia, the United States, Britain and Canada.

Carlile, a persistent critic of FINA's performance in trying to fight doping, said the newly-created World Swimming Organisation (WSO) was designed to pressurise FINA into adopting a tougher stance.

Unless FINA responded, WSO would begin a long-term strategy to wrestle control of the sport, Carlile said.

"If the top athletes become involved in supporting our campaign and our new organisation, FINA will not be able to run their competitions without that everyone has fair chance to succeed."

The problem of doping in swimming was dramatically highlighted at the 1994 Asian Games when seven Chinese swimmers tested positive.

Carlile said the WSO would be based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and would aim to maximise the impact of any protest by swimmers and coaches against FINA.

"It is an underlying threat to FINA that if the drug situation gets too bad then the athletes themselves will be able to take the initiative and say 'we are not going to compete under your rules,'" Carlile said.

He said WSO would seek to recruit past and present Olympic and world champions to lobby FINA for tighter testing and the compulsory release of test results.

If there were sufficient support for the breakaway body among top swimmers, WSO would eventually seek to organise its own events, Carlile said.

## Medvedev passes first test

HAMBURG, May 7: Defending champion Andrei Medvedev held his head high as he safely negotiated the opening round of the German Open on Monday with a 6-2, 7-5 victory over Tomas Carbonell of Spain, reports AFP.

"When you defend something you feel pride and fight harder. It's a good feeling to be the defending champion, especially in a tournament like this," said the 11th-seeded Medvedev.

The victory marked his 100th win on clay and he always looked comfortable against an able but more erratic opponent.

The Ukrainian made a blistering start, dropping only three points in the first three games and, although he had to save a break point in the next game as Carbonell found his feet, Medvedev stayed comfortably in charge.

Medvedev failed to dominate the second set as he had the first. But although games went with serve and he was unable to convert two match points at 5-4, he broke serve to the initial expectations.

However, as recently as April 16 he signed a new contract which would see him through as coach until after the World Cup final of 1998 in France, assuming Italy have a successful European Championship.

Italian soccer press chief Antonello Valentini said last month that Sacchi would be paid 1.7 trillion lire (around 1 million dollars) a year, and that there was no clause in the contract for him to leave if the national team performed badly in England.

The Italian fans are the clause," one source said. "They'll give him a kick in the backside if the team does badly."

The second set was pretty close, but he made a few more unforced errors than me," said Medvedev.

Harman Guny of Argentina produced the first upset of the 2.2 million dollar tournament, beating 13th seeded Dutchman Jan Smeirink 6-4 6-7 (5-7), 6-3. But ninth seed Alberto Costa eased past Patrik Kuhnen 6-3, 6-0 and 16th seed Gilbert Schaller overwhelmed qualifier Viktor Sender 6-2, 6-0.

Qualifier Emilio Arverez earned the right to meet top seed Boris Becker with a hard fought victory over German wild card Nivolas Kiefer.

The Spaniard won 7-5, 7-6 (12-10), holding off a set point in the tiebreak and eventually clinching victory on his sixth match point.

## Two French booters to play in China

SHANGHAI, May 7: Two French footballers signed one-year contracts on Monday to play with China's leading team, a newspaper reported today.

The Xinmin Evening News reported that Clement Garcia, who plays in the French league for Gueugnon, and Jose Bray, who is with Lille, became the first French players to join a Chinese team when they signed with Shanghai Shenhua Football Club.

The players, who arrived in Shanghai two weeks ago, and the Shanghai Club both declined to disclose contract details, the report said.

Shenhua, which also has three Russian players on its roster, is to meet Italy's AC Milan here for a May 28 exhibition match.



KRASIMIR BALAKOV ... breathtaking ball control bound to attract attention.

## KL to soup up sports bodies

KUALA LUMPUR, May 7: Malaysia is studying a two-term limit rule for officials of sports bodies to check in fighting and remove ineffective leaders, Youth and Sports Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said Friday, reports AFP.

The rule would be included in the Sports Development Bill being drafted by the ministry.

Muhyiddin was reported as saying by Bernama news agency at a national sports convention.

"Problems in sports associations are caused by weak leadership as well as office-bearers hanging on to their posts for too long," said Muhyiddin. Adding Thailand's sports act limits the tenure of office-bearers to two terms.

That officials have to get the sports minister's nod if they want to seek a third term, he said.

Muhyiddin was echoing Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's remark on Thursday that the decline in sports was due to bickering among officials, some of whom had held on to their posts for too long and could not guide the associations.

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