

Mixed bag on new rule

MACCLESFIELD, England, June 22 (Reuters): Germany captain Juergen Klinsmann believes the new sudden-death system in extra time at Euro '96 is a major boost to the game even though his boss Berti Vogts has called it "ridiculous and unfair."

For the first time at a major championship the team scoring first in extra time wins.

While Germany coach Vogts strongly believes officials should have kept the traditional 30-minute system, his best striker said on Friday that the change would make the game more attractive.

"I think it will make things more exciting. It's a good idea," the Bayern Munich forward said. "It certainly will make things interesting for the fans. They know that any second something could happen and one team will have won it."

Vogts' main opposition to the rule is that a team does not have the chance to rectify a mistake made in the first minutes of extra time which he said was against the concept of fair play.

"It's ridiculous," the German trainer complained on Thursday. "There is this talk of fair play. A player only has to make one mistake in the second minute of extra time and it's all over."

There seems to be a difference of opinion between strikers and defenders about whether the rule is positive. Certainly this was the case in the German camp as they prepared for Sunday's quarter-final with Croatia at Old Trafford.

Vogts, who played in West Germany's 1974 World Cup-winning team, was a defender. Klinsmann's clubmate Thomas Helmer, another defender, did not agree with his captain either.

The defender makes one mistake and that's it. It is very harsh on the losing team," Helmer said. "I am not necessarily a friend of all this."

If no team has scored what officials are calling the "golden goal" at the end of 30 minutes of extra time a penalty shoot-out will follow.

The rule seems to be aimed at reducing the number of penalty shoot-outs which are regarded as controversial. There was a great deal of disappointment when the 1994 World Cup final between Brazil and Italy was decided in the fashion.

Klinsmann said he did not think the rule would make extra time too tactical and boring with both teams worried that they might give away a goal.

"After 90 minutes the fitness is not as strong as during normal time. There is more space to exploit and there are more mistakes," Klinsmann said.

Atlanta welcomes the world

WASHINGTON, June 22: With millions of visitors expected to attend the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia, this summer, Spurgeon Richardson, president of the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Centre, told an international television audience May 30: "You will have a minimum amount of problems when you come to this city."

Taking questions from viewers in Madras, Madura, Yaounde, and Port Louis, Richardson said: "People from around the world will be coming here, many of them for the first time. They are going to love our city and they will want to come back many times in the upcoming years."

Richardson was joined in the discussion by Shirley Franklin, senior policy adviser of the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games. The programme was broadcast worldwide by the US Information Agency (USIA) Worldnet satellite film and television service.

Franklin noted that with 197 nations having accepted invitations to participate in the Atlanta Games.

Atlanta, often called the "Gateway to the South," has been a major transportation and commercial hub for the region. In addition, its large, diverse population has created a melting pot that makes the city an intellectual and cultural center for the South. The city is both the headquarters for the Martin Luther King Jr. Centre for Social Change and the Home of The Carter Centre, former President Jimmy Carter's conflict resolution institute.

About the level of security during the games, Richardson said, "We feel that during the period of the Olympics, Atlanta will be the safest place on the earth."

The centre point of the Games will be a two-and-one-half kilometre area of downtown Atlanta called "The Olympic Ring." Within this complex, 16 of the Olympic sports will take place, making the Atlanta games one of the most compact in history, according to a promotional video shown during the interview.

The crowning achievement of Atlanta's new Olympic construction is the 83,000-seat stadium built to resemble an old-fashioned American baseball park from the turn of the century. All of the major track and field events will take place in stadium, as well as the games' opening and closing ceremonies.

None of the new structures built for the games are temporary. All of the athletic facilities, like dormitories used to house the 10,000 athletes, will be put to other uses after the Games are closed.

— source: USIS/News Network



England striker Alan Shearer (R) is tackled by Spain's Fernandez Abelardo during their Euro '96 quarterfinal encounter at Wembley Stadium yesterday.

— AFP/UNB photo

Wimbledon sick of speed



WIMBLEDON, June 22 (AP): The "Stop Sampras Movement" israging at Wimbledon, where the poohbahs of the All-England Club are reacting as if they were in the grip of mad ball disease.

Fear of boredom, personified by the prospect of Pete Sampras acing his way to a fourth straight Wimbledon title, is relegating the plain, old balls into oblivion.

Softer balls last year did nothing to slow down the game, change the champions or cut down on aces, so now the poohbahs have come up with a kind of Day-Glo yellow felt that might make the misses a tad easier to track at 120-plus mph.

"New balls, please," the traditional call from the umpire, will be taken quite literally.

The basic idea is to inject more rallies into the grass game so players such as Sampras, who starts on Centre Court at 2 pm Monday, won't keep winning games like this —



PETE SAMPRAS

ace, serve-return-volley, service winner, ace.

The poohbahs think that if the ball is visible a millisecond sooner, players will hit it back and forth more often. Maybe it will be so easy to spot that even an Englishman will be able to see it enough to win here for the first time since World War II. Though probably not.

Nothing short of the most flagrant shenanigans is likely to keep the usual suspects from ruling Wimbledon again.

That means, among the men, Sampras, three-time champion Boris Becker, two-time finalist Goran Ivanisevic, former champions Michael

Stich and Andre Agassi, and the latest Grand Slam winner, French champ Yevgeny Kafelnikov. For a dangerous floater, there's Mark Philippoussis, who sometimes lives up to his nickname, Scud.

Among the women, there's defending champion and six-time winner Steffi Graf — and no one else — unless Martina Navratilova makes a last-minute comeback.

If Graf is healthy — she took last week off to recover from her latest ailment, a touch of tendinitis in the knee — don't expect anyone to beat her on Centre Court, even if they can see the balls better as they fly by.

Monica Seles, last seen here in the final against Graf four years ago, has three major problems — head, shoulder and belly — that are likely to thwart her bid for a first Wimbledon title.

Seles' once-unparalleled tenacity is less intimidating these days after all the starts and stops she's been through in her comeback from the stabbing three years ago. She's had a bum left shoulder since winning the Australian Open in January. And the weight she gained during her layoffs is slowing her down and throwing off her timing.

All that may not mean much for Seles most days against most players, but she's more vulnerable now in any given match.

Maybe this will be the year that Jana Novotna finally breaks her habit of choking and gets to cry happily on the Duchess of Kent's shoulder. Or maybe Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario will make the leap beyond the final she barely lost last year. Or perhaps Conchita Martinez will rediscover the magic of 1994. But, alas, it still looks like Graf.

The reason for the limited list of who can win the men's or women's trophy at Wimbledon is tied to their styles more than any special affinity they may have for Centre Court and the crowd.

Tennis evolved in the 1980s from finesse to brute power, and it is evolving again to a blend of both. The contenders for Grand Slam titles now, whether on hardcourts, clay or grass, are those players who can do it all — crush opponents with a serve-and-volley game, stay back patiently and safely, flick drop shots and lobs, work their way shot by shot

through each point, and point by point through each match.

That's why it doesn't matter if the ball is a little softer or a little brighter. As long as it's the same for both players, the ones who are leading the evolution toward the ultimate all-court game are the ones who will triumph.

Sampras showed that when he outlasted Agassi in their spectacular 22-shot rally in the US Open final last year, a corner-to-corner, baseline-to-net-to-baseline duel that demonstrated Sampras' versatility as much as his endurance.

Becker showed the same balance of power and patience, winning from the baseline and the net as he took the Australian Open title in January. Kafelnikov did exactly the same thing in winning the French.

"One weapon is not going to be enough anymore," said Nick Bollettieri, the most prominent coach in tennis. "For a while, you could get by on grass with just a big serve, or you could win on clay with a strong baseline game. In to-

day's game, you have to be able to do it all because so many of the players are bigger and stronger and the equipment makes the game much faster."

He likened pro tennis to the NBA, where the Chicago

Bulls dominated this year because of their all-court attack.

"It wouldn't matter if the baskets were two inches higher or if they took some of the air out of the ball," Bollettieri said. "The Bulls would win because they do everything so well, and they can adjust to the situations. That's what the top players in tennis do. Changing the ball isn't going to make a difference."

Now Kafelnikov, the first Russian to win a Grand Slam title, takes up the mantle and in the opinion of many has the best tools to complete the job of anyone in recent years.

Though Stich seemed to falter at a few key moments of the match, the young Russian was doing himself an injustice by suggesting that his victory had come from anything other than his own superb play — as Stich was quick to point out.

"I didn't lose it, he won it," the German said after going down to a 7-6, 7-5, 7-6 defeat. "Whenever I had chances, he played well."

Now the 22-year-old from the Black Sea resort of Sochi has a chance to become the first man since Bjorn Borg in 1980 to follow up a triumph on the red clay courts of Roland Garros by winning on the green grass of Wimbledon.

Since Borg achieved the double for the third successive time in 1980, the men's game has polarised into, on the one hand, the slow court experts who achieve their best results on clay, and on the other the grass court exponents with the big serve-and-volley tactics so well suited to that surface.

In recent years the man best equipped to bridge the gap has been Andre Agassi, a groundstroke expert if ever there was one who managed the unlikely achievement of winning Wimbledon from the baseline in 1992.

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His grass court appearances have brought him enough success to suggest the Wimbledon title is not beyond his capability.

He reached the third round in his first appearance in 1994 and last year made it to the quarter-finals before he was blasted away by the big serves of Goran Ivanisevic.

But the way he dealt with reigning Wimbledon champion

Pete Sampras in his 7-6, 6-0, 6-2 semifinal victory in Paris impressed a lot of people. Even though Sampras seemed exhausted after five-set battles in three of his previous five matches, Kafelnikov displayed a lot of aggression in attacking the American's service throughout the match.

That positive approach will stand the sixth seed in good stead in a draw that begins against rising Briton Tim Henman and which could see a fourth-round clash with South African 11th seed Wayne Ferreira, an accomplished grass court player.

If he comes through his early challenges, there is the mouth-watering prospect of a meeting with Agassi in the quarter-finals.

The hardest-working member of the tennis fraternity — not many of the top players also play doubles at Grand Slam events — Kafelnikov has not rested on his laurels since the French, playing this week in the Halle grass court tournament in Germany to hone his game for Wimbledon.

Kafelnikov rarely takes time off from the game. "I took two weeks off once then I was out of shape for the next three weeks," he explained.

Playing so many tournaments, so many matches really helps me to keep my confidence at a really high level."

On the rare weeks of he likes fishing and soccer, but now that Russia have been eliminated from Euro '96, there is one less distraction for him to deal with.

Still, he is aware of the expectations placed on him after his triumph in Paris, which boosted him to fifth in the world rankings.

Officials said the two lead-

ers will try to steer around

sensitive issues and focus on

the problem of North Korea

and the soccer finals.

— source: USIS/News Network

Sport

Euro '96 England in last four

Hosts England reached the semifinals of Euro '96 after beating Spain 4-2 on penalties in first quarterfinal played at Wembley Stadium last night.

The sides finished goalless after 120 minutes. — source: BBC

TODAY'S EURO '96 FIXTURES

QUARTERFINALS

Germany vs Croatia

Venue: Old Trafford

Time: 8:00 pm (BST)

Portugal vs Czech Republic

Venue: Villa Park

Time: 11:30 pm (BST)

Japanese spikers

keep going

FUKUOKA, Japan, June 22:

Defending champions Japan eased through a challenge from Vietnam, with a three-set victory to remain unbeaten at the Asian Pacific Cup men's volleyball tournament on Friday, reports AFP.

John Drummond placed

third and Jeff Williams was

fourth in the trials. But US

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relay.

Lewis anchored the United

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Olympics and has been on four

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records in the event.

US 100-metre trials winner

Dennis Mitchell and runner-up

Michael Marsh also were on

the Barcelona team along with

world record-holder Leroy

Burrell, who finished sixth in

the trials.

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