

Carribbeans mean it

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, July 8: West Indian community leaders announced their full support this weekend for an official bid to host the 2003 World Cup cricket, reports AFP.

At the conclusion of a community heads of government (Caricom) meeting, Dr Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister of Kitt's and St Nevis, said that the event could help raise revenue to support the development of the game.

"This means quite a bit for the people of the Caribbean. It means the private sector will have to become involved and the public sector as well," he said.

Last month, the new president of the West Indian Cricket Board (WICB), Pat Rousseau, revealed his intentions to launch a bid for the World Cup after the International Cricket Council indicated their interest in the idea.

In a separate move, community leaders backed plans to offer contracts to a pool of West Indian players to encourage them to stay in the country rather than pursue their career elsewhere.

"This would provide the players with an opportunity of financial security and also ensure that when our cricketers are required to play Test cricket, there would be no excuse that they are not on any contract with the WICB."

Wimbledon enters third week

LONDON, July 8: Wimbledon will go into a third week this year because the mixed doubles cannot be completed on Sunday, reports Reuter.

This was made clear after top-seeded mark Woodford of Australia and Larisa Neiland of Latvia beat Britain's Jeremy Bates and Australian Nicole Bradtke 6-4, 6-4 in the third round of the mixed doubles.

Neiland had a play in the women's doubles final with American Meredith McGrath against Helena Sukova of the Czech Republic and Martina Hingis, the 15-year-old Swiss player, following the men's singles final.

Only then could Woodford and Neiland play their mixed quartet against Americans Patrick Galbraith and Pam Shriver.

By the time that match is finished there would not be time for both the semifinal and the final of the mixed to be played.

The last time the championships went into a third week was in 1992 when the men's doubles final, won by John McEnroe and Michael Stich, was completed and the finals of the mixed doubles, and boys and girls doubles finals were staged.

Eriksson 3rd in Argentina

555 Subaru World Rally Team driver, Kenneth Eriksson, finished the third and final leg of the 16th Rally of Argentina in 3rd position after a slow puncture on Special Stage 24 lost him 2nd position to Carlos Sainz. Teammate Piero Liatti, in the second Subaru Impreza 555, drove a superb final day, regaining 2 minutes and 46 seconds to overhaul his nearest rival and finish in 7th place after an incident-packed rally robbed him of a potential third position, says a press release.

The opening competitive section of Saturday's stages nevertheless proved frustrating for the World Championship drivers when the correct route at a junction was blocked, causing all the drivers, except Kenneth Eriksson, to take the wrong route. Following a meeting of the Stewards, it was deemed that no time advantage had been gained by any of the drivers



and the times on the stage stood.

Italian ace, Piero Liatti, drove at an incredible pace consistently taking time off Rui Madeira to elevate himself to 7th position. With over a minute splitting the two at the end of the rally, Piero's final day charge paid off and the duo picked up points for the 555 Subaru team and Liatti now lies fourth in the Drivers' Championship.

The 1996 FIA World Rally Championship contenders now head to Finland for the 1000 Lakes Rally (23-26 August) for the sixth round of this year's series.

424-member Aussie squad for Atlanta

CANBERRA, July 8: Australia is sending a record 424 athletes to the coming Atlanta Olympic Games and aiming to increase more medals than four years ago in Barcelona, reports Xinhua.

Reports from Sydney said in the Barcelona Olympic Games, Australia wrested seven gold, nine silver and 11 bronze medals.

In Atlanta, the focus of Australia's medal hopes will be largely on the three traditional areas of strength — Swimming, cycling and rowing.

Third Test heads a draw

Sports Reporter



England look certain to hold on to their 1-0 lead in the series against India as, despite a minor middle order collapse, they managed to win the battle for the first innings lead on the fourth day of their third and final Test at Trentbridge on Monday.

At close England were 550 for seven.

AP adds:

England could muster 469 for five at tea following a rejuvenating bowling spells from India.

From 379 for two at lunch, England lost three quick wickets and was still 52 runs behind India's first innings 521.

England were off to a bad start even before the fourth day's play began. No 3 batsman, Nasser Hussain, 107 not out before Sunday's rest day, didn't even make it out of the pavilion.

Hussain, who fractured his right index finger after being hit by a Jagaval Srinath delivery in the last over of the third day, was forced to retire hurt, leaving his 192-run partnership with captain Mike Atherton unbroken.

But immediately after lunch

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Of a volatile virtuoso



ATLANTA, July 8 (AFP): Big serving Croatian Goran Ivanisevic is far from his typical player on the international tennis circuit.

A self-confessed man of God who says he cares little for money — the fiery tempered world number seven is also passionate about the Olympics.

He carried the flag proudly at the head of the parade of Croatian athletes at Barcelona and is tipped to repeat the honour in Atlanta, so highly is 24-year-old from Split revered in his home country.

Ivanisevic also has an excellent chance of improving on his haul of two bronze medals (one for singles and another for doubles), as 1996 has seen the often volatile and unpredictable star settle into a winning rhythm.

Since taking on Vedran Martic as his coach at the beginning of the year, Ivanisevic has enjoyed the most consistently successful period of his career.

Yet he is still haunted by the reputation of being a "tanker" — throwing away matches once they slip from his control.

It seems that if a match is going too easily, then he makes problems for himself and can't fight his way out of trouble.

"Sometimes like when everything is going okay on the court, I become bored. I don't like to win 6-0, 6-0," Ivanisevic admits.

As a result, he experiments with his play, often opting for a

variation on his huge power serve.

But when that goes wrong, Ivanisevic can find himself in a hole, double-faulting, making unforced errors and ultimately throwing his tennis racquet in an all too familiar gesture of frustration.

All the while, however, Ivanisevic loves his job.

"It's a great job, a healthy job. And it's sport, with a lot of money — which is not so important. It's primary that you're healthy and it's what you like to do," he added.

In fact, the Croatian donates part of his earnings to charity in Croatia, where he has set up a foundation to help the underprivileged.

One of the members of the foundation board is a Catholic priest, who has brought Ivanisevic back into the folds of the church.

The tennis player says that his temperament on court has calmed significantly since he started returning to mass three years ago, coincidentally the time in which he embarked upon a steady relationship with his girl friend.

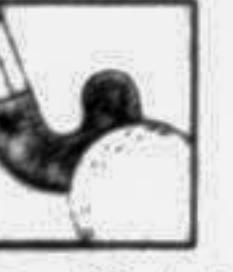
Ivanisevic has even had a brief meeting with the Pope Jean Paul II at the Vatican.

"I had my speech for one minute. Along with the Olympics this was maybe the biggest honour in my life which I am never going to forget," he recalls.

Ivanisevic will certainly be hoping for divine inspiration when he one again takes to the court in Atlanta.

GORAN IVANISEVIC

India eying Games' gold



NEW DELHI, July 8: Eight-time Olympic champions India hope to claim a remarkable comeback to the top of international field hockey with a gold medal in Atlanta, reports AFP.

A triumph at the Olympic Games would end a 16-year drought for a nation that was once the dominant international force in the sport.

The Indians, who last won an Olympic gold at the western-boycotted Moscow Games in 1980. Slipped to a humiliating low in 1986 when they finished 12th out of 12 contenders in the World Cup.

But wily coach Cedric D'Souza, backed by a committed administration under police chief K P S Gill, have transformed the ragtag hockey outfit into world-beaters again.

The rejuvenated Indians carry the entire nation's hopes of Olympic glory after victories over gold medalists Germany, world champions Pakistan and powerful Holland over the past 12 months.

This team knows they are capable of winning the gold, they fear no one, said D'Souza, a former goalkeeper who turned coach after failing to make the national squad in the 70s.

This is the best India team in a long time. We will return with a medal, hopefully a gold, said veteran defender Pargat Singh, who will be leading the country for a second successive time at the Olympics.

Even the corporate world is gripped by Olympic fever, although hockey offers India's only medal hope in a 50-strong contingent that includes Davis Cup tennis star Leander Paes and pistol prodigy Jaspal Rana.

Multinationals Citibank, Reebok, Nike and Att are bending over backwards to sponsor that team, a far cry from earlier years when Indian Olympians struggled to make ends meet.

One bank has set aside 25 per cent of all transactions from a special Olympic visa card to sponsor India's preparations and clothing manufacturers are also backing team members.

"We have never had such support before," said Indian Olympic Association secretary-general Randhir Singh, a former shooter. "We used to beg for money, now it is puring

The recent success of the hockey team has been the key to the generous cash flow.

"Olympic medals are rare in India, but this time we stand a great chance in hockey," said one public relations executive. "Nearly 500 million people in India will follow the team's campaign at Atlanta on television. It makes sound business sense to back the team."

While the hockey stars go for gold, the other members of the contingent will at best form the cheering squad once their respective events are over.

Paes and Mahesh Bhupathy, who earned a direct entry for the Olympics after taking India into the Davis Cup quarter-finals this year. Know they have no realistic chance of securing a medal against a world-class field.

"For me, being part of the centennial Games itself is a medal," Bhupathy said. "Anything else will be a bonus."

Any medal hopes for Rana, the 20-year-old Asian Games shooting champion, were quashed when his favorite centrefire pistol event was not included in the Olympic programme.

Six different players scored for Bolivia as they threatened a repeat of their 1994 qualifying campaign when a 100 per cent home record in La Paz, including a win over Brazil, helped them reach the finals for the first time since 1990.

Although FIFA stipulated that clubs must release players 10 days in advance for national teams playing in La Paz, which lies 3,600 metres above sea level, Venezuela chose to fly in three hours before the start — considered the second best option.

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South American minnows Venezuela, who came within a minute of only their third-ever World Cup qualifying win before drawing 1-1 with Chile last month, were under pressure from the start, falling behind to a second minute goal by Marco Sandy.

"We have never had such support before," said Indian Olympic Association secretary-general Randhir Singh, a former shooter. "We used to beg for money, now it is puring

Ganguly trapped the left-hander lbw, denying him his 17th half-century.

All-rounder Mark Ealham came in for his first Test innings, joining Hick, who after innings of eight, one and six in the series so far, was desperate for a big score.

Hick started confidently with a cover drive for four off his second ball, but was then bogged down by the spin of Venkat Raju, taking another 75 minutes to reach double figures.

On 16 Hick lofted Raju over mid-wicket for his third boundary, but in Raju's next over, he attempted to do the same, succeeding only in finding a leading edge to be caught out at mid-on, making the score 444 for four.

Jack Russell, the second Test match-saver with scores of 124 and 38, lasted only five balls before edging Prasad to wicketkeeper Nayan Mongia without a run out to England's score.

Shadab Kabir missed out on a well-deserved century by one run as Pakistan staged a fine recovery against Northamptonshire on Sunday, reports Reuter.

The elegant young left-hander hit two sixes and 11 fours in his 99 off 193 balls, sharing an eighth wicket stand of 171 in 49 overs with fellow 19-year-old Saqlain Mushtaq (78) to rescue the tourists from deep trouble at 140 for seven.

Pakistan ended on 323 all out and the country side closed the second day of the three-day match on 71 without loss in their second innings, still 100 behind.

Resuming on 79 for one, the touring side collapsed against Northants' makeshift attack which was without five resting first team regulars, plus Neil Maller who did not take the field because of a bruised foot.

Scott Boswell and David Capel picked up two early wickets a piece to raise hopes of an unexpected first innings lead, but the youngsters retrieved the situation for Pakistan.

The innings of Shadab, who made 74 against England in a World Cup warm-up match in Karachi last winter, earned high praise for tour manager Yawar Saeed.

"He is a player of immense promise. It was pleasing not only because he got close to a hundred, but also because of the way in which he made the runs. He will be figuring in Pakistan cricket for a long time of come," he said.

Shadab eventually edged a catch behind off Capel in the third over with the new ball and the ex-England all-rounder, who captured four for 60, then bowled Saqlain to end the innings.

On the whole, however, Ivanisevic loves his job.

"It's a great job, a healthy job. And it's sport, with a lot of money — which is not so important. It's primary that you're healthy and it's what you like to do," he added.

In fact, the Croatian donates part of his earnings to charity in Croatia, where he has set up a foundation to help the underprivileged.

Chairman of selectors Ray Illingworth confirmed on the rest day of the third and final Test against India that Atherton would continue in the job.

England play three Tests against Pakistan, starting on July 25, followed by a three-match limited overs series at the end of the tour.

Atherton struck a positive note for the rest day by insisting England can pull off victory over India despite a bland Trent Bridge pitch.

England ended the third day on Saturday at 222 for one in reply to India's first innings of 521 all out.

Opener Atherton led from the front with an unbeaten 145 and shared an unfinished second wicket stand of 192 with Nasser Hussain (107 not out) as their side comfortably avoided the follow-on.

But Hussain may not be able to continue his innings on Monday. He was struck on the glove late on Saturday and had an X-ray which revealed a hairline crack of a right finger.

The 28-year-old Essex batsman will have an early-morning net to see if he is fit enough to play.

Atherton, whose team lead the series 1-0, said: "We can still win it. There is still time to do that."

"With nine wickets in hand, our aim must be to bat for another four sessions and put some pressure on India."

"Although the pitch is still playing well, it's a mind game, and the mind can play some funny tricks with you when you're under pressure."