

'Bodyline' stump fetches 1600 dollars only!

ADELAIDE, Australia, Oct 20: A stump used in the infamous 'bodyline' cricket series between Australia and England was snapped up for a bargain 2,000 Australian dollars (1,600 US) at auction here Sunday, reports AFP.

Auctioneer Paul du Plessis said he was surprised an item of such historical note brought such a low price.

He did not reveal the buyer's identity, but said the stump would remain in Australia.

The stump was used in the 1932 Sydney Test match, the first of cricket's most infamous series.

In the 1932-33 series, England, under the captaincy of Douglas Jardine, used short-pitched bowling described as leg theory but which came to be known as 'bodyline'.

The brass-topped stump was kept as a souvenir by South Australian paceman Tim Wall for a friend, Adelaide grade cricketer Gary Habich.

After Habich's death the stump was sold by his widow and the buyer then put it up for auction.

A steel-shafted golf putter given as a gift to entertainer Bing Crosby also sold at the auction for 2,600 dollars.

PFA delays strike action

LONDON, Oct 20: English soccer officials made an 11th-hour bid to stop a strike by the players in the First, Second and Third Divisions on Saturday, reports Reuters.

The Football League said they were ready to make a new offer to the players' union, the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA), in a dispute over the income from the sale of television rights.

In return, the PFA said they would delay announcing the result of a strike ballot which they had planned to publish on Saturday.

The PFA balloted its members on the question of a strike after the league decided to scrap a regulation that entitled the union to 10 per cent of any television deal.

PFA chief executive Gordon Taylor said he had agreed to a request by the Football League to delay announcing the outcome of the ballot pending the new offer.

"It's an encouraging development but there is the worry that we've been asked to delay in the past and nothing has been forthcoming so we are a bit wary," he said. "We hope they're not crying wolf."

The Football League Board is due to meet either over the weekend or on Monday and the new offer to the unions is expected to be made after that.

"Dependent on that offer, we will either have formal talks with them in a bid to conclude an agreement or be forced to reconsider our position," said Taylor.

The league's television deal with Sky, for live coverage of matches, is worth 125 million pounds (198.5 million dollars) over five years and the union would have received 2.5 million pounds (3.97 million dollars) a year under the old regulation.

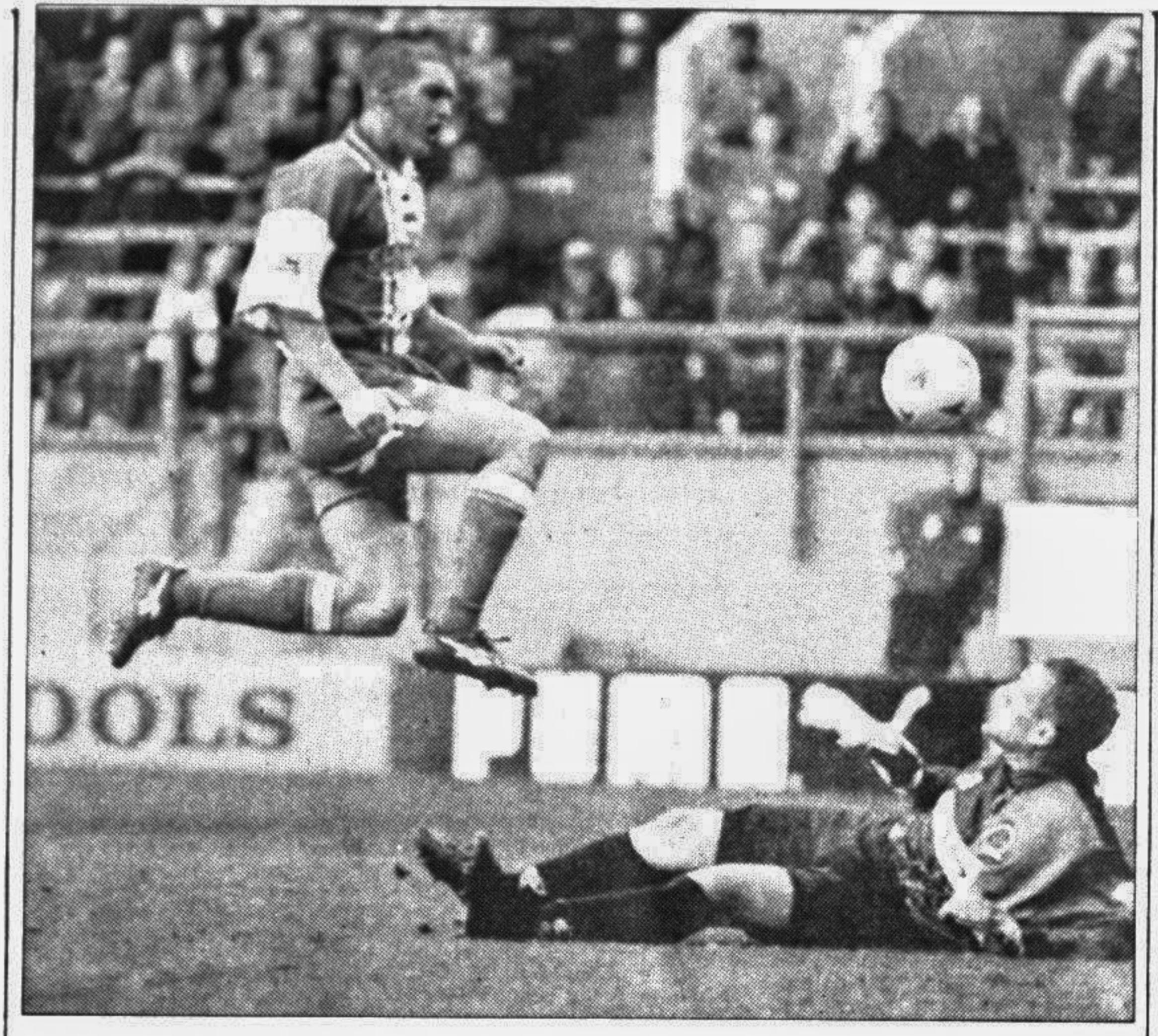
Rotor slip up

MOSCOW, Oct 20: Russian league leaders Rotor Volgograd dropped two key points to lowly opponents on Saturday, giving rivals Spartak Moscow a chance to go top with just two games of the season left if they win today, reports Reuters.

Rotor, who have been showing increasing signs of nerves, struggled to a disappointing 0-0 draw away to strugglers Chernomorets Novorossiisk, 14th in the 18-team Premier Division and just two points clear of the relegation zone.

The result leaves Rotor on 67 points with two games left and Spartak - champions in 1992, 1993 and 1994 - will go top if they win their Derby match away to Torpedo Moscow today. Spartak are second with 65 points.

Defending champions Alania Vladikavkaz are in fourth place on 63 points but today should beat bottom side Lada Togliatti, who are already certain to be relegated.



Sheffield Wednesday's Andy Booth powers the ball past Blackburn Rovers' keeper Tim Flowers during their English Premier league Match in Sheffield on Oct 19. The sides ended 1-1.

—AFP/UNB photo

Gunners top the table



LONDON, Oct 20: Coventry goalkeeper Steve Ogrizovic accused Arsenal striker Ian Wright of deliberately breaking his nose in an explosive incident at Highbury on Saturday, reports Reuters.

The clash, five minutes before the end of their goalless draw in the English Premier League - which was enough to take Arsenal to the top of the table - ended with Ogrizovic being carried off on a stretcher five minutes before the end of the game with blood all over his face.

Ogrizovic also suffered an injured arm-muscle, and he didn't mind his words afterwards when he said: "Ian Wright knows in his heart of hearts what he's done and I know what he's done."

"I was on the ground and he blatantly kneed me in the nose. It is difficult for referees to see what is happening in situations like this but I just hope somebody at the club will take Ian to task over this,"

Referee Peter Jones, who had earlier booked Wright for a willful lunge on Coventry's Paul Williams, let the incident between Wright and Ogrizovic, without censure.

Arsene Wenger, Arsenal's new French manager who saw his team climb to the top of the Premier League for the first time in four years, said: "Frankly, I did not see what happened. I know that Ian Wright had a chance to score and the goalkeeper went down. Maybe Ian

wanted so much to score but from my view it is hard to see.

Referee Jons, who last week booked Aston Villa goalkeeper Mark Bosnich for his controversial Nazi salute at Tottenham, did not even speak to Wright after the clash.

Wright, however, is once again the focal point of another unsavoury incident at the end of the week in which the Football Association have charged him with misconduct for an alleged verbal slur against Sheffield Wednesday manager David Pleat.

Aston Villa ended a seven-match winless run with a 2-0 home victory over Leeds to move up to seventh. Dwight Yorke (50th) and Tommy Johnson (65th) scored the goals.

Tottenham won 3-0 at Middlesbrough for their biggest league win of the season to move up three places to eighth. England striker Teddy Sheringham scoring twice and Ruel Fox once.

Southampton continued their recent improvement with a 3-0 win over Sunderland, who lost goalkeeper Tony Coton with a double-fracture of his right leg after 29 minutes.

Coton was injured in a collision with Saints' new Norwegian defender Egil Ostenstad, making his home debut, but Sunderland manager Peter Reid agreed afterwards the collision was an accident.

Blackburn stayed bottom, still searching for their first win of the season, after drawing 1-1 at Sheffield Wednesday.

A minute's silence was held before the start of all the matches on Saturday as a mark of respect to the victims of the Guatemala Stadium disaster earlier this week.

Christea was the return of their player-manager Ruud Gullit as a second-half substitute for the first time this season following a knee operation.

"I was very impressed with Wimbledon, they played some good, intelligent football," said Gullit. "And there wasn't too much wrong with our performance either, apart from letting the goals in."

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Richey rewards Spadea



HONG KONG, Oct 20: Lucky loser Vincent Spadea is set to receive the biggest pay cheque of his career after taking the back door to the final of the 722,000-dollar Marlboro Championships here on Saturday, reports AFP.

The 22-year-old American was a lucky loser semifinalist after compatriot Richey Reneberg pulled out because of a stomach virus.

The 65th-ranked Spadea took full advantage to defeat Sweden's Jonas Bjorkman 3-6, 6-4, 7-5 and reach the final.

Spadea, who would have won 25,000 dollars had Blue Group winner Reneberg not pulled out, now stands to earn 185,000 dollars if he beats Australian Patrick Rafter in today's final.

Rafter took his place in the final after a 6-2, 5-7, 6-3 win over Zimbabwe's Byron Black.

Spadea is guaranteed at least 65,000 dollars even if he loses the final, which is around 15,000 dollars more than his previous biggest pay-out at the Lipton tournament in Key Biscayne.

Obviously, you are conscious of the money involved, but if you think about it too much it detracts from your execution of tennis and metal consistency,"

Joppy stops Ray

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Spadea, who was runner-up to Reneberg in the Blue Group.

"If you start thinking about the wrong things, you are not going to get the results."

Spadea said he only knew of his place in the semifinal one hour before he was out on court.

Bjorkman, who won 60,000 dollars as a losing semifinalist, was clearly hampered by cramps.

"I felt I was in control for a set and a half. But then I started to cramp up and it affected the way I played," said world number 56 Bjorkman.

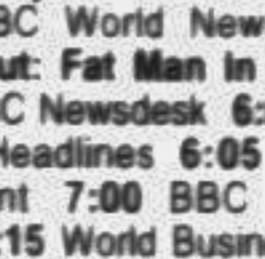
"Before the cramps, I was very confident of winning."

A key break in the eighth game of the third set was enough to put Rafter on the way to victory.

It will be Rafter's second final in Hong Kong, having lost to Michael Chang in the 1994 Saigon Open.

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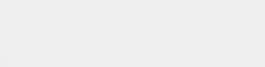
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