

Column One

SPORTS TALK



Jean Rene Lacoste

(One of the legendary 'four musketeers' of French tennis)

There are kinds of things that just don't have any good explanation. I suppose you could say that if it had been a really nice animal, something sympathetic, then maybe nothing would have happened. Suppose I had picked a rooster. Well, that's French, but it doesn't have the same impact.

About choosing the famous alligator emblem for his apparel company.

Sports

WHIZZ KID

COMPETITION FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN

WIN

TK, 2000/-

PRIZE BOND

EVERY FORTNIGHT

WI focus on a fightback



MELBOURNE, Australia, Dec 24: West Indies will have plenty on their minds over Christmas Day dinner as they work out a way to salvage their disastrous tour of Australia when the third Test starts Thursday, reports AFP.

Courtney Walsh's team trail 2-0 in the series for the Frank Worrell Trophy after heavy losses in the Brisbane and Sydney.

One more defeat, even a draw, means that it will be impossible for the tourists to reclaim the trophy they lost in the Caribbean in May last year.

The tour has been a failure so far, with just one-day win over Pakistan and a six-wicket win over Victoria in a four-day match this week and a seven-match losing streak.

Batting has caused most concern, with Trinidad left-hander Brian Lara only totalling 73 runs in four innings in the series — including just two and one in the second Test in Sydney this month.

Apart from opener Sherwin Campbell, who scored 113 in Brisbane and Carl Hooper's 102 in the same Test, the West Indian batting has been brittle, particularly the once-strong tail.

The other concern is the potency of giant fast bowler Curtly Ambrose, who has three wickets in four innings.

"Ambrose just needs little confidence, that's all," Walsh said today.

"As a team we're improving and we need to keep doing that. In the first two Tests I thought we were in a position to win but

didn't get on with it."

Supporters are hoping the gradual improvement will carry through to the Melbourne Cricket Ground, but Australia signalled their strength when they opted to sack number three Ricky Ponting and bring in Matthew Hayden and Justin Langer into the 12-man squad.

Australia will probably release one of their batsmen to 12th man on the morning of the Test.

The candidates are Langer, the unconvincing Michael Be-

47 and taking a wicket.

Steve Waugh hit an unbeaten 186 for New South Wales in last weekend's Sheffield Shield match with Queensland and is back to further strengthen the Australian line-up.

What might save the nervous Bevan is his new-found worth as a wrist-spinning back-up to star leg-spinner Shane Warne.

Although Bevan's highest score is 52 in four innings, he has captured five wickets and gets surprising turns on responsive wickets.

MCG curator Tony Ware said the Test pitch was a "result wicket." He predicted the pitch would assist both pacemen and spinners from day one.

West Indies are expected to bring in Junior Murray as wicketkeeper and there is even a possibility he may open the innings with Campbell.

Courtney Browne, wicket-keeper in the opening two Tests, was criticised for some faulty work, including a couple of dropped catches. He has also only contributed 49 runs in four innings.

SQUADS

AUSTRALIA (From): Mark Taylor (capt), Matthew Hayden, Justin Langer, Mark Waugh, Steve Waugh, Greg Blewett, Michael Bevan, Ian Healy, Shane Warne, Paul Reiffel, Jason Gillespie, Glenn McGrath.

WEST INDIES (From): Sherwin Campbell, Robert Samuels, Brian Lara, Carl Hooper, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Jimmy Adams, Junior Murray, Courtney Browne, Ian Bishop, Kenny Benjamin, Curtly Ambrose, Nixon McLean, Courtney Walsh (capt).

COURTNEY WALSH

van, or possibly Greg Blewett, although he had a fine Test return in Sydney as Steve Waugh's injury replacement hitting a confident 69 and an unbeaten

130. As a team we're improving and we need to keep doing that. In the first two Tests I thought we were in a position to win but

it bounced down and Shearer punched to rifle the ball in the roof of the net for his 13th goal of the season.

Two minutes later, McManaman broke down the left and with a clear scoring opportunity, shot wide.

Gilola was limping and Keegan replaced him with Steve Watson in the 36th minute. Watson moved into a left wing-back role with Clark slotting into midfield. They enforced change worked in Newcastle's favour, allowing them a more compact look.

On the stroke of half-time, Liverpool, having squandered numerous chances, were brought level by the devastating left foot of Robbie Fowler, his 19th goal of the seasons from a McManama cross.

After the turnaround, with Newcastle increasingly troubled the Liverpool defence.

Beardsley fired a left foot effort narrowly wide and James had to make two saves in succession turning shots from Shearer and Rob Lee behind at the expense of corners with Liverpool's pressure area.

James stepped up to curl over the free kick and Ferdinand powered in a header.

James leapt high to his right to tip the ball onto the crossbar

Paes honoured

NEW DELHI, Dec 24: Indian tennis star and bronze medalist at the Atlanta Olympic Games, Leander Paes, was presented with a cheque worth Rs five lakh by the secretary, Department of Youth Affairs and Sports, Bhashkar Barua, here yesterday, reports PTI.

The cheque was to be handed over the Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda on December 7 but the ceremony was deferred following Paes' inability to attend the function on that day, according to a press release.

Liverpool clung on at the end, but with each game they look ever more equipped to become champions.

Sammer gets 'Golden Ball'



PARIS, Dec 24: Stylish German international sweeper Matthias Sammer on Monday won the prestigious Golden Ball award organised by France Football Magazine, reports AFP.

The 29-year-old Borussia Dortmund star beat off competition from Barcelona's young Brazilian hotshot Ronaldinho and Newcastle United's England forward Alan Shearer to succeed AC Milan's Liberian striker George Weah.

Sammer, also voted the outstanding player at last summer's European Championships in England, scored a total of 144 points as he just edged Ronaldinho, who totalled 141 to Shearer's 109.

It fell to a panel of 57 European leading sports journalists from 51 countries to pare down a shortlisted 50 players.

Sammer becomes only the third defender to win the award following legendary libero Franz Beckenbauer (twice) and Russian goalkeeper Lev Yashin.

Monday's award was one of the closest ever — the three point winning margin equalling that of Denmark's Alen Simonsen over England's Kevin Keegan in 1977 and Beckenbauer's 1972 triumph over German teammate Gerd "The Bomber" Muller.

The closest finish since the award's inauguration in 1954 was a single point when Bobby Charlton beat Portugal's Eusebio in 1966.

Sammer, who placed ninth last year, is the fifth German player to take the trophy after Muller in 1970, Beckenbauer in 1972 and 76, Kari Hainz Rummenigge in 1980 and 81 and Lothar Matthaeus.

The award is open to all European based players whichever continent they are from.

Sammer, a former East German international, made his name when he helped VFB Stuttgart win the 1992 Bundesliga title, he has led his present side Dortmund to the championship in the past two seasons.

He won the old East German championship in 1989 and 1990 with Dynamo Dresden.

France had the most players shortlisted, five in all, and managed to get three top ten finishers in Manchester United's Eric Cantona (7th), Milan's Marcel Desailly (8th) and Inter Milan's Youri Djorkaeff, who came ninth.

RANKINGS

Golden Ball rankings in Monday's vote:

1. Matthias Sammer (Ger/Borussia Dortmund) 144 pts; 2. Ronaldinho (Bar/PSV Eindhoven/Barcelona) 141; 3. Alan Shearer (Eng/Blackburn/Norwich) 12; 4. Alessandro Del Piero (Ita/Juventus) 65; 5. Jurgen Klinsmann (Ger/Bayern Munich) 60; 6. Davor Suker (Cro/Sevilla/Real Madrid) 38; 7. Eric Cantona (Fra/Manchester United) 24; 8. Marcel Desailly (Fra/AC Milan) 22; 9. Youri Djorkaeff (Fra/Paris-SG/Inter Milan) 20; 10. George Weah (Lbr/AC Milan) 17; 11. Karol Poborsky (Cze/Slavia Prague/Manchester United) 15; 12. Nwankwo Kanu (Ngr/Ajax/Inter Milan) 14; 13. Gabriel Batistuta (Arg/Florentina) 12; *Alen Boksic (Cro/Lazio/Juventus) 12; *Andreas Koepke (Ger/Frankfurt/Marseille) 12.

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