

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 may be 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.

**WIN**  
**TK, 2000/-**  
**PRIZE BOND**  
**EVERY FORTNIGHT**

**Sports WHIZZ KID**  
**competition-60**

✓ Tick the Correct Answers

Competition closes : 8 pm  
Jan 3, '97

- 1 Who won the Danish Premier Division football league title this season?  
Mohammed Abani Muktiyodha
- 2 Which team won the Bijo Dabish Cup hockey title?  
Usha Ajax Bangladesh Army
- 3 Which country won the Champions' Trophy hockey title recently?  
Pakistan Holland Germany
- 4 Who is the top scorer in this season's Premier Division football league?  
Nakib Mizan Alifaz
- 5 Former Italian national soccer coach Arrigo Sacchi now coaches  
Inter Milan AC Milan Fiorentina

Name .....  
Class ..... Roll No. ....  
School Address .....  
Phone: (If any) .....

**Becker skips Davis Cup opener**

MUNICH, Germany, Dec 24: World number six Boris Becker will not play in the first round Davis Cup World Group tie with Spain on February 7 to 9 in Majorca, his manager Axel Meyer Woelden said Monday, reports AFP.

Meyer-Woelden explained the decision by saying that the German three-time Wimbledon champion would only just have returned from the Australian Open, which ends in Melbourne on January 26 and would not be easily able to reacclimatize as he returned to a European winter.

"In February the temperature there (in Majorca) is low and the air very humid. The clay court is extremely slow and the balls become very heavy. All these conditions speak against Becker's participation," Meyer-Woelden said.

The German tennis federation (DTB) said it had learned of Becker's decision "with surprise" given that his participation was regarded as certain after the grand Slam Cup which Becker lifted in Munich just over a fortnight ago.

But the DTB admitted Becker had voiced doubts about the Davis Cup clash "as he says other German players are better than him on clay," which has always been the 29-year-old's least favourite surface.

The federation said in a statement that as things stood there had been no definitive decision either way and that his would only come 10 days before the tie.

"We are going to be looking at whether there has been a breach of contract," said DTB president Guenter Sanders. The DTB pays Becker 2.6 million marks (1.6 million dollars) annually as part of an arrangement which stipulates that he will play Davis Cup ties assuming he is fit.

**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 Tests.

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 end 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 tailend.

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 relegate one of their batsmen to 12th man on the morning of the Test.

The candidates are Langer, the unconvincing Michael Be-



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

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 turn 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).

**Newcastle fall behind**



LONDON, Dec 24: Newcastle failed to gain ground in their race to catch Liverpool at the head of the Premiership at St James Park on Monday night as a 1-1 draw of blistering pace but also many squandered chances, reports AFP.

Honours finished even as Liverpool had the better of the first half, with Newcastle led by the movement of veteran Peter Beardsley, unlucky not to take the three points as they faded in the second half.

Liverpool are now three points clear at the head of the table. Newcastle meanwhile extended their run without a win to six matches.

Liverpool defender Mark Wright agreed that for Liverpool it was a magnificent result. "We knew it would be hard. They had chances we had chances but there was no decisive winner."

"It's a good feeling being at the top of the table but it counts for nothing unless we can go to Leicester and get a result."

Newcastle striker Alan Shearer agreed that Newcastle needed to pick up more points, but refused to rule out their chances of taking the title. "We needed a win. But we've got a match in hand and we are only seven points behind, which is nothing really."

Newcastle manager Kevin Keegan added: "We are happy with a point. I felt like we got what we deserved. If we don't win the championship I would be delighted for Liverpool."

"Whoever wins the championship will have to beat Liverpool."

Liverpool almost went ahead after eleven seconds Stan Collymore beating three defenders from the kick off worked a quick one two with Robbie Fowler, who headed over Pavel Snick as the Czech keeper challenged him 30 yards out.

Darren Peacock raced back towards the Newcastle goal to hook the ball clear but Fowler had been flagged offside.

Liverpool's flying start turned into early dominance, but there were plenty of chances for both teams.

Newcastle appealed in vain for a 14th minute penalty when Ruddock blocked Keith Gillespie's cross near the left edge of the Liverpool penalty area.

Mark Wright earned a 28th minute booking when he brought down Ferdinand two yards to the left of the Liverpool penalty area.

Ginola 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.

James couldn't claim Lee's punt into the box under Ferdinand's far post challenge and, when the ball broke to Albert 18 yards out, his job was just too much with James scrambling back towards his line.

Shearer was the next to threaten as his fiercely struck shot catching Wright's boot and looping over the crossbar for another corner which Newcastle wasted.

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

Liverpool feeling the pressure.

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**Lanka's cricket calendar '97**

COLOMBO, Dec 24 (AFP): Sri Lanka's Cricket Board Monday announced a hectic schedule for its world champion side in the New Year opening with a tour of New Zealand.

**Feb 26-March 27:** Tour of New Zealand, two Tests and three one-day internationals.

**April 3-11:** Triangular series in Sharjah with Pakistan and Zimbabwe.

**April 13-27:** Tour of Pakistan, two Test matches.

**May 7-22:** Quadrangular tournament in India.

**May 23-June 23:** Tour of West Indies, two Test matches and one one-day international.

**July 15-31:** ACC Trophy, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

**Aug 3-Sept 5:** Two Tests and three one-day matches against India after the ACC Trophy.

**Oct 30-Nov 10:** Triangular series in Pakistan.

**Nov 14-Dec 26:** Three Tests and three one-day matches against India.

**Romario takes to his heels!**

RIO DE JANEIRO, Dec 24: Brazilian soccer star Romario was chased off a beach after becoming involved in an argument during a foot-volleyball competition, police sources said on Monday, reports Reuters.

Romario and his partner began arguing with fans as they were watching another game in the tournament which also involved Vasco da Gama striker Edmundo on Sunday, said an official.

The incident happened in the resort town of Cabo Frio, 120 kilometres east of Rio.

Other people became involved in the discussion and began threatening the former World Cup player, who was forced to flee the beach and was eventually escorted away in a police car.

Media reports quoted one youth as claiming that he had been hit by Romario and said the star had to take refuge in a restaurant before being rescued by police.

Romario rejoined Flamengo on loan from Valencia two months ago after a trouble-ridden 78 days with the Spanish club.

In his first game back he was injured and the next time he played Flamengo were beaten 2-0 by Criciuma and knocked out of the Brazilian championship. He played one more game and has been on holiday since.

Foot-volleyball, which is the name suggests is a version of volleyball in which the hands and arms cannot be used, is a popular beach sport in Brazil.

**Seles still hopeful**

SYDNEY, Dec 24: Four-time champion Monica Seles still expected to defend her Australian Open title next month, although a broken finger has forced her out of a prior tournament in Sydney, officials said today, reports AFP.

Seles informed organisers of the Sydney international tournament here, scheduled for January 5-11, that she would be withdrawing from the event, the traditional warm-up for the year's opening Grand Slam in Melbourne, starting January 13.

Seles, a left-hander, injured a finger on her right hand late last month but did not have it treated immediately. The break was diagnosed 12 days ago and she has since trained with the finger in a split.

The setback continues a run of injuries for the tenacious 23-year-old since her comeback to tennis from an April 1993 court side stabbing in Hamburg, Germany, that kept her out of the game for 18 months.

Seles has yet to be beaten in the Australian Open in four visits to Melbourne and rates it as one of her favourite tournaments.

Should she withdraw from the Australian Open it would be a massive blow for organisers who are anticipating a head-to-head contest with world No 1 Steffi Graf, whose opening Australian engagement is in the Hopman Cup mixed teams event in Perth, starting on December 29.

The Seles withdrawal from the Sydney event follows Monday's pull-out of 15-year-old Russian prodigy Anna Kournikova.

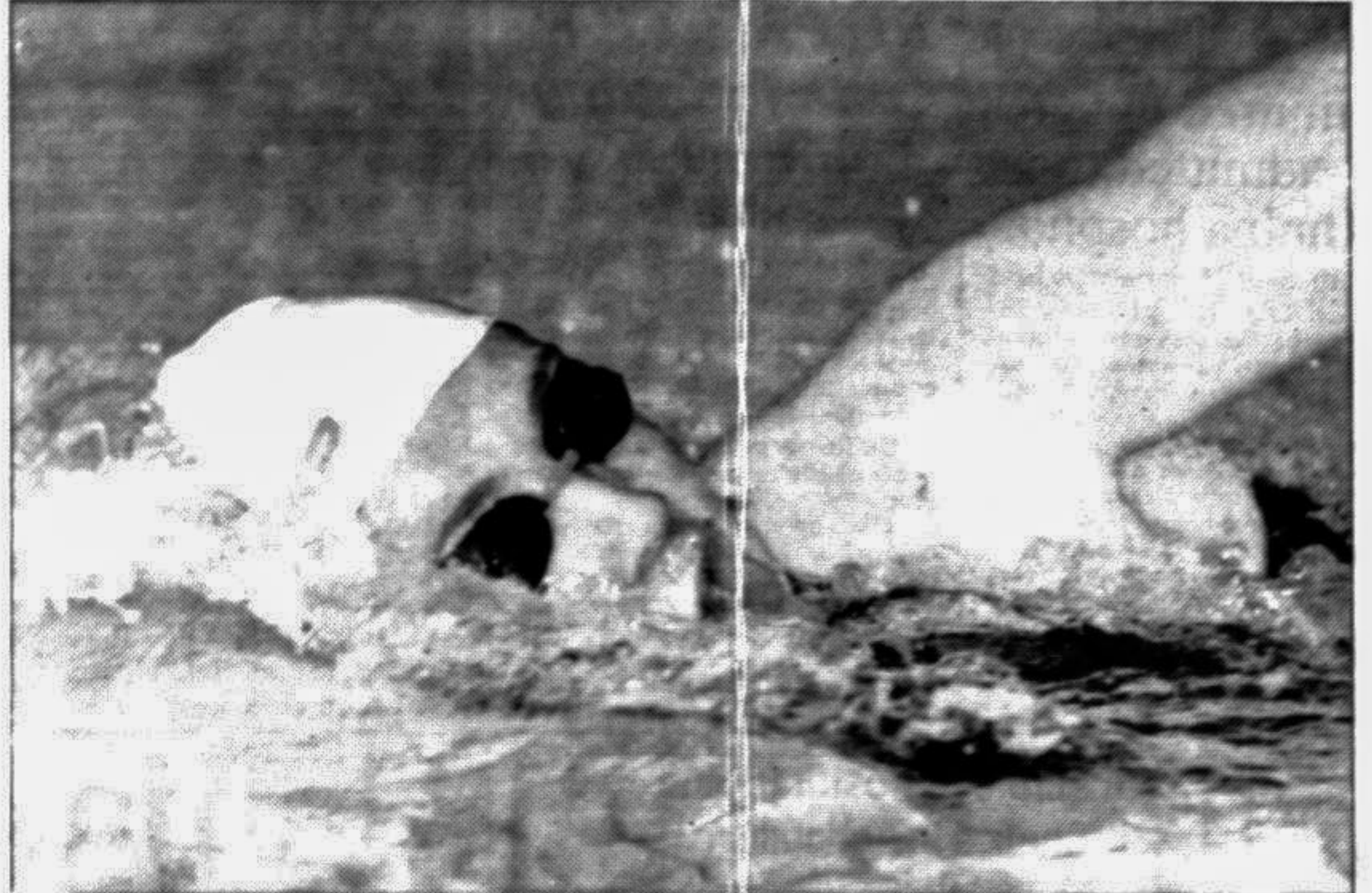
Flamboyant American Andre Agassi is another notable absentee from Australian tournament this summer, citing a lack of motivation.

**Lewis' trainer turns back on Tyson!**

LONDON, Dec 24: The man who trains British heavyweight boxer Lennox Lewis has turned down an offer to switch to Mike Tyson's camp because he says the American is not good enough, reports Reuters.

Emanuel Steward, Lewis' trainer for the past two years, said: "I turned Mike down without even bothering to ask how much money they were prepared to pay me. I have always been convinced Lennox is the best heavyweight out there and nothing could persuade me to turn my back on him."

"I suppose it is quite flattering to be asked by Mike to work with him," Steward acknowledged. "A lot of people believe that is the number one trainer's job in boxing but I had to tell him and his people, I already have the top job."



Irish Olympic gold medalist Michele Smith on her way to win the 50 m freestyle gold at the Bordeaux International competition in France on Dec 23.

**Zimbabwe in high spirits**



HARARE, Dec 24: Zimbabwe confidence is mounting ahead of the second Test against England starting on Thursday despite touring team coach David Lloyd's claim his side "flippin' murdered them in the drawn first Test, reports Reuters.

The inaugural Test between the two teams ended in a draw with the scores level — the first time there has been such a result in Test cricket history.

England led by only 30 on first innings and struggled to polish off Zimbabwe's second innings on the final day, but Lloyd repeatedly said after the match "We flippin' murdered them and they know it."

In contrast, Zimbabwe captain Alistair Campbell said: "I thought we held our own and at times dominated, especially on the first two days."

Campbell said they were confident going into the opening game of the two-Test encounter and "We'll be even more so in Harare."

The Harare Sports Club was the venue of Zimbabwe's only Test win, against Pakistan in February last year, since they became a Test-playing country four years ago.

In that Zimbabwe victory by an innings and 64 runs, Grant Flower made a double century, Andy Flower and Guy Whittall both scored hundreds, and paceman Heath Streak had a nine-wicket match haul.

Zimbabwe are likely to make one change from Bulawayo, with batsman Stuart Carlisle being dropped in favour of Mark Dekker, the left hander who hit a century for Matabeleland in the four-day game against England which preceded the first Test.

England can reflect on some plus points from the first Test, with centuries by Nasser Hussain and John Crawley and runs in both innings for opener Nick Knight and Alec Stewart, whose 73 from 75 deliveries on the last day initially fired England's victory hopes as they chased 205 in 37 overs.

Off spinner Robert Croft bowled well in the first innings left-arm spinner Phil Tufnell was effective in the second, paceman Chris Silverwood, though ignored by Mike Atherton for most of the second innings, had a creditable Test debut.

However, England's new ball attack of Darren Gough and Alan Mullally was never threatening and a familiar inability to clean up the tail, let Zimbabwe off the hook in both innings.

The long England tail was exposed in the first innings and for lengthy periods on the first three days the touring side were saving the game, not winning it.

England will have to decide whether to include the recently-arrived Craig White, who has been added to the tour party as cover for fellow all-rounder Ronnie Irani, ruled out by back trouble.

On his performance in Bulawayo Mullally should be the one to make way, with Silverwood being given the new ball, but England's management will probably decide against such a radical move.

The Harare Sports Club pitch is likely to be as batsman friendly as the one in Bulawayo and the smart money will be on a draw.

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**Belgian booter in stew**

BRUSSELS, Dec 24: Gilles De Bilde, star striker of Anderlecht and the Belgian national team, walked free Tuesday after spending the night in a police cell where he was questioned about a left hook to an opponent's nose and cheek, reports AP.

De Bilde hit Eendracht Aalst defender Kris Porte during a First Division game Saturday. Porte's nose and cheek bone were broken, and doctors fear he may suffer permanent eye damage.

Police hauled De Bilde in for questioning late Monday and held him overnight, after Porte pressed criminal charges against the Anderlecht star.

Early Tuesday, a magistrate freed De Bilde, but the player may