

Costa Rica rout Cameroon

SAN JOSE, Mar 12: Cameroon's players initially refused to take the pitch for a friendly with Costa Rica on Sunday because of a dispute over money, reports Reuters.

When they finally agreed to play they were hammered 5-0. Striker Paulo Cesar Wanchopé scored a first half hat-trick as the so-called 'indomitable lions' who set pulses racing in the 1990 World Cup, capitulated meekly against unrated opponents.

Cameroon's players had claimed they were owed 35,000 dollars from television rights and were prepared to boycott the match. But after intensive negotiations they finally lined up 45 minutes late, only to be outclassed.

Two second half goals by Austin Berry completed Cameroon's misery and gave Costa Rica an ideal work-out for next week's home match with Mexico, their first in the final stages of the CONCACAF World Cup qualifiers.

Since 1990, Cameroon soccer has been plagued by political bickering and the team's fortunes have taken a turn for the worse.

They were knocked out of the 1994 World Cup in the first round and failed to reach the last eight of last year's African Nations Cup.

FIFA threatened to ban them after a government minister suspended the Cameroon Soccer Federation.

Last month, FIFA stepped in again when it ordered Cameroon directors to pay former national team goalkeeper Joseph Antoine Bell money he was owed for taking part in the 1990 World Cup.

Cameroon were labelled violent by Brazil coach Mario Zagallo after losing 2-0 in a friendly last year and were held 0-0 at home by Angola in their most recent World Cup qualifier.

World Masters' Games in USA

NEW YORK, Mar 12: Nike, giant of sports products world, is planning to co-sponsor an Olympics of its own: The Nike World Masters' Games, reports Xinhua.

The company is lending its name to what could develop into a massive promotional sporting event to be hosted by the city of Portland, Oregon, and to be staged in August 1998, the USA Today reported Monday.

The 14-day multisport event, designed for athletes aged 30 and older, is expected to attract as many as 25,000 amateur athletes from the USA and other countries, according to the report.

Previously, World Masters' Games have been held outside the US with limited corporate support. It's a global event and the number of participants are attractive to it," said Nike spokeswoman Erin Kendrick.

Connors' second

NAPLES, Fla., Mar 12: Jimmy Connors capped a flawless week at the Nuvolet Masters' Championship by taking the 100,000 dollar title in straight sets over Mel Purcell, 6-2, 6-2, on Sunday, reports AP.

Purcell went up 2-0 in the first set, but after that it was all Connors.

"This is the best match I've played from start to finish," the 44-year-old Connors said. "It feels great to win. Playing tennis is what I do."

Connors, the No. 1 seed entering the tournament, finished the week with a 5-0 record, defeating Bjorn Borg, Guillermo Vilas, John Lloyd and John McEnroe to advance to the final.

It was Connors' second title in the three-year history of the annual championship event for the men's over-35 tour.

Second Test begins tomorrow

Noel sent in, Sachin stunned



NEW DELHI, Mar 12: Mystery off-spinner Noel David, a stranger even to skipper Sachin Tendulkar, left Wednesday to join the touring Indian cricket team in the West Indies, reports AFP.

The 26-year-old, who has taken a mere 28 first-class wickets since his debut in 1992, received an unexpected call to reinforce the tourists after a shoulder injury ruled out pace spearhead Javagal Srinath.

David's selection surprised many, including Tendulkar, who was quoted by a newspaper as asking "Noel who?" When informed by a journalist of the Hyderabad players' selection.

"Wasn't there anyone else?" Tendulkar reportedly asked.

But David's mentor Shivlal Yadav, a former Test off-spinner from Hyderabad and a current selection, restored: "The team management requested for an off-spinner and we

plumped for David because Ashish Kapoor, the only other contender, was short of form. "Besides, David is a useful middle-order batsman with a first-class double century to his credit, and easily the best fielder in Indian cricket."

If Tendulkar is surprised at David's selection, it is only because the busy international schedule has given him and the other stars little opportunity to play domestic cricket.

But former Indian captain and manager Ajit Wadekar is unconvinced, hinting that regional considerations rather than merit prompted the selectors choice.

"Who is this David? Nobody has heard of him" said Wadekar, under whom India recorded its lone series win in the West Indies in 1971.

"While picking the original 16-man squad for the tour, the selectors did not find any good off-spinner, but now suddenly they have found Noel David to

be of international class. "This is very funny. I don't know how they are selecting the team."

David himself was unperturbed. "To bowl to the West Indian genius Brian Lara is a dream come true and I take it as a personal challenge," he said before leaving.

The selectors stressed that David was going to the West Indies as a 17th squad member and not as a replacement for Srinath, who is currently seeking expert advice in South Africa for his injury.

"If the doctors in South Africa do not permit Srinath to rejoin the team, another seamer, Salil Ankola, will be sent out," chief selector Ramakant Desai said.

David will join his teammates on the even of the second of five Tests starting at Port of Spain on Friday, the rain-hit first Test ended in a draw at Sabina Park, Kingston on Monday.

Aussie astounds Agassi



INDIAN WELLS, California, Mar 12: Mark Philippoussis, the hard-hitting server in men's tennis, had 23 aces as he defeated 10th-seeded Andre Agassi 7-6 (7-5), 7-6 (7-5) in the Newsweek Champions' Cup, report agencies.

Agassi, considered to have one of the best returns of serve, could not handle the Australian's 23 aces, one clocked at 139 mph. The first-round match lasted 100 minutes Tuesday at the Hyatt Grand Champions Resort.

Philippoussis, the winner of last week's Franklin Classic in Scottsdale, Arizona, faced Agassi for the first time.

"He wasn't playing at his best," Philippoussis said. "The big points came in the tiebreaker. I think I played well when I had to come to the net or, when I had to hit some winners on the big points. I served well, too, in the tiebreakers."

It was another setback for Agassi's bid to climb back to the top of the world after a disappointing 1996.

"I felt like I played pretty well today, considering where I am," Agassi said. "I can play a lot better, but it's definitely a step up."

The defeat was Agassi's fourth in a row, after a semifinal loss in San Jose, California, a second-round defeat after a bye, in Memphis and a first-

round defeat in Scottsdale last week.

Even so, Agassi found a few positives.

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