

World chess meet on

GRONINGEN, Netherlands, Dec 9: The largest-ever field for a World Chess Championship begins battle Tuesday — but without two of the world's top players and the intense rivalry they always generate, reports AP.

Garri Kasparov and Vladimir Kramnik have refused to play in the 5 million dollars tournament organised by the International Chess Federation, or FIDE, in the northern Dutch city of Groningen.

"It is very hard to say this is a real world championship, when the two strongest players in the world are not playing," Dutch chess writer Gert Lichtenfeld said.

Kasparov, reigning world champion with the rival Professional Chess Association, has refused to play because of what he calls the "dirty money" in the huge prize fund.

The comment — which he has made repeatedly without elaboration — is apparently aimed at the Russian oil company Khazina, which put up the prize. Organisers say they have no reason to question Khazina's contribution.

But Anatoly Karpov, tournament organiser FIDE's world champ, has his own explanation for Kasparov's refusal to play.

Kasparov "does not take any risks with his ideas that he is the strongest chess player in the world. He wants to choose his opponent and to choose the right moment," Karpov said at a recent event in Singapore.

The barbed comment is a taste of the arch-rivalry that will be missing from the tournament because of Kasparov's absence.

Kramnik has snubbed the event because he says organisers made it too easy for Karpov to defend the world title he won for the fifth time last year in Elista, Russia. Karpov has been given automatic entry into the six-game final, to be played in Lausanne, Switzerland, starting Jan 2, and will not be playing in Groningen.

The decision guarantees Karpov — currently ranked below Kramnik — a minimum prize of 768,000 dollars even before he shifts a single pawn. The event winner will pocket 1,370,000 dollars.

In Lausanne, Karpov will play the winner of the knockout tournament in Groningen, which features '98 of the world's top Grand Masters.

Henri knows the score

RABAT, Dec 9: Frenchman Henri Michel, who has coached Morocco into the World Cup finals, knows exactly what lies ahead for his largely inexperienced North African team, reports Reuters.

A 47-year-old veteran of 58 appearances for France, he played in the 1978 World Cup in Argentina, and then coached the French squad to the gold medal in the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles.

Two years after that he was coach of the French team in the Mexico World Cup, taking his side to the semifinals. Then four years ago, he was in charge of the Cameroon squad at USA '94.

Michael was not too disappointed with the first round draw that placed Morocco with world champions Brazil, Scotland and Norway.

"It will be tough, but I am confident of our chances,"

Cyclists off to Pakistan

Sports Reporter

A six-member Bangladesh cycling team left the capital for Pakistan yesterday to take part in the Golden Jubilee international cycling competition to be held from December 12 to 25.

The members of the team which includes two officials are: Abdul Kuddus Babul, Zahid Chowdhury Sumon, Riad Mahmood Islam, Golam Kader Dhan, Saidur Rahman (coach) and Wahid Hossain (manager).

Akram's dream comes true

Caribbeans crucified



KARACHI, Dec 9: In a devastating spell skipper Wasim Akram snapped up three wickets in just six balls as the West Indies by 10 wickets in the third Test here today, tormenting the tourists with a 3-0 clean sweep, reports AFP.

Akram thus fulfilled his dream of taking a place in the history books, becoming only the third Pakistani captain to win all three Tests in a series.

The West Indian innings folded at 212, leaving Pakistan a mere 12 runs to win. Pakistan reached the target in five overs without losing a wicket.

For the West Indies it was their worst series result in 69 years, since losing 3-0 to England in 1928.

For Pakistan the victory was their third whitewash of an opponent in Test series. Imran Khan led Pakistan to a 3-0 win over Kim Hughes' Australian side in 1982-83 while Javed Miandad thrashed the Kiwis under Martin Crowe 3-0 in 1990-91.

Akram finished with 4 for 42, bagging seven wickets in the match but off-spinner Saqlain Mushtaq won man-of-the-match award for 4 for 26 and a total of nine wickets.

"It's a sort of feeling that very rarely comes, beating the cavalier West Indians 3-0 but I owe a lot to my teammates who did their best in all departments to bring curtains on our golden jubilee season in a befitting manner," Wasim Akram said.

Pakistan celebrated its 50 years of independence in the season. They lost 1-0 to South Africa in the Test series and failed to qualify for the final of the quadrangular tournament.

The whitewash of the Caribbean is the best performance ever by any Pakistan team against West Indies.

West Indian manager Clive Lloyd and coach Malcolm Marshall looked dejected over the dismal performance of the West Indian team once regarded as invincible in Tests.

"I have always rated (the) Pakistan team high in the order but our players did not play to their potential. Our batsmen let us down," Lloyd said.

"We batted miserably in the whole series and Walsh did not get the needed support from the other end," Marshall said.

"I feel disappointed over this loss as no team had fared as badly as we have done. But I will tell the guys to re-group for the

tasks ahead and feel that it's not the end of the world," Courtney Walsh said.

Resuming at 198 for 7, West Indies avoided the third innings defeat in a row but lost Franklin Rose in the fourth over of the day. Rose tried to glance a leg-side delivery from

Curtly Ambrose took just one wicket and West Indies leg-end Brian Lara scored 129 runs in the entire series.

Opener Sherwin Campbell with 248 runs in six innings proved to be the most consistent with Carl Hooper (228), Shivnarine Chanderpaul (153) and Stuart Williams (60) failing to lift their team.

SCOREBOARD

Scorecards at close of play on the fourth day of the third cricket Test between Pakistan and the West Indies in Karachi Tuesday:

WEST INDIES: First innings 216 (Sherwin Campbell 50, Brian Lara 36, Saqlain Mushtaq 5-54, Wasim Akram 3-76)

PAKISTAN: First innings 417 (Aamir Sohail 160, Ijaz Ahmed 151, Mervyn Dillon 5-111, Courtney Walsh 4-74)

WEST INDIES: Second innings (198/7 overnight) Campbell c Inzamam b Waqar 5, S Williams lbw b Waqar 12, Lara c M Wasim b Saqlain 37, Hooper b Akram 106, Chanderpaul c Moin b Saqlain 16, Holder c Sohail b Saqlain 5, D Williams b Saqlain 2, Bishop not out 6, Rose c Moin b Akram 5, Walsh b Akram 0, Dillon lbw b Akram 4, Extras: (b-7, lb-2, nb-5) 14, Total: (all out in 52.4 overs) 212

Fall of wickets: 1-14; 2-19; 3-140; 4-182; 5-186; 6-191; 7-193; 8-207; 9-208

Bowling: O M R W Akram 16.4 7 42 4 Waqar 6 0 31 2 Mahmood 3 0 32 0 Mushtaq 8 0 72 0 Saqlain 19 9 26 4

PAKISTAN: Second innings M Wasim not out 0 Mahmood not out 13 Extras: (nb-2) 2, Total: (without loss) 15

Bowling: O M R W Walsh 3 0 11 0 Rose 2 0 4 0

Result: Pakistan won by ten wickets, taking the series 3-0

Pakistan won first Test at Peshawar by an innings and 19 runs and second Test at Rawalpindi by an innings and 29 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Saqlain Mushtaq

Man-of-the-series: Aamir Sohail (Pakistan); Walsh (West Indies)

Umpires: Cyril Mitchell (South Africa) and Salim Badar (Pakistan)

TV umpire: Riazuddin ICC umpire referee: Raman C Subba Row (England)

SOHAIL ... m-o-s

Akram and was caught by keeper Moin Khan for 6.

Akram took two wickets in his 16th over, his sixth over of the day, to wrap up the tourists' innings.

West Indian captain Walsh was yanked for another nought while Mervyn Dillon was trapped lbw for 4.

Mohammad Wasim and Azhar Mahmood were sent to open Pakistan's second innings. Wasim was caught by Carl Hooper off Walsh but to the despair of the West Indian captain umpire Salim Badar called it a "no ball".

Azhar, unbeaten on 13, hit Walsh for a boundary to achieve the target.

West Indies will play a five-match Test series against England early next year. They leave for Sharjah to take part in the four-nation tournament also involving Pakistan, India and England. Pacer Curtly Ambrose nursing a bad back will go back home.

Saqlain recorded his best match figures of 9-80, Waqar Younis finished with 2-31, taking his tally to 298, third highest wicket-taker for Pakistan after Imran Khan (362) and Wasim Akram (334).

Akram is only the second captain to achieve a whitewash against West Indies. A F P Chapman led England to a 3-0 whitewash against R K Nunes' Caribbeans in 1928.

One superstriker too many

RIO DE JANEIRO, Dec 9 (AP): The two were rusty, off peak form and hadn't played together in more than three years. It hardly mattered.

Bebeto and Romario, improvised on a depleted Brazilian team, dazzled fans at a friendly game with South Africa and led the world champions to a 2-1 victory Sunday in Johannesburg.

Each scored a goal on a pass from the other, and the chemistry between the two was evident in a repertoire of back-heeled passes, thread-the-needle through-balls and precise conclusions.

"One knows what the other is thinking," Bebeto said simply.

The show recalled the best moment of Brazil's 1994 World Cup champion team and left coach Mario Zagallo with a dilemma: whom to bench when superforward Romario returns?

Many, including Romario and Bebeto, feel the answer should be neither — all three should play.

"It's Zagallo's decision, but if I were coach, I'd put all three in," said Bebeto. "I don't mind playing a little farther back. I began my career in the midfield."

Romario also likes the idea, although he has no illusions,

"I sure would be interesting," he said. "But for the moment, it's Romario and one other, and we're competing to see who will be the other."

Romario was not released to face South Africa by his club, Internazionale. But the FIFA player-of-the-year in 1996 is expected to join the Brazilian squad for a tournament in Saudi Arabia starting Friday.

Zagallo said the problem with a three-attacker formation is that it leaves the defence vulnerable.

"It's more than proven that with three attackers you lose the midfield," he said, despite heaping praise on the art of his two veteran attackers.

Zagallo also has doubts whether two over-30 forwards can take the rigours of a World Cup. Bebeto is 33, Romario 31, and both are visibly a step slower than in 1994.

But the magic — that's still there.

"Just like old times," read a newspaper headline in Rio Monday. "The good times are back, said another, 'Romario on the bench?' imagined a third.

Soccer analyst Sergio Noronha wrote in his column in Rio's Jornal do Brasil that "the two seemingly made a pact to remind everyone of what they can create."

The Rio sporting daily O Lance noted that the pair's performance put pressure on Romario to show he deserves a starting spot.

"The impossible happened. Romario's position no longer seems so unshakable," the paper said. "The two hadn't played together for nearly four years. Imagine if they had."

Bad mood spurs Zagallo?

RIO DE JANEIRO, Dec 9: Brazil coach Mario Zagallo, who won the World Cup as a player in 1958 and 1962, as coach in 1970 and assistant coach in 1994, is intensely proud of his record in the World Cup, and he does not hesitate to issue a reminder to his detractors, reports Reuters.

Zagallo took over from Carlos Alberto Parreira after the 1994 World Cup. Often criticised for tactics which are seen as unnecessarily defensive and for not studying Brazil's opponents, Zagallo's standard response is that his record speaks for itself.

Once asked if he was in a bad mood, Zagallo replied: "Yes I am. And I was in a bad mood in '58. I was in a bad mood in '62. I was in a bad mood in '70 and in '94..."

South Asian junior tennis begins

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Dec 9: The eleven-day long ITF South Asian under-14 tennis circuit, began at the Rajshahi Tennis Complex today.

Deputy Minister for Primary and Mass Education Prof Zinnatunnesa Talukder formally declared the meet open as chief guest.

A total of 46 players including 15 girls from eleven South and Central Asian nations are taking part in the competition which will be held in two phases.

The first leg, which starts here tomorrow, will continue up to December 13 while the second leg will begin the day after and will end on December 18.

Brazilian duo on FIFA shortlist

ZURICH, Switzerland, Dec 9: Brazilians Ronaldo and Roberto Carlos are among four players in contention for the FIFA-world-player-of-the-year award to be announced at Disneyland Paris on 12 January, reports AFP.

Inter Milan striker Ronaldo and Real Madrid's Roberto Carlos are in competition with Arsenal's Dutch striker Dennis Bergkamp and Juventus' French midfielder Zinedine Zidane.

A total of 128 national team coaches have voted in the poll and two of the four finalists have received an identical number of points, meaning there will be four players on the podium for the first time.

The awards night will also feature the team award to Brazil and an award to Yugoslavia as the team which has made the swiftest rise up the monthly FIFA rankings.

Foreman's last punch at glory

NEW YORK, Dec 9 (AP): George Foreman wants to make another comeback, but plans to wait at least another year — until after his 50th birthday.

"I'd like to have one last boxing match in Las Vegas — a 50-year-old man enters the ring with a top contender and then calls it quits," he told Fox Sports on Monday night. "In 13 months ... I'll be 50 years old."

The thought of fighting at that age doesn't bother Foreman, who apparently wants more punishment.

"Someone's really got to give me a good whoopin'," he said. "I don't want anyone to slap me around and abuse me. I want a whoopin'."

The former heavyweight champion didn't get that while losing a disputed decision to Shannon Briggs on Nov 22.

"I'm walking away," Foreman said after the loss in Atlantic City.

"This could go on for the rest of my life, chasing young guys. Young guys should be chasing young guys."

In 1994, at age 45, Foreman became the oldest heavyweight champion in history by knocking out Michael Moorer in the 10th round for the WBA and IBF titles.

Foreman won the heavyweight gold medal at the 1968 Olympics at Mexico City. He turned pro in 1969, became undisputed world champion by stopping Joe Frazier in the second round on Jan 22, 1973, at Kingston, Jamaica, and lost the title to Muhammad Ali when he was stopped in the eighth round on Oct 30, 1974, in Kinshasa, the capital of what was then Zaire.

After being outpointed by Jimmy Young on March 17, 1977, at San Juan, Puerto Rico, Foreman said he had a vision and he retired to become an evangelist in Houston.

In 1987, Foreman began a comeback, he said, to raise 100,000 dollars for his youth centre.



THE PICTURE TELLS THE STORY: Windies skipper Courtney Walsh finds his off-stump sent for a ride by opposite number Wasim Akram (not seen) during the fourth day's play of the third and last Test in Karachi yesterday.

—AP/UNB photo

Suqqi, the smiling assassin

KARACHI, Dec 9 (AFP): Pakistani off-spinner Saqlain Mushtaq says he wants to become the best in the world after destroying the West Indies in the third Test with a match haul of nine wickets.

"I work very hard on my bowling and with the help of almighty Allah and the prayers of my parents I wish to play more and more for Pakistan," the 22-year-old from Lahore said.

Other than to become the best in the world," he said, adding he had a long way to go to fulfil his dream.

Saqlain took nine wickets in Pakistan's emphatic 10-wicket win in the final Test at Karachi today as Pakistan demolished the West Indies for an unprecedented 3-0 series victory.

He posted career-best innings figures of 5-54 and match figures of 9-80 to earn the man-of-match award.

Saqlain, fondly called "Suqqi" by teammates, is as unassuming as his innocuous-looking bowling, but friends say once he gets going he is as mischievous as his "twinklers".

Saqlain has shown great potential since entering the international cricket scene and promises more to come.

He burst onto Test cricket with superb performances in Pakistan's under-19 team, impressing with his effective off-spinners on a tour of New Zealand in 1993-94.

The following season he got his first cap against Sri Lanka but really blossomed last year. Saqlain took 17 wickets in the World Series tournament, leading Pakistan to their first-ever triangular series triumph.

Saqlain took 65 wickets in one-dayers last year, beating the previous best of 50 in a season set by Australian leg-spin wizard Shane Warne.

He is also the youngest and fastest player ever to reach 100 wickets in limited-over games, but despite his individual achievements he remains a solid team player.

"I feel happy when I achieve something but I am overjoyed when my team wins," Saqlain said.

He recorded the first ever hat-trick by a spinner in one-dayers against Zimbabwe at Peshawar last year, and also featured in the eighth wicket world record partnership of 313 runs with Wasim Akram against Zimbabwe at Sheikhupura, scoring his best of 79.

English county side Surrey offered him a monthly contract when Australian all rounder Brendon Julian failed to turn up. He lived up to his reputation with 32 wickets to finish sixth in the overall averages.

Saqlain will return to Surrey next season with a new vigour and determination.

"It's nice to play in the county championship as we have altogether different conditions. But people at Surrey are very nice and I keep my fingers crossed for the next season," he said.

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Otto makes way for Carlos?

DUBAI, Dec 9 (Reuters): Saudi Arabia, surprise entrant in their World Cup finals debut in 1994, sacked seven coaches before booking their place for France.

Stand-in German coach Otto Pfister, appointed in October, made sure of their second consecutive appearance in the finals but even that may not save his job which is almost certainly going to Carlos Alberto Parreira, who coached Brazil to victory in 1994.

He is expected to sign on in dotted line any time now. Sami Al-Jaber's 63rd minute goal in the final qualifier against Qatar took the pressure off the 59-year-old Pfister but he has since gone back to his original job — of training the country's youth side.

In 1994, coached by Argentine Jorge Solari, the Saudis enthralled fans with their speed on the ball and remarkable control, beating Belgium 1-0 thanks to a fifth minute wonder goal by Saad Owairan.

Solari spoke barely 30 words of Arabic yet under him the Saudis ran the Netherlands close in a 2-1 defeat, leading early in the match, and beat Morocco.

Bookmakers in London slashed their odds from 500-1 to 40-1 after they beat the Belgians and they were somewhat unlucky to lose 3-1 to Sweden in the second round and went home with their reputation much enhanced.

Their hallmarks then were to play deep but hit back on the counter-attack with quick passes.

The success in 1994 and in qualifying this year has further raised the