

Sport

Sharjah tourney on Internet

NEW YORK, Dec 10 (AP): For cricket fans who can't get no satisfaction, Mick has come to their rescue.

Mick Jagger, front man for the Rolling Stones, has started a new Internet company to bring cricket matches to the Net. His company, Jagged Internetworks, along with World-Tel in Connecticut and Cricinfo, will netcast the Akai-Singer Champions' Trophy, an international cricket tournament from Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.

Cricket-loving Web surfers can browse the site and hear live broadcasts of the matches and see video highlights afterward.

"This is the future of sports information," said Jagger.

"In a few years, the Internet will be a huge player in sports broadcasting across the globe."

The Rolling Stones often broadcast their concerts live over the Net, so broadcasting a cricket match isn't too different, said Jagger.

"It's very, very broadcast in the big sense of the word," he said. "We don't have it on in England, and wherever you are, you can get it now."

Jagger got the idea to distributor the event when he couldn't follow England's team while on the Bridges to Babylon tour, now in Georgia. Jagger, an avid cricket fan since his childhood, found the tournament wasn't broadcast anywhere outside Asia, so he decided to put it on the Web.

The Akai-Singer Champions Trophy is the second-most important cricket tournament. England, the West Indies, Pakistan and India will compete for the trophy in seven matches from Dec 11-19.

The president of WorldTel, Mark Mascarenhas, said he expects an audience of 1.5 million to 2 million people in England, India and the subcontinent. "That's nearly as many households as Rupert Murdoch has in England," he said.

WorldTel is the company producing the webcast. Designer Tommy Hilfiger is sponsoring the webcast. Cricinfo is the largest site on the Net for information about the sport.

If the netcast is successful, Jagger said he plans to carry more tournaments next year and include other sports in the lineup.

The tournament will be broadcast from <http://www.cricket.org>.

Reiffel joins 'em

MELBOURNE, Dec 10: Australia's fast bowling ranks, already stretched by injuries to Glenn McGrath and Jason Gillespie, may lose another key player with Paul Reiffel's chronic hamstring problems resurfacing during the one-day cricket loss to South Africa here Tuesday, reports AFP.

Reiffel is in doubt for the Boxing Day Test match against Hansie Cronje's South Africans at the Melbourne Cricket Ground after straining his right hamstring when fielding during Australia's 45 run loss.

The 31-year-old had treatment on the injury after the match and will be tested today.

McGrath is already battling to play in the Test with a stomach muscle strain and was ruled out of Tuesday's game, while Gillespie is recovering from stress fractures in his back suffered on this year's Ashes tour of England.

Australian captain Steve Waugh was confident Reiffel and McGrath would be fit for the first Melbourne Test.

"With all the cricket we play these days, bowlers are going to get injured. But both injuries are not serious, they're only strains," Waugh said after Tuesday's defeat.

The injuries may pave the way for Andy Bichel to be promoted to the Test side after the Queenslander was 12th man for this summer's three Test series against New Zealand.

Australia beat the Kiwis 2-0 in the series.

STAR WORLD CUP SPECIAL

From Nizamuddin Ahmed in London

If the dazzling performance of the Rest of the World XI last Thursday at Marseilles is anything to go by then the Europeans, beaten 2-5 on the night, have a lot to worry about: Brazilian Ronaldo, Colombians Toto Asprilla and Antony De Avila, Argentine Gabriel Batistuta, to name a few.

However, Britons who are characteristically undaunted even after the final whistle not to speak of before it, can hardly hide their excitement at being able to avoid all the big guns in the showpiece World Cup 98 draw on the night. One report estimated the cost of the gilt and glamour, fireworks and baozooks, to be a neat five million pounds. Peanuts in a craze football whose worldwide involvement is appropriately counted in billions. Thursday's extravaganza is only the beginning as organisers have predicted that the World Cup next summer would be the biggest televised event of the 20th century.

England, drawn in Group G with seeds Romania (weakest according to much of the British press), unpredictable Colombia and underdogs Afro-qualifiers Tunisia, "should qualify, will qualify", said their beaming English boss, Glenn Hoddle, who could hardly suppress his bubble and paid respects to the underdogs Tunisians almost as an afterthought in his post-draw interview. Both Romania and Colombia are ranked above England, but the English were thrilled on not being grouped with 3-1 favourites and champions Brazil, 5-1 France, Germany and Italy, both 7-1 as are England.

The Queen considered a seemingly occasion to announce a knighthood for Pele, voted in Britain a week back as

the greatest footballer of all time. No question about that perhaps but when the same electorate chooses to name triumphant England captain of the 1996 World Cup at London Bobby Moore as one of the top five football stars of all time, one may be pardoned for suggesting that the ballot was rigged.

The frenzy is building up here. Soon after the draw there has been innumerable radio and TV talk programmes where participants, former players, current managers, journalists and football experts have been discussing how England will qualify for the next round, whom they will meet in the quarterfinals, in the semis and so on. The England goalkeeper David Seaman wants to meet Germany in the quarters to exact revenge of the Euro '96 debacle, meaning he is more certain this time that England would win. What nobody is not talking of is England not reaching the last sixteen.

Hoddle, gleeful on the outside he may be about the grouping, was not happy about the prospect of having to wait five days after the opening night on June 10 because there may be "too much tension" if England sit around for that long.

Whatever it is the British public, pundits and rookies alike, are thinking. Newcastle star Asprilla sounded a note of warning. Not only his Colombia, but Romania and Tunisia will also create problems for England, cautioned the super striker who according to team-mate and England skipper, Alan Shearer, can be up to anything. The present discussion here is not based on any fears in that line.

The Scots are not being given

much chance even by their optimistic fans. Odds against the Tartan Army have increased to 125-1 from 100-1 after being pitted in the same group with the holders. Scottish supporters are being more realistic. Alan Rough, their goalkeeper when Brazil beat them 1-4 in 1982 hopes that the present Scottish defence may limit the samba stars to a goal or two in the opening match and then they can set about Norway and Morocco.

As in any World Cup, tickets will be a problem. The opening Brazil-Scotland match at Stade de France is mostly sold out because it was always known that the Latinos will be playing. If the general rule of eight per cent of ground capacity for each team is enforced, the Scottish FA may have a few problems with large number of their fans willing to travel.

Both England and Scotland are hoping that fans from other countries in their groups may not be turning up in such large numbers and that may perhaps allow them to get an extra slice of the cake. The impending shortage of tickets will spark a black market. Already a thirty-five pound sterling ticket is on offer in the seedy alleys, not necessarily dark, for one hundred and seventy-five. And, the World Cup is still six months away.

England is likely to call off their scheduled friendly in February with Colombia after both were drawn in the same group. Instead, Argentina may be welcomed at Wembley. If the former World champions do play England before the France World Cup, it will be their third meeting since the Falkland conflict. In 1991, the match ended in a draw, but in 1986, Diego Maradona's hand came in-between the two.

Steffi to start at Aussie Open

MELBOURNE, Dec 10: injured tennis star Steffi Graf has entered next month's Australian Open and is expected to relaunch her career at the year's opening Grand Slam event, reports AP.

Graf last played on June 3 before having surgery for a knee injury. Her ranking has slipped to No. 28 and she has cancelled several planned comebacks in the past two months.

"Unfortunately, I've fallen a little behind in my rehabilitation and will be unable to compete in Baltimore," Graf said in a statement ahead of the Nov. 25 Tennis Challenge in Baltimore.

Despite being spared the marathon South American

Entries closed Wednesday for the Australian Open.

Graf, a four-time winner of the Open, joins defending champion Martina Hingis, four-time winner Monica Seles and American Venus Williams, the US Open finalist, as major draw cards for the tournament starting Jan. 19.

Nine of the women's world top 10 have entered, with Jana Novotna of the Czech Republic opting not to play.

The cutoff ranking for players to gain an automatic acceptance into the main draw of the tournament is 113 this year, a record according to officials.

The men's cutoff is 107 and all of the men's top 10 players will contest the event.

Defending champion and world No. 1 Pete Sampras and US Open winner and world No. 2 Pat Rafter head the list.

Players will battle for a prize money pool of million dollars when the Open is played from Jan 19 to Feb. 1.

SL name squad for 3 ODIs

COLOMBO, Dec 10: Sri Lanka today named a 14-man squad for three one-day internationals in India later this month, reports Reuters.

Sri Lanka returned to Colombo last week after the first stage of their tour in which they drew all three Tests against India.

They go back to India to play the limited-overs internationals on December 22 in Guwahati, December 25 in Indore and December 28 in Margao.

SRI LANKA

Arjuna Ranatunga (captain), Sanath Jayasuriya, Roshan Mahanama, Aravinda de Silva, Marvan Atapattu, Hashan Tillekaratne, Romesh Kaluwanthara, Kumara Dharmasena, Muttiah Muralitharan, Sanjeva de Silva, Chaminda Vaas, Mahela Jayawardena, Pramodya Wickremasinghe, Upul Chandana.

They still have a game away to South Africa followed by the Confederations Cup to come in December and in February take part as guest in the CONCACAF Gold Cup — a competition ostensibly for countries from North and Central America and the Caribbean.

This will probably be followed by a series of friendlies which Zagallo will use to select the team who will aim to win a fifth world crown for Brazil.

Many critics have argued that some of this year's friendlies, such as those at home to below-strength Chile and injury-weakened Wales, have been a waste of time.

Zagallo argues they have given him a chance to test players and see how they react to the responsibility of wearing the famous gold shirt.

There have been no arguments, however, about Brazil's recent form.

Already certain of finishing the year top of the FIFA rank-

Samba in perfect rhythm

INGRES, soccer's world governing body, Brazil's run of wins began in the Tournoi de France with a 1-0 win over England.

They then won six games in a row, scoring 22 goals, on their way to winning the Copa America in Bolivia, even contriving to overcome the difficulties of playing at 3,600 metres above sea level as they beat the hosts in the final.

This was followed by wins away to South Korea and Japan and at home to Ecuador, Morocco and Wales.

Since the last World Cup, Brazil have only lost twice, going down 2-0 to Mexico in the final of the 1996 Gold Cup and 4-2 against Norway in a friendly in May.

Brazil, however, refused to recognise the Mexico game as a full international, claiming that they fielded an under-23 team. FIFA list the game as a full international because it was the final of a recognised competition.

The Copa America appeared to answer a few fundamental questions as to the basis of the Brazil team in France next year.

In goal, Taffarel remains Zagallo's favourite, somewhat controversially given some of his recent blunders for both his country and his club side Atletico Mineiro.

Flavio Conceicao ousted original choice Mauro Silva as Dunga's partner in front of the defence while Leonardo emerged as favourite for the role of playmaker during the Copa America. Ronald and Romario were undisputed as the front two, while Sao Paulo's left-sided midfielder Denilson turned out to be the national team's revelation.

Zagallo was on the point of being picked out for special praise by Zagallo, who compared him to some of the great Brazilian wingers of the past.

Zagallo has used subsequent friendlies to test possible alternatives such as Sao Paulo's Dodo and Barcelona's Sonny

Anderson in attack, Rivaldo in a playmaking role and Bayer Leverkusen's Emerson Ferreira as a possible alternative to the ageing Dunga.

The big question in the past two months has been the return of Vasco da Gama striker Edmundo in one of the striking roles.

Edmundo, leading scorer in the national championship with 25 goals, is the man of the moment in Brazilian soccer but has been left out by Zagallo because of disciplinary problems.

These include six red cards this year, a fight on Ipanema

beach in Rio and racist remarks

he made after one of his sendings-off during a game in north-eastern Brazil.

Zagallo was on the point of recalling him for this month's friendly with Wales but thought again after Edmundo was sent off for elbowing a rival goaleekeeper.

"Whatever I do, I'm going to be criticised," said Zagallo.

"Everybody wants him in the team now — but what happens if I pick him and then he gets sent off during a match in the World Cup? Then they'll be saying I shouldn't have selected him."

Changes made to France '98 schedule

As announced before the final draw for France '98 in March and in order to maximise the international TV audience, certain modifications of the schedule have been made as follows:

Fixture	Date	Venue	Time (GMT)
Yugoslavia v Iran	14/6/98	Saint-Etienne	1630 (GMT)
Argentina v Japan	14/6/98	Toulouse	1330 (GMT)
Belgium v Mexico	20/6/98	Bordeaux	1630 (GMT)
Japan v Croatia	20/6/98	Nantes	1330 (GMT)
Argentina v Jamaica	21/6/98	Paris	1630 (GMT)
Germany v Yugoslavia	21/6/98	Lens	1330 (GMT)

Source: FIFA/Internet

Dhaka places 7-pt proposal

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provision of better health, nutrition and welfare support to the poorest sections of the population are also required.

To observe the Martyred Intellectual Day, a meeting will be held at the TSC auditorium of the university at 10 am on December 14. On the Day a silent procession led by the Vice Chancellor of the university will march up to the Martyred Intellectuals Graveyard at Mirpur and place wreaths.

Meanwhile, the Joy Bangla Sangskritik Oikya Jote organised a discussion meeting at the city's Ramna Batamul as part of its programmes to celebrate the Victory Day.

State Minister for Information Abu Saeed Chowdhury addressed the meeting as chief guest. Presided over by journalist Altaf Mahmud, the meeting was also addressed by, among others, president of the Jote Salauddin Badal, its general secretary Abdul Kader, Dilip Kumar Gomta and Debendra Malakar.

The speakers recalled the contributions of the friendly countries during the Liberation War.

The discussion meeting was followed by a cultural function. Dramas were staged by Sanglap Group Theatre and Jagarani Theatre. Two films — Chiranjib Gangabandhu and Stop Genocide — were screened.

Hasina said "Let us be realistic in responding to these challenges. As a first step, we should evolve a strategy to counter the malicious anti-Islamic campaign."

"Any measures to bring the Afghan brothers together on the road to peace will have the fullest support and cooperation of Bangladesh," she said.

About simmering tension between Pakistan and India over Jammu-Kashmir, the Prime Minister said it has been of profound concern to all of us. Bangladesh has repeatedly urged both the parties to exercise restraint.

"We also emphasised the need to seek a peaceful solution of the basic problem that underlies the present situation. We are optimistic that the process of dialogue between the two countries would bring positive results and ease tension in that region."

Hasina said the Islamic Institute of Technology (IIT) located at Dhaka has been successfully imparting training and education of Muslim youths from over 43 Islamic countries.

In view of the IIT's immense financial hardship, she urged the concerned states who have not settled their outstanding dues (\$13m) to do so to enable the IIT to perform its activities smoothly.

On Afghanistan, Hasina said

the fratricidal armed conflict there has been causing untold sufferings, deaths and disabilities, and destruction of property.

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