

SPORT LETTERS WATCH THIS PAGE FRIDAYS

Child abuse in World Cup!

THE HAGUE, Apr 11 (AP): Pakistani children are being illegally employed to stitch soccer balls bearing the logo of the World Cup finals in France...

The children work from home, making it more difficult for investigators to trace them. The Netherlands Press Association (GPD) reported that balls it found being made in Sialkot...

Coca-Cola spokesman Ben Deutsch said the soft drink giant does everything it can to prevent child labour being used. "We only do business with companies who guarantee they do not use child labour," he told the GPD.

He added it was possible that the balls were counterfeit products. Last November, a team of investigators representing a coalition of sporting goods makers and child advocacy groups toured Sialkot...

The independent monitoring was intended as a first step in the coalition's programme to end child labour in Sialkot by 1999. Fifty-five sporting goods makers including Reebok, Nike and Adidas, signed on to the effort...

Thousands of Pakistani children have, in the past, been reported stitching balls at home and in small shops, receiving little pay for working up to 10 hours a day.



Michael Owen (R) of Liverpool and Manchester United's Ronny Johnsen are involved in a scramble during their English Premiership clash at Old Trafford on Apr 10. The match ended 1-1.

Owen upsets Man United

MANCHESTER, Apr 11: Manchester United failed to overcome a 10-man Liverpool on Friday, drawing 1-1 as the balance of power in the Premier league tilted once more in the favour of Arsenal, reports Reuters.

Sepp takes a break

PARIS, Apr 11: FIFA general secretary Sepp Blatter has decided to take an eight-week leave from his post as he challenges Jeno Havelange to succeed Joao Havelange as FIFA president, reports Xinhua.

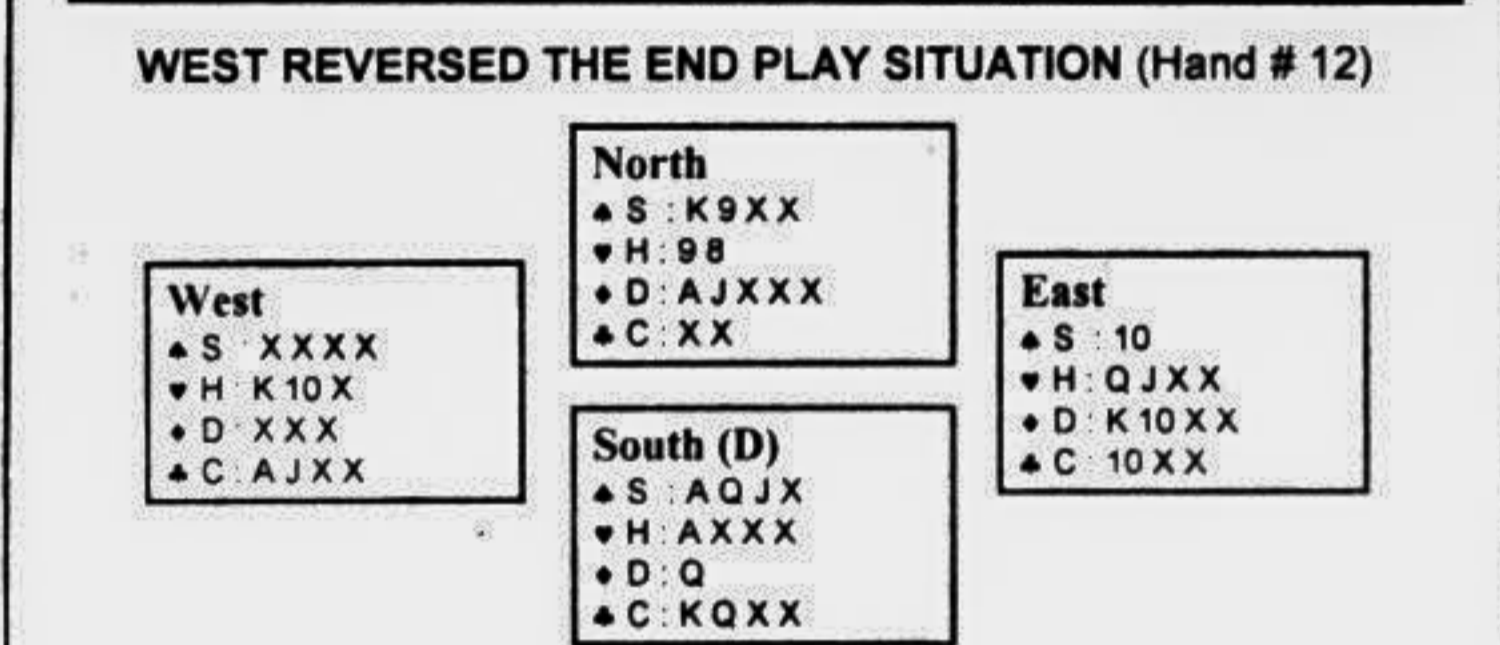
His temporary lay-off comes after vigorous protests from Johannsson and his supporters. The UEFA president wanted Blatter to resign immediately when he announced his candidature in Paris last month.

But the 62-year-old Blatter said earlier that he would continue to work as secretary general from home and hand over some responsibilities to his deputy Michel Zen-Ruffinen.

His decision was criticised by Johannsson, and this week Blatter told Havelange he would stop acting as secretary general until a new president is elected.

SIX NO TRUMPS

A K Sayeedul Huq WEST REVERSED THE END PLAY SITUATION (Hand # 12)



Bidding table with columns for South (Sayed), West (Mohsin), North (Mazumdar), and East (Mizan) showing bids for 1C, 1NT, 2S, and 3NT.

\*Artificial; 18 or HCP \*\*Artificial; 7-9 points HCP

Four Spades might appear to be a better contract with 4-4 fit. But if West starts with a Spade and continues on obtaining lead twice in Heart and Club South will be short of enough ruffing tricks in the dummy.

The Play West opened a Spade in the hope of giving away nothing. South captured East's 10 with the Ace and played the Q of Diamond which was won by East.

East's 10 with the Ace and played the Q of Diamond which was won by East. East returned a small Heart, South ducked, and West winning with the 10 returned another Spade which was won with the 9 in dummy. He then cashed A and J of Diamond, played the two remaining Spades ending in the dummy, and played the 8 of Hearts covered by East with the J when South played the Ace. He then exited with a Heart, and as West failed to unblock by dropping the King, he was end played in clubs. However, West escaped from this situation by playing a small Club. South won with the Q but he himself was end played in Clubs and failed to make 9 tricks.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words. Includes a solution time of 23 mins and a 'Yesterday's answer' section.

France '98 Euro tickets go on sale from Apr 22

PARIS, Apr 11: About 110,000 World Cup tickets will be on sale by telephone to fans from 18 European countries from April 22. The World Cup organising committee announced on Friday, reports Xinhua.

According to reports reaching here, the tickets will be for first and second round matches with the exception of the opening match between Brazil and Scotland on June 10.

The tickets will go on sale in 18 countries in Europe, including Germany, Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Norway, Holland, Portugal, Sweden, as long as the caller has an address in one of those countries.

The reservations will be on a first come, first serve basis, with a limit of four tickets per match for each person, and an absolute limit of the 16 tickets for each person.

Nigerian squad for Apr 22 friendly

LAGOS, Apr 11 (Reuters): Nigeria's soccer authorities named the 22-man squad for the World Cup warm-up against European champions Germany on April 22, the national news agency reported on Friday.

Only one of the squad plays for a Nigerian club. The rest are based abroad.

Asian Cup Winners' Cup

RIVADH, Apr 11: South Korea's Samsung Suwon, 1-0 up at halftime, benefitted from red cards for two Beijing Quonan players early in the second half to win their Asian Cup Winners' Cup semifinal 5-0 on Friday, reports Reuters.

Suwon will play Saudi Arabia's Al-Nasr who beat Turkmenistan's Kopetdag 2-1 despite a penalty miss by Bulgarian Hristo Stoichkov.

UEFA reassures Germany

BONN, Apr 11: (Reuters): UEFA president Lennart Johansson was quoted as saying that he would support Germany if their bid to host the 2006 World Cup finals was to clash with the England one.

"If we were to have a confrontation between the two bids, I would stick to the gentleman's agreement that we reached within the UEFA executive under which England would get the European Championship and Germany's bid for the 2006 World Cup finals would be supported (by UEFA)," Johansson said in an interview with German magazine Der Spiegel released ahead of his publication on Monday.

The silly thing in all this is that we might have a costly competition between the two bids," he added. "It would have been preferable to spend that money on football proper."

German soccer officials are backing Swede Johannsson to take over from his old rival Joao Havelange at the top of world governing body FIFA later this year.

Johansson, widely viewed in the German media as a supporter of the German bid, is the only candidate for the FIFA presidency so far.

But FIFA general-secretary Sepp Blatter, a close ally of Havelange, may also throw his hat into the ring, that could put important backing for the German bid in doubt.

Franz Beckenbauer, the German bid's "ambassador", said on Thursday he had "great doubts" about whether his country would get the chance to host the 2006 World Cup.

The World Cup-winning captain and coach said that if the votes of delegates from European governing body UEFA on the committee were split between Germany and England, another candidate was likely to get the nod.

"You need the concentrated power of UEFA, the combined votes from UEFA to have a chance," Beckenbauer said. "If two people fight, it's usually a third party who has the last laugh."

FIFA's 24-member executive committee will decide in the year 2000 who will host the tournament, Germany, England and South Africa have already launched bids and several other countries are also considering applying.

Russia lift world wrestling title

STILLWATER, Oklahoma, Apr 11: Heavyweight Andrei Shumilin won the final match Sunday to give Russia a 16-15 win against the United States and the championship at the 1998 World Cup of freestyle wrestling, reports AP.

Russia, the United States and Iran finished the two-day, round-robin tournament with 4-1 records. Russia won the team gold medal through a tie-breaker, with the United States getting the silver and Iran the bronze.

The United States led 15-13 going into the final match, where Shumilin beat Tom Erikson by referee's decision, 1-0 in overtime.

A key match for Russia came at 187 1/4 pounds where Alexei Krupniakov upset world champion Les Gutches 4-2. Gutches led 2-0, but with a minute left, Krupniakov hit a three-point hip toss to take an insurmountable lead.

The first tie-breaker used is team points. Russia and the United States had 101 and Iran had 92. The next tie-breaker is most falls, and Russia had more than the Americans.

Cuba finished fourth after going 2-4, while Germany (1-4) was fifth and Japan (0-5) was sixth.

Two US wrestlers claimed individual gold medals: Cary Kolat at 138 3/4, and Lincoln McIlravy at 152. McIlravy won all five of his matches and Kolat went 4-1.

Iran had three champions: Bahman Tayebi at 119, Ali Reza Dabier at 127 3/4 and Abbas Jaddi at 213 3/4.

Other champions were Shumilin, Alexander Lepov of Germany at 167 1/2 and Yoel Romero of Cuba at 187 1/4.

Raman Lamba Gold Cup Gandaria's Sports Reporter

Gandaria Cricketers clinched the Raman Lamba Gold Cup memorial cricket title with a six-wicket win over Kathalati Eleven at the Champakdi play ground in Shiradikhan, Munshiganj yesterday.

National right-arm seamer Zakir Hossain captured three wickets for Gandaria as Kathalati Eleven, batting first, were all out for 155 in 30 overs.

In reply, Biplob, who plays for Surjo Tarun Club in the Premier League, hammered an unbeaten 60 to throttle Gandaria to 159 for four in 22.1 overs.

Later Shegputa Yasmeen, MP, gave away prizes as the chief guest.

Brewer keeps IBF belt

ATLANTIC CITY, New Jersey, Apr 11: American Charles Brewer retained his International Boxing Federation super middleweight title Saturday after a barrage of punches in the 10th round sent Briton Herol Graham defenceless against the ropes, reports Reuters.

Brewer began his bombardment with a left hook to drive the 38-year-old Graham against the ropes and landed at least eight at 1:34 of the round.

Money matters in S Korea

SEOUL, Apr 11: Plans to build new stadiums in South Korea for the 2002 World Cup finals may be shelved due to the recent financial crisis, a presidential Blue House source said today, reports Reuters.

South Korea co-hosts the finals with Japan.

But Korean leaders have been forced to slash expenses in all areas to keep the country afloat after an economic crisis forced the government to accept a 58.35 billion dollar rescue package from the International Monetary Fund in December.

FIFA tackles tackling

PARIS, Apr 11: (AFP/AP): World Cup referees will be told to send off players who tackle from behind in this summer's finals in France, FIFA said Tuesday.

FIFA spokesman Andreas Herren claimed dismissal was necessary to protect forwards.

"As it has been pointed out, the aim is to eliminate brutality in the game of football," Herren said.

FIFA were particularly concerned about players like former European player-of-the-year Marco van Basten of Holland who was forced out of the game with ankle injuries three years ago.

"The aim is to protect the players, especially the good players who can also score goals," Herren denied the new ruling would be tough on defenders.

"When the back pass was

FRANCE '98 SIDELINES

UNDATED, Apr 11 (AP): Looking for a new World Cup star? Pele has singled out England and Liverpool forward Michael Owen, pointing out that he was a year younger when he made his World Cup debut in 1958.

"The biggest surprise for us in Brazil has been Michael Owen," said Pele of the 18-year-old Englishman. Pele, recognised as the world's greatest player, was in town Friday to help Manchester United open its new museum.

"He's a young player who appeared on the scene last year when he was only 17, but I think he might be one of the good young players at the World Cup. I think he will be one of the biggest names in the World Cup."

With Pele watching from the stands, Owen scored his 20th goal of the season in the first half against Manchester United — then was sent off four minutes later after receiving his second yellow card.

Italians want Roberto Baggio on the World Cup team, but as a substitute. In results made public Friday, the magazine Calcio 2000 said its poll showed 72 per cent want the 31-year-old forward on the team. However, just over half said he should be a substitute.

The magazine noted that Baggio is seen by most fans as a "tactical weapon" to be fielded for portions of matches to produce a key play.

Baggio, who plays with First Division Bologna, was Italy's hero at the 1994 World Cup in the United States, scoring decisive goals and helping the team reach the final against Brazil.

Troubled by injuries and playing on a low-ranked team, the former star of Juventus and AC Milan is an uncertain starter in the Italian World Cup team.

Italy's coach Cesare Maldini is expected to announce the 22-player roster early in May.

Belgian midfielder mainstay Lorenzo Staelens is worried about his chance to reach his third World Cup in a row after runaway league leader FC Brugge sidelined him because of his upcoming transfer to rivals Anderlecht.

Staelens has been a linchpin in FC Brugge's and the national team for years and long looked a certainty to be among the 22 for the World Cup finals in France this summer.

But ever since he announced his upcoming transfer to Anderlecht, he has been jeered by the Brugge fans and FC Brugge coach Eric Gerets, with the luxury of a huge league lead, has benched him to let young talent play.

"It's worrying me. But I cannot let it affect me. I'll use every minute of play to catch the eye of coach (Georges) Leekens," he said.

Staelens, who will be 34 when the June 10-July 12 finals start, played in the 1990 edition in Italy and in the United States four years ago. Both times, Belgium reached the second round.

GAZZA FIT ENOUGH Don't count the injured Paul Gascoigne out of the World Cup for England.

"Gazza will be match fit in plenty of time for the World Cup finals," said Viv Anderson, assistant coach at his Middlesbrough club. "He could have done without this week off but the World Cup won't be a problem for him."

Gascoigne suffered a foot injury earlier in the week in a 1-0 loss to First Division rivals Sheffield United.

Zeze no more SAO PAULO, Apr 11: Zeze, who was Brazil's coach at the 1954 World Cup in Switzerland, died in hospital here on Friday, reports AFP.

The 90-year-old, who also coached Brazilian clubs Fluminense, Vasco, Botafogo, Corinthians and Sao Paulo, as well as clubs in Chile, Uruguay and Portugal, had been in hospital 25 days before dying of pneumonia.

Alfredo Moreira Junior, known as Zeze, was coach on the years preceding Brazil's phenomenal success.

TIPS FOR RONALDO Here's some advice for Ronaldo, Inc. Aldair, a rival of Ronaldo in the Italian League but a teammate of the young striker on the Brazilian national side, says Ronaldo should limit his commercial commitments to avoid exhaustion.

Ronaldo, who plays in Italy with Inter, has several rich commercial contracts with big sponsors and is often busy with advertising campaigns and videos.

"He must reduce the number of trips and his commercial activities. Otherwise he's going to pay for it in terms of stress and exhaustion," said Aldair, the captain of AS Roma.

POETIC COACH The Japanese don't have just a national hero as their coach. He also happens to be a poet.

Takeshi Okada's success in leading Japan to their first ever World Cup has made him such a star he has received several book offers.

"I'd rather put out a book of poems," Okada, 41, was quoted as saying by the Sports Hochi newspaper Friday.

But he was quick to add with a grin: "But the only people who'd buy it are the reporters."

LORENZO'S CAUSE FOR CONCERN Belgian midfielder mainstay Lorenzo Staelens is worried about his chance to reach his third World Cup in a row after runaway league leader FC Brugge sidelined him because of

PHILIPS The Daily Star World Cup Quiz '98 Your Fabulous Chance to Win Fabulous Prizes from PHILIPS official supplier to the World Cup 1998. Includes a table of prizes for Round One and a list of rules for the quiz.