

NZ cricketers in Colombo

COLOMBO, May 16: New Zealand cricket team arrived in the Sri Lankan capital on Saturday amid tight security to prevent a repeat of the bombings that disrupted their two earlier visits, reports AP.

This time security is water-tight and we are not leaving anything to chance, said Lucky Kodituwakku, senior deputy inspector-general of police.

Sri Lanka, a cricket-crazy nation of 18.5 million people, is wracked by a 15-year-old insurrection led by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

Police sniffer dogs checked each room at the Taj Samudra hotel, hours before the team checked into the beachfront hotel.

Police commandos were stationed at the hotel and the teams will be guarded during travel to and from cricket grounds.

New Zealand will stay in this island nation for seven weeks and play three Tests against the hosts and then take part in a three-nation Independence Cup that includes India.

Langer, Hooper turn up heat

LONDON, May 16: Australian Justin Langer struck an unbeaten 233 and West Indian Carl Hooper stroked 147 not out to lead fightbacks by Middlesex and Kent respectively in the English county championship on Friday, reports Reuters.

Opener Langer's first three-figure score in the competition powered Middlesex, 49 behind Somerset for first innings, to 450 for four declared on the third day of the four-day game at Lords.

Langer faced 369 balls and hit one six and 33 fours, sharing a fourth-wicket partnership of 222 with David Nash (114).

Somerset, needing 402 to win, crashed to 50 for six at the close, England pace bowler Angus Fraser doing the damage with four wickets.

All-rounder Hooper, who missed last season with Kent because of West Indies commitments, delighted the Canterbury crowd with a typically fluent century against Lancashire.

Hooper lifted Kent, 259 behind on first innings to 343 for three at the close.

Surrey crushed Hampshire by an innings and 184 runs at Southampton to go to the top of the 18-team standings.

It was their second victory by an innings in three matches.

Sussex, rejuvenated this season after taking the wooden spoon in 1997, moved into second place, one point behind Surrey, after beating Nottinghamshire by four wickets at Trent Bridge.

Martinez moves into final

BERLIN, May 16: Spain's Conchita Martinez ended the run of Russian Anna Kournikova at the German Open Saturday, routing the nervous teen-ager in straight sets to reach the final, reports AP.

Martinez swept the first set in just 19 minutes in the battle of generations, slowing down the pace with soft shots and slices to win 6-0, 6-1 against Kournikova.

Earlier on Friday, Kournikova picked up the biggest win of her career stunning top-seeded Martina Hingis in two hard-fought sets in the quarterfinals.

Kournikova, whose spectacular game has led some to believe she could one day top the world rankings, let three match points slip away before ousting Hingis, 6-3, 7-6 (7-1).

"I'm been praying this win would come," said Kournikova. "I'm just very happy."

It was the first win for the 16-year-old Russian against the world's top-ranked player, who had knocked her out of three of the last four Grand Slam tournaments. They have faced each other five times.

Jana Novotna, the third seed, also advanced into the semifinals with a 6-3, 5-7, 6-3 win against the No. 10, Romania's Irina Spilrea and will face 18-year-old qualifier Amelie Mauresmo.

The French player, a former French Open and Wimbledon winner as a junior, ousted Austria's Barbara Paulus, 6-4, 6-2. Previously, she upset the world No. 2, Lindsay Davenport of the United States.

In Sunday's final, Martinez will face the winner of Jana Novotna of the Czech Republic and 18-year-old French qualifier Amelie Mauresmo.

Zagreb's hattrick of doubles

ZAGREB, May 16: Croatia Zagreb won the Croatian Cup and secured their third consecutive league and cup double on Thursday with a 2-1 second-leg victory over Varteks Varazdin, Croatia had won the first leg 1-0, reports Reuters.

Marko Topic surprised Croatia by scoring in 38th minute but the home team, playing only occasionally at full steam, levelled through Australian-born Marko Viduka in 54th.

Varteks, who only narrowly avoided relegation this season, missed several good opportunities and Croatia's highly talented midfielder Silvio Maric dashed their hopes with a well taken goal seven minutes from time.

Croatia go for the European Cup next season while Varteks will compete in the European Cup Winners' Cup.

Cups of Europe, then and now



Italy's mercurial striker Gianfranco Zola scored a decisive 71st minute goal against VfB Stuttgart at

Stockholm last Wednesday after coming in as a sub for barely twenty seconds to give Chelsea a delightful victory in the final of the European Cup Winners' Cup. And on coming

May the 21st Italy's Juventus and Spain's Real Madrid lock horns in a cracker of a final of the European Cup. As if these were not enough, Europe also lists the UEFA Cup and the European Super Cup as major tournaments. Once upon a time

European teams also battled for the Intercontinental Cup, the Mitropa Cup and the Latin Cup.

To an outsider, such an array of tournaments in arguably the 'football' continent raises primarily the question of qualification and to lesser degrees matters related to history and crowd interest.

Mitropa Cup, shortened form of Mittel Europa, was an important competition between the two World Wars but is now obsolete. It is the oldest of the tournaments mentioned. A forerunner of the European Cup, it was created by Hugo Meisl and was restricted to clubs from Austria, Italy, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, Romania and Yugoslavia. Although in the beginning the champion club of each country participated in the tournament, it was eventually expanded to include the top four clubs from each. The tournament began in 1927, was suspended from 1939-50 and lost much of its prominence when the European Cup got under way in 1956. Downgraded to 'Second Division' champs of each country from 1980, it died following the events in former Yugoslavia in 1991.

The European Cup is officially the European Champion Clubs' Cup. It is the premier European club event. Frenchman Gabriel Hanot is its founder. He was the editor of the French daily sports paper *L'Equipe*. As any other Frenchman, he was angered by claims of an English newspaper that Wolverhampton Wanderers were champions of Europe because they had beaten Honved and Moscow Spartak in friendlies. In 1955 he invited

twenty leading European clubs to Paris to discuss a competition to find out the real champions of Europe. Supported by FIFA and UEFA, the tourney took off from the following season. League Champions clubs of each country, plus the holders after the first meet, play home and away on a knock-out basis, the result being decided by the aggregate score — except in the final, which has always been a one-off match played at a neutral venue. Until 1967 drawn ties were followed by a play-off to decide on a winner but since then the team scoring more away goals qualified for the next round. If teams were tied after considering away goals, a toss of coin decided the issue till 1971 after which penalty kicks were introduced. Real Madrid won the Cup in its first five seasons.

Following the success of the European Cup, it was inevitable that someone should think of a tournament for the winners of

the national knockout competitions. And the European Cup-winners' Cup was born in 1960-61. The organising committee of the Mitropa Cup is credited with the founding of this now immensely popular tournament. The format is similar to that of the European Cup — home and away matches on a knock-out basis till the final, which was initially a two-leg affair, but is now a one-off match. Thank God! Says

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An AP file photo shows Italian side Juventus' Angelo Di Livio (L) and Bruno Irls of French team Monaco are in pursuit of the ball during a Champions' League semifinal match in Turin on April 1.

Chelsea, Fiorentina of Florence won the two-leg first final by a 4-1 aggregate against Glasgow Rangers.

UEFA was formed in 1954 and almost by deliberate pregnancy the UEFA Cup commenced from the following year. The UEFA Cup was called the Fairs Cup from its inception in 1955-56 till 1971. Why? Because in 1954, the FIFA vice-president Ernst Thommen, of Switzerland, thought up the idea of an European competition to give a competitive edge to friendly matches between cities holding trade fairs. Initially the competition was designed for representative sides but soon clubs began to dominate it. Entry into the UEFA Cup is based on past performances, which ensure four entrants each from Italy, Spain, Germany and England. But, with more countries entering Europe and more teams entering UEFA and the tournament, UEFA are considering expanding the tournament to include the 'new' countries and smaller clubs knocked out of the European Cup, making it a difficult tournament to win. Barcelona thrashed a London Select XI 8-2 on aggregate to win the maiden Fairs Cup in 1958. Tottenham Hotspur beat Wolverhampton 3-2 on aggregate.

The Intercontinental Cup dates back to the 1960s and was organised mainly to facilitate the summer football pools. It was re-launched in 1995 but even offers of UEFA spots for the semi-finalists could not attract the imagination of big guns, Italy, Spain and England.

The Latin Cup was a tournament involving the champions of France, Spain, Italy and Portugal. Beginning in 1949 when Barcelona annexed the trophy, it ended after 1957 with Real Madrid tasting the last drops of honey.

Is there anything for a European club to look for beyond the European Super Cup? Yes! The World Club Cup or the International Cup as it is sometimes known. Since 1980 it is a one-off match in Tokyo between the champions of Europe and the champions of South America. FIFA is now considering an inter-continental tournament between the champions from each of the continents. From 1960 to 1979 the World Club Cup was decided on home-away aggregate until the Japanese extended their hospitality. Real Madrid, beating Montevideo Penarol 5-1 on aggregate were the first World Club Cup champions.

Come to think of it, there is much more football than just the World Cup.

Victor marked for death!

BOGOTA, May 16: Colombian international striker Victor Aristizabal has been ordered to remain in his home town of Medellin after receiving threats — reviving memories of the murder of Andres Escobar four years ago, reports AFP.

The selection in Colombia's provisional World Cup squad of the 26-year-old, who has scored six goals in 40 appearances for his country, came in for heavy criticism earlier in the week from the media, who believed there were better options than linking him with his former clubmate Faustino Asprilla in attack.

Aristizabal, who plays for Brazilian outfit Sao Paulo, was a teammate of Escobar's in the hugely disappointing 1994 Colombian World Cup campaign. Escobar was murdered in Medellin after a row over his own goal in the 2-1 first round defeat at the hands of the United States.

Owairan on the comeback trail

PARIS, May 16: Saudi Arabia's Saeed Al-Owairan, the so-called 'desert Maradona', plans to make up for lost time at the World Cup finals in France.

During an 18-month ban for 'immoral act' reportedly drinking and womanising — the talented forward missed his team's wonderful 1996 Asian Cup victory and their successful campaign for a second consecutive World Cup final berth.

There were fears that the elusive, long-striding striker had seen action for the last time but new Saudi Arabia coach Carlos Alberto Parreira picked him in all three matches in the Confederations Cup in Riyadh at the start of the year.

The 1994 Asian player-of-the-year took time to re-adjust to the top level but showed flashes of the skill that singled him out as one to watch during the 1994 finals in the United States.

His virtuoso strike against Belgium, a 75-metre solo run followed by an unstoppable shot, was rated as the goal of the tournament and it lifted the Saudis into a surprise second-round slot.

Since returning from the lengthy ban, the 30-year-old Owairan has turned in some stirring performances for his club side Al-Shabab and has shown a fierce determination to regain full fitness.

He has made it clear that he wants to play in another World Cup finals, viewing it as an opportunity to fully rehabilitate himself in the eyes of his fellow players and his countrymen.

Karoly Seles passes away

SARASOTA, Florida, May 16: Karoly Seles, the father and coach of tennis star Monica Seles, has lost his five-year battle with cancer, reports AP.

Seles, 64, died Thursday in Sarasota with his wife of 35 years, Ester, his son, Zoltan, and daughter at his side.

Seles was a popular and respected figure in the international tennis community for many years. He was known for his charisma and humour.

"He was like everybody's father on the tour; well-liked," said Linda Dozoretz, a California spokeswoman for the family. "He was Monica's father and tennis coach, but there was more to it. There was a real bond between them. He was very important to her."

Until Seles took ill, he had been Monica's only coach.

An award-winning editorial cartoonist in his native Yugoslavia, Seles used his artistic talent to teach Monica and Zoltan the 'fundamentals' of tennis.

When he saw his children were interested in the game, he drew cartoons to show them the moves. Then he studied the game to teach them how to play.

Seles coached Zoltan, now 33, who became a top junior player, and Monica, now 24, who became the top woman tennis player in the world.

Seles was very protective of his daughter, especially after she was stabbed by a fan during a match on April 30, 1993.

To January 1997, Seles began chemotherapy for leiomyosarcoma. Originally, he was diagnosed with prostate cancer in June 1993 and with gastric malignancy in December that year.

Despite a condition continually weakened by the cancer and the treatments, Seles attended many of Monica's tournaments. He last saw her play in August in Atlanta.

Soccer suspended in Argentina

BUENOS AIRES, May 16: A judge indefinitely suspended play in Argentine professional soccer leagues Wednesday, reacting to fan violence surrounding weekend games, including two shootings, reports AP.

Civil judge Victor Perrotta said the decision will stand "until security conditions are improved."

Perrotta said any change in his stance will come only when "the people in charge of organising the tournaments can convince me that I'm able to assure the safety of the spectator."

ROK defeat Jamaica

SEOUL, May 16: South Korea beat Jamaica 2-1 in a World Cup warm-up match played in driving rain here today, reports AFP.

FRANCE '98 SIDELINES



UNDATED, May 16 (AP): Dennis Bergkamp was ruled out of Saturday's FA Cup final after failing a fitness test on his hamstring Friday. But Arsenal coach Arsene Wenger says the Dutch striker should be fit for the World Cup.

The Dutch striker, named English soccer's player of the season in two prestigious polls, has been sidelined for a month and missed the moment Arsenal clinched the Premier league title.

Now the striker whose 22 goals and standout performances earned the Gunners the league championship will miss an FA Cup triumph as well.

Iran's World Cup match against the United States will be like any other, national team coach Tomislav Ivic said Friday.

And it's one he expects to win.

Iran are in the World Cup for the first time since 1978, a year before the Islamic revolution toppled the US-backed Shah. The United States and Iran have not had diplomatic relations since 1979, when militants stormed the US Embassy in Tehran and held 52 Americans hostage for 444 days.

That doesn't worry Ivic, a Croat who was hired by Iran in January.

"I think our game with the Americans will be a normal game. I think both teams will exchange jerseys at the end of the game. And like all other games, what's important is to have a good result," said Ivic.

"We know how the US play and I think we will do okay."

ZAMORANO READY FOR ARGENTINA

After starring for Inter Milan in the UEFA Cup final, Chilean striker Ivan Zamorano is set to take on Argentina in a World Cup warm-up.

Team doctor Eugenio Valdecantos said that Zamorano had

recovered from a pain to his right knee as a result of a ball that hit him during a practice session. The striker was spared from training for four days but was back working with his teammates Friday.

Zamorano will play next to Chile's other star striker Marcelo Salas for the first time in almost a year.

ONLY A PLACE WILL SUFFICE OWEN

Michael Owen, the youngest player this century to make his debut for England and joint top scorer in the Premier league at age 18, believes he will be on the bench when England start their World Cup campaign.

Alan Shearer and Teddy Sheringham have been the main strike force for England for the past couple of years so it would be a hard act to break up the two of them, the Liverpool striker said Friday.

"I wouldn't expect to break that partnership up immediately and I'll just be happy if I get into the squad as that would be an achievement itself. Coming on as a substitute would be a bonus."

SWATCH OKANO

The man behind the golden goal that's taking Japan to their first World Cup is now pushing a watch.

Masayuki Okano, the 25-year-old long-haired substitute forward, nicknamed "the beast," because he supposedly runs faster than a dog, shot to stardom with his extra-time goal in Japan's dramatic 3-2 win against Iran.

Okano even caught the eye of some soccer-loving Swatch executives in Switzerland, who happened to be watching the game on TV.

Next month, Okano will appear in print ads in Japan, naked to the waist, hair down to his shoulders, flexing his biceps to show off the 9,000 yen (70 dollars) watch, called "Goal," which has a soccer ball designed

on the wristband.

PILOTS FOLLOW TRUCKERS

First it was rail workers, then truckers. Now French pilots are threatening to go on strike during the World Cup.

The National Airline Pilots' Union (SNPL) said Friday that Air France pilots were prepared to carry out a "long and tough" stoppage throughout June unless their demands for better pay and working hours are met.

A strike would doubtless cause havoc since hundreds of thousands of soccer fans will be planning to travel to France in June. Many French are also likely to flee the country to escape the soccer mania.

Air France pilots have been at loggerheads with company authorities for several weeks.

The World Cup is being used as a bargaining chip by several French transport unions pushing for better salaries and schedules.

CBF annoys Paraguay

ASUNCION, May 16: Paraguay are protesting to world soccer's governing body FIFA because Brazilian club Palmeiras refused to release full-back Francisco Arce for their tour to Japan, reports Reuters.

Arce, a key player, was not with the Paraguay team which left for a World Cup warm-up trip to Japan on Tuesday.

Paraguayan football league (LPF) spokesman Guillermo Batallana said on Thursday Palmeiras had "broken" the FIFA regulations and refused to allow him to travel.

He said FIFA had contacted the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF).

Ironically, the Brazilian national team are in constant conflict with European clubs over the release of their players for international games.

The Daily Star

World Cup Quiz '98

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Hodde a great believer in faith-healing

LONDON, May 16 (AP): England always used to go to soccer World Cups with burly defenders, bustling strikers, speedy wingers and crutching forwards.

This time the squad has dazzling drabbers, confident passers and intelligent mid-fielders.

Oh, and a faith healer, too. When the English squad arrives in France for the June 10-July 12 championship, the cameras won't necessarily be chasing Paul Gascoigne, star striker Alan Shearer or even coach Glenn Hodde.

There will be searching for Eileen Drewery.

Hodde, who has been a committed Christian for 12 years, announced before the April 22 warmup game against Portugal that faith healer Drewery had been called up to help the squad overcome injuries and psychological worries.

"She's been working with some of the players for the last 18 months," he said. "Around three quarters of the team have been to see her at one time or another."

"I've had experience of her work over more than 20 years. I want to see her with a torn hamstring and I'd been told it would be seven to eight weeks before I could play again."

"After seeing her, after two or three days I was back in training."

His announcement attracted ridicule from a skeptic media and spawned a string of humorous stories, cartoons and headlines about the coach's faith and Drewery's special healing powers.

The credibility of the England coach wasn't helped by a psychic who claimed he had smuggled the World Cup trophy into his home to energise it in England's favour and had sprinkled crystals on the field in Marseille so that magical powers would help the team beat Tunisia June 15.

England will know by June

22, when the team has played Romania in its second match, whether the additional powers have worked. Or whether the team needs some kind of miracle to stay in the tournament.

Hodde's team should beat Tunisia its opening game. But then come tougher matches



GLENN HODDE against the Romanians, who had the best qualifying record of all the 32 teams, and the Colombians, who were ousted by the United States in 1994 after a defeat which led to the defender Andres Escobar when the team returned home.

Colombia have much to prove and should prove a far tougher team this time. When England gained a hard-earned 0-0 draw in Italy to clinch a place among the 32 finalists, there was an air of euphoria in the so-called birthplace of soccer. England appeared to have all the attributes of a World Cup winner.

The team had a world-class goalkeeper in David Seaman, hard-working, inspirational midfielders such as Paul Ince, young, effervescent players such as David Beckham and Paul Scholes and razor-sharp strikers Alan Shearer and 18-year-old Michael Owen.

It also had Paul Gascoigne, a player of exceptional match-

turning talent who was one of the eye-catching stars of the 1990 World Cup in Italy, where England reached the semi-finals.

Rival coaches admitted how they admired England for their new-found technical ability and the fact that they had finally shrugged off their stereotypical long-ball style, which failed to get the team to the 1994 finals.

Yet, instead of building on that wave of optimism and praise, England seem to have slipped back into some of their old ways. The pre-World Cup form has been puzzlingly poor.

Because of injuries, Hodde sent out an improvised lineup against World Cup-bound Chile in February and they lost 2-0 at Wembley.

The depression deepened after a tame 1-1 draw with non-qualifiers Switzerland in Bern where the defence was torn apart in the first half and was fortunate to concede only one goal.

A 3-0 home victory over Portugal calmed the nerves but the performance exposed more failings in defence and midfield. But for some standout saves by Seaman, the Portuguese could easily have gained a 3-3 draw.

Hodde and Drewery, still may have a lot of work to do.

Zubizarreta to quit after WC

SANTA CRUZ DE TENERIFE, Spain, May 16: Spanish veteran goalkeeper Andoni Zubizarreta announced here late on Friday that he is to retire after this summer's World Cup finals, reports AFP.

The 36-year-old, who holds the national record of 123 international appearances, announced his decision after his club side Valencia went down 3-2 to Tenerife on Friday night.

Zubizarreta, who formerly played for Alavés, Athletic Bilbao and Barcelona, will be appearing in his fourth World Cup finals.