

Akram keeps Lancs on track

LONDON, Sept 14 (Reuters/Internet): A brilliant all-round performance by Pakistan's Wasim Akram kept Lancashire's treble hopes alive on Sunday.

Akram scored 155, his English county's championship best, then took five for 66 as Lancashire thrashed Nottinghamshire by 289 runs in their penultimate match.

The victory put them third in the table, two points behind Surrey and 11 behind Leicestershire.

Surrey host Leicestershire in their final game. If it is drawn, Lancashire could win the title outright for the first time since 1934 by beating Hampshire.

They have already clinched two one-day competitions, the NatWest Trophy and the league. Akram's century left Nottinghamshire with a 461 target. They fell for only 171.

The talented Pakistani is relinquishing the Lancashire captaincy next season and will be replaced as the county's overseas player by Sri Lankan spinner Muttiah Muralitharan. Akram was named in an allegation of match-fixing and betting in international cricket last week but has insisted he is innocent.

The one-day league finished with second-placed Essex crashing to Leicestershire by 128 runs.

Trinidadian Phil Simmons made 56 as Leicestershire scored 219 for nine off their 40 overs, then shot Essex out for 91.

Third-placed Warwickshire beat Yorkshire by five wickets, with England opener Nick Knight unbeaten on 92.

Surrey achieved a second successive win, beating Durham by 101, but still finished bottom after losing 12 of their first 14 matches.

The top nine counties will play in the first division of the new 50-over National League next season, with the bottom nine in division two.

Marseille out to restore lost pride

LONDON, Sept 14 (Reuters/Internet): Olympique Marseille return to European competition after a four year absence on Tuesday and not only hope to win the UEFA Cup but also repair the damage to their tarnished reputation.

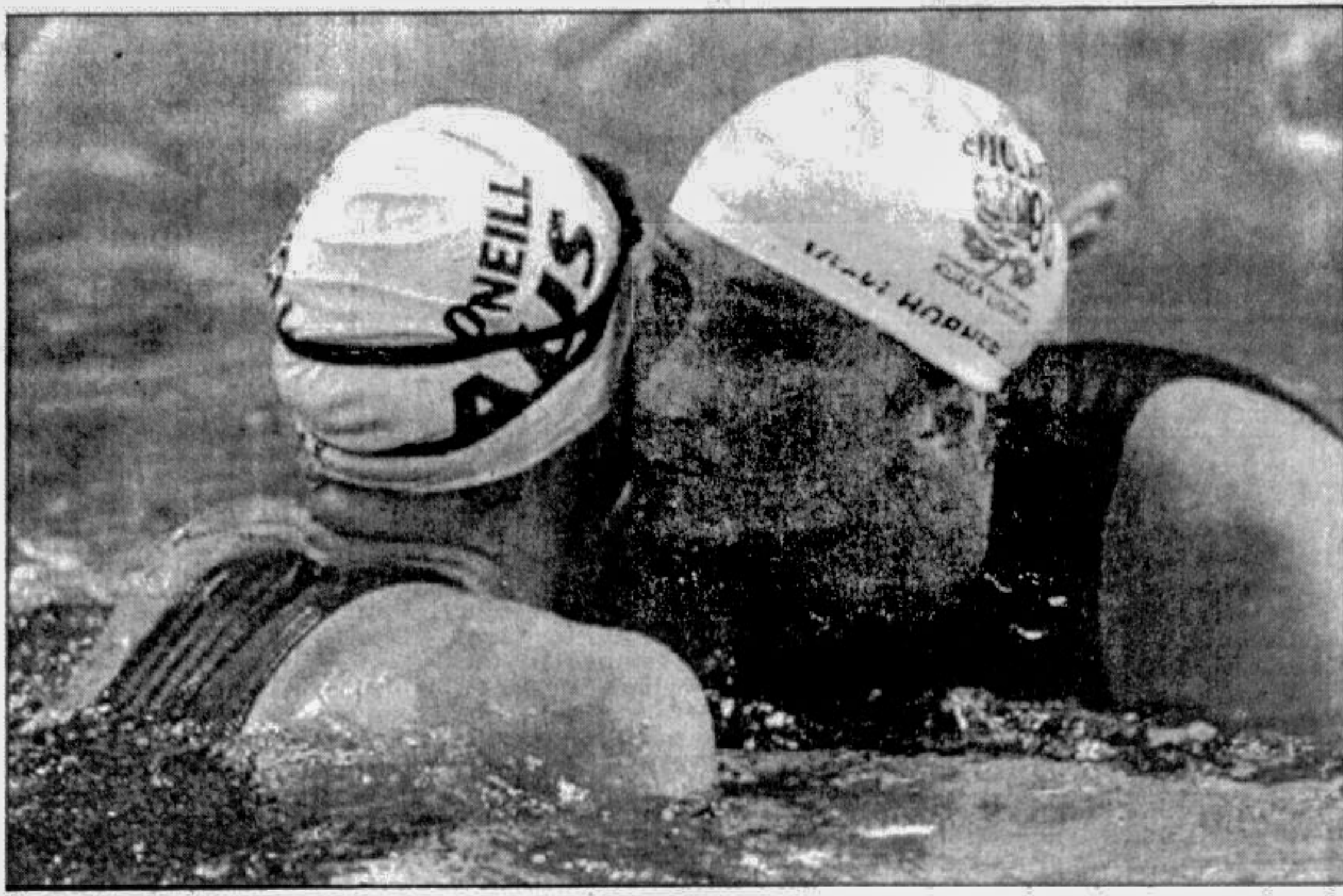
Marseille visit Czech side Sigma Olomouc in the first round of the competition on Tuesday and are confident of making a major impact in Europe for the first time since they won the European Cup in 1993.

But that triumph was ruined by their involvement in an unsavoury bribery scandal which ruined careers, blighted reputations and left Marseille humiliated and relegated.

Although the victory still stands in the record books, they were stripped of the title, were not allowed to defend it and were relegated from the French first division.

They did qualify for the UEFA Cup two years later but went out in the second round and the club sees this campaign as their chance to stamp a more positive image.

Marseille have played in two European Cup finals and reached the semifinals on a third occasion as well as the Cup Winners' Cup semifinals once. But they have never gone further than the second round in six UEFA Cups, going out in the first round four times.



Gold medalist in the women's 400-metre Susie O'Neill of Australia (L) being congratulated by silver winner Briton Vicki Hornes after the final in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. — Internet photo

Day belongs to O'Neill

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 14: Four-gold Susie O'Neill collected a women's record eighth Commonwealth Games title and Michael Klim made it a world record, two golds, a silver and a bronze from four swims as Australia maintained its stranglehold in the pool Monday, reports AP.

O'Neill, who won a gold at Auckland in 1990 and three more in Victoria, British Columbia in '94, took her total here to four with a double success in the pool.

After winning the 400-metre freestyle, O'Neill swam the final leg of the 4x100 freestyle relay for gold No. 8. That's the most for a woman swimmer and one fewer than Mike Wenden's total of nine.

Klim, who shared in Australia's 4x200-metre freestyle world record triumph on Sunday, set a Games record in the 100 free with a time of 49.43 to edge countryman Chris Fyler and England's Gavin Meadows.

"I don't think about records a heel of a lot," O'Neill said. "But I know that when I retire it will be nice. I suppose I'd like people to remember my name so this is a good way of doing it."

Australia also gained swimming golds through Giaan Rooney in the women's 100-metre backstroke but its streak of golds was stopped at 10 by Canada's Mark Versfeld, who triumphed in the men's 200 backstroke.

While the 5,000 Commonwealth Games athletes chased

more medals Monday, there was a health scare in the village when a woman Australian team official and a New Zealand team doctor contracted the potentially fatal dengue fever.

"She's in hospital and it looks very much like she's got it," said Australian team doctor Brian Sando said the woman, who declined to identify the woman.

According to New Zealand team chief Les Mills, Dr Nick Chamberlain probably caught the disease when he was bitten by a mosquito during a run.

"They took him in for a test, took a blood sample and he was diagnosed," Mills said. "It's not serious there are no complications, we expect him back in a couple of days."

In action outside the pool, Andrei Kravtsov, a 27-year-old Russian who moved to Australia almost six years ago, overcame a shoulder injury and a persistent challenge by England's Andrew Atherton to win the men's all-around gymnastics title.

Australia's Brennon Dorrwick took the bronze but the battle was mainly between Kravtsov and Atherton with the Australian triumphing by 65.

Host Malaysia collected its second gold of the Games by winning the men's team badminton title while England won the women's gold.

South Africa picked up its first medal and first title of the 16th Games when Gavin van Rhyn and Michael Thiele won the men's pairs free rifle prone at the shooting ranges on picturesque Langkawi Island off Malaysia's east coast.

The silver went to England's Phil Scalan and Neil Day and Tim Lowndes and Warren Potent of Australia won the bronze.

Sharon Bowes and Christina Ashcroft earned Canada its third gold medal of the games by winning the women's air rifle.

Noemi Rostas and Belinda Muehlberg of Australia claimed the silver and England's Rebecca Spicer and Louise Minett collected bronze.

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KL GAMES GALLERY

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 14 (AP): Malaysia's badminton ace hobbled off the court clutching his thigh during a match against India, diminishing the host nation's Commonwealth Games gold hopes in the sport.

Ong Ewe Hock, the singles favourite, injured his hamstring muscle in his second game against India's P. Gopi Chand in team competition Sunday after winning the first 15-2, the Star daily said.

A grumbling Ewe was helped off the court by the team manager and a teammate. "At this time, it's still very hard to say whether Ewe Hock can play or not," said Malaysia's coach, Martin Frost.

"It looks pretty bad. Whether it is a hamstring pull, rupture, or strain, we still don't know," said Frost, a former world champion.

Although Malaysia won its encounter against lowly India, Ewe's injury could seriously hurt the team's overall performance. Competition in individual events starts Wednesday.

LONG DAYS, LATE NIGHTS

Bowlers at the Commonwealth Games are complaining about time. Too much of it.

Even for a tradition-steeped game played on lush lawns, the pace in the first two days of competition has been too leisurely, Australian bowlers said.

"There was too much time between games," said Australian team manager Don Sherman. "It meant a lot of waiting around and the facilities are not really set up for sitting around."

The result: bowlers sometimes can't get back to the athletes village until the early hours of the morning.

Team officials made their complaints known to the tournament organisers and a new, more compact playing schedule has been introduced, allowing an extra hour's sleep in the morning and an earlier finish.

SORE RIDERS

The jubilant Malaysian cycling squad that fetched the host country its first medal is sore about the government trying to share the credit.

"Some of the officials were behaving as if they were responsible for Nor Effandy's win," the Star daily quoted a cycling team member as saying. Effandy Rosli won the silver Saturday in the 184-kilometre road race.

"Before this, they (sports officials) did not even bother to see us when we were training or give words of encouragement," he said.

Flamengo sink further

RIO DE JANEIRO, Sept 14 (Reuters/Internet): After promising supporters a refund if their team lost, Flamengo faced having to hand out a small fortune to more than 50,000 fans on Monday after a 3-2 defeat by Portuguesa.

Club president Kleber Leite admitted he now had a massive logistical problem, but this is matched by his problems on the pitch after another bizarre weekend for Brazil's most popular club.

Leite made his unprecedented offer last week following a run of eight matches without a win in the championship. If he thought things could only get better, he was wrong.

The team lost again on Sunday, two Flamengo players were sent off, general manager Washington Rodrigues ran onto the pitch to remonstrate with the referee and coach Toninho Barroso resigned after less than three weeks in charge.

Flamengo, now perilously close to the relegation zone, said last week supporters who kept their tickets would be given refunds, if Flamengo lost, at the Maracana Stadium before the team's next home game against Goias on Tuesday.

But Leite said officials at the state-run stadium had ruled out the plan. Leite, who had also slashed the price of tickets for the match, appeared surprised at the number of fans who took advantage of the money-back guarantee.

More than 52,000 watched Sunday's game, compared to 791 for the previous home match.

Flamengo led 2-1 at one stage on Sunday, with striker Romario among the scorers, but fell apart when full-back Pimentel was sent off for a violent tackle on an opponent.

Pakistan held by hosts

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 14: Hockey aristocrats Pakistan narrowly avoided their first defeat in 12 years at the hands of Malaysia here at the Commonwealth Games on Sunday, equalising 16 minutes from time to draw 1-1, reports AFP.

In the night's other match their fellow Pool B rivals England defeated Kenya 3-1 in a far from impressive performance, which leaves Pakistan top of the pool with five points from three matches. Malaysia and England joint second with four points and Canada on two, all having played a game less.

Pakistan, who had beaten the same team 7-2 in May's World Cup, seized the initiative in the second-half and got a deserved equaliser when Ali Raza's vicious low shot whizzed past keeper Roslan Jamaluddin with 16 minutes to go.

However, the Malaysians, who have improved out of all recognition since coach Paul Lissek was hired on loan from Germany in May, almost stole the three points at the death when Pakistani captain Muhammad Usman was sin-binned and the bandana wearing Azlan Bakar just sent his shot wide of the post.

The Malaysians, who were inspired by the capacity 15,000 crowd, took the game to the Pakistanis from the start and scored from when Kuanhan Shanmuganathan's shot took a deflection off Chairil over the diving keeper Ahmed Alam.

Alam, who has been under fire for his performances here, kept the young Pakistani side in the match with several stunning saves as the host side, displaying much more fire than they had. They finished 12th and last in May's World Cup.

The Pakistani management defended their decision to discard their older stars for youth. "Every time a Pakistani team comes to a tournament they are supposed to kill the other teams but you must not forget that this is a side being aimed at the 2000 Olympics,"

Pakistan manager Zakauddin said. "We depended on Alam tonight and this time unlike his previous performances he was great," he added.

Barry Dancer, England's Australian-born coach, accepted that their display could have been better against a side that has just one 11-year-old artificial pitch but said it had been a better performance than in the draw with Canada.

"There were areas where we had improved and some which left a lot to be desired," he said. "We're improving and I think by the semifinals we will be a good outfit," the former Australian under-21 coach added.

One of England's goalscorers Russell Garcia paid tribute to the Kenyan's toughness. "They're big, built like basketballers, and very individualistic which makes them tough to play against," the 28-year-old hairdresser said.

Davinder Bharu, the Kenyan Manager, said that his side would have to cut out their elementary errors which always came at crucial times and left them chasing the game, but he issued a defiant note to the rest of Africa hockey.

"We are number two to South Africa at the moment but next year we will win the African title and we will represent Africa at the 2000 Olympics, you can be sure about that," he said.

Frankie changes his mind

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 14: Namibia's former world 200 metres champion Frankie Fredericks has changed his mind and will definitely compete here at the Commonwealth Games it was confirmed today.

"Frankie has decided to come and all we are waiting for the final confirmation from the Commonwealth Games Federation," Namibian Olympic Committee member Gerhard Roux told AFP.



WATERLILLY: Valerie Hould-Marchand of Canada in the midst of her solo synchronized swimming routine at the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Hould-Marchand won the gold. — AFP photo

European soccer scene

Juventus' winning start

UNDATED, Sept 14 (Reuters/AP): Champions Juventus prevailed in a seven-goal thriller, Girondins Bordeaux surged further ahead in the French First Division. Mallorca and Oviedo won in Spain while in Greece, Panathinaikos and Olympiakos remained jointly on top in the weekend's league matches in Europe.

Juventus opened up with a spectacular 4-3 win at Perugia while title rivals Lazio and Inter Milan could only draw.

Juventus went 3-0 ahead at halftime but Japanese World Cup hero Hidetoshi Nakata brought the home side storming back with two goals on his debut.

Daniel Fonseca added a fourth for Juve and Antonio Bernardini pulled one back for Perugia with a late penalty.

Inter Milan, missing the suspended Ronaldo, fought back with two late goals by substitute Nicola Ventola to draw 2-2 at newly-promoted Cagliari.

Lazio led at Piacenza thanks to a long-range blast from Serb Dejan Stankovic but Simone Inzaghi equalised with a header just three minutes from time.

France Bordeaux beat Montpellier 3-1 at their Stade Lescorp to open a four-point lead.

Goals from Herve Alcarate, Kaba Diawara and Sylvain Wittord gave Bordeaux their fifth successive win.

Olympique Marseille conceded a 90th-minute equaliser in a 1-1 draw at home against Rennes. Olympique Lyon won 2-1 at promoted Sochaux, while Monaco beat champions RC Lens 2-0 at home on Thursday.

Spain Goals from Daniel Garcia and Argentine Ariel Lopez provided Mallorca with a 2-0 victory over Espanyol on Sunday in the second round of Premier league.

Garcia headed in the first goal in the 27th minute from a precision pass by Yugoslav Goran Stankovic, and Lopez

flicked in the second from a Stankovic corner in the 49th.

In Sunday's only other game, Cesar Martin Villar headed home a corner taken by Slovak Peter Dubovsky in the 34th minute to give Oviedo a 1-0 victory over division newcomer Alaves.

In Saturday's games, Real Madrid and FC Barcelona notched up modest 1-0 victories over lesser sides. The rivals face each other in the third round next weekend.

With the second round completed, Real Madrid shares the top spot with Zaragoza — the only teams to claim maximum points from both games.

Greece Aris Salonica and Ionikos Nikea played to a 1-1 draw Sunday to share second place of the First Division.

The draw sent the two teams into a four-way tie in second place of the league. Defending champions Olympiakos and AEK Athens are the other two clubs sharing the position.

They four clubs are two points behind Panathinaikos Athens, who are at the top of the league with nine points after three games.

In games played Saturday, Panathinaikos beat Ethnikos Asteras 4-1 at home. Olympiakos defeated Verria 3-0 away on goals from Vassilis Karapialis in the 15th minute, Brazilian midfielder Luciano de Souza in the 37th and Ghanaian striker Peter Oforiaye in the 44th.

AEK played to a scoreless draw against newcomer Panefsinikos Elefsina away.

SIX NO TRUMPS

A K Sayeedul Huq

NORTH FAILED TO REACH THE CORRECT CONTRACT (Hand # 93)

West	North	East
♠ J 10 9	♠ A K 7 2	♠ S Q 8 5 3
♥ K 6 2	♥ H Q 10 5	♥ A J 9 4
♦ 10 8 3	♦ J 7 4	♦ Q 9 2
♣ J 9 8 6	♣ A 7 4	♣ K 10 3

South (D)
♠ S 4
♥ H 8 7 3
♦ D A K Q 6 5
♣ C K Q 5 2

BIDDING	West	North	East
1 Diamond*	Pass	2 Clubs**	Pass
2 Diamonds	Pass	2 No Trumps	Pass
3 Clubs	Pass	3 Spades	Pass
4 Diamonds	Pass	5 Diamonds	Pass
Pass	Pass		

* Artificial opening

** Artificial, showing 13-15 HCP.

With 14 HCP and a strong Diamond suit South opened an artificial one Diamond and partner responded two Clubs showing 13-15 HCP. Their combined hands had sufficient high card points to have a game contract. It was a matter of reaching an appropriate game contract. When South bid two Diamonds North appropriately bid two No Trumps. When South showed his second suit of Clubs North unnecessarily showed his 4-card Spades. With no stopper in Hearts, he could not bid three No Trumps. Ultimately, North South reached five Diamonds.

THE PLAY

West opened a small Heart, the unbid suit, the Ten was played from dummy, East won the trick with the Jack. He returned a small Heart. West took his King and played back his last Heart. Thus, the defence scored three Heart tricks for down one. In the post-mortem it was found that North South could have made three No Trump as the defence could score four Heart tricks only. North was the culprit, as on South's Club bid North should have bid three No Trumps, instead of showing his 4-card Spades. Obviously South did not have four cards in Spades since he bid Clubs. Thus, a Spade bid was useless as it was difficult to play 4-3 in a suit in the combined hands.



Action from the Commonwealth Games ladies' hockey match between New Zealand and Wales at Kuala Lumpur on September 13. New Zealand won 5-1. — AP/UNB photo

Spain turns to Camacho

MADRID, Sept 14 (Reuters/Internet): Spain's hard-pressed Football Federation (FEF) has turned to Jose Antonio Camacho in its increasingly desperate effort to appoint a successor to Javier Clemente.

Camacho is the second man to be offered the post of national team coach since the departure of Clemente, who left the job last week after an ignominious 3-2 defeat to Cyprus in a European championship qualifier.

The former Real Madrid player and Espanyol coach has accepted the offer — but only on the condition that he can work free of interference from the Spanish Federation.

The FEF said last week any offer would be non-negotiable and must now decide whether to go back on its word and accede to Camacho's demands — details of which were not made public — or refuse to budge and face further embarrassment.

Camacho, who played 16 seasons for Real Madrid and was capped 81 times by his country, left Espanyol in the summer to take charge at Real Madrid. But he lasted there only 22 days, walking out after a row over backroom staff.

The FEF's first choice to succeed Clemente was Luis Aragones, the veteran coach who left Real Betis during the summer, saying he was retiring from football altogether.

Aragones, the most experienced coach in Spain having taken charge of 611 first division games, said he was tempted by the offer but ultimately could not accept.

It is believed that the imposition of Clemente's old coaching set-up was the stumbling block, which is at least one problem Camacho does not have.

A venomous campaign for Clemente's dismissal started after Spain's poor showing at the World Cup in France and intensified after the Cyprus debacle.

Clemente was given the full backing of the federation immediately after the Cyprus game and the Basque insisted for several days that he was not about to resign.

But the Federation's support finally dried up as the press stepped up their attacks — Clemente was described as a public enemy and an embarrassment and accused of presiding over the worst team in Spain's history. His departure was announced on Thursday.

Aragones was offered the job on Saturday, asked for 24 hours to make up his mind and the following day delivered a snub to the FEF.

The federation hoped to bring a speedy close to the saga by immediately appointing Camacho but his proviso could yet prove a stumbling block.