

China ready to enter race for 2008 Games

SEOUL, Sept 16: Five years after its bitter defeat in the race for the 2000 Olympics, China gave a strong indication Wednesday that it is ready to bid for the 2008 Games, reports AP.

"If we have a chance, then we will bid for the Olympic Games," said Wu Shaouzi, president of the Chinese Olympic Committee. "We are now actively, positively considering this matter. We are looking at 2008."

Wu told reporters that Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, capital of the southern province of Guangdong, were the Chinese cities being considered for a possible bid.

IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch, who made a brief stopover in China last Sunday on his way to Seoul for Olympic meetings, said he also had been told by Wu that China was "positively studying" a 2008 candidacy.

Samaranch has encouraged China to bid for the Games ever since Beijing lost the 2000 contest to Sydney by two votes at the 1993 IOC session in Monaco. The Beijing bid was dogged by opposition from human rights groups, especially in the United States.

China chose not to bid for the 2004 Games, which were awarded last year to Athens.

Cities have until February 2000 to submit bids to the IOC, which will then select the host city in 2001.

"We have plenty of time to consider the bid," Wu said.

The declared candidates so far for 2008 are Toronto and Osaka, Japan. Bids are also expected from previous candidates Istanbul, Turkey; Seville, Spain; and Buenos Aires, Argentina. Paris is weighing a possible candidacy.

A Chinese bid would have a major impact on the race for both the 2008 and 2012 Games.

China would provide a major challenger for 2008 front-runner Toronto. That would be welcomed by the United States, which is planning a bid for the 2012 Games.

If Toronto gets the 2008 Games, a US city would have virtually no chance of winning

the 2012 contest because the IOC would not send the Olympics back to North America four years later.

On another issue, Samaranch said Wednesday that he hopes the proposed Olympic anti-doping agency could be up and running by the end of next year.

The agency, which would coordinate drug-testing around the world, is expected to be approved at the Feb 2-4 anti-doping summit in Switzerland.

ACA, ACB no longer in dispute

SYDNEY, Sept 16: The Australian Cricket Board (ACB) and an association representing its top players have resolved a pay dispute that had threatened to disrupt international matches, reports AP.

The ACB said Wednesday that it and the Australian Cricketers Association (ACA) signed a three-year memorandum of understanding Tuesday detailing player remuneration and formalising the working relationship between the organisations.

The ACB will contribute 250,000 Australian dollars (150,000 US) annually to the players' association.

The association will get 20 per cent of cricket revenue up to a certain amount, and 25 per cent of any extra income. The first year is expected to earn the association about 13 million Australian dollars (7.8 million US).

The ACB has 20 players contracted but will expand that to at least 25 because of the new policy of picking separate test and limited-overs sides.

It has been more than a year since former ACB chief executive and sports management consultant James Erskine first flew to England to brief the Australian players on their log of claims.

In Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia at the Commonwealth Games, limited-overs captain Steve Waugh said he was relieved to see the end of the dispute.

Samaranch said the agency, which would be based in Lausanne and run under the aegis of the Olympic movement, could be operating five to six months after the conference.

Preparations for the February meeting, which was called in the wake of this summer's drug scandals at the Tour de France, was the main topic of the three-day IOC executive board meeting that ended Wednesday.

Samaranch said he hopes all international summer and winter sports federations will endorse the drug-testing agency at a meeting in Lausanne, Switzerland, on Oct 27. The federations will also be asked to approve a single IOC medical code providing for unified rules, procedures and sanctions.

"We need to go to this conference in February united," Samaranch said.

He said the conference will seek ways to encourage government involvement in cracking down on drug traffickers and unifying anti-doping legislation.

"I think at the moment what is going on is dangerous for the future of sport," he said. "If one country develops one law and another country has another law with different sanctions, this is not good for the future."

IOC vice president Anita De-Francis of the United States, who is chairing a working group of athletes for the February meeting, said she was inviting former Olympic hurdler Edwin Moses and speedskater Johann Olav Koss — among others — to take part.

Also Wednesday, Sydney organisers said Australian officials are working to resolve the city's water contamination crisis so drinking supplies will be safe well before the 2000 Olympics.

More than 3 million people in Sydney have been forced to boil their drinking water after three contaminated water alerts in six weeks.

"I said clearly, 'Yes, this is a problem. The problem is both a surprise and an annoyance but it's a problem the New South Wales government is committed to getting fixed,'" Olympics Minister Michael Knight said.

S Arabian FA defends its decision

RIVADH, Sept 16: Saudi Arabia has decided not to send its football team to the Asian Games in December, reports AFP.

Abderrahman Al-Dahham secretary general of the Saudi Football Federation justified the move here Tuesday on the team's hectic existing schedule taking in the Arab Cup, Gulf Cup, Intercontinental Cup and the Afro-Asian Cup.

Also missing from the competition in Bangkok will be Indonesia, whose side was withdrawn after deliberately trying to lose a Tiger Cup clash against Thailand this month.

Sky boss' refutation

LONDON, Sept 16: The head of broadcaster Sky Sports Vic Waking on Tuesday blasted as untrue rumours that his company had gone behind Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson's back to bid for Japanese star Hidetoshi Nakata, reports AFP.

Newspaper reports said an aide of media tycoon Rupert Murdoch had made two offers to Nakata's Serie A side Perugia for the Asian-footballer-of-the-year but that the Italians had rejected the approaches.

The papers say Murdoch, whose BSkyB is bidding to buy Manchester United for a billion dollars, wants the player because it would give his Star TV station — the equivalent of Sky in the Far East — a major boost.

However, Waking vehemently denied the reports.

"This story is completely untrue," he said. "I think that during the last week there has been a lot of speculation, a lot of it has been mischievous and some of it downright fanciful. This story falls into that second category."

"We Sky don't own a football club, we are simply bidding for a football club."

"We have already said we won't interfere in any way if the bid is successful and that is true. Alex Ferguson picks the team and he decides who he wants to sign."

Waking blasted the stories as disruptive and mischievous.

Gremio, River to fight it out

RIO DE JANEIRO, Sept 16: Brazilian champions Vasco da Gama meet River Plate of Argentina on Wednesday in a battle for first place in Group B of the Mercosur Cup, reports AP.

The teams could hardly be more evenly matched. Both have five points, identical records of 1-2-0 and a goal difference of one. In their first encounter in Buenos Aires, they tied 1-1.

In the group's other game Wednesday, Brazil's Gremio face Universidad Catolica of Chile in Santiago. Gremio has three points and U Catolica two.

Vasco, exhausted from their victorious campaign in the Libertadores Cup, will face the visitors with their reserve team, nicknamed "the little express." But that might not be much consolation. Vasco is so deep in talent that the second-string has looked as sharp as the "A" team, which now is without injured starters Donizete and Pedrinho.

On Tuesday, Vasco announced they have acquired forward Guilherme from Gremio. The club plans to use him in the Mercosur Cup final against Real Madrid in December.

The game starts at 9:40 pm local time (0040 GMT Thursday) at Sao Januario stadium.

Borg beats McEnroe in charity

SODERTALJE, Sweden, Sept 16: Bjorn Borg beat John McEnroe 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 on Tuesday as the two former tennis greats clashed in a charity game in Borg's home town Sodertalje, reports AP.

Borg, who had trained two hours every day for the last three weeks, broke the American twice to clinch the first set 6-4. Then McEnroe bounced back, taking the second set 6-4 after breaking Borg twice in the deciding both players held service until the tenth game, when Borg broke McEnroe to clinch the match.

Tennis commentators and coaches said the match was far better than they had expected. "Both players were impressive. Borg was playing a lot better compared to when he launched his unsuccessful comeback in Monaco in the late 80s," said Percy Rosberg, who coached Borg before he had his international breakthrough.

Commission to look into irregularities

ROME, Sept 16: Deputy Prime Minister Walter Veltroni, the minister responsible for sport in Italy, set up a commission of inquiry on Tuesday into flawed dope tests carried out by the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI), reports Reuters.

Veltroni's office said in a statement the commission would have 30 days to carry out its inquiry, followed by 10 days to submit a report.

CONI admitted earlier this month that routine dope tests were not carried out properly. Some tests were destroyed.



VFB Stuttgart's former Germany international Thomas Berthold (R) making a nasty tackle on Feyenoord's Argentine striker Julio Cruz during their UEFA Cup first round first leg fixture in Stuttgart on September 15. Feyenoord won 3-1. — AP/UNB photo.

UEFA Cup report card

LONDON, Sept 16: Feyenoord continued their great start to the season on Tuesday when they won 3-1 at VFB Stuttgart in the first leg of their UEFA Cup first round tie, reports Reuters.

The Dutch league after winning their first four games, out-gunned last season's Cup Winners' Cup runners-up with Jon Dahl Tomasson (2) and Jean-Paul van Gastel scoring all their goals in the first half.

English league leaders Aston Villa did it the other way round as they produced a remarkable late assault to beat visiting Norwegian part-timers Stromsgodset 3-2.

Villa trailed 2-0 with seven minutes left but emerged victorious as 18-year-old substitute Darius Vassell scored twice in injury time.

Another Norwegian side Brann Bergen also went 2-0 up against the odds but their defence stood firm to shock Werder Bremen.

While the Norwegians scrap for every penny, Italian club Parma were able to spend nearly 50 million dollars on players in the summer — but it counted for little as they were beaten 1-0 by Fenerbahce in Turkey.

There were no such slips for fellow Italians AS Roma or Liverpool, Monaco Club Brugge and Real Sociedad, who all notched up good away wins and look well-placed to advance.

In what always looked the tie of the round, in-form Feyenoord went ahead in Stuttgart after 19 minutes through Van Gastel and doubled the lead two minutes later through Tomasson.

Fredi Bobic pulled one back for the Germans in the 31st minute but seconds later Tomasson, who joined Feyeno-

ord this summer after a goal-shy season at Newcastle, out-sprinted veteran defender Thomas Berthold to make it 3-1.

The victory completed a great night for the Netherlands as Willem II Tilburg and Vitesse Arnhem both notched up 3-0 home wins over Dynamo Tbilisi and AEK Athens respectively.

But there was more disappointment for Germany as Bremen were embarrassed by Borussia Dortmund.

Bremen are bottom of the Bundesliga with just one point from four games and lost to goals in each half by Arne Vidar Moen and Jettil Lovvik.

Bayer Leverkusen, winners of this tournament in 1988, looked on course to give the Germans some joy as they led Udinese through an early Ulf-Kirsten goal.

But the Italians clinched a draw eight minutes from time through Johan Walem.

Villa, quarterfinalists last season, were starting disaster in the face as Anders Michelsen and Christer George had Stromsgodset 2-0 up after 23 minutes.

But Gary Charles reduced the deficit in the 83rd minute before Vassell produced his heroics.

Parma were undone in Turkey by Romanian striker Viorel Moldovan's 23rd minute header.

The Italians were not helped by a red card for midfielder Dino Baggio after an hour and ended with nine men as defender Fabio Cannavaro was sent off in injury time.

Bruno Rodriguez struck in the last minute to give Metz a vital away goal in a 2-1 defeat against Crvena Zvezda (Red Star) Belgrade and fellow French club Marseille needed an equaliser by Eric Roy seven minutes from time to salvage a

2-2 draw at Sigma Olomouc of the Czech Republic.

Monaco, however, cruised to a come-from-behind 3-1 away win against Poland's LKS Lodz.

Bruges thumped Ujpest 5-0 in Hungary, despite having defender Torven de Brul sent off in the 62nd minute.

The Belgians were already 4-0 up by then with goals by Edgaras Jankauskas, Aleksander Ilic, Sven Vermant and Darko Anic. Elonja Ekakia added the fifth in the last minute.

Liverpool were also in fine form in Slovakia as they overwhelmed Kosice 3-0.

Patrick Berger, Karl Heinz Riedle and Michael Owen, with a trademark run and shot, were on target.

Fellow English side Leeds scrapped an unimpressive 1-0 home win over Maritimo of Portugal thanks to Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink but Blackburn lost 1-0 at home to Olympique Lyon. Pole Kacek Bak striking a superb 25 metre goal four minutes from time.

Second half goals by Francesco Totti and Dimitry Alenichev gave Roma a 2-0 away win over Danish side Silkeborg while Brazilian Edmundo scored twice as Fiorentina recovered from a goal down and the dismissal of Italian defender Moreno Torricelli to defeat Hajduk split 2-1 in a match played in Bari.

In a good night for Spain, only Real Betis, 1-0 losers at Vejle of Denmark, failed to win.

Real Sociedad triumphed 4-2 at Sparta Prague, Valencia won 4-3 at Steaua Bucharest in a thriller, Celta Vigo edged Romanians Arges Pitesti 1-0 and Atletico Madrid beat Obilic of Yugoslavia 2-0.

There was also a good win for FC Zurich, 4-0 at home over Anorthosis Famagusta, while Schalke 04, UEFA Cup Winners in 1997, struggled to a 1-0 home win over Slavia Prague.

FIFA not in favour of re-scheduling

GENEVA, Sept 16: Soccer's world governing body FIFA has said it feels the next World Cup cannot be rescheduled to avoid bad weather in host countries South Korea and Japan, reports AP.

However, officials have asked both nations to investigate past weather in the region between May and September to allow FIFA's executive committee to make a final decision at a two-day meeting starting Sept 24.

South Korean officials suggested earlier this year that the competition should start in May 2002 to avoid the traditional rainy season.

But FIFA's planning group said at a meeting Tuesday that the dates for the event cannot be changed because June and July are traditionally reserved for the World Cup.

"The quadrennial, month-long competition usually starts around June 10. The professional soccer season in Europe and South America ends in April.

"Any change of timing would severely disrupt soccer operations around the world," a press release from FIFA said.

The host countries' organising committees have been asked to report the results back to FIFA within a week.

Meanwhile, FIFA said it has decided ticketing revenue from the next World Cup, soccer's first major event to be held in Asia, will go entirely to the host countries.

The move is an attempt by FIFA to avoid the controversy that surrounded ticketing arrangements at this year's World Cup in France. France had to give up a part of the proceeds, which was why, under FIFA rules, French fans were given preference for half the tickets, FIFA President Sepp Blatter said during his campaign for the presidency in May.

Participating nations close to France complained bitterly that their fans weren't allocated enough tickets.

No immediate bid for MU

LONDON, Sept 16: Expectations of a swift counter-attack by a rival bidder to Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB for famed English soccer club Manchester United faded on Tuesday as two rumoured candidates stepped off the pitch, reports Reuters.

US investment bank Salomon Smith Barney said it had advised a "potential client" — which had asked for information on the club — to retire to the sidelines until a review by British competition authorities had been completed.

Time Warner, the US group, and British commercial TV company Granada have been widely rumoured in the British press as potential rivals to BSkyB.

Salomon said it had asked Man Utd's financial adviser HSBC for more information about the company, but the request had been rejected. It said it was not currently acting on any offer for Man Utd, either on its own behalf or for a client.

HSBC told Reuters there was no "exclusivity" agreement — deals which are sometimes signed to freeze out other bidders — in place between Man Utd and BSkyB, stressing that if a credible bid were to be tabled, the football club would consider it.

"We are reluctant to disclose information unless we are satisfied who the principal is, and that the funds are available to make an alternative bid," an HSBC spokesman said. But he declined to comment on the specifics of the Salomon request for more information.

Earlier another potential bidder, US advertising giant Interpublic Group, denied a report it was in the running to trump BSkyB's controversial 623.4 million pound (1.05 billion US dollars) bid.

HSBC said Man Utd was committed to the BSkyB offer and would recommend shareholders to accept it.



England's Denise Lewis clears a barrier during the 100 metres hurdles of the women's heptathlon in the Commonwealth Games yesterday. — AFP photo

SIX NO TRUMPS

A K Sayeedul Huq

SHEILA DOES IT AGAIN!
(Hand # 95)

West	North	East
♠ S 75	♠ S A Q 8	♠ S 2
♥ H 3	♥ H 3	♥ H A K J B 2
♦ D J 5 4	♦ D A K 10 2	♦ D Q 9 7 3
♣ C 8 6 2	♣ C A K Q 5 3	♣ C J 10 9
	South (D)	
	♠ S K J 10 9 6 4 3	
	♥ H 5 4	
	♦ D 8 6	
	♣ C 7 4	

BIDDING (Both sides were vulnerable)

South (Sayeed)	West (Mushfiq)	North (Sheila)	East (Tora)
2 Spades	Pass	6 Spades	Double
Pass	Pass	Redouble	Pass
Pass	Pass		

North South were partnered by Sheila and Sayeed who were hosting dinners to Mushfiq and Tora who live in Australia. After the dinner they were playing a few hands of Rubber Bridge. Both the husbands were against high stakes as the wives, the recent bridge enthusiasts, were unpredictable in their bidding. However, the keepers of the purse wanted to play at high stakes as without them there was hardly any fun for them! The diagrammed hand occurred that evening.

Sayeed opened a weak two-Spades bid, and Sheila literally jumped to six. This was doubled by Tora and while South was regretting his opening bid of two without any thing else, Sheila said — "Redouble". Sayeed could hardly believe his ears!

THE PLAY

With nothing to guide him West led a Spade. The declarer cleared the trumps and then discarded the Heart losers on good Clubs which broke perfectly. A redoubled Little Slam was made with an over trick.

BFU gets the boot

SOFIA, Sept 16: The Bulgarian government on Tuesday revoked the licence of the country's ruling soccer body, accusing it of failing to take action in a doping case, reports Reuters.

The state committee of youth, physical education and sports — the equivalent of a sports ministry — said in a statement that the professional football league would take over the Bulgarian Football Union's (BFU) functions.

The row dates from before last summer's World Cup in France when Nefchichimik midfielder Ilija Grujev tested positive for a banned anabolic steroid at a national team training camp in the Black Sea port of Bourgas.

Former head coach Hristo Bonev dropped Grujev from his World Cup squad but brought him back against Poland in Bulgaria's opening European Championship qualifier this month.

The state committee accused the BFU management of "unprecedented negligence and irresponsibility" on Tuesday.

"The BFU management was supposed to penalise the player and the guilty officials within a month after the infringement was found," the statement said.

Spain unchanged

MADRID, Sept 16: Spain named an unchanged squad for the Davis Cup semifinal against Sweden on September 25-27, reports Reuters.

Commission to look into irregularities

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CONI admitted earlier this month that routine dope tests were not carried out properly. Some tests were destroyed.

KL GAMES GALLERY

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 16 (AP): At least one person can't wait for the Commonwealth Games to end.

Malaysian businessman Tan Chean Chye bought a condominium in the complex where some 6,000 athletes and officials are staying, and is eager to move in once they leave.

There are 1,567 apartments at the Vista Komanwel complex on the outskirts of the Malaysian capital, most of which were sold off ahead of the two-week games, which end next Monday.

Tan, 57, plans to retire once he moves into what has been dubbed the athletes' "village" and thinks he might benefit from the temporary tenants in his apartment.

"I'm very happy that someone else is testing out my house," he told The Star newspaper of Kuala Lumpur. "If there are any defects and problems, the athletes would have complained and got them fixed."

HAPLESS HOCKEY

The coach for a Malaysian team was not amused.

The men's field hockey team from the host nation turned in a shaky performance in a 2-2 draw Tuesday with England. The Malaysian players seemed nervous and didn't capitalise on their chances.

"The team is capable of so much more. They played chicken hockey in the first half," fumed German coach Paul Lissek after the Group B game. "I have lost my voice today, shouting at them to play better."

"This is the worst moment I have had working with a team."

Top two sail

TASHKENT, Uzbekistan, Sept 16: Top-seeded Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia and No. 2 seed Tim Henman of Britain easily advanced to the round of 16 Tuesday at the 500,000 dollars President's Cup, reports AP.

Kafelnikov, ranked 11th in the world, defeated Martin Sliner of Germany 6-4, 6-2. Henman, ranked 13th, beat Nir Welgreen of Israel 6-1, 6-4.

Marc Rosset of Switzerland, seeded fifth and ranked 47th, downed Tomas Ketola of Finland 7-6 (10-8), 7-5.

Cedric Pioline of France, seeded third, topped Vadim Kutsenko of Uzbekistan, 6-3, 6-3.

Lissek told local newspapers. "They played well below their potential and it is not good."

NEED A LIFT?

Drug tests are posing new hazards for some athletes at the Commonwealth Games.

Australian competitors have been left stranded at venues at night after random drug tests caused them to miss their shuttle buses home, team officials said Wednesday.

The major night events so far have been swimming, hockey, weightlifting and gymnastics.

"We've got stranded a couple of times," said Don Stockins, an Australian team director. "But that's just a minor thing and the venue managers will be reminded of the responsibility to get the people concerned back to base."

Team doctor Brian Sando said three swimmers were being tested after each final — the winner, one of the other medal

winners and one of the remaining five competitors. Australia has dominated the pool at this year's games.

MASCOT MEET

Step aside, international track stars. Make way for some fresh running talent.

Officials from three teams will dress up in their mascot costumes and race 100 metres Saturday in the National Stadium, which seats 100,000.

There's a Malaysian orangutan called Wira, a Canadian goose named Canoose and Scotland's Super Squirrel.

"We haven't really settled on a prize," said Jacinta Ythillingon, a games spokeswoman. "We'll figure that one out at the end of the race."

More conventional track events feature world-class stars Obadele Thompson of Barbados, Ato Boldon of Trinidad and Tobago and Frankie Fredericks of Namibia.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Equitable freude 59 Work in the Tom?

5 Kids' card 38 Swabbie's mail room 20 Computer woe

8 Mast 40 St. DOWN

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