

MacGill makes it easier for NSW

CANBERRA, Oct 31: Australia's rising leg-spinner Stuart MacGill made a triumphant return home today when he took five wickets to steer New South Wales to victory over the Australian Capital Territory in a Mercantile Cup limited-overs match, reports Reuters.

Playing his first game since helping Australia secure a historic series win in Pakistan, MacGill took five for 40 as ACT crumbled to be all out for 205 in 43.2 overs in reply to NSW's 235 from 50 overs.

Moeller agrees to return

COLOGNE, Oct 31: New German coach Erich Ribbeck has convinced Borussia Dortmund's Andreas Moeller to make an early international comeback in the friendly clash next month against Holland, reports AFP.

The midfielder a disappointment at the World Cup, announced a couple of months ago he would not play for Germany for the foreseeable future and instead concentrate on re-capturing his form.

Ribbeck, however, is desperately in need of a midfield playmaker. Moeller is recovering from a painful viral inflammation, thought to be shingles, and misses Dortmund's home game against Hamburg today.

The 31-year-old Moeller did not play in Germany's two European championship qualifiers this month against Turkey and Moldova. His last start was on July 4 in the second-round World Cup tie with Mexico.

Although Moeller has 82 caps he has developed a reputation of falling on the big occasions. Germany's new assistant coach Uli Stielike had written him off after France '98 for being a "non-starter."

Ribbeck, who replaced Berti Vogts as German coach after he quit in September, plans up to six changes to the 22-man squad which played in Turkey and Moldova for the Holland game.

Lothar Matthaus, Thomas Strunz and Mario Basler will all resume after injury. Paris St Germain's Christian Worns has sat out his two game suspension, picked up during Germany's defeat against Croatia at the World Cup, and AC Milan winger Christian Ziege will win a reprieve after showing good form against Lazio Rome at the weekend.

The Holland friendly will be contested at Schalke's Park Stadium on November 12th.

Kuerten has an eye disorder

RIO DE JANEIRO, Oct 31: Top Brazilian tennis player Gustavo Kuerten, 23rd in ATP's world rankings, has discovered the reason for his poor form: he's short-sighted, reports AP.

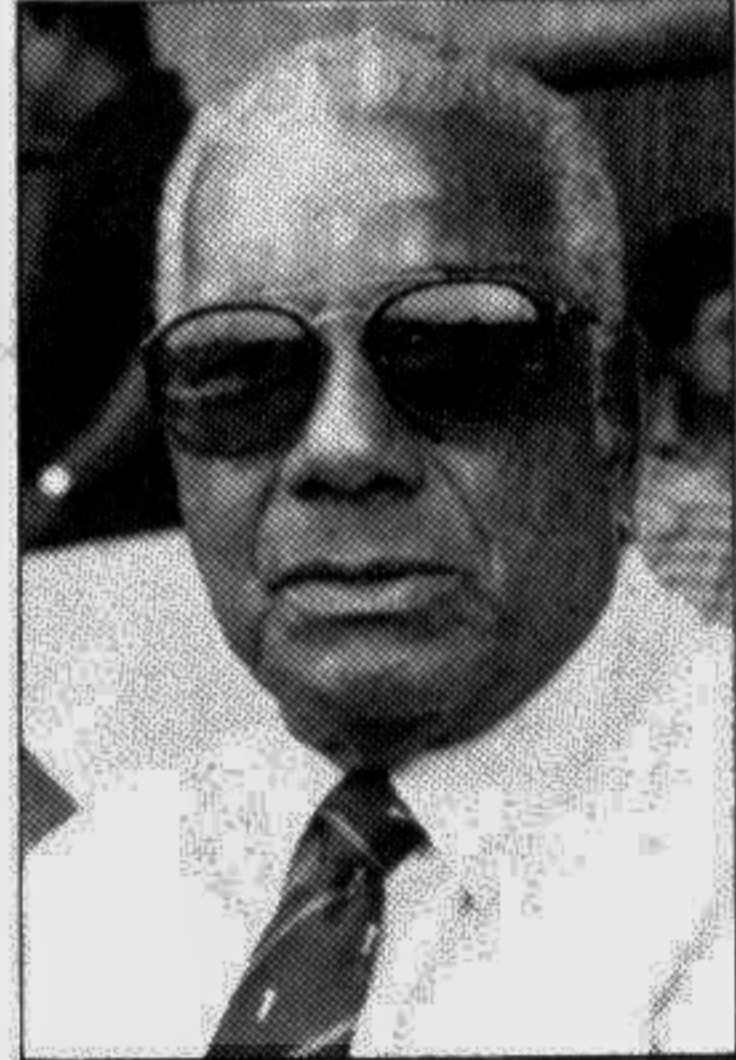
"One moment I win a difficult point and the next I lose one because I can't see the ball clearly," the former French Open winner told the O Globo newspaper Thursday.

Walcott sends ominous smoke signal Test status a far cry

Hasan Masood

The youngsters, then I think you can get closer to the Test status," opined Sir Walcott.

"The response from the people to cricket as I have seen for the first time coming here in Dhaka is extremely good. The



interest is high. The crowd is very disciplined and knowledgeable. I am only surprised that the standard of cricket in Bangladesh isn't higher than it is," added Sir Clyde.

When asked about the present picture of the game with the two versions, the bespectacled hero of yesteryears said, "Cricket has changed. There is, for example, the limited-over game which is completely different from the Test cricket. And that has changed the whole approach to cricket. So there has been a big change in cricket over the years."

"You have to keep faith in what's going on in the world. Everything is changing and I have no problem with that. The game has become more professional, more commercialised. And that is what we have to accept today," he continued.

About the dwindling standard of Caribbean cricket, Sir Walcott said, "West Indies has been reeling in the eighties and the nineties, probably for about sixteen years. You can't continue to win for life. The other countries are improving. And we had such a talented side, that it is difficult to maintain a standard throughout. So I think West Indies can still compete but they may not be champions. They should go on and develop new players and hopefully they become better again."

Finally, Sir Walcott praised the West Indies captain Brian Lara saying, "I think he is a very knowledgeable individual in cricket and he should do very well as captain."

After their victory against India yesterday, West Indies captain Brian Lara obviously was quite happy with the huge support given to his team by the Dhaka crowd, reports UNB.

Following their Wills International Cup opener against Pakistan on Thursday, the world record holder in Test cricket praised the spectators who packed the 35,000-capacity Bangabandhu National Stadium.

At the same time, Lara was a little frustrated that almost the entire stadium wanted a win for Pakistan. But things looked different when West Indies took on India in the second semi-final of the knockout tournament.

Spectators supporting Azharuddin and company were still larger in number, but the Calypso cricketers also had the fans flying flags beating drums and chanting for Lara.

"Why shall we not support the West Indies? They are the best side in the tournament," said Mahmudul Haq who came from War in the old part of the city.

"Bangladesh is not here. But I feel the same pride when we West Indian players perform well."

The Indian tri-colour, however, outnumbered the West Indian flags. The cheers for Sachin and Saurav were also much louder than for Lara.

Several vendors were found selling the Indian flags outside the stadium. One of them, Kashem said he sold about fifty before and during the match.

Like Kashem, many vendors, not allowed inside the stadium this time as previously, were quite happy with the eight-match 10-day tournament involving the nine Test-playing nations.

"Could it be continued for a longer period, we won't have any problem of bread and butter," said Abdur Rahim, a seller of muri (puffed rice). The football World Cup continues for a month, why not this one," he asked.

"We asked Mushtaq about the allegations that he and Salim Malik were offered 100,000 dollars each over a match in the Singer Cup in Sri Lanka in 1994 and he denied it," Fazli said.

Anwar denied former Pakistan captain Javed Burki's statement before the inquiry commission that once he (Anwar) told Burki that he was offered money to throw away his wicket during a one-day match in Sri Lanka.

"Anwar denied all that and took all the responsibility for Pakistan's loss to India in the 1996 World Cup quarterfinal on himself," Fazli said.

The judicial commission was set up in September and has so far held 17 hearings.

Fazli said the hearings were expected to conclude in November.

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Stewart has mysterious illness

PERTH, Oct 31: England cricket captain Alec Stewart moved to ally fears today that a back problem could plague him during his side's Ashes tour, reports AFP.

Stewart, 35, who withdrew at the eleventh-hour from the tourists' team to play Western Australia in a four-day game here, said: "It is a problem that just flares up now and again. It is just there — and then it will go."

Stewart's condition is described as "back soreness". It also prevented him from fielding in England's opening game of the tour against an Australian Cricket Board Chairman's XI at Lilac Hill Park, Caversham, on Thursday.

Stewart scored an apparently untroubled 74 from 68 balls earlier that day.

Stewart said he had had every intention of playing in the match against Western Australia.

But, this morning it was not 100 per cent right, so I was not going to risk playing and being set back even further," he said.

"If this had been a Test match, it would have been a toss up," whether he played or not, said Stewart.

Stewart said he was hoping his back would be satisfactory for him to practise in the nets here tomorrow morning.

The trouble comes on only once or twice a year, and for no special reason," he said.

"I have hardly missed any games because of it in my career, so I am not going to start panicking now."

Stewart is a crucial member of the tourists' line-up for the five Test against Australia starting in Brisbane in three weeks.

A veteran of 81 Tests, he is a vital middle order batsman and the team's number one wicket-keeper, as well as being an outstanding leader.

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Borussia Moenchengladbach's Marcel Ketelaer (L) and Nico Kovac of Bayer Leverkusen are in quest of the ball during their Bundesliga clash in Moenchengladbach on October 30. —AP/UNB photo

Ronaldo stakes a claim

MILAN, Oct 31: A year after Inter Milan bought Ronaldo, the Brazilian multi-millionaire is buying a stake in the Italian club, reports AFP.

Inter president Massimo Moratti, whose family control nearly 70 per cent of the shares, has announced a loss of nearly 30 million dollars and the arrival of an unexpected backer.

"I had a conversation with someone about Inter earlier today and he asked me if he could buy some shares in the club," Moratti told a shareholders' meeting here on Friday.

"I thought it was a nice thing to ask, and the main question was Ronaldo."

Inter is a private company with few shareholders — club sponsor Pirelli has 13 per cent, another Milanese family 12 per cent and Inter's bankers five per cent. Small shareholders have only 0.5 per cent of the club.

"Given the difficulty in finding Inter shares available, I will sell him some of mine," the president said, he insisted the 22-year-old striker was making a sound investment.

Inter's dismal finances are only temporary, Moratti said, blaming the red balance sheet mainly on the European court's 'Bosman ruling' in December 1995, which changed the way clubs keep their books.

Pre-Bosman, clubs could include the market value of players whose contracts were expiring, as a buyer would still have to pay them a transfer fee.

But by outlawing transfer fees on players whose contracts had expired. Those assets vanished, and the court wiped hundreds of millions of dollars off the books of Europe's soccer clubs.

Moratti said that 24 billion of the new TV rights contract with Telepiu started along with the new ones for European matches and the new sponsorship deals — Inter will be worth as much as Manchester United, 1.770 billion lira (over a billion dollars).

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