

Bangladesh cagers keep on losing From Masood Akhter Mobaraki

CALCUTTA, Nov 11: Holders China, Japan, Qatar and Chinese Taipei moved into the semifinals of the 15th Asian Basketball Confederation (ABC) championship at the Netajee Indoor Stadium here today.

Mobile phone dilemma

BELGRADE, Nov 11 (Reuters/Internet): Yugoslavia's national coach Milan Zivadinovic plans to ban his players from using mobile phones before their European Championship Group Eight qualifier against Ireland next week.

I want 100 per cent concentration for the match with Ireland and I am banning the use of mobile phones," Zivadinovic told reporters.

I notice that after training sessions players spend all their time talking on their phones and losing their concentration -- to prevent this, their mobile phones will be put under lock and key," he said.

Warne being wise

SYDNEY, Nov 11 (Reuters/Internet): Shane Warne said on Wednesday he did not expect to play in the opening two Tests of the Ashes series against England.

There had been speculation that Australia's leading leg-spinner may be rushed into the Australian team for the first Test in Brisbane next week.

But Warne, who makes his Sheffield Shield comeback against Perth on Friday, said he wanted to make sure his shoulder was completely healed before returning.

Rios escapes an upset

SANTIAGO, Chile, Nov 11 (AP/Internet): Top-seeded Marcelo Rios narrowly escaped a first-round upset bid Tuesday and kept alive his quest for the world's No. 1 ranking.

Rios lost eight of nine games between the second and third sets before rallying to defeat Brazil's Marcio Carlsom 6-2, 1-6, 6-3 at the \$315,000 Chevrolet Cup clay court tennis tournament.

Rios, who is battling Pete Sampras for the year-end top spot, won six of the final seven games in front of an enthusiastic hometown crowd.

All five seeded players in action Tuesday won their matches. Joining Rios in the second round were No. 2 Felix Mantilla, No. 4 Gustavo Kuerten, No. 5 Francisco Clavet and No. 6 Mariano Puerta.

Harvey doesn't give English a chance

SYDNEY, Nov 11: Former Australian Test cricket great Neil Harvey has dismissed England's chances of winning the Ashes, reports Reuters.

Harvey, who ranks among Australia's top players after scoring more than 6,000 runs during a 79-Test career, said England did not have enough quality bowlers to challenge Australia's batsmen.

"England won't win a Test," Harvey said. "Their attack will let them down because they've no real speed ... and their spinners are very ordinary."

The 60-year-old Harvey, whose playing career spanned the 1950s when England's fast bowling attack was spearheaded by Frank Tyson and Fred Trueman, said he was saddened by the current state of English cricket.

"England were a great side during the 1950s and to see where they've fallen to now, so low in world cricket, it's a shame to see," he said.

Australia have held the Ashes since 1989 and are favourites to win the upcoming five-Test series which starts in Brisbane next week.

Kucera bites the dust

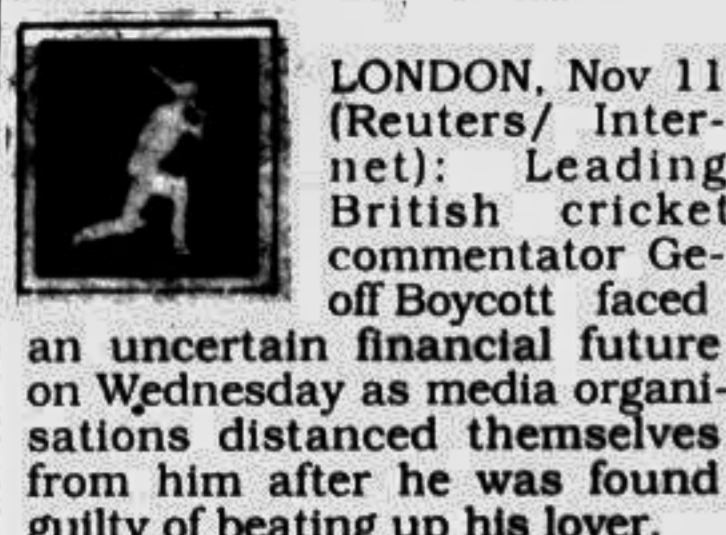
STOCKHOLM, Nov 11: Australian qualifier Wayne Arthurs ousted second seed Karol Kucera in straight sets in the first round of the \$25,000 dollar Stockholm Open on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Arthurs won 7-6, 7-6 against the Slovak who reached the quarterfinals of this tournament last year but seemed to lack motivation this time.

Ivanisevic staggers

MOSCOW, Nov 11: Third-seeded Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia served eighteen aces but had to struggle through two tiebreaks to defeat Carsten Ariens of Germany on Tuesday in the 1.1 million dollar Kremlin Cup, reports AP.

It never rains but it pours



BOYCOTT

LONDON, Nov 11 (Reuters/Internet): Leading British cricket commentator Geoff Boycott faced an uncertain financial future on Wednesday as media organisations distanced themselves from him after he was found guilty of beating up his lover.

A French court ruled on Tuesday after a retrial that the 58-year-old former England and Yorkshire cricketer star did batter his former girlfriend, Margaret Moore, 45, during an argument about money in 1996.

Now, besides a three-month suspended sentence, Boycott faces more difficulties over money.

Apart from the 5,000 pound (\$8,300) fine imposed by the court in Grasse and the estimated 250,000 pounds Boycott spent on his defence, the commentator could lose another 250,000 pounds in earnings from broadcasters and newspapers.

Britain's top-selling daily paper, the Sun, immediately announced it had sacked Boycott as a columnist.

In its Wednesday edition, the Sun said it would no longer employ Boycott after a court in southern France on Tuesday gave him a suspended three-month jail sentence.

"Our readers would find repugnant the idea of us employing someone with a conviction for violence against a woman," it wrote in a front-page article. "We will not turn a blind eye to violence against women. We are certain our decision will be applauded by women and men up and down the country."

Boycott has written a column for the tabloid Sun for the past eight years. Boycott was in Lahore covering Pakistan-Australia cricket for television when the verdict was announced.

"Obviously I am very disappointed with the court's decision," he said. "But in view of the way the trial was conducted I suppose this is not a total surprise."

Boycott was working for Trans World International, a sports broadcasting company, in Pakistan. TWI said there were no more cricket tours in prospect for him.

Boycott was suspended by the British Broadcasting Corporation as a Test match commentator as a result of initial adverse publicity. Although he said he was not under contract and there were no plans to employ him in future.

Boycott, who denied beating Moore, has said he will appeal against the verdict.

Tuesday's sentence was exactly the same as that imposed at his first trial in January. Under French law, he was entitled to a retrial because he was not in court for the original hearing.

His lawyer, claiming he had been framed, promptly announced they would appeal against the ruling.

The 58-year-old former opening batsman, who played 108 Tests, captaining England four times, was also ordered to pay a symbolic franc in damages for assaulting Margaret Moore two years ago during a stay on the French Riviera.

Rafter savours royal life

LONDON, Nov 11 (Reuters/Internet): After accumulating successive U.S. Open titles, more than \$5 million prize money in the bank and a luxurious home in Bermuda, Pat Rafter is savouring the good life.

The long-haired 26-year-old Australian, with his surfer's tan and dark dog looks, is the undisputed sex symbol of the men's tennis tour.

Voted by U.S. People magazine as one of the world's "10 sexy men", Rafter is a major draw card, not just in his native land but wherever he plays.

And now his on-court ability has finally caught up with the off-court appeal that has won him so many fans.

Ranked third in the world, an ankle injury aggravated in Paris last week brought his season to a premature end and wrecked his dream of knocking Pete Sampras off the top of the rankings.

Now he is determined to claim the number one spot in front of his own fans at the first Grand Slam of the season in Melbourne in January.

Just five months ago things were very different. Rafter had sunk to an all-time low and was questioning his future in the sport.

In June he crashed out of the traditional pre-Wimbledon tournament at London's Queens Club to a compatriot ranked more than 100 places below him, prompting him to say: "I am as flat as I have ever been in my career."

"Sometimes I feel that I would just like to be a bum for a while."

He packed his racquets, caught a plane to the Netherlands and turned around his fortunes in spectacular fashion.

Rafter used his serve-and-volley game to perfection to win the title on the grass courts of Den Bosch before returning to Wimbledon.

A creditable display saw him reach the last 16 where he bowed out to local hero Tim Henman. Then the American dream began.

First stop was Toronto and the Canadian Open. Rafter became the first player since Ivan Lendl 10 years ago to win the title without losing a single set.

A week later he took the ATP Championship in Mason, Ohio, beating Sampras in the final. Later that month he stormed changed.

"I had phenomenal success in the U.S. and played a lot of tennis. That took its toll on my ankle but I wouldn't swap those six weeks for anything."

Euro booter-of-the-year France Football's preliminary 50 selected

PARIS, Nov 11: France Football magazine named 50 players on Tuesday as candidates for their prestigious European-footballer-of-the-year award next month, reports Reuters.

World champions France have eight players nominated, including gifted Juventus midfielder Zinedine Zidane, third last year and one of the chief candidates to succeed 1997 winner Ronaldo.

Liverpool teenager Michael Owen, arguably the major revelation of this year's World Cup finals, is one of four Englishmen on the list which also includes Tony Adams, captain of Arsenal's double-winning side.

With Dutchmen Dennis Bergkamp and Marc Overmars, Emmanuel Petit of France and England goalkeeper David Seaman also on the list, Arsenal have five candidates.

But the club most represented are European champions Real Madrid with seven, including Yugoslav Predrag Mijatovic, who was second last year and scored the winning goal against Juventus in May.

South America is represented by nine players, including Italy-based Argentines Gabriel Batistuta and Ariel Ortega and Chile duo Ivan Zamorano and Marcelo Salas.

Inter Milan's Ronaldo is one of four Brazilians. The others are Real Madrid left back Roberto Carlos, Barcelona's Rivaldo and Denilson, the world's most expensive player who is now with Spain's Real Betis.

Hidetoshi Nakata, Japan's brilliant playmaker now with Perugia of Italy, gives Asia a rare entry on the list, while Ajax Amsterdam's Nigerian Sunday Okech is the only African candidate for a trophy won in 1995 by Liberia's George Weah.

Now what Diego?

LONDON, Nov 11 (AP): Imagine: The man who scored the "Hand of God" goal that helped eliminate England from the 1986 World Cup playing soccer in England.

Former Argentine star Diego Maradona is being lined up to play in a new six-a-side, 35-and-over indoor league in England, the London Evening Standard reported Tuesday.

The paper said organisers of Masters League Football, due to be launched in April 2000, were in discussions with Maradona.

"We are very hopeful of getting Maradona," Neil Black of Aladdin Management, one of the companies involved in the league was quoted as saying. "Negotiations are quite advanced and it's a sign of how serious we are about establishing this competition."

Black said the league was also talking to Brazilian star Dunga and former German captain Lothar Matthaeus.

Fiorentina vent their fury

ROME, Nov 11 (Reuters/Internet): Fiorentina shrugged off a controversial UEFA Cup ban to win 4-0 at Lecce in the third round of the Italian Cup on Tuesday.

The emphatic victory took Giovanni Trapattoni's league leaders into the quarter-finals with a 5-0 aggregate score-line.

All four goals came in the second half and all were scored by different players.

Portuguese midfielder Rui Costa put Fiorentina ahead three minutes after Lorenzo Amoroso was sandwiched between two Lecce defenders as he shouldered his way into the penalty area.

Italy international Moreno Torricelli made the tie safe with an opportunistic goal a minute later, capitalising on a mistake in the home side's back four to score with a simple side foot shot from close range.

Brazilian Edmundo added a third in 79 minutes with a splendid free kick from 30 metres before his Argentine striking partner Gabriel Batistuta blasted home the visitors' fourth goal two minutes from time.

Brian Lara says 'sorry'

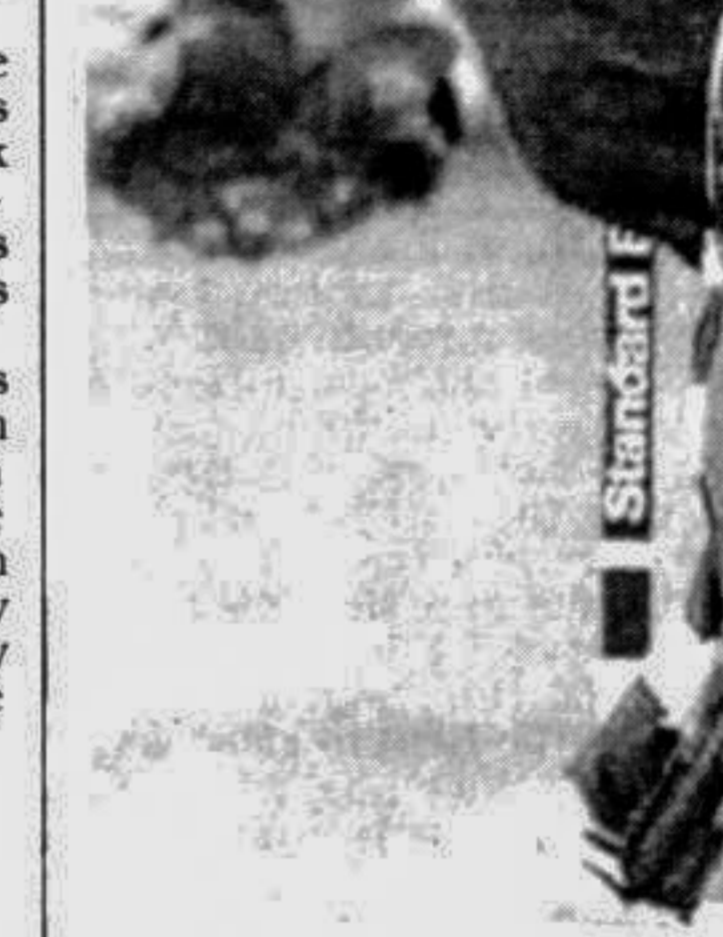


LARA

JOHANNESBURG, Nov 11: Rein-stated West Indian captain Brian Lara on Tuesday apologised for the delayed start of the West Indies three-month cricket tour of South Africa but said the team were now ready to play cricket, reports AFP.

"Sorry to the people of this country for the delay in coming were," Lara said. "We're here to play cricket. It's important to our country. It's an important tour, a Test series, and we're looking forward to giving it a hundred per cent."

Lara was addressing a press conference here after he and his team arrived from London after striking a late-night deal in London with the West Indies Cricket Board, ending pay dispute that had led to his sacking



West Indies captain Brian Lara batting during a tour match in South Africa yesterday. - Internet photo

and that of his deputy Carl Hooper. He steadfastly fended off question on the deal, saying it was a private matter between the board and the players.

"The West Indies Cricket Board and the West Indies players have had a discussion, and that discussion is totally confidential," he said.

"No one would like to start a tour that is originally to start on the 2nd of November, and I'm sure all parties involved do regret that situation," he added.

Lara, one of the world's best batsmen, and Hooper, were sacked after failing to turn up in South Africa last week and apparently they were backed by their teammates, who refused to tour without them.

After a week of wrangling, West Indies board president Patrick Rousseau said late Monday that a deal had been struck, including the reinstatement of Lara and Hooper, and that the tour was on again.

Dr Ali Bacher, managing director of the United Cricket Board of South Africa, teamed up with Rousseau to end the impasse. Bacher flew to London on Thursday with a letter from President Nelson Mandela requesting the players to tour.

The social significance of the West Indies tour for South Africa's black population has been stressed during the past week.

The West Indians are treated as heroes in South Africa, where cricket chiefs have been criticised for failing to select black players who can act as role models for the majority population.

Fittingly, the team will now play their first game today in Sweto black township near Johannesburg, against a Gauteng XI.

Tuesday's planned fundraising opener against a Nicky Oppenheimer XI at Randfontein outside Johannesburg was cancelled.

The opening first-class match will be against Griqualand West on Saturday, with the first Test starting on November 26.

Difficulty everywhere

JOHANNESBURG, Nov 11: The start of the West Indies opening exhibition match against a Gauteng XI at Sweto on Wednesday was delayed when the Caribbean team found they were missing their uniforms.

The gear apparently was lost at the airport on arrival Tuesday, the South African Press Association said.

When paceman Curtly Ambrose and Courtney Walsh, who missed the original flight, arrived Wednesday morning the clothing was brought out with them and rushed to the Soweto cricket oval.

After an hour-long delay, West Indies captain Brian Lara won the toss and elected to bat.

Lara had made a special request - which was granted - that he be allowed to use all his bowlers during the match. Lara wants his players to have as much practice as possible.

The team's arrival was delayed by a pay dispute. Meanwhile, officials said President Nelson Mandela would attend the match at the township outside Johannesburg.

The long-awaited tour, the first here by West Indies since the fall of apartheid, should decide the No 2 team after Australia. The first Test begins Nov 26.

The West Indies dominated cricket during the 1980s and early 1990s until slumping several years ago. They lost to Australia in 1995 and 1996-1997, and this year was blanked by Pakistan 3-0, though the team beat England 3-1.

The dispute between the players and the West Indies Cricket Board has been the talk of the Caribbean.

In Barbados, the two leading newspapers Tuesday reported calls for WICB president Pat Rousseau to resign. "Time for heads to roll," The Advocate said in a commentary by former Barbadian batsman Tony King, who quoted a friend as saying it was time Rousseau stopped treating the board as if it was his own company.

"Resign, Rousseau!" headlined a Daily Nation story saying Rousseau has been accused of misrepresenting the position of other board members. It quotes the past president of the board, Peter Short of Barbados, as saying, "I think the honorable thing to do in this case is to tender his (Rousseau's) resignation..."

On the television programme "Wake Up Caribbean," former WICB member Allan Lequay, who is president of the Trinidad and Tobago Cricket Association, questioned Rousseau's earlier statement that the dismissal of Lara and vice captain Carl Hooper was a unanimous decision of the board. The two were fired when they refused to travel to South Africa in the pay dispute, though they were reinstated as part of a settlement.

"When he chatted with our representatives, we were told that no vote was taken..." Lequay said.

Roland Holder, the secretary of the West Indies Players' Association, said he was happy

about the agreement, and that it should help outline new negotiating procedures with the WICB.

"I think out of this there will more than likely be guidelines for future negotiations which both sides are going to have to follow," Holder said.

Rain, Lara rule tour opener

SOWETO, Nov 11 (Reuters/Internet): West Indies' tour of South Africa finally got off to a faltering start on Wednesday when rain cut short the opening fixture against a Gauteng XI in the largest of the country's townships.

However, there was sufficient time for Brian Lara to please the crowd of several thousand mainly black spectators with an aggressive 65 as West Indies made 258 for seven in 47 overs before heavy rain forced the match to be called off.

A band trumpeted a lively welcome to the visitors before the start of play at the Soweto Oval in the middle of the sprawling township where 22 years ago a school boycott sparked the massive black revolt against apartheid.

The start of the tour had been delayed by a dispute over pay and conditions between West Indies players and their cricket board.

Lara, the captain, hit 10 boundaries in his 60-ball innings and his vice-captain Carl Hooper was the next highest with an unbeaten 60 off 70 balls which included two fours and a six.

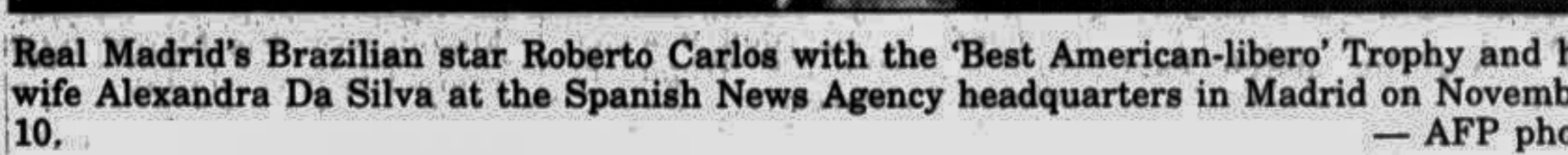
Seam bowler Malan Morkel took two wickets, including that of Lara.

Cuba, China set for final clash

OSAKA, Japan Nov 11 (Reuters/Internet): Cuba and China set up a rematch of the 1996 Olympic final by winning their semifinals at the women's world volleyball championship on Wednesday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer. 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55

CRYPTOQUIP. V F G P L X S S O R D R Y G C G Z Y R E G L D I X Z R Z S J O X E G C V F R V F G R F R C R J G Y V X S G Y P. Yesterday's Cryptquip: WHO WAS THE FIRST OF ALL POOCHES ELECTED PRESIDENT? ROVER CLEVELAND. Today's Cryptquip clue: S equals L. The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.



Real Madrid's Brazilian star Roberto Carlos with the 'Best American-libero' Trophy and his wife Alexandra Da Silva at the Spanish News Agency headquarters in Madrid on November 10. - AFP photo