



Professionals, present and future, line up during the colourful opening ceremony of the Professionals' Cup at the BAT Mahakhali ground yesterday.

— Star photo

ECB's primary selection

LONDON, Nov 13: England Cricket Board (ECB) selectors included two uncapped players in a 23-man squad for the limited-overs series against Australia and Sri Lanka starting in Australia in January, reports AP.

Gloucestershire captain Mark Alleyen and Leicestershire's Vince Wells, both recognised domestic limited-overs players, were the only uncapped players in the squad announced Thursday.

The squad will be cut to 18 in early December but is expected to contain the bulk of players already in down under for the Ashes tour.

ECB chairman of selectors David Graveney said the preliminary squad was announced early to allow fringe players to prepare for a possible call-up.

"This squad covers all options as it contains several all-rounders capable of batting high in the order," he said.

Graveney said Lancashire wicketkeeper Warren Hegg had been selected as a possible backstop for captain Alec Stewart, who faces a demanding Ashes tour schedule and has recurring back problems.

Although, Graveney said there was a possibility of using a part-time wicketkeeper, such as John Crawley, if needed.

ENGLAND: Alec Stewart, Mark Alleyen, Mike Atherton, Ian Austin, Douglas Brown, John Crawley, Robert Croft, Mark Ealham, Neil Fairbrother, Matthew Fleming, Angus Fraser, Ashley Giles, Darren Gough, Dean Headley, Warren Hegg, Graeme Hick, Adam Hoolioake, Ben Hoolioake, Nic Knight, Peter Martin, Alan Mullally, Graham Thorpe, Vincent Wells.

Celta hoping against hope?



MADRID, Nov 13 (Reuters/Internet): Under normal circumstances the visit of Celta Vigo to would not cause too much consternation among Real Madrid supporters.

The Galician club have not won in the Santiago Bernabeu stadium since February 1, 1948 and since then have been on the receiving end of some appalling beatings including an 8-3 thrashing in the 1955-56 season.

Last season Real Madrid won 3-1 and twice in the last four years the same fixture has ended with the scoreline reading 4-0 in the European champions' favour.

However, on Saturday, Celta Vigo have some justification in believing they can turn the clock half a century.

Celta's new coach Victor Fernandez is the second-youngest coach in the top flight of Spanish soccer and at 37 is only a few years older than several of his more experienced players.

And he has moulded a squad together that many believe can challenge for their first ever league title.

After nine games they are still unbeaten, in third place a point behind Real. On Tuesday a Spanish soccer magazine described Fernandez's outfit as "the best Celta team ever."

"At the present time, I am the happiest I've ever been in my professional career. I have got the directors behind me providing everything I want and I've

got a squad that is working well on the field. Consequently it is no surprise we are getting the results," Fernandez said.

"I take the view that the games against both Real Madrid and Liverpool (in the UEFA Cup) are very open. I'm thinking about victories not defeat."

Fernandez believes that the game will be won by strikers rather than defenders. The two teams have the best goal scoring records in the Spanish first division.

"It is going to be a fight between two sets of extraordinary players who can at any moment change the course of the game."

Real Madrid will be facing a well-organised team that has got great creativity. My philosophy is not to stop individual talent flourishing," Fernandez added.

He readily acknowledges the fact that he inherited the foundations of a good team from the previous coach Javier Irureta, who moved to Deportivo Coruna in the summer.

However, some Irureta's more eccentric ideas, including at one stage having his players learn an instrument and form a band, openly confused some of the squad.

By contrast, Fernandez has managed to get his players reading from the same songsheet.

The only major signing during the summer was French international Claude Makelele from Olympique Marseille, although they acquired a cut-price Lubo Penev from relegated Compostela because the Bulgarian striker did not want to

move too far.

"I've been introducing my own ideas little-by-little and the players have responded well," Fernandez said.

Defender Michel Salgado has produced some outstanding performances to shrug off his previous claim to fame as the man who broke Juninho's ankle and has ensured French goalkeeper Richard Dutruel does not have to perform heroics too often.

Brazilian midfielder Mazinho is back to the form that he showed when a part of the 1994 World Cup winning squad, and accompanied ably by Russia's Alexandre Mostovoi.

With such good service, strikers Juan Sanchez and Penev have had little trouble finding their scoring touch.

Celta also come upon a Real Madrid side that has a few problems.

Guus Hiddink has to fill a gap in his back four left by the injury to Spanish international stalwart Fernando Hierro.

French World Cup winner Christian Karembeu is also out, while doubts remain over whether Yugoslav striker Predrag Mijatovic will be available to play due to international commitments.

"We are better than them," Real Madrid striker Raul Gonzalez said on Thursday. "But now is the hour to demonstrate it."

Celta fans will be thinking about years rather than hours - the 50 that have passed since their last Bernabeu success.

Mahfuz's 95 for SK&F BATBL miscue bat and ball

SK&F got off to a flying start in the Professionals' Cup cricket tournament with a 59-run win over British American Tobacco Bangladesh Limited (BATBL) in the inaugural match played at the BATBL factory ground at Mahakhali yesterday.



Opener Mahfuzur Rahman hammered 95 as SK&F, put in to bat in the 30-over-a-side affair, amassed 197 before being all out in the final over.

In his 75-ball hurricane innings, Mahfuz smote a quartet of sixes and nine boundaries.

Among others, one-down Shahab contributed 20 while middle order Tarek chipped in with 14.

In reply, BATBL were shot out for 138 in the face of some inspirational bowling from SK&F's Tarek and new-ball bowler Mirazur Rahman, who shared five wickets. Tarek captured three wickets for 31 while Mirazur bagged two for 30.

One-down Selim was the only BATBL batsman to score a man-like 53 off 64 balls while Shahed (16) and Jahangir (10) were the others who reached double figures.

A total of eight office teams are taking part in the tournament, being held for the first time and to be played only on Fridays.

Dean pads up for politics?

MELBOURNE, Nov 13: Former Australian Test cricketer Dean Jones is set to go into bat for the Liberal Party in his home state of Victoria, reports AFP.

"The ball is in their court," Jones said today adding that he would be happy to listen to any offers.

His comments come after media speculation last week that he had been sounded out to stand for the Liberals, headed at a national level by Australia's cricket-loving Prime Minister John Howard.

Jones, considered during his 17-year career as the world's best one-day batsman, said he was willing to consider the possible career opportunity but wanted to know more about what would be required.

"It would be silly to slam doors in people's faces," he said. "It is something I have never thought of going into, but down the road, I don't know."

He said he would have to consider the requirements of being a Member of Parliament, the workload and his family.

Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett has said Jones would be welcomed on to his team if he wanted to make the commitment.

OM bid for eighth in a row



MARSEILLE, France, Nov 13 (Reuters/Internet): French league title favourites Olympique Marseille will be looking for their eighth win in a row when they meet defending champions RC Lens at the Velodrome on Saturday.

Unbeaten Marseille are two points ahead of Girondins Bordeaux, who are at home to Sochaux, and seven in front of third-placed Rennes, who host Olympique Lyon.

Marseille striker Christophe Dugarry, however, says it is too early to talk of the championship.

"It's still premature to consider a handover of power even if OM have undoubtedly a far greater chance than the northern team of lifting the title at the end of the season," he said.

Marseille coach Roland Courbis will have captain Laurent Blanc back at the heart of his defence after resting the French World Cup defender for the 3-2 win at Nancy on Tuesday.

He also welcomes back midfielder Eric Roy, who has been out for more than a month through injury, a timely return in view of the two-match suspension handed down to Peter Luccin after his dismissal against Monaco last week.

Striker Titi Camara's return from suspension may allow Courbis to rest Fabrizio Ravanelli. The Italian is nursing a knock on the ankle.

"Despite their six defeats, which can be put down in large part to their European Cup fatigue, Lens have an impressive attacking potential," Courbis said. Lens are eighth, 16 points adrift of Marseille.

"There really are men of great class in their team, notably by forwards capable of sowing mayhem in any defence."

Marseille are not forgetting they lost 3-2 at home to Lens last season.

"It is a memory made even worse by the fact that Lens became champions of France by negotiating the final sprint better than us," Courbis said.

Ravanelli expressed admiration for Lens coach Daniel Leclercq, whose players reacted to his offer to resign -- turned down by the club -- with a fighting 3-1 home win over Rennes on Wednesday.

Leclercq offered his resignation after Lens lost 3-1 at Le Havre playing badly last Saturday.

"Leclercq knows football well," Ravanelli said. "I like his approach -- which is to score one more goal that his adversary. Lens are a dangerous team that you have to meet with a lot of respect and concentration."

Ravanelli formally denied

he had been contacted by his former club Juventus with a view to returning to Turin as cover for long term injury victim Alessandro Del Piero.

"It is not on the cards," he said. "I've still got three years' contract with OM and want to win important things with my club. I'm flattered that Juventus should be interested in me. It's proof it's the real Ravanelli playing today at OM."

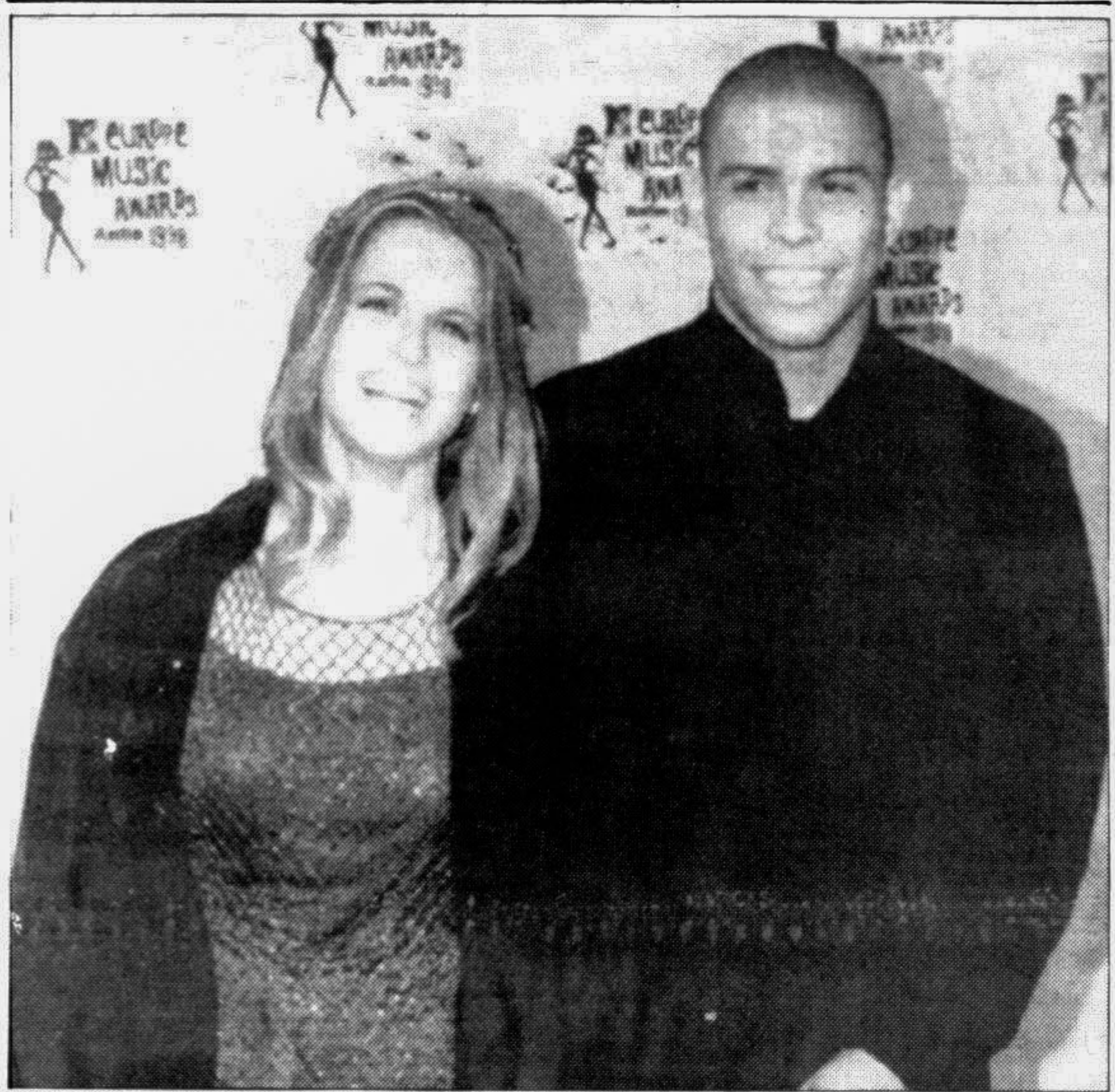
Courbis said he had directly contacted Juventus, who told him it was against their principles to re-sign a player who has already worn their colours.

Lens have regained their confidence in good time for the trip to the Velodrome, where they will play in front of the only crowd in France they would recognise as more fervent than their own.

Striker Tony Vairelles said: "What is encouraging before the match at Marseille is that against Rennes we played on of our best games of the season, certainly the most complete."

Defender Yoann Lachor said: "We are still capable of improving our position... so, for the succession, wait until the return match."

Lens will be deprived through injury of their teenage playmaker Stephane Dalmat, but captain Frederic Dehu and striker Pascal Nouma are both back after suspension.



Brazilian soccer star Ronaldo and his friend Suzana Werner on arrival at the MTV Europe Music Awards in Milan on Nov 12.

— AP/UNB photo

Hungary call up rookie striker

BUDAPEST, Nov 13 (Reuters/Internet): Hungary have called up 17-year-old striker Imre Szabics for their friendly against Switzerland on November 18 in Budapest.

Szabics has impressed in recent weeks for Ferencvaros but he has played just eight full games in the Hungarian first division, scoring six goals.

"His call-up is a message to young players that nothing is impossible," said Hungary coach Bertalan Bicskei.

Bicskei has called up two other uncapped youngsters to his 23-man squad, Robert Waltner of Videoton and Miklos Lendvai of Ferencvaros. Krisztian Lisztes of Stuttgart is a surprise omission from the squad.

SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS: Gabor Kiraly (Hertha Berlin), Gabor Babos (MTK Budapest).

DEFENDERS: Pal Lakos (Gyor ETO), Gyorgy Korsos (Gyor ETO), Vilmos Sebok (Ujpest), Csaba Feher (Ujpest), Tamas Peto (Ujpest), Janos Hrutka (Kaiserslautern), Janos Matyus (Ferencvaros), Tamas Szekeres (MTK Budapest).

MIDFIELDERS: Bela Illes (MTK Budapest), Pal Dardai (Hertha Berlin), Istvan Pisont (Eintracht Frankfurt), Miklos Lendvai (Ferencvaros), Jozsef Somogyi (Gyor ETO), Norbert Toth (Ujpest), Otto Vincze (Ferencvaros), Tamas Peto (Ujpest).

FORWARDS: Gabor Egressy (Diosgyor), Miklos Feher (Peto), Robert Waltner (Videoton), Miklos Herzeg (Ujpest), Jozsef Sebok (Zalaegerszeg).

Leeds don't need Lee anymore

LEEDS, England, Nov 13: Leeds United have transferred winger Lee Sharpe because he does not figure in the plans of new manager David O'Leary, reports Reuters.

The former Manchester United player missed all of last season with knee ligament trouble and has made just five appearances with the club this season, though he insists he has recovered from his injury problems.

Leeds bought him from Manchester in mid-1996 for 4.5 million pounds (7.46 million dollars) but O'Leary said on Thursday Sharpe "does not figure in his plans so we are inviting offers for him."

"I just need games," Sharpe, 27, said. "I know in myself and the way that I feel that I just need six to 12 games to start producing what I am capable of."

Houllier begins at Leeds



LONDON, Nov 13 (Daily Mail/Internet): Liverpool embark on a new era on Saturday with an English Premier league match against Leeds United that revives memories of the club's golden age.

Joint coach Roy Evans left Liverpool on Thursday, severing a connection with the club that spanned more than 30 years and embraced their glorious success of the 1960s, 70s and 80s.

And while Manchester United may now be the benchmark to which Liverpool's coach Gerard Houllier -- now in sole charge -- aspires, in Evans' days in the boot room it was always Leeds who were the great rivals, producing matches that were among the highlights of the season.

After Liverpool beat Leeds in the 1965 F.A. Cup final and then beat them to the league title the following year, the scene was set for a 15-year battle for supremacy.

Liverpool won it, going on to become the most successful team in British soccer history.

They won five more titles up to 1980 and a string of Euro-

pean successes as Leeds earned the reputation of perennial runners-up.

The Yorkshire club did win the league in 1969 and 1974 but in between finished second three times and also lost in the final of the European Cup and Cup Winners' Cup.

Both sides have fallen from grace since then and Saturday's fixture is little more than a mid-table meeting.

Leeds are currently having the best of things, in sixth place under new coach David O'Leary,

but their record at Anfield is poor, with only five wins in 44 games.

Liverpool won home and away last season and would dearly love a repeat to launch the new era with three points.

Having slipped to 11th place after just one win in eight league games, they need them. Houllier and his new assistant Phil Thompson will have to do without Michael Owen, who injured a hamstring in Tuesday's 3-1 home League Cup defeat by Tottenham Hotspur.

Also out are Steve Manaman and Jason McAteer, but Houllier's bigger problem is his defence -- not because of injury but poor form.

Steve Staunton, more usually a full back, and Jamie Carragher have been playing in the middle of defence and have been embarrassed time and time again by high balls played into the box.

Assistant coach Thompson, a commanding centre half during some of Liverpool's prime years, will act quickly to stiffen up that area.

Leeds are likely to be missing their own centre back, South African Lucas Radebe, who has a knee injury, as well as full back Gary Kelly.

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Nagano donation

TOKYO, Nov 13: The Nagano Olympic Committee will donate 90 per cent of its 4.5 billion yen (36.87 million dollars) profit from February's Winter Games to the Nagano prefectural (State) government, an organising official said Friday, reports AP.

Jin-O Matsuo, spokesman for the Nagano Olympic Committee, said the remaining 10 per cent, or 450 million yen (3.68 million dollars) will be donated to the Japanese Olympic Committee.



Kuwait's Gulf Cup-winning captain Hamad al-Salah poses with Bahrain Crown Prince Hamad ibn Issa al-Khalifa (L) and Sheikh Ahmed al-Fahed (C) after the winning final 4-1.

— AFP photo

£10m price-tag on Bosnich



LONDON, Nov 13 (Daily Mail/Internet): Mark Bosnich will cost Manchester United 10 million pounds if they decide he is the

man to replace Peter Schmeichel, who yesterday announced he intends to quit Old Trafford.

That staggering amount is what Aston Villa's Australia goalkeeper has already been offered by Roma of Italy's Serie A.

Bosnich, first revealed by the Daily Mail's Sportsmail as Alex Ferguson's first choice to take over from Denmark's Schmeichel, becomes a free agent in the summer when his contract expires at Villa Park.

The Italians want him to sign a pre-contract on January 1 and the 26-year-old has been told he would receive more than 6 million pounds over a four-year term in addition to a 3 million signing-on fee.

Schmeichel, 34, will go at the end of the season because he feels the physical demands of playing for such a big club will ultimately diminish his ability.

The Dane's leaving may be months away, but manager Ferguson, who was annoyed when Bosnich left United and returned to Australia due to work permit problems six years ago, is already running out of time if he wants him back.

Ferguson, also linked with Ipswich's England Under 21 goalkeeper Richard Wright, will probably have to match Roma's offer to keep Bosnich in England.

Chase draw

NEW YORK, Nov 13 (Reuters): First round matchups for the women's tennis season ending Chase Championships following the draw conducted on Thursday at Madison Square Garden (prefix number denotes seeding).

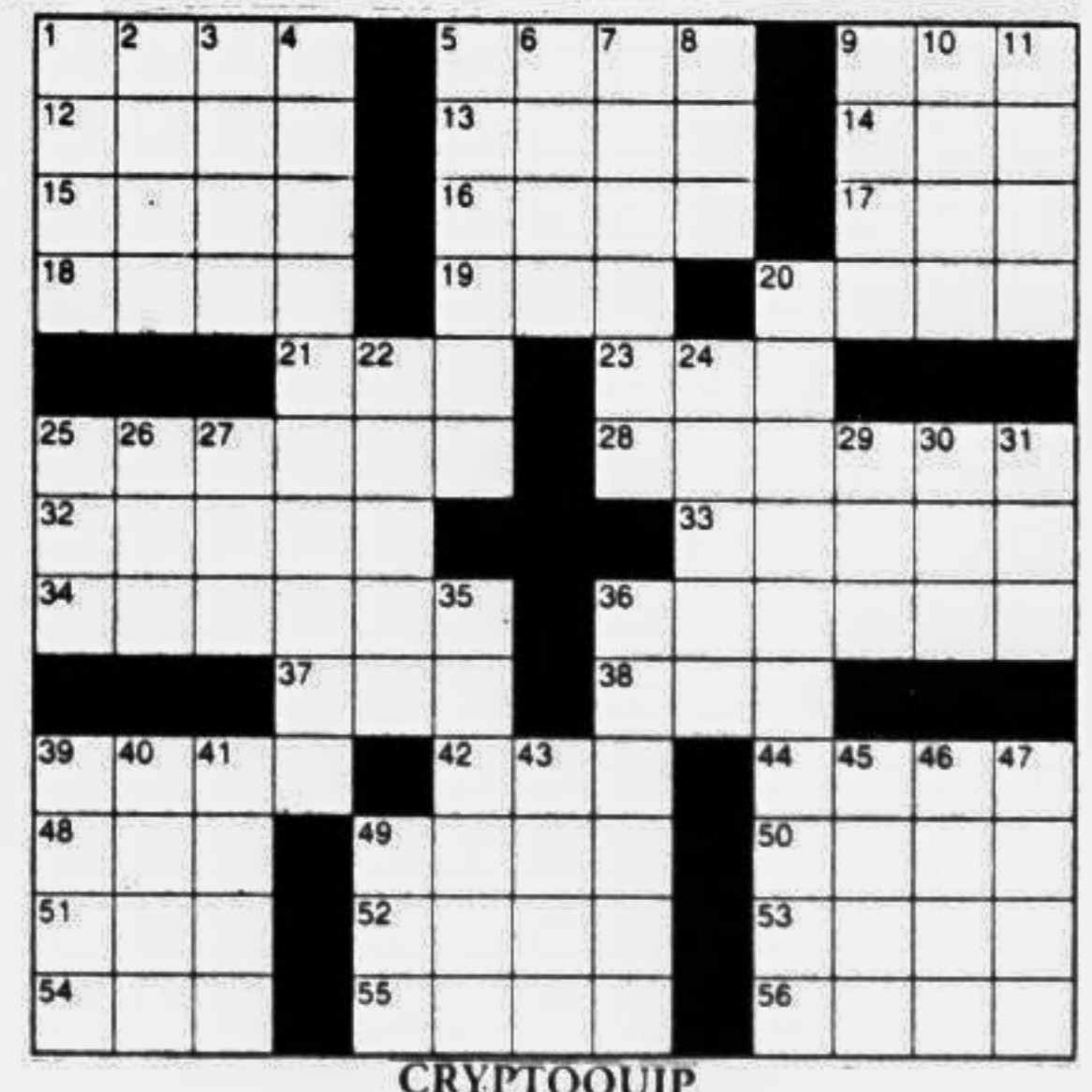
TOP HALF
1 Lindsay Davenport (USA) v Sandrine Testud (FRA)
Nathalie Tauziat (FRA)
3-Jana Novotna (CZ REP) v Steffi Graf (GER)
Anna Kournikova (RUS) v 5 Monica Seles (USA)

BOTTOM HALF
7-Conchita Martinez (ESP) v Dominique van Roost (BEL)
Irina Spirela (ROM) v 4 Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario (ESP)
6-Mary Pierce (FRA) v Amanda Coetzer (RSA)
Patty Schnyder (SWI) v 2 Martina Hingis (SWI)

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Pilgrimage to Mecca
5 Puerto Rico
9 Crude oil
12 Hodge-podge
13 Beige
14 "...and seven years"
15 Krupa's rival
16 Meter man?
17 Buddhist sect
18 Witnessed
19 Remnant
20 Cheat at hide-and-seek
21 Comrade
23 1990s news-making jurist
25 Can't tolerate
28 Midwestern capital
32 Daytime TV fare
33 Forum garb
34 Ornamental tassel
36 Go
37 Away from WSW
38 Adj.

2 modifier
3 Open a crack
4 Erstwhile Peruvian
48 Curse
49 Playwright
50 Fate
51 Bishopric
52 Rose's occupant
53 Perry's creator
54 Right angle
55 Kegler's targets
56 Muscat's land
1 - d'oeuvre
11 Grind
20 Hit show
21 "of the Mind"
22 Bad lighting?
24 Carried
25 Warbucks henchman
26 Greet the villain
27 Scenery chaser
29 Bambi's aunt
30 Current flavored aperitif
31 Presentation
35 Ore-rich range
36 Hops, e.g.
39 Basilica area
40 Grey or McCrea
41 Figure-skating maneuver
43 Green acres
45 Standard
46 Caffeine-laden drink
47 The last word
49 Treasure-seeker's aid



CRYPTOQUIP
N V X C Z X L F P E N V
M A P E F Y F J L X C L X C Q Y
J P Q E X L A H Z P L L V Z
X E E Q A X E N V N P Y M C H Z
Yesterday's Cryptogram: PRESUMELIGHTHOUSE
EMPLOYEES CERTAINLY BRING HOME THE BEACON.
Today's Cryptogram clue: L equals B
The Cryptogram 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.