

Sport

India go to NZ Dec 3

MUMBAI, Nov 28: Indian skipper Mohammad Azharuddin and coach Anshuman Gaekwad were very optimistic of clinching the three-Test series against New Zealand on their forthcoming tour to the antipodes and eradicate their dismal record abroad, reports PTI.

"Why not? We have the bowlers and the batsmen to deliver the goods. There is no reason why we cannot perform well," Azharuddin told reporters when asked whether the tour represented the best chance for India to win a Test series overseas after a long time.

Gaekwad also echoed similar views after the team's training session for the first day of the five-day camp at the Brabourne Stadium.

"We have a good chance to eradicate the past. We have certain plans which I cannot disclose now. We are going to practise on grassy pitches similar to what we would encounter in New Zealand," Gaekwad said.

Both Azhar and Gaekwad maintained that the team would use only the three openers chosen specifically by the selectors Navjot Sidhu, Ajay Jadeja and VVS Laxman, in the Tests and insisted that Nayan Mongia would not be asked to do the difficult job barring an emergency.

The team, scheduled to leave here on December 3, is to play three Tests and five one-day internationals against the home team besides the side games.

Faisal flashes for Babylon

Sports Reporter Babylon Group recorded a comprehensive 52-run win over Credit Agricole Indosuez in the John Player Gold Leaf-Lights Professional's Cup cricket tournament at the BAT ground last Friday.

With this win, their second on a trot, Babylon Group advanced into the second round earlier last week, Babylon handed a five-wicket defeat to Phillips.

Sent into bat first, Babylon posted a huge total of 169 before being all out with two balls to spare in their allotted 30 overs. Thanks to a brilliant run-a-ball 46 from man-of-the-match Faisal, who hammered seven fours in his entertaining knock.

In reply, Credit Agricole could manage only 114 before being bundled out in 29.3 overs. Arif scored highest 25 for the losers.

Tyson plans no contest plea

WASHINGTON, Nov 28 (AP/Internet): Former heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson plans to plead no contest next week to charges he attacked two women in August after they reentered his Mercedes-Benz at a traffic stop in suburban Gaithersburg.

The plea to the two assault charges means Tyson would not have to admit or deny guilt.

But if a judge accepts the plea, Tyson would be sentenced as if he pleaded guilty. Each second-degree misdemeanor charge carries a maximum of 10 years in prison.

Defence lawyer Paul F. Kemp said he did not know whether the plea would lead to a revocation of Tyson's probation in his 1992 Indiana rape conviction, which could send him back to prison for the three years remaining on his sentence there.

Walsh: Dedicated, determined



JOHANNESBURG, Nov 28: (Reuters/AFIP): Courtney Walsh has no plans to quit after becoming the most successful bowler in West Indies Test cricket on Friday.

"People have been saying for a while that I should pack it in and maybe they will be saying that more now that the record has gone," said the 36-year-old veteran after taking his tally to 379 in the opening Test against South Africa.

"But I'm still enjoying it and as long as I feel I am contributing something to the team I'll carry on playing."

"I am concentrating on making this a good series as it's a landmark tour," Walsh added.

Fast bowler Walsh's four for 48 haul on the second day took him beyond Malcolm Marshall's previous best of 376, reached in 1991.

Marshall applauded Walsh's feat from the pavilion.

"We had a little chat beforehand and he said he hoped I'd get it in the first innings and not have to wait until the second," Walsh said.

"It's nice to get it out the way once and for all, and to pass someone like Malcolm Marshall I feel is a great achievement."

Marshall paid tribute to a man he said was "Too modest." "I predict he will play at least another 13 Tests and at the end of it he'll be the leading wicket-taker of all-time."

Walsh moved fourth on the all-time world list headed by Kapil Dev's 434 for India.



Courtney Walsh ... toast of teammates. — Internet photo

LEADING WICKET-TAKERS

Table with 3 columns: Bowler, Wickets, Matches. Lists Courtney Walsh (379), Malcolm Marshall (376), and others.

WEST INDIAN TOP TEN

Table with 3 columns: Bowler, Tests, Wickets. Lists Courtney Walsh (103), Malcolm Marshall (81), and others.

Asiad makes 'em worried

BANGKOK, Nov 28: European coaches are howling complaints about losing new Asian imports at the height of the season to the Asian Games soccer contest, reports AFP.

China has recalled players from England and France, while Iran demanded the release of German-based World Cup players.

After a row with the Asian Football Confederation over eligibility, South Korea and Japan are also using World Cup players in their young teams.

The football, the most watched event, starts Sunday, ahead of the formal December 6 opening of the Games.

China, who lost the 1994 Asian Games final 4-2 to Uzbekistan, have caused consternation in Europe. Coached

Bobby Houghton has brought back former national skipper Fan Zhiyi and Sun Lihai from English First Division side Crystal Palace and Li Jinyu from Nancy in France.

Palace manager Terry Venables has led complaints about losing key members of his squad to a tournament he has barely heard of.

Venables claimed no mention was made of the Asian Games when Fan and Sun joined the London club this year. Houghton insists Palace were repeatedly told of the event.

China, who start in a group with Lebanon and Cambodia, also wanted striker Yang Chen at Eintracht Frankfurt in Germany.

It took an appeal from China's former German national coach Klaus Schlappner for Yang to be left to establish himself at Frankfurt. "Yang is a great player but he risks losing his place if China insist on taking him", Schlappner warned the Chinese Football Association.

Iran had no mercy for the Bundesliga, however, calling up former Asian player of the year Ali Daei from Bayern Munich and Karim Bagheri from Cologne into the 20 players based around the squad from the World Cup finals in France.

Head coach Mansour Purheidari has taken the squad to Dubai before their first match against Kazakhstan on December 1. "Our target has to be gold," he insisted.

Yellow-France '98 representatives Japan and South Korea are also determined to make an impact on the Games soccer, though both are officially taking Olympic sides.

South Korea's team sees five World Cup players including striker Yoo Sang-Chul and playmaker Yoon Jong-Hwan among a soccer creche of

AB Bank TT Easy wins in opening round

Sports Reporter

Brothers Union Club, Biman seniors and juniors and Armanitola Jubo Sangha got off to flying starts as the AB Bank Senior Division and First Division table tennis leagues began simultaneously at the NSC wooden floor gymnasium yesterday afternoon.

On the inaugural day of the 10-team Senior Division league, Brothers Union whitewashed Wari Club three sets to nothing while last year runners-up, Biman seniors, posted an identical win over Ajax Sporting Club.

In the other match of the day, Biman juniors handed Swambagh Boys Club a 3-0 defeat while holders Armanitola Jubo Sangha earned a walk-over against Mariner Young's Club.

In the First Division league, Uttara Club trounced Prottyasha by three sets to nil. Swambagh Table Tennis Sangtha outplayed Arka 3-0, Engineers' Club thrashed Purbachal Parisad 3-0 while Dilkusha Sporting Club registered a 3-1 victory over Wari juniors.

Ten Senior Division teams and 13 First Division teams are taking part in the league.

Senior Division: Armanitola JS, Biman Seniors, Biman Juniors, Brothers Union, Inter Sports, Armanitola Juniors, Wari Club, Swambagh Boys, Mariner Young's Club and Ajax SC.

First Division: Uttara SC, Mohamadpur Boys, Swambagh ITTS, Wari Juniors, BSJA, Purbachal Parisad, Angels Club, Mansoor SC, Engineers' Club, Mohammadia Youth Club, Dilkusha SC, Arka and Prottyasha.

TODAY'S MATCHES

(Venue: NSC wooden floor gymnasium) Senior Division (4:15 pm) Inter Sports v Armanitola Juniors Armanitola JS v Ajax SC Mariner Young's Club v Swambagh Boys Biman v Wari Club First Division (3 pm) BSJA v Angels Club Uttara SC v Arka Mansoor SC v Mohammadia YC Mohamadpur Boys v Dilkusha SC

Aravinda, Muttiah face fitness battles

COLOMBO, Nov 28: Injuries are threatening the Sri Lankan cricket team preparing to tour Australia with vice-captain Aravinda de Silva and star spinner Muttiah Muralitharan among four players in doubt, reports AFP.

They have been given until December 23 to pass a fitness test if they are to remain in the squad for the triangular one-day series that also includes England.

The other two injured players are Upul Chandana and Nuwan Zoysa.

SQUAD

Arjuna Ranatunga (capt), Aravinda de Silva (vice-capt), Sanath Jayasuriya, Marvan Atapattu, Roshan Mahanama, Hashan Tillekeratne, Romesh Kaluwitharana, Chaminda Vaas, Muttiah Murali tharan, Upul Chandana, Pramodya Wickremasinghe, Suresh Perera, Nuwan Zoysa, Aviska Gunawardena and Tilan Samarawera.

Gilchrist hits hundred

SYDNEY, Nov 28 (Reuters/Internet): Adam Gilchrist smashed a century to put Western Australia 64 ahead of New South Wales on first innings in their Sheffield Shield match on Saturday.

Gilchrist made 125 off 155 balls to power his side to 337 in reply to New South Wales's 273 on the third day at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Australian leg-spinner Stuart MacGill, who was left out of the team for the second Ashes Test in Perth, took four for 111 to give NSW an outside chance of taking a first innings lead but Gilchrist tilted the balance.

NSW were 147 for one in their second innings at the close, with Corey Richards unbeaten on 90, chasing quick runs in the hope of an early declaration.

Baggio & Ronaldo: Lethal liaison



MILAN, Nov 28 (Reuters/Internet): Roberto Baggio and Ronaldo are set to lead an Inter Milan revival that will ring alarm bells throughout Europe as well as Serie A.

The pair, recovering from fitness after injuries, came together for only 22 minutes of Wednesday's victory over Europa.

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players. Now, I hope it is over." On Sunday, Inter, who beat Real 3-1 with two goals in the final six minutes from Baggio, entertain struggling Salernitana at the San Siro with relieved coach Luigi Simoni hoping for another win to help them surge back into the top six.

They are currently eighth, but have one foot in the quarter-finals of the Champions League.

A victory in Austria, against Sturm Graz, next month would seal a place in the last eight and boost their revival after a faltering opening spell during which Ronaldo, the European and world player of 1997, has been a fitful presence.

He has suffered bruised knees, like Baggio's with tendonitis, while midfielder Francesco Moreiro and striker Nicola Ventola have also had similar damage.

Ronaldo's appearance on Wednesday, if only 90 per cent fit, was his first since the Milan derby on November 8.

But he said he enjoyed it and believed Baggio could add something extra to the Inter attack.

"It was great to play with him," said Ronaldo. "It worked well. We were a good pair."

"Of course, we need to work together. It is up to the coach to decide what happens, but I am feeling stronger and fitter and this was a great signal for the future for us both and for the squad. It was easy to see the effect of Baggio in this match. I think."

Ronaldo did not score, but played a major part in Inter's best attacking moves as they recovered from Dutchman Clarence Seedorf's equaliser to Chilean Ivan Zamorano's opening goal and clinched victory with a late Baggio-inspired surge.

"Roberto did a lot of good things to help me," said

Ronaldo. "He runs cleverly with the ball and takes defenders' attention away. It gives opportunity and me a little more time. But everyone in the team did well in this match."

Baggio's near-perfect evening included him collecting a yellow card for an extravagant off-pitch celebration of his first goal when he took off his shirt. But his second goal -- a solo run and dummy which left Bodo

Illiger stranded -- was a classic example of his skills.

"I enjoyed the goals and the match, but they were more for the squad, the coach and the president than they were for me," said Baggio later amid a pack of reporters.

"I hope this result is the start we wanted -- now we must work on it and keep winning."

With a squad that includes French World Cup winner Youri Djorkaeff, who was left out on Wednesday, Argentine midfielders Diego Simeone and Javier Zanetti and the ageing defensive lynchpin Giuseppe Bergomi, president Massimo Moratti has every reason to believe Baggio has lit the fuse-paper.

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Bad news for British louts



LONDON, Nov 28 (Reuters/Internet): The British government on Friday put forward tough proposals for cracking down on soccer hooliganism at home and abroad, including travel bans on people who have not actually been convicted of a criminal offence.

The proposals, which the Home Office (interior ministry) hope could become law within the next year, are aimed at putting a stop to the soccer-related violence which has damaged the reputation of England fans abroad.

Measures in the 29-point consultation document include new powers to stop unconvicted but known hooligans from travelling to overseas matches, tougher curbs on ticket touts, new powers to restrict the sale of alcohol in and around grounds and making racist chants a criminal offence.

It is clear that the legislation we have is not tough enough and is not helping to isolate and marginalise the minority of those criminal

thugs who have wreaked havoc... and have tarnished our image as football supporters abroad," said Home Office Minister Kate Hoey.

"The government is determined to do its bit to create a football culture which just does not tolerate hooliganism," she told a news conference to present the document.

The new proposals came on the back of a police warning on Thursday that soccer hooligans were back with a vengeance, smashing up bars, wrecking trains and stabbing rival fans.

The measures are particularly relevant because England is bidding to stage the World Cup finals in 2006.

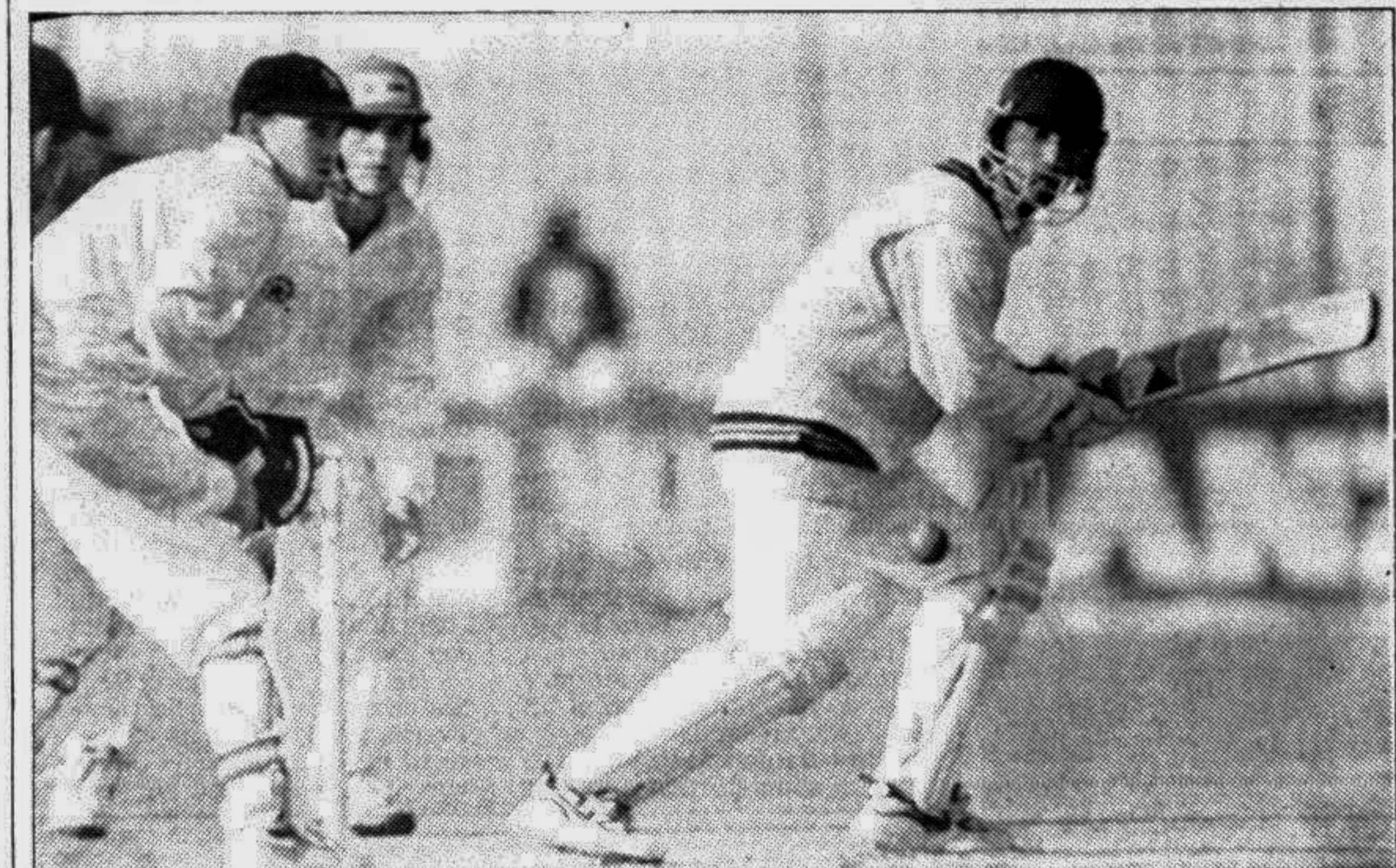
International football authorities have expressed concern about the threat of hooliganism, a problem highlighted by clashes last summer at the World Cup in France.

"This could be the toughest anti-hooligan legislation on the book, if it goes through as the document suggests, of any country in the world save perhaps only that of Argentina," said Sports Minister Tony Banks.

"Our 2006 World Cup bid will also benefit from these measures. It will send a clear statement to every FIFA representative that we meet. We will be able to give them a commitment that the government will take strong action against all troublemakers," he said.

Germany midfielder Andreas Moeller put the issue beyond doubt by scoring from inside the penalty area in the 75th minute.

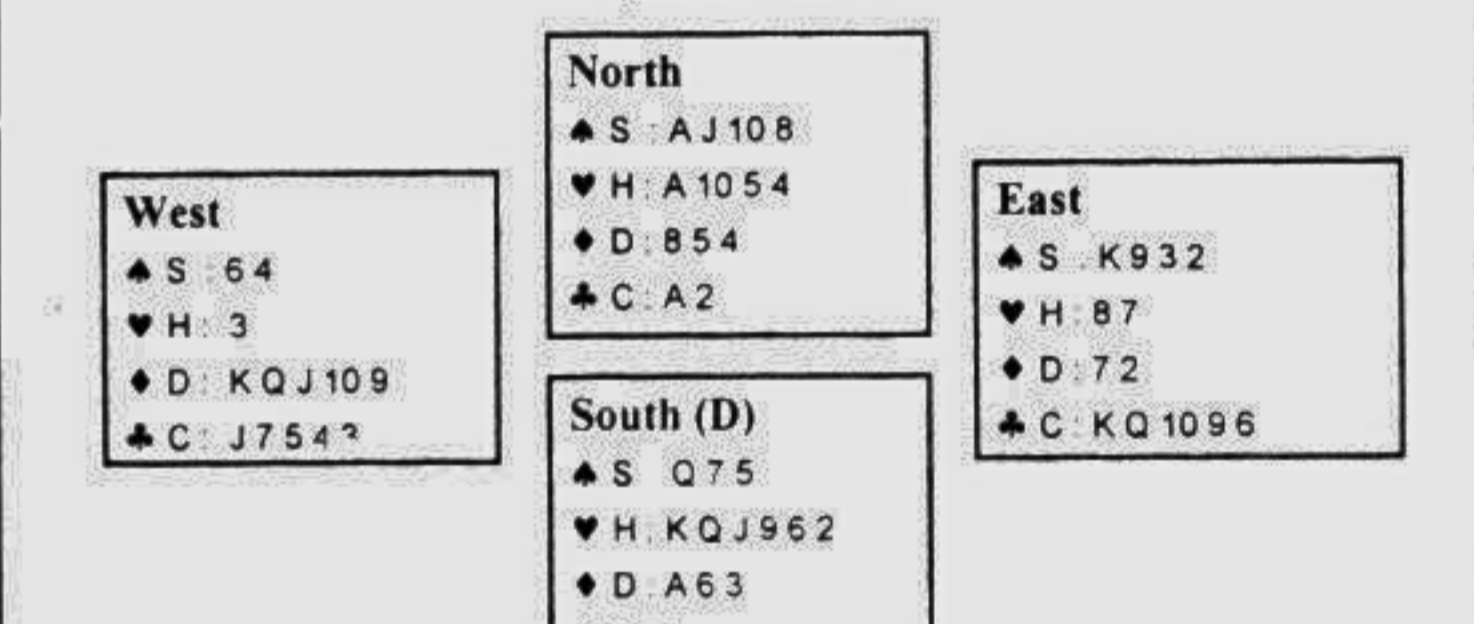
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Yousuf Youhana of Pakistan batting against Zimbabwe on Day One of the first Test at Peshawar on November 27. — AP/UNB photo

SIX NO TRUMPS A K Sayeedul Huq

THE DECLARER SHOULD HAVE DUCKED THE FIRST CLUB TRICK (Hand # 139)



Bidding: North South were vulnerable

Table with 4 columns: South, West, North, East. Shows card counts: South (1 Heart, 4 Hearts, Pass), West (2 Diamonds, 5 Clubs, Pass), North (3 Hearts, 5 Hearts), East (4 Clubs, Pass).

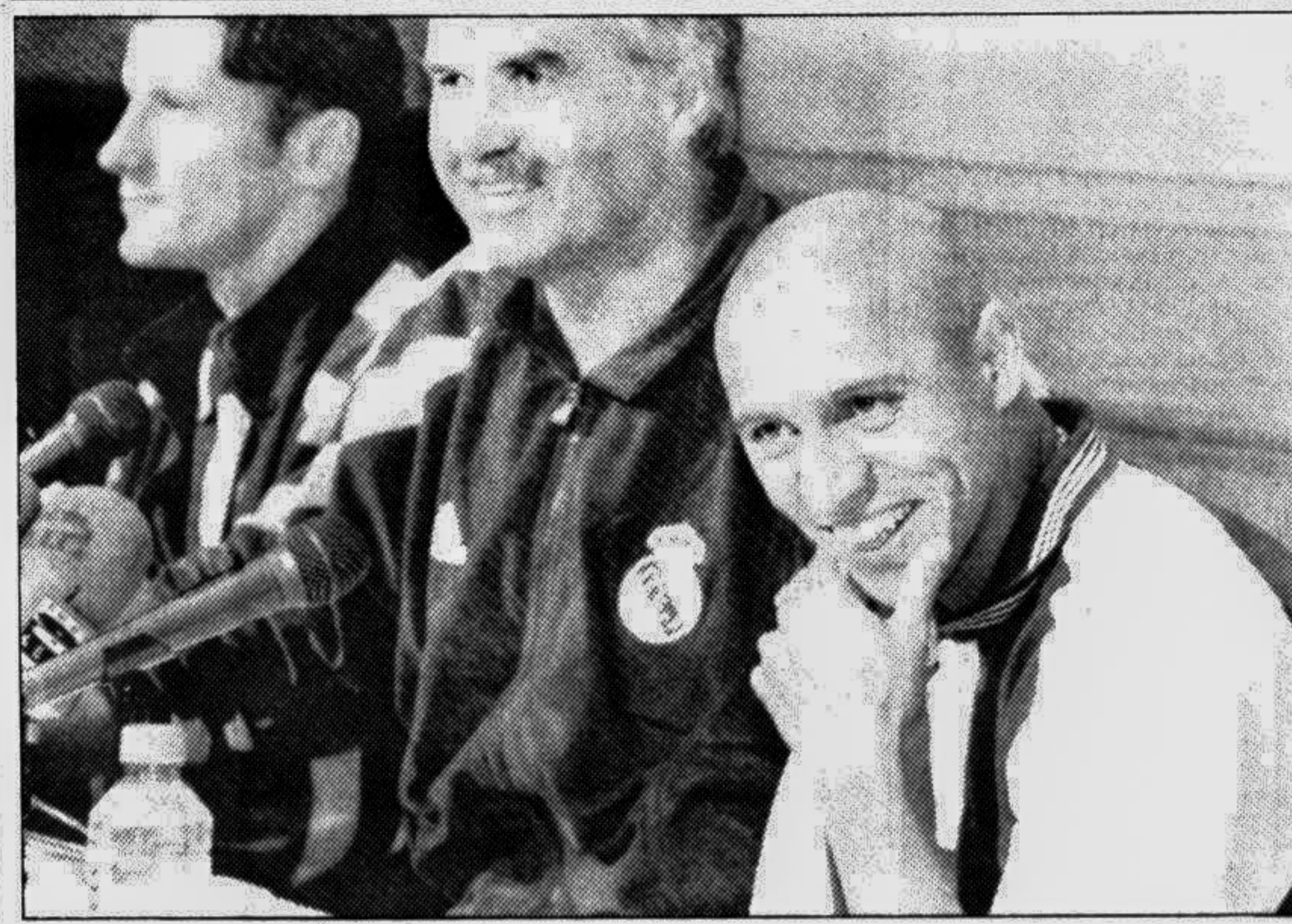
The diagrammed hand was played by the writer of this column partnered by wife Sheila while visiting Singapore recently. The East West cards were held by Sheila's uncle Apu and aunt Shelly. This was competitive in the sense that both the ladies wanted to pay the bill of the Sea Food dinner to be held later. Finally it was decided that the winner would have the right to do so.

With 12 HCP but a solid long suit Sheila opened one Heart which was overcalled by Apu with two Diamonds. North jumped to three Hearts and East came in with four Clubs. North South were ultimately pushed to five Hearts in a vulnerable position.

THE PLAY

West led the King of Diamonds and when Shelly played Seven Shiela took her Ace. She cleared the trumps and took the losing Spade finesse. East returned a Diamond in which the defence collected two tricks for down one. Shelly was happy because she won the right to pay for the dinner, and Apu said that it was appropriate for them to buy the dinner as they were residents there and we were visiting.

When I mentioned that Sheila should have made the hand by ducking the first Club trick and winning the second Club, Sheila stated that the second Club might have been ruffed by East and the Spade finesse might not work (actually it did not work). And as West overcalled in Diamonds, he might have six cards in which case the hand could not be made by ducking the first Club trick. Sheila had a point, but she was unhappy because I overbid at the five level as five Clubs could be beaten without any doubt and she would have won the privilege to pay for dinner at the Sea Food Restaurant. And that was of course true.



Real Madrid's Roberto Carlos is relaxed during a press briefing for the Toyota Cup in Tokyo on November 27. He is flanked by coach Guus Hiddink and teammate Davor Suker. The reigning European champions play Vasco da Gama in the intercontinental clash on December 1. —AFP photo

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

CRYPTOQUIP

CRYPTOQUIP G H X Z O S W W M X W W M S M X L - O S S Z N M B N X L B Z H S X " N M B ' L N M B " G L Z B N X " N M B ' L M S ? " Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WILL GARDENERS OFTEN GET SMART FROM WEDDING A LOT? Today's Cryptoquip clue: N equals W The Cryptoquip 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.