

Lara wants dedication

PORT ELIZABETH, South Africa, Dec 13: Brian Lara urged his West Indian team to put in more effort following Saturday's 178-run defeat inside three days in the second Test against South Africa, reports AFP.



BANGKOK, Dec 13: The head of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) has called for an Asian boycott of the football World Cup if the continent's representation at the 2002 finals is not increased, reports AFP.

The Sheikh, one of the top six figures in world sport, made his call in an interview with AFP ahead of an emergency meeting of the Asian Football Confederation on Tuesday to discuss FIFA's decision to award just four places to the continent at the 2002 finals.

World Cup 2002

Prospect of an Asian pull out

"I said two years ago that we don't have the soldiers to fight for our interests and I was proved right, we have to be united to get our rights, otherwise we will have to boycott."

FIFA's executive committee has decided to give Asia only two places on top of those for Japan and South Korea to be contested by the rest of the confederations 43 members.

AFC general secretary Peter Velappan has already attacked the decision saying "Asia is the loser here and it shows that FIFA has no respect for Asia at all."

Asia had three guaranteed representatives at France '98 South Korea, Japan and Saudi Arabia qualified directly and Iran defeated Australia in a playoff.

Velappan said Tuesday's emergency meeting would concentrate on the end of the so-called three and half places formula. The president and the executive committee are very angry and disappointed with this decision and we will be discussing what to do next."

The Sheikh said FIFA had been short-sighted in just taking into account Asia's relatively weak results from this year's finals.

"FIFA has to take into account that Asia is the second economic power in the world, it has 45 per cent of the sponsor companies for the World Cup, and not to look just at the technical results of the World Cup."

"But decision might cause some problems for the two host countries but they will be the losers otherwise. The World Cup will last only one month. But their future lies with the Asian confederation."

FIFA president Sepp Blatter had been due to visit Bangkok last week after touring South Korea and Japan to see the 2002 preparations. He called it off because of illness.

The AFC will come up with some form of action to show the international governing body that it means business.

But on top of the tub thumping from the Sheikh and Velappan, Asian soccer chiefs are already trying to figure out a compromise to reduce the insult.

Velappan has said that Oceania nations, including Australia, could be brought into the Asian qualifying groups. Under the current FIFA plan, the Oceania winner takes part in a play off with one of the top South American runners up.

Asian Games roundup

BANGKOK, Dec 13: His father was dubbed Asia's 'iron man' after winning the hammer throw at five consecutive Asian Games. Now Koji Murofushi has taken over the family business.

Murofushi won gold Sunday with a throw of 78.57 metres, beating the 77.14 of Uzbekistan's Andrey Abdullayev, who holds the Asian record at 83.36. Kyrgyzstan's Nikolay Davydov took bronze with 68.10.

Thus the gold is back in the family after a 12-year break. The winner's father, Shigenobu Murofushi, who was here watching, won in 1970, 1974, 1978, 1982 and 1986.

In other early track and field action, China's Yu Guohui won the men's 20-kilometer walk. Yu finished in 1 hour, 20 minutes, 25 seconds, a games record, beating the 1:23:52 of Kazakhstan's Valery Borisov.

It was China's 71st gold of the Games, to 27 for Japan and 26 for South Korea after Sunday's early events.

South Korea gained one by beating Japan 3-1 in the final of women's team soft tennis, and another in shooting.

Taiwan had 13 after Lu Hsiao-chuan shot with an even-par 288 total and led a 1-2-3 finish for her nation in women's golf. That gave Taiwan the team title as well, with 575 to South Korea's 585. Lu shot 72 Sunday.

In shooting, North and South Korea split the golds in men's centre-fire pistol competition.

South Korea's Park Byung-taek won the individual title in a tie-breaker after he, India's Jaspal Rana and Kazakhstan's Vladimir Volkhymanin all shot 589s. Rana took the silver.

North Korea also needed a tie-break formula to take the gold after tied with the South Koreans at 1,749 in the team event. India took bronze with 1,747.

Fehaid Al-Deehani won gold in men's individual trap shooting and led Kuwait to the team championship Sunday.

North and South Korea split the individual and team golds in an extremely close men's center fire pistol competition that required tie-breaking systems to decide the medals.

The events concluded a 34-event, seven-day shooting tournament at the games. China won the most golds — 18 — but could gain only one bronze Sunday.

Kuwait finished 1-2 in the men's individual trap shooting, with Al-Deehani winning with 140 and Fehaid Al-Deehani taking silver with 137. North Korea's Pae Won Guk won the bronze with 135.

Andry Rajoelina shot down a total of 346 targets for the team gold. India had 329 and China 323.

In the men's centre fire pistol event, North Korea's Park Byung-taek, India's Jaspal Rana and Kazakhstan's Vladimir Volkhymanin all shot 589. Tie-breaking formulas had to be used after Park and Rana then both shot 149 and Volkhymanin had 146 in an extra round.

They were used again in the team event, giving North Korea the gold and South Korea the silver after both shot 1,749. India took bronze with 1,747.



Action from the Asiad kabaddi encounter between Bangladesh and Japan yesterday. Bangladesh won 25-8. — AFP photo

Nippon mantra works out



BANGKOK, Dec 13 (AFP): Beat China, was the mantra of Japanese swimmers at the 13th Asian Games, and 589s.

with single-minded determination they did.

"We set out one goal — to beat China this time, and our effort paid off," said Tomoko Hagawa, winner of the women's 100m and 200m backstroke.

Added 1500m freestyle champion Masato Hirano, "We met every night in the village to discuss how to beat China."

Japan were determined to erase the memory of China's drug-ridden triumph at Hiroshima four years ago. Their success, by the slim margin of 15 gold medals to 13, promised a fierce regional rivalry in years to come.

In Hiroshima, we were beaten by China and it was a sort of total loss," said breaststrokeer Akira Hayashi.

Japan's performance level has since closed up on that of China, and we can go on with confidence," he added. "Our solidarity as a team has been strengthened, beating China was our highest goal at the Asian Games."

Even after seven swimmers were disqualified for doping in Hiroshima, China led the gold medal tally 15-10.

They had suddenly grabbed superiority at the 1990 Beijing Games, beating Japan 23-7 in the gold medal count after trailing significantly throughout the previous two decades. China

didn't claim one swimming gold until the 1986 Asiad.

Now, the two giants appear headed toward the Sydney Olympics on more or less even terms.

"We are catching up with China and we don't want to be beaten by China, which is our main rival in Asia," said double butterfly gold medalist Takashi Yamamoto. "We are determined not to be beaten by that country, with which we are all but even."

Chinese officials were not willing to concede defeat.

"Chinese swimmers broke seven Asian Games marks while Japanese only four," said head coach Zhang Xiong. "I think we are the winners in swimming."

The mere medal tally is not sufficient to decide who is the number one Asian power in the sport," he added. "The Chinese team was depleted by the absence of star swimmers while Japan sent most of its best swimmers here."

True, but many of those Japanese were past their best for this season, having peaked for the Japan Games in September.

And cynics still not ready to forget China's doping escapades — including one as recent as the 1998 world championships in January — hinted at sinister reasons for the absence of world-record holders Le Jingyi and He Chong.

Hirano said he believed China's top swimmers also focused on medals earlier in the season.

"I personally think the Chinese swimmers concentrated on national championships and had too short a time to prepare for this meeting," he said.

China's Xiong Guoming, whose loss of three individual gold medals made him one of the most infamous of the Hiroshima seven, said inexperience was a factor in China's lower gold tally.

"This time, China fielded a lot of young swimmers," said Xiong, who returned after serving his two-year ban, won the men's 200m medley gold and very nearly won the 400m medley as well.

"They are very inexperienced. This is the reason why China's gold medals are fewer than at Hiroshima."

China could take comfort in the fact that the younger swimmers, led by 16-year-old Chen Hua, showed they are ready to take their place alongside the old guard in Sydney.

Chen Hua did what heralded world record-holders Chen Yan and Wu Yanyan failed to do, capturing three gold medals.

Just four swimmers broke the China-Japan monopoly on gold: Thai Torlarp Sethothorn, Taiwan's Tsai Shu-Min, Malaysian Lim Keng-Liat and Cho Hee-Yeon of South Korea.

Sunshuke Ito of Japan claimed that many gold medals himself, three of them as Japanese men triumphed in every relay.

"We set a slogan for the Games and it was 'beat China,' Ito said. "We did."

Indians toil for runs



WELLINGTON, Dec 13: India, playing Wellington in their last fixture before the first Test against New Zealand starting in Dunedin on Friday, looked far from ready for the big occasion today, reports Reuters.

After conceding 312, they struggled to match it and were 219 for seven at the close of the second day.

The tourists lost wickets at steady intervals despite the fact that their batsmen were more intent on spending time in the middle than a scoring runs at speed to keep competitive interest alive in this four-day match.

However, Rahul Dravid, who had also batted with distinction in India's previous match against Central Districts, made a well composed 50 and left-hander Saurav Ganguly, batting fluently, was unbeaten with 68.

He played with absolute freedom and reached his 50 off 75 balls, having struck three fours and two straight sixes off left-arm spinner Mark Jefferson who was Wellington's most successful bowler with three for 82.

Even allowing for the absence in the Indian ranks of the two leading batsmen, skipper Mohammad Azharud-Din and Sachin Tendulkar, their performance lacked lustre.

This was despite the pitch having flattened out and the Wellington attack although tidy and disciplined, being far from menacing.

Ajay Jadeja, whose last Test appearance was in July 1997 against Sri Lanka, would seem to have clinched the opening bat for the Test — alongside Navjot Sidhu — by scoring 46 runs. His rival for the role, Venkat Laxman, made 28 without much conviction.

Jadeja hit six hearty fours off the back foot during a 73 wicket partnership of 73 with Dravid before being brilliantly caught at third slip by Gavin Larsen, off Robert Kennedy.

Laxman fell to Jefferson, missing a big leg-side hit and Dravid, who should have been caught at second slip on 24, was out leg before by Kennedy with one that cut back sharply.

Ganguly's innings was chanceless but, attempting to leg cut Jefferson when 63, survived a confident appeal for caught behind.

His refusal by umpire Chris King evoked an angry response from the fielders, with skipper Roger Twose's reaction being particularly strong.

In the morning, India took a full hour to capture Wellington's three remaining wickets. Richard Petrie, who had proved a big obstacle to them yesterday, stayed in for another 25 minutes and reached 48 before top-edging a pull of pace bowler Debashish Mohanty.

Scoreboard on the second day of a four-day cricket match between Wellington and India on Sunday.

SCOREBOARD table with columns for Team, O, M, R, W. Includes innings for India and Wellington.

MEDALS TABLE

BANGKOK, Dec 13 (AFP): Medal standings of the 13th Asian Games here on Saturday (tabulate under gold, silver, bronze, total).

Table with columns: Team, G, S, B, Total. Lists medal counts for various countries like China, Japan, South Korea, etc.

Aravinda, Mutiah still uncertain

COLOMBO, Dec 13: Sri Lanka's vice-captain Aravinda de Silva and star spinner Mutiah Muralitharan are yet to recover from injuries that may keep them out of the Australian tour next month, cricket officials said today, reports AFP.

The duo had earlier been given a final December 25 to pass a fitness test to qualify to officiate at their participation in the triangular series that includes Australia and England remained doubtful.

The triangular run into trouble when top Australian umpire Darrel Hair reiterated that Muralitharan was guilty of throwing and that he would not hesitate to no ball the spinner unless he corrected his "diabolical" act.

He withdrew from officiating at any Sri Lankan matches but the cricket board here is insisting that the controversial umpire should be investigated for commenting on players in violation of a code of conduct.

Muralitharan is meanwhile nursing an injury he sustained during the Mini World Cup in Bangladesh.

The Sunday Times newspaper said vice-captain De Silva may face attacks from the Australian press because of his 'personal problem'. The paper was referring to an illegitimate child he fathered in Australia.

SQUAD Arjuna Ranatunga (capt), Aravinda de Silva (vice capt), Sanath Jayasuriya, Marvan Atapattu, Roshan Mahanama, Hashan Tillekeratne, Romesh Kaluwitharana, Chaminda Vaas, Mutiah Muralitharan, Upu Chandana, Pramodaya Wickramasinghe, Suresh Perera, Nuwan Zoysa, Aviska Gunawardena and Tilan Samarawera.

Bordeaux, Marseille win

PARIS, Dec 13: Positions at the top of the French league championship remained the same as Gorondins Bordeaux and Olympique Marseille, separated only by goal difference, both won by identical 3-0 scores on Saturday, reports Reuters.

France striker Lillan Laslandes scored twice, taking his league tally to eight, as pacesetters Bordeaux stroled to victory over Le Havre despite the absence of first choice centre backs Nisa Saveljic, suspended, and Herve Aicarte, injured.

Playmaker Ali Benarbia found the net in between when he deftly turned a cross from the left from midfielder Johan Micoud past Le Havre goalkeeper Stephane Mesard.

Marseille beat Metz down ten men from the 42nd minute when striker Bruno Rodriguez was sent off for dissent, having already been booked earlier for a similar offence.

Guinean striker Titi Famara scored a fine goal close to the half hour to put Marseille ahead at the Velodrom, taking the ball wide out on the left wing and beating three defenders in a winding run before shooting low into the far bottom corner.

Olympique Lyon climbed to fourth despite a 0-0 at Toulouse as Monaco's match at Sochaux was postponed because of the poor state of the pitch.

Nantes are sixth following their 2-2 draw at Strasbourg on Friday, while Bastia climbed to seventh with a 2-0 victory over a poor Paris Saint Germain, who are eighth.

Defending champions RC Lens, now ninth, followed their midweek failure to qualify for the Champions' League quarter finals by being held 1-1 at lowly Lorient.

Lens goalkeeper Guillaume Warmuz was booked for heated protesting against Lorient's equaliser, a Patrice Loko shot he claimed he stopped on the line.

No more Cup Winners' Cup

UEFA designs new look club competitions



LAUSANNE, Dec 13: European soccer chiefs ended months of uncertainty over the future of continental club football on Thursday, reports Reuters.

They formally announced the introduction of an expanded European Champions' League and UEFA Cup from next season.

Their decision not only killed off any lingering doubts about the formation of a rival super league, but also won personal support from IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch, who praised UEFA for "holding together soccer's solidarity."

Although the announcement of an expanded 32-team Champions' League and a 121-team UEFA Cup at the end of the first day of a two-day executive committee meeting was fully expected, it still represents a major landmark in the history of European soccer.

From next season eight extra teams will compete in the Champions' League proper, and 25 more in the UEFA Cup.

But the European Cup Winners' Cup, launched in the 1960-61 season and of increasingly poor quality over the last few seasons, is discontinued.

Samaranch, who visited the committee during their session on Thursday, told them, "I am delighted that you have held soccer's solidarity together. You have taken a very important, crucial decision and I believe it is the right one."

Their decision also heralds the start of a new era of virtually year-round European club soccer.

Next season's programme starts with the first round of the Intertoto Cup, the qualifying competition for the UEFA Cup, on June 1999 and ends with the Champions' League final on May 24, 2000 — just 17 days before the European Football Championship begins in Belgium and the Netherlands.

In all 526 matches will be played in the two competitions — nearly 600 if the Intertoto matches are included.

Gerhard Aigner, UEFA's general secretary said, "I am delighted we have reached this stage in our negotiations and that at last there is light at the end of the tunnel."

"But we still have many details to negotiate regarding new statutes and rankings. But at least now there are no major problems to overcome."

That point however, overlooks the re-distribution of the hundreds of millions of dollars of revenue generated by the Champions' League.

The money issue was one of the central tenets of a proposed breakaway European Super League planned by the Milan-based entrepreneurs Media Partners.

While UEFA has seen off that threat and ensured their solidarity with the clubs and national federations, the money issue has still not been resolved with the major clubs wanting a bigger share of the 275 million pounds revenue raised by the sale of TV rights and marketing.

Aigner agreed the clubs were solidly behind UEFA and that all talk of a breakaway was now over.

"It is a question of taking the money from one pot and putting it in another and making sure everyone is happy. It takes time to do that, but in the end I am sure everyone will be satisfied."

In all 72 teams will take part in the Champions' League — but 40 of them — mainly from the smaller European countries — will be eliminated during three qualifying rounds between July and August.

The remaining 32 are split into eight groups, of four with the top two in each group advancing to the second group phase consisting of 16 teams in four groups of four.

The top two in those groups then advance to the quarterfinals which are played as a two-legged knockout, the same as in the semifinals.

The final, as always, consists of one match, which means that the two finalists will each have played 17 matches to reach that stage — and as many as 23 in the unlikely event they have survived from the opening qualifying round.

The expanded UEFA Cup starts with 82 teams in the qualifying round next August. The 41 winners of those matches will be joined by the 16 teams eliminated from the final

qualifying phase of the Champions' League, plus the defending champions, domestic cup winners from the top 17-ranked nations, other highly-ranked qualifiers from the major countries and three teams from the Intertoto Cup.

That makes a total of 96 teams who will comprise the first round proper.

They will be whittled down to 24 teams by the third round stage when they will be joined by the eight third-placed teams from the Champions' League.

The competition then proceeds on a knockout basis until the final, set for May 17, 1999.



Japan's Kenji Takao (R) glances behind to see Ahmed Hashim of Qatar close on his heels during the 10,000 metres final of the Asiad yesterday. — AP/UNB photo

'Say No to Drugs'

BANGKOK, Dec 13 (AP): For China's swimming coach, persistent questions about his team's drug-tainted medals are unfair and akin to calling an English cow mad.

"Only a small number used drugs. Don't lump us all together," Zhang Ziong said in an interview. "Think about the logic of it: England has mad cow disease, so therefore all English cows are mad. Is that fair?"

After years of drug scandals and accusations, Chinese coaches and officials say enough is enough. China is cleaning up its act, they say, and it's time for the world to cut them some slack.

In a new step, Chinese sports authorities have issued a book, "Say No to Drugs," to all their athletes, including the nearly 600 Chinese competing at the Asian Games, a senior sports official said Sunday.

"Everybody was told to read it," said He Huixian, a spokeswoman for the Chinese delegation. Some athletes were even tested to see how much they know, she said.

The 204-page volume was published in September and includes essays about the dangers of drugs, lists banned drugs and anti-doping regulations, and is illustrated with cartoons. One shows a runner swigging drugs from a bottle during a 100-metre dash. By the time the runner reaches the tape, he has turned

into a skeleton. Another shows a Great Wall of China keeping drugs at bay. One also shows medal winners on a podium with people in the foreground saying, "They've all taken drugs."

He said the book was part of anti-doping measures that were stepped up after the last Asian Games in 1994, when 11 Chinese athletes, including seven swimmers, tested positive for steroids and were stripped of their medals.

One of the disgraced swimmers, Xiong Guoming, was back in medal-winning form at these games, having served out a two-year ban. Sporting an earring and the air of someone enjoying a new lease on life, Xiong said he grew flowers, visited the ballet and listened to music during his ban while his teammates continued to compete.

"Those two years really were very boring," the 25-year-old said Saturday after winning gold in the 200-metre medley. Now, "through a urine test, I can show I'm clean," he said.

He, the spokeswoman, said the Hiroshima scandal made sports officials realise they needed to do more to educate athletes about doping. The financial rewards for winning, which can include cash and houses, had prompted some Chinese athletes "to take risks" with drugs, she said.

"We were very surprised. It made us realise that we didn't know enough about what was going on at the grass roots," she said of the 1994 scandal. "Since Hiroshima, we've been getting tougher every year."

This year, in the strictest measure adopted by any country, China announced that swimmers caught using steroids would be banned for life. The punishment came after another uproar over four Chinese swimmers who failed doping tests at the World Championships in Australia in January. A Chinese swimmer and coach also were caught with vials of banned human growth hormone in their luggage.

To avoid any more scandals, China carried out more than 500 drug tests in the month before these games. Still, Chinese sports officials say they are not getting enough credit for their stepped-up efforts.

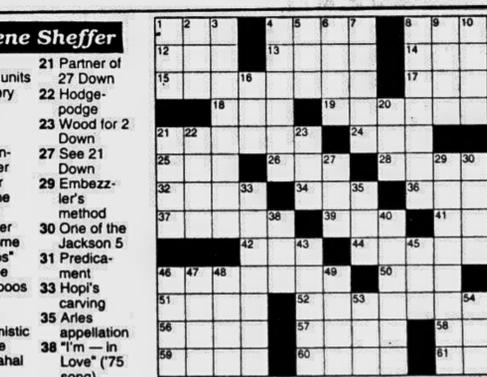
Unlike at Hiroshima, when Chinese swimmers white-washed Japan, this time China came out second best to its Asian swimming rival, winning 13 golds to 15 for Japan.

But Zhang angrily rejected the notion that its performance showed China can't beat Japan without drugs.

"It's not fair: If we get a result, it's drugs. No result, no drugs," he said. "Give the Chinese a way out."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP G T R W K Q R X U D Q Q B V T R D Z T R R P R C Q G B Z R E T K Q U D G V T K C B X E R X G B Q D P R G K W R Yesterday's Cryptogram: MAYBE MOST WORLDWEARY CARPENTERS WILL COMPLAIN THAT THEY'RE BOARD. Today's Cryptogram clue: P equals V 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.