

'Leave the Ashes alone'

SYDNEY, Jan 6 (Reuters/Internet): Rival captains Mark Taylor and Alec Stewart have both made passionate pleas for the Ashes to remain as they are after the success of the most recent series which ended in Sydney on Tuesday.

A number of other nations have called on the International Cricket Council to cut the traditional five and six Test series to a maximum of three matches so they can introduce a new four-year roster where each of the nine Test-playing countries faces each other home and away.

That would open up the possibility of a world Test championship played between the two teams with the best records over each four-year cycle.

But the two current Ashes captains believe the current format is just fine the way it is and should not be tampered with.

Stewart said: "You only have to see the two teams and the support here to know that the Ashes series should remain five-Test series at least."

Taylor said he was opposed to the introduction of a world championship because it would detract from the traditional Test clashes.

"I've never been a great believer in a world test championship," Taylor said.

"I've always believed in playing test cricket the way it should be played."

Crowds around the world have been steadily declining at test matches since the advent of limited-overs matches played at night under floodlights.

But Taylor said the success of the 1998-99 Ashes series, which Australia won 3-1, proved that Test cricket was alive and well.

He pointed to the fifth Test in Sydney where more than 142,000 fans attended the four days play, with thousands more turned away on the first two days when the ground was sold out.

"You only have to look at the number of people that turned up to realise that there's nothing much wrong with Test cricket the way it is," Taylor said.

The English premier league club are also interested in Dutch striker Erik Meijer but denied he is set to move to Anfield this week.

Bayer Leverkusen forward Meijer is out of contract at the end of the season and the Bundesliga club could be willing to sell him now rather than lose out on a fee.

"Meijer is a player we have got an interest in but he will not be signing in the immediate future."

"We have signed Kippe this morning after he came through his medical. He has returned home to sort out his personal affairs and will return to the club next week."

Liverpool snap up Kippe

LIVERPOOL, England, Jan 6 (Reuters/Internet): Liverpool completed a 1.16 million US dollar signing of Norwegian under-21 international defender Frode Kippe on Wednesday.

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The FC Utrecht player is hoping to follow the lead of Cameroon defender Rigobert Song, who impressed while training with Liverpool and will sign as soon as he receives a work permit.

Four Germans charged with WC violence

BONN, Jan 6 (Reuters/Internet): Four Germans will stand trial for attempted murder and grievous bodily harm following the savage beating of French gendarme Daniel Nivel during the World Cup in France last June.

The four, aged between 23 and 30, are likely to stand trial towards the end of April, prosecutors in the western city of Essen said on Wednesday. Their full names were not released.

One of the accused is alleged to have beaten Nivel with a section of advertising hoarding as hooligans ran riot in the northern French town of Lens after Germany's game against Yugoslavia.

A second allegedly beat the policeman repeatedly with his own teargas launcher.

Nivel lay in a coma for several months after the attack and is only now making a partial recovery.

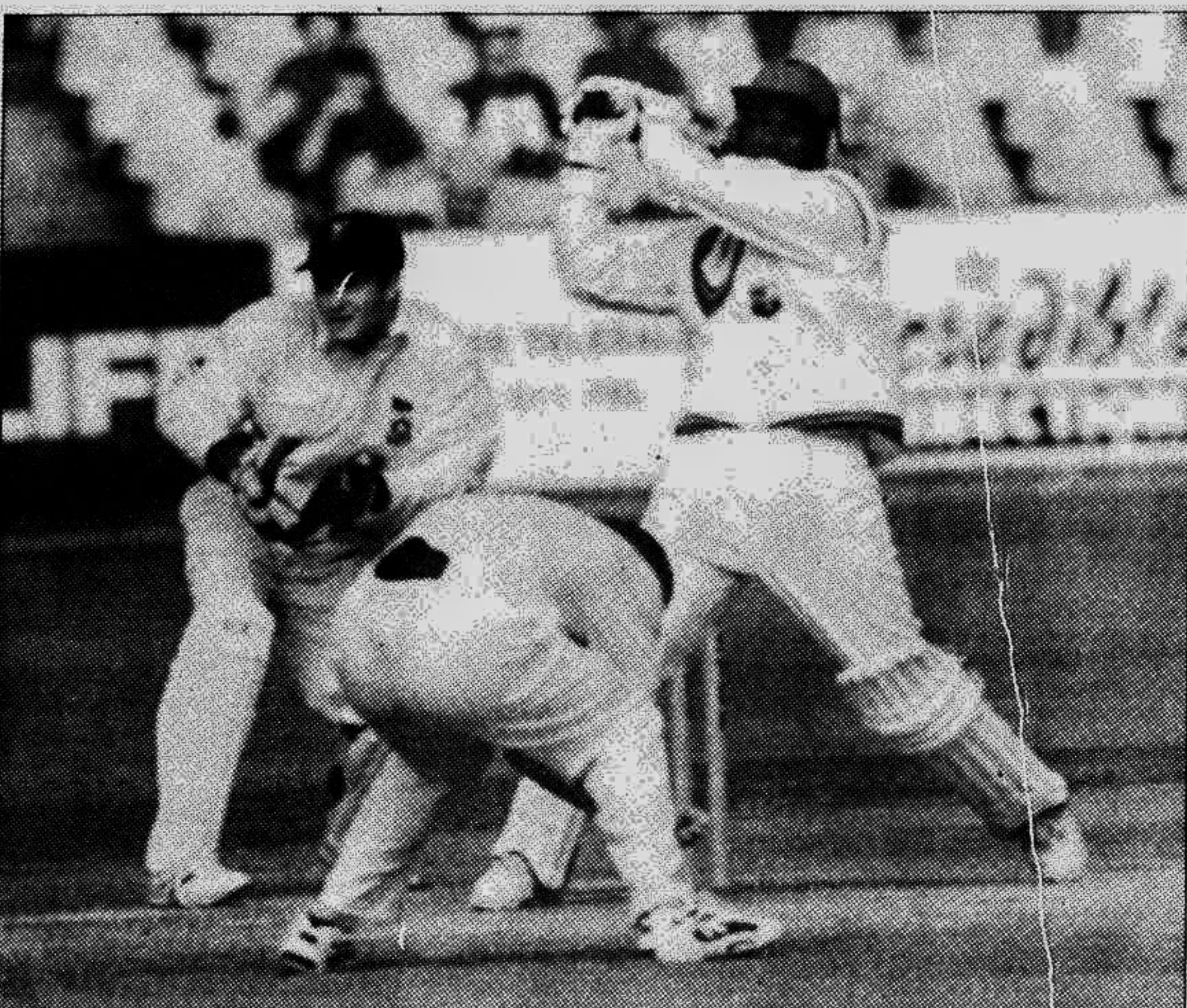
Prosecutors said they would call 30 witnesses from France, Germany and Britain.

Gascoigne may play against Villa

MIDDLESBROUGH, England, Jan 6: Middlesbrough are confident that midfield star Paul Gascoigne will be fit for the home match against English Premiership leaders Aston Villa on Saturday, reports AFP.

Gascoigne has recovered from a virus that has affected other players at the club and manager Bryan Robson said: "Gazza also has a slight knee problem but I expect him to be ready for a tough challenge against Villa."

Middlesbrough hope to bounce back after suffering two league defeats over Christmas as well as being knocked out of the FA Cup by Manchester United.



Brian Lara pulls over mid-wicket against South Africa's Paul Adams on day four of the fourth Test at Cape Town on January 5. — AP/UNB photo

Proteas make it 4-0

CAPE TOWN, Jan 6 (Reuters/Internet): South Africa won the fourth Test against West Indies by 149 runs on Wednesday, leaving the touring side facing the possibility of their first 5-0 defeat in a Test series.

But the victory came only after South Africa struggled to contain a spirited batting display by the tourists' tail-enders.

With the visitors resuming at 93 for six on the final day and chasing 421 to win, it seemed it would be only a matter of overs before South Africa completed another crushing victory.

But West Indies amassed a creditable 271 after an obdurate and often belligerent rearguard action masterminded by wicket-keeper Ridley Jacobs, who scored 63 not out.

All the lower order scored runs and the flow of punishing drives and bludgeoning hooks put the West Indies' upper order to shame and kept the South Africans at bay for more than 51 overs.

Mervyn Dillon, with 36, hit the second highest score by a West Indies number 11 in a 34-run partnership with Jacobs before he was last man out.

The last four wickets added 184 runs with Nixon McLean (39) and Dillon recording their Test best scores.

The fifth Test is at Centurion

Park from January 15. The West Indies' worst result in a series of more than three Tests was a 5-1 defeat in Australia in 1975-76.

The West Indies lost the first three Tests by margins of four

WEST INDIES: First innings 212 (C. Hooper 86; A. Donald 3-20)	WEST INDIES: Second innings Wallace c Gibbs b Pollock 0; Murray lbw b Kallis 7; Chandrapaul c Cullinan b Kallis 5; Lara c and b Adams 33; Hooper b Kallis 20; Ganga lbw b Pollock 16; Jacobs not out 69; Gibson run out (Rhodes) 13; McLean c Adams b Kallis 39; Ambrose c Kirsten b Adams 19; Dillon c Cronje b Kallis 36; Extras (lb-2, nb-12) 14; Total: 271
SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings 226-7 declared (J. Kallis 88 not out, H. Cronje 54; N. McLean 3-53)	WEST INDIES: Bowler: O M R W Pollock 25 4 49 2 Kallis 27.4 4 90 5 Cronje 1 1 0 0 Terbrugge 11 4 40 0 Adams 23 5 80 2 Cullinan 4 1 10 0
Result: South Africa won by 149 runs.	Man-of-the-match: Jacques Kallis.
Series score: South Africa lead 4-0.	Fifth Test: Centurion, January 15-19.

SCOREBOARD
Final scoreboard on the fifth day of the fourth Test between South Africa and West Indies at Newlands on Wednesday.

SOUTH AFRICA: First in-

wholesale prices from July 1993 to May 1995, one month before Salt Lake City was selected as host to the 2002 Games.

Browning has been searching its records since receiving inquiries about firearms sold to the bid committee. So far, its search has come upon four shotguns and five rifles.

Other guns that went to Samaranch were a Browning "Gold" semiautomatic shotgun with an estimated retail value of 475 dollars and a "Euro Bolt" bolt-action rifle with an estimated retail value of 500 dollars.

Juan presented with guns?

SALT LAKE CITY, Jan 6: The guns given by Salt Lake City to International Olympic Committee president Juan Antonio Samaranch have been valued at more than 2,000 dollars, reports AP.

So far, two rifles and a shotgun, all made by Browning Arms of Mountain Green, Utah, have been identified as going to Samaranch, and there also may have been a handgun.

IOC officials say such gift-giving to the leader of the IOC is commonplace, and Samaranch said he didn't want to insult the city by refusing the gifts.

The Tribune de Geneve on Wednesday quoted Samaranch as saying, "I went to the American city twice before it was granted the 2002 Winter Games. On these occasions, I did indeed receive a .22 Long Rifle and a Browning. I didn't want to refuse the gifts, for in cities like this, there is a certain tradition to arms. Refusing them would have been a real insult."

"But I do remember very clearly the inscription on the case: 'To President Juan Antonio Samaranch on behalf of the population of Salt Lake City.' These gifts were put down in a register, as is required by our internal rules. They are in my office in Lausanne and I am in a position to show them to any of my visitors," he said.

IOC rules impose a 150 dollar limit on gifts to committee members, but an official of the organisation implied that limit doesn't apply to Samaranch, who does not vote on which cities will host the Olympics.

"The exchange of gifts on the occasion of visits by the IOC president is customary and it has almost become a matter of protocol to do so," said Francois Carrard, the IOC's director general.

His acknowledgment of the practice was in response to a report Tuesday in The Salt Lake Tribune that Samaranch received two guns worth 1,000 dollars from the Salt Lake bid committee a month before Salt Lake won the right to host the 2002 Winter Games.

The Tribune said in another copyright story Wednesday that another Browning rifle also went to Samaranch.

That rifle, apparently was sent to the Salt Lake City bid committee in Lillehammer, Norway, during the 1994 Winter Olympics and was delivered by Browning's distributor in Norway.

Browning billed the bid committee 1,250.75 dollars for the rifle.

Last month, Browning disclosed the bid committee bought nearly 10,000 dollars worth of rifles, firearms and cases at

RETURNING THE FAVOUR? An AFP file photo of International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Juan Antonio Samaranch handing over the Olympic Flag to Mayor Dee-dee Corradini of Salt Lake City which will host the 2002 Winter Olympics. Samaranch revealed yesterday that he received two firearms as gifts from the Salt Lake City's bidding committee.

Thackeray's threat

BOMBAY, Jan 6: A Hindu radical group has threatened to disrupt Pakistan's first cricket tour of India in 13 years, even though the federal government has okayed the matches, reports AP.

"I maintain that Pakistan should not be allowed to play anywhere in India," said Bai Thackeray, the fiery leader of the Shiv Sena party and an ardent hater of India's neighbour.

The Shiv Sena shares power with the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party in Maharashtra state, of which Bombay is the capital. The BJP leads a national governing coalition that does not include Shiv Sena, which has relatively little influence outside Bombay.

Cricket is the most popular sport in the neighbouring countries. India and Pakistan rarely play each other in either country for fear the combination of their long-standing political rivalry — which has erupted into three wars in the past five decades — and the fierce loyalty of their cricket fans could result in violence.

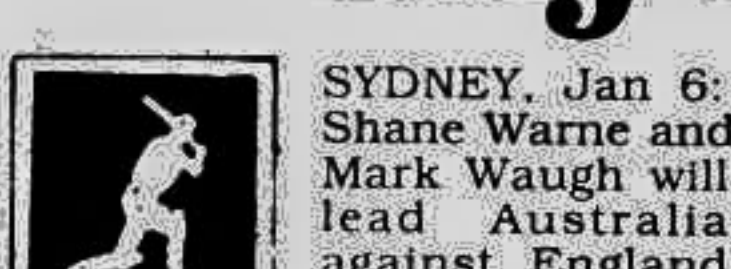
As part of attempts to improve relations, India's Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said last month the Pakistan cricket team was welcome and would be protected during a tour that begins at the end of this month. Bombay is not among the venues for the test and one-day matches.

"We are not against cricket, but against the Pakistanis. We have our workers in the north and south of India. Wherever the Pakistanis play we will oppose them," Vinayak Raut, another Shiv Sena leader, told The Associated Press Wednesday.

Shiv Sena activists in Bombay once dug up the cricket pitch before a test match with Pakistan. Last year, its workers disrupted a Pakistani singer's concert.

Thackeray had tried to stop the upcoming tour, and called again for a ban Tuesday night in an interview with a private television station. Thackeray says he will oppose cultural and sports exchanges between India and Pakistan as long as Pakistan supports Muslim separatists in the Himalayan state of Kashmir, a region over which both nations have fought two wars. Pakistan says it only gives moral support to the guerrillas and does not train or arm them.

Shane steps in for injured Steve



SYDNEY, Jan 6: Shane Warne and Mark Waugh will lead Australia against England on Sunday, less than a month after being exposed in a bookmaker scandal, reports AP.

While officials in Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka are reported to be pushing for life bans against the pair, the Australian Cricket Board showed total support for them Wednesday.

Steve Waugh was named captain for the first five matches of the limited-over tri-nations series against England and Sri Lanka but will miss at least the first two games because of injury.

Warne, who captains Victoria state, will lead in his absence, while Mark Waugh will be vice-captain.

The two players admitted selling information on weather conditions to an illegal Indian bookmaker while on a tour of Sri Lanka in 1994. They were fined by the ACB in 1995 but the Board kept the matter secret until it was exposed last month.

The news caused major embarrassment for the pair and it was thought that could affect their chances of ever leading the country.

But Test captain Mark Taylor, not part of the limited-over team, backed Warne's cap-

taincy aspirations after the final Test of the Ashes series finished in Sydney on Tuesday.

"There has been a lot of talk that he should not captain because of the bribery issue," said Taylor. "But I think he just made a mistake and everybody is entitled to make a mistake."

Australia's selectors made



SHANE WARNE the decisions on Warne and Mark Waugh when naming a 14-man squad for the first five games. But the move had to be ratified by the ACB, which has stated it does not believe the two tainted players should receive any further punishment.

The pair will be back in the spotlight for their bookie deal-

ings Friday when they go in front of a Pakistan inquiry into bribery and match-fixing. The public hearing will be held in Melbourne.

Warne and Waugh accused Pakistan player Salim Malik of trying to bribe them on the 1994 tour of that country.

Warne said suggestions that the Indian bookmaker involvement was a precursor to Malik's alleged bribe were not true.

"The most disappointing thing over the last couple of weeks is people have linked the two things together, the match fixing and Mark and I taking 5,000 dollars from a bookmaker," Warne said.

"Maybe the bookmaker was linked to what happened in Pakistan but I think the two issues are separate."

"There are a lot of things to that I think the public needs to know about how it happened and they might be a little more sympathetic once they know."

Australia will play England in Brisbane on Sunday and Sri Lanka in Sydney on Wednesday.

AUSTRALIAN SQUAD: Steve Waugh (captain), Shane Warne (vice-captain), Michael Bevan, Greg Blewett, Adam Dale, Damien Fleming, Adam Gilchrist, Brendon Julian, Darren Lehmann, Glenn McGrath, Damien Martyn, Ricky Ponting, Mark Waugh, Brad Young.

Adidas wins Japan deal

TOKYO, Jan 6 (Reuters/Internet): German sportswear giant Adidas has won a five-company race to sponsor the Japanese Football Association beyond the 2002 World Cup, which Japan will co-host with South Korea.

A five-year deal, starting April 1, was announced in Tokyo on Wednesday, but no financial details were revealed.

The Japanese FA has rotated between three suppliers on an annual basis, but chose a long-term commitment with Adidas because of the company's expertise in World Cup matters, said JFA president Shun-ichiro Okano.

Franchman Christophe Bezu, president of Adidas Japan, said the deal would cover all national representative teams and also support grassroots development.

"We have equipped a lot of the world's best federations, including Germany, Yugoslavia, Spain and France, and are now making a clear and substantial commitment to the Japanese Football Association," he said.

"We will work closely with the JFA but we do not impose anything," he added.

Bezu said that fans could expect two further designs within the five-year contract, the second one for the 2000 Asian Cup in Lebanon and the third for the 2002 World Cup.

Marseille meet Auxerre in French Cup

PARIS, Jan 6 (Reuters/Internet): League leaders Olympique Marseille will play 1996 Cup winners AJ Auxerre in the first round of the French Cup for the second successive season.

Marseille will play the match at home on the weekend of January 23/24. The two sides have met once this season in a 1-1 draw in the league at Auxerre a month ago.

Three times winners Girondins Bordeaux, three points behind Marseille, in second place in the league, are away to Metz in the only other all-first division match.

Cup holders Paris St Germain visit third division Thouars.

South American U20 Argentina, Chile win

MAR DEL PLATA, Jan 6: Three goals in six minutes of the second half helped defending champions Argentina defeat Venezuela 4-1 Tuesday in the South American U20 soccer championship, reports AP.

Aldo Duscher, Ernesto Farias and Luciano Galetti between the 64th and 70th minutes and Pablo Aimar in the 40th scored for Argentina, overturning an early deficit from a header by Juan Arango in the 39th.

Earlier Tuesday, first-half goal by Rodrigo Moya gave Chile a 2-0 victory over Ecuador in the opening match of the championship.

The tournament's top four of ten teams qualify for the World Youth Championship scheduled for April in Nigeria.

Blatter sure of its success

ZURICH, Jan 6 (Reuters/Internet): FIFA President Sepp Blatter, who has triggered uproar in the soccer world with talk of making the World Cup a biennial event, told a Swiss newspaper that he was confident of getting his controversial plan implemented.

"Certainly I will get my plan through," Blatter said in an interview published in the Wednesday edition of the Swiss mass circulation newspaper Blick.

Blatter also said he would seek backing for the plan at the FIFA Congress next year.

"Something as radical as this must be blessed at the broadest level, that means from the FIFA Congress in the year 2000," Blatter said.

Blatter's plan was first made public in an interview published on Sunday in which he called for scrapping the current four-year World Cup format and holding the world's biggest soccer competition every two years, starting in 2008.

Blatter said he favoured holding regional or continental championships during every uneven year and the World Championship every second year.

He was quoted in the Swiss daily Le Matin on Monday as

saying that he would also like to see a special World Cup, with perhaps only 24 teams instead of 32, staged in 2004 when FIFA celebrates its 100th anniversary.

Some saw Blatter's bold move as a step toward re-opening the old battle between European and world bodies over the sporting calendar, money and power on the global field.

The European soccer body UEFA, which just recently won the fight for the control of the club game in Europe, has its 50th anniversary in 2004. UEFA president Lennart Johansson has said that the idea of a World Cup in the same year was unacceptable.

Also, if Blatter's plan comes to fruition it would in effect force the European championships to become a biennial tournament and reduce it to a virtual World Cup qualifying event.

Other observers saw the Blatter statements as warning shots ahead of his meeting in Zurich later on Wednesday with International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Juan Antonio Samaranch.

A FIFA spokesman said on Tuesday that the structure of the Olympic soccer tournament and anti-doping

measures were among the items on the agenda.

But the IOC also wants an open Olympic soccer tournament rather than one limited to national under-21 teams.

Blatter said in another interview published on Tuesday that he wanted soccer to stay in the Olympics, but with different teams than those in the national or world championships.

The IOC has also been proposing common anti-doping rules for all Olympic sports. FIFA agrees with the anti-doping initiatives in principle, but has reservations about the implementation of sanctions which could be interpreted as restraint of trade.

Ferguson out for six weeks

LONDON, Jan 6 (Reuters/Internet): Scottish striker Duncan Ferguson, who joined English premier league Newcastle United from Everton in November, is expected to be out of action for six weeks after undergoing groin surgery on Tuesday.

Newcastle's telephone service for fans said the player had had the operation in London.



Pablo Aimar (C) of Argentina being pulled down by a Venezuelan defender during their South American under 20 tournament match at Mar del Plata, Argentina on January 5. Argentina won 4-1. — AP/UNB photo

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Protudes
5 Pulverize
9 That girl
12 "Mommy kissing..."
13 Ranges
14 Shooting marble
15 Hollywood VIP
17 "All the Things You..."
18 Doggie docs
19 Campus facilities
21 Scene of confusion
24 Peaches' singing partner
25 Sixth of a drama
26 Large antelopes
30 As so-and-so would
31 Zagreb citizen
32 Pub order
33 Now-or-never time
35 Staff
36 Comical Carey
37 Fashions

and --

2 Gis' enter-tainers
3 Last Hebrew letter
4 Turn support
5 Sail support
6 Some are fine
7 Vast expanse
8 Least comfortable
9 Flight, at sea
10 Injury
11 Lambs'

Solution time: 24 mins.

DOWN

16 Conger or lamprey
20 Sphere
21 Ruth's husband
22 Competer
23 Meeting place
24 Leam of
26 Forehead
27 Bud's partner
28 "Fish Magic" painter
29 Wields a needle
31 "Ta-tal"
34 Assoc.
35 Shade of blue

Yesterday's answer

LARA EDD STOP
UNDER TOW PALE
VIOLENCE RUDE
GLASS IDA LOITLER
OUCH QUETZAL
OAT PURRS VAV
USELESS NONE
NOSE LEND
DIWITT MON
GLITTER
LIAM ONEV ONE
LARA NOW VOTE

CRYPTOQUIP

L K F M Q I G P J U G L F M L
C Z R W G U P U J L Z M R U Q
C R M L M Z K U S Z R A J
M U U L K U W Z L L S I G I A
Yesterday's Cryptquip: FOR DINNER, I THINK
A NUMBER OF MATHEMATICIANS ORDER CUBED STEAK.

Today's Cryptquip clue: G equals N
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.