

Indian hockey in trouble

NEW DELHI, Jan 13: Indian hockey was thrown in turmoil Tuesday when the coach, captain and five senior players of the triumphant Asian Games squad were axed for a Pakistan tour next month, reports AFP.

Skipper Dhanraj Pillay, coach Maharaj Kaushik and goalkeeper Ashish Ballal, key members of the squad which won India their first Asian gold in 32 years in Bangkok last month, were among those left out of next month's nine-match series.

The other top players ignored in a 22-man preliminary squad were veteran winger Mukesh Kumar, goalkeeper AB Subbiah and midfielders Sandeep Somesh and Sabu Varkey.

Indian Hockey Federation (IHF) president Kunwar Pratap Singh insisted the top players had been rested. The players believe they have been victimised for speaking out against the administration.

Ballal, whose spectacular saves in the penalty shoot-out of the Asian Games final against South Korea won India the gold, was furious.

"These guys are dictators," the 28-year-old Indian Airlines officer said. "I don't need any rest, it's the IHF top brass which needs to be rested."

Pillay, leading scorer in the Asian Games with 11 goals, wondered if his career was over. "I wanted to play in the Sydney Olympics, but I am not sure what will happen now," he said.

Kaushik, whose five-month tenure as coach was summarily ended despite the Asian victory, was replaced by his predecessor Vasudevan Bhaskaran — the man who wanted Pillay and other seniors out after the World Cup debacle in May.

Gill said the return of Bhaskaran and the omission of the top players was "coincidental." But few believed him.

Noted Indian hockey critics S Thyagarajan said the decisions were dictated by factors unrelated to form, skill or even to an analytical reasoning.

"The act is ungrateful to the set which has put Indian hockey back on the rails," he said.

Pillay and Ballal had termed the IHF officials as "worse than garbage" after the Asian Games victory, saying they did not have the interests of the players or the game at heart.

The Asian gold was India's first major triumph since winning the last of their eight Olympic titles in the Western-boycotted Moscow Games in 1980.

The Indo-Pakistan series begins on February 3 with four matches in India and five immediately after in Pakistan.



Brigadier Saeed Rafi (C), special envoy of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), talking with Delhi Cricket Board (DCB) president Ram Babu Gupta (L) during a visit to the Ferozeshah Kotla ground in Delhi yesterday.

India confirms the swap

NEW DELHI, Jan 13 (Reuters/Internet): Indian cricket authorities said on Wednesday they had decided to switch the venues of the first two Test matches during Pakistan's upcoming tour, hit by threats of disruption by Hindu rightwing activists.

They decided late on Tuesday that, as earlier media reports had said on Monday, the venues of the Delhi and Madras Tests of the two-Test series would be swapped.

The first Test will now take place in Madras from January 28 and the second in Delhi from February 4. J.Y. Lele, honorary secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), said.

He said there were no changes in the rest of the tour schedule or in the dates of the two Tests.

Cricketers officials said the change of venues was done to ensure adequate security in Delhi, as the original dates for the first Test clashed with a busy period in the Indian capital.

India observes its Republic Day on January 26 and the anniversary of the assassination of independence leader Mahatma Gandhi on January 30.

The opening Test will be the first for Pakistan on Indian soil in more than a decade.

They have played one-day matches in tournaments during the long interval, but no Test.

BUET cricket, hockey camps

In preparation for National and Inter-varsity cricket, BUET will start its camp from January 25. Interested students have been asked to report with kits on that day at 3 pm, says a press release.

Also, to participate in the Inter-university hockey championship in the second week of February, the hockey camp will commence from January 25. Players should report in proper kits on that day at 3 pm.

Big guns stall Spanish bourse

MADRID, Jan 13 (Reuters/Internet): Star names from Yugoslavia, the Netherlands, South America and even Spain have been touted as targets for Real Madrid and Barcelona ahead of Friday's Spanish soccer deadline for new signings.

But in typical fashion not a single deal had been confirmed by Wednesday and both clubs were likely to wait until the eleventh hour before getting round to completing the paperwork.

Barcelona's on-off bid to bring in Dutch international Frank de Boer from Ajax Amsterdam has been the longest-running of the recent sagas.

After missing out on both de Boer brothers over the summer — when a \$15 million deal for Frank and Ronald was reported as being signed, sealed and delivered — Barcelona have moved the goalposts and seem set to have settled for Frank, who should arrive, brotherless, for \$11 million in the next couple of days.

Unfortunately, the signing could yet falter over that remaining 10 percent and, as one Ajax official admitted, "Nothing has yet been signed."

Barcelona have a habit of leaving things late. At the start of the current season the Catalan club waited until moments before the deadline to register Patrick Kluivert with the league.

Club officials said the deal had been in negotiation for weeks before ironing out the last few wrinkles in the contract made for an anxious pre-deadline day.

Meanwhile at Real Madrid, Crvena Zvezda (Red Star) Belgrade midfielder Perica Ognjenovic finally seems set to complete a move that had been in danger of falling through because of a break in a "chain of foreigners" at the club.

Real, who were strongly linked earlier in the season with a move for Liverpool's Steve McManaman, settled instead on Ognjenovic only to realise that they had no more room in their squad for a non-European Union player.

Curiously, the club appeared ready to sell Croatian international Davor Suker — capable of winning the golden boot in France 98 but not a place in the Real first team — before a proposed move to Panathinaikos fell through.

Coach Guus Hiddink then tried to persuade Cameroon youngster Samuel Eto'o to go on loan to second division Malaga.

Eto'o refused to leave — despite the fact he had never once made the starting line-up under Hiddink — but now appears to have been persuaded into joining first division Espanyol until the end of the season.

That, in theory, leaves the way clear for Ognjenovic to sign, with an announcement from Real expected on Wednesday or Thursday.

Atletico Madrid have been relatively quiet on the transfer front, which may have something to do with the fact that their president is currently being held by police on fraud charges.

Argentine midfielder Santiago Solari who is a cousin of Real Madrid star Fernando Redondo.

Kaiser fancies SA's chances

England's qualifications to stage the World Cup.

"In my opinion, England and Germany has an equal chance," he said. "We like them, can offer everything. I can't say which is the best because ultimately it's not up to me. It's for the FIFA executive committee to decide."

The fourth major candidate, Brazil, received a strong knockback from one of its leading officials.



NO HARD FEELINGS: Germany's 2006 World Cup bidding committee chief Franz Beckenbauer (L) exchanging pleasantries with his counterpart in the England 2006 bidding committee Sir Bobby Charlton in Cannes on January 12.

NZ-Ind 3rd ODI today

WELLINGTON, Jan 13: New Zealand cricket coach Steve Rixon says he'll continue to promote positive running between the wickets despite a bewildering five runouts against India on Tuesday, reports AP.

New Zealand and India play the third match in the limited over series at the Basin Reserve on Thursday and the running will be the centre of attention for what is expected to a capacity crowd of 12,500.

Rixon said running had been the main point of discussion at Wednesday's training session but there was never a question of settling for a more conservative approach.

"The issue needed to be addressed because it was diabolical in Napier," Rixon said. "But so often our running has been so good, so one bad day is not anything to panic about."

New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming rejoined the side in Wellington on Wednesday after having an ultrasound scan on his troublesome groin in Christchurch on Tuesday.

The Tests revealed a slight tear and Fleming will not play Thursday but is a likely starter in Auckland on Saturday.

Dion Nash will captain the side again.

India are expected to retain the same playing XI and captain Mohammad Azharuddin believed the two-wicket win in Napier was the perfect springboard for his team to start performing.

TEAMS

NEW ZEALAND: Dion Nash (captain), Matthew Horne, Bryan Young, Craig McMillan, Roger Trescoe, Chris Cairns, Adam Parore, Chris Harris, Daniel Vettori, Gavin Larsen, Simon Doull, Chris Drum (one to be omitted).

INDIA: Mohammad Azharuddin (captain), Sachin Tendulkar, Saurav Ganguly, Rahul Dravid, Ajay Jadhav, Robin Singh, Nayan Mongia, Jagavallab Srinath, Anil Kumble, Nikhil Chopra, Venkatesh Prasad, Harishwar Kankar (two to be omitted).

UMPIRES: Dave Quesed, Evan Watkins.

THIRD UMPIRE: Steve Dunne.

Huge profit from France '98

PARIS, Jan 13: The World Cup made a provisional profit before tax of \$505 million (French francs 88.8 million dollars), French organising committee president (CFO) Michel Platini said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Revenue had been 2.9 billion French francs (\$10 billion dollars) which Platini described as "very satisfying."

He said the profits should go to the 10 host cities with some of the money used to build sports grounds in the suburbs.

But French federation chairman Claude Simonet argued the profits should be handed over to the federation and kept within football.

"All the benefits came from soccer matches and must be returned to soccer," he said. "The federation has appointed a committee to work out a plan to improve soccer situation."

Despite the controversy, Platini said the CFO had achieved their aim. "The stadiums were full for all the 64 games of the World Cup finals and that was what we have worked for," he said.

Savicevic set to quit Milan

BELGRADE, Jan 13 (Reuters/Internet): Yugoslav international Dejan Savicevic, who has largely been sidelined at AC Milan since injuring a knee nine months ago, is to rejoin his former club Crvena Zvezda Belgrade, according to Yugoslav media reports on Wednesday.

Savicevic, who has 52 caps and helped Zvezda win the European Champions' Cup in 1991, has been in poor shape and sat on the bench through most of Yugoslavia's World Cup final appearance in France last year.

But Zvezda director Dragan Džajić said that in spite of his poor form, Savicevic would provide inspired leadership to the team who are third in the title race, trailing city rivals Partizan by 12 points and reigning champions Obilic Belgrade by six.

Zvezda have also signed a two-and-a-half year contract with another former Italian Serie A player, Yugoslav international goalkeeper Aleksandar Kocić, who has left Perugia.

Kocić, who has also played in Spain since leaving Vojvodina Novi Sad, has 18 caps.

Yeovil bow out

LONDON, Jan 13: Minor League club Yeovil, one of the great giant-killers of the English FA Cup, went out of the competition on Tuesday after a dramatic 2-1 defeat by Cardiff City in a third-round replay, reports Reuters.

The Somerset side, who in their history have produced 18 victories over football league opponents, hit an 86th minute equaliser from Matt Hayfield to force the game into extra time after Jeff Eckhardt had given Cardiff the lead in the 43rd minute.

But a defensive error in the first minute of extra time let Kevin Nugent in for Cardiff's winner.

The two teams had drawn 1-1 in the first clash earlier this month at Cardiff.

In the fourth round, Cardiff travel to the winner of a third-round replay between First Division Sheffield United and Second Division Notts County which was postponed because of poor weather on Tuesday.

Last Test starts tomorrow

Ambrose, Walsh WT's worry

CENTURION, South Africa, Jan 13: The West Indies are hoping injured fast bowlers Courtney Walsh and Curtly Ambrose will be fit as they seek to avoid a 5-0 whitewash by South Africa in the fifth Test, which starts at Centurion Park on Friday, reports AFP.

Walsh, 36, and Ambrose, 35, are both struggling to recover from hamstring injuries but captain Brian Lara said Tuesday that intensive physiotherapy could result in the veteran new ball pair playing.

Walsh was Saturday named as one of five players who will return home before the start of a limited-over series against South Africa. But he seemed to be making good progress when he bowled in practice on Tuesday.

Ambrose, who will stay for the limited-over games, appears to have only a slim chance of being fit for Centurion.

The West Indies completed their programme of provincial matches when they drew a three-day match against Boland, one of the weakest provinces, in Paarl on Tuesday. Lara settled for batting practice instead of seeking the touring side's first win in a first-class match on tour.

"Lara, Carl Hooper and Philo Wallace made half-centuries but no batsman went on to make a big score in a pattern that has become depressingly familiar to the tourists."

Going into the final Test, after losing the first four, the West Indies still do not have a settled batting combination. Lara indicated that Darren Ganga, 20, would open the batting at Centurion.

He has looked one of the soundest of the West Indian batsmen and could be the best option to stop the succession of early breakthroughs by South African fast bowlers Allan Donald and Shaun Pollock.

While the West Indies struggle to put a solid line-up together, South African hopes have been boosted by expectations that Donald will play after being listed as a doubtful starter after suffering hamstring strain during the fourth Test at Newlands.

Although Lara said he hoped both Walsh and Ambrose would play, he said it was possible that replacement fast bowler Reon King would be drafted into the Test side. Lara said he was still not sure when King would arrive but said: "hopefully he will be available for selection."

Centurion Park usually provides a hard, true pitch which favours batsmen but also provides bounce for fast bowlers.

Recent rain in the Gauteng area makes it likely conditions will be bowler-friendly.

At the start of the tour, the West Indies would have been confident of winning in conditions which suited fast bowlers, but their struggling veterans Walsh and Ambrose have been outgunned by Donald and Pollock, while South Africa's batsmen have proved more reliable than the West Indians.

All South Africa's top order batsmen have shown good form, with opener Gary Kirsten making two half-centuries in a provincial match after being the only batting failure of the fourth Test.

SQUADS

SOUTH AFRICA: Hansie Cronje (capt), Gary Kirsten, Herschelle Gibbs, Jacques Kallis, Daryll Cullinan, Jonty Rhodes, Shaun Pollock, Mark Boucher, Allan Donald, David Terbrugge, Paul Adams, Lance Klusener.

WEST INDIES: Brian Lara (capt), Philo Wallace, Darren Ganga, Junior Murray, Shivanarine Chandernaul, Carl Hooper, Ridley Jacobs, Nixon McLean, Curtly Ambrose, Mervyn Dillon, Courtney Walsh, Rawn Lewis, Stuart Williams, Clayton Lambert, Reon King, Floyd Reifer.

Umpires: Rudi Koertzen (RSA), Srinivas Venkataraghavan (Ind).

Match referee: Ranjan Madugalle (Sri Lanka).

Lara limbers up well

PAARL, South Africa, Jan 13 (Reuters/Internet): Brian Lara lashed 46 off 32 balls on Tuesday to hint at a return to form heading into the fifth and final Test against South Africa.

The West Indies captain produced his cameo innings on the third and final day of the match against Boland, which ended in a draw.

Lara's assault increased his overnight score of seven to 53 before he pulled a short ball from left-arm seam bowler Charl Willoughby to Justin Ontong at square leg.

The Trinidadian left-hander's half-century and a sparkling 70 off 88 deliveries by Carl Hooper spurred West Indies' second innings from 94 for four overnight to 307 all out.

Boland, left an improbable victory target of 393 in 42 overs, ended the match on 123 for five.

Lara, who has had a modest Test series with the bat and made only one in the first innings against Boland, opted to let his side have batting practice when they resumed in the morning with an already commanding lead of 179.

Hooper took advantage by reaching a chanceless 50 from 78 balls before striking spinners Ontong and James Henderson for a brace of sixes over long off.

The start of Boland's second innings was rocked by paceman Nixon McLean, who grabbed a wicket in each of his first three overs to reduce the local side to 10 for three.

Lara subsequently decided to lower the tempo, withdrawing McLean and fellow pace bowler Mervyn Dillon from the attack and allowing his opposite number Kenny Jackson (35) to steady the innings.

Jackson fell to Lara's occasional leg-spin and Darren Ganga took his maiden first-class wicket when he trapped Doug Gain lbw with a quicker delivery.

West Indies travel north on Wednesday to prepare for the final Test at Centurion, near Pretoria, starting on Friday. They trail 4-0 in the series.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at the close of play on the third and final day of the match between Boland and West Indies at Boland Park on Tuesday.

WEST INDIES: First innings 220 (S Williams 55)

BOLAND: First innings 135 (R Lewis 45)

WEST INDIES: Second innings 307 (overnight 94-4)

S Williams lbw b Willoughby 0
D Ganga run out 14
P Wallace c Koch b Henderson 57
C Lambert c Ferriera b Willoughby 1
F Reifer b Henderson 27
B Lara c Ontong b Willoughby 53
C Hooper st Palframan b Ontong 70
J Murry b Koch 37
R Lewis c Ontong b Willoughby 26
N McLean lbw b Willoughby 12
M Dillon not out 8
Extras (lb-2) 2
Total: 307

Fall of wkts 1-0: 2-27; 3-28; 4-81; 5-132; 6-156; 7-254; 8-277; 9-295.

Bowler O M R W
Willoughby 20 5 60 5

Result: Match drawn.

Agassi shocks Korda

MELBOURNE, Jan 13: Petr Korda discovered how difficult it may be to defend his Australian Open title when he was thumped 6-2, 6-1 by Andre Agassi in the first round of the Colonial Classic on Wednesday, reports AP.

In other matches Wednesday, Thomas Enqvist beat Goran Ivanisevic 7-6 (7-4), 7-6 (7-6), defending champion Mark Philippoussis rallied to overcome Tim Henman 2-6, 6-4, 6-4, and Michael Chang outlasted Yevgeny Kafelnikov 6-7 (5-7), 6-3, 7-5.



FIFA boss Joseph Blatter (R) speaking at a media conference in Paris on January 12. Blatter declared that departing chairman of the France '98 Organising Committee (CFO) Michel Platini (L) would be FIFA's new head of development.

Trapattoni plans return to the Bundesliga

BONN, Jan 13 (Reuters/Internet): Fiorentina coach Giovanni Trapattoni has said he would be prepared to work again in Germany despite his unhappy experience with Bayern Munich.

"If a club believes that Trapattoni can train a German team, I'll come back," the Italian said in an interview with German weekly Sport Bild released on Wednesday.

During his two spells at Bayern, Trapattoni struggled to communicate in German and had difficulty keeping his stars under control.

He left Bayern last summer for Fiorentina, who have spent most of the season top of the Italian league before being overtaken by Parma last weekend.

"Enough, I'm going back to Italy, to my world," he said at the time.

Trapattoni first coached Bayern in the 1994-1995 season. He led them again last season, hitting the headlines with a comical outburst in broken German last March.

Gesticulating wildly and yelling at a press conference, the Italian blasted his players, saying he was tired of defending them after poor performances.

Two months later, he was gone. Few imagined then that he would ever want to return to Germany.

Beckenbauer, president of Germany's campaign team, is in Cannes at the Football Expo world trade fair to promote his country's 2006 bid.

The Germans, English and South Africans have all taken prominent space at the conference in order to seek early support ahead of the crucial vote in 14 months' time.

Beckenbauer said the so-called "gentleman's agreement" brokered by UEFA, the European governing body, to support the German 2006 World Cup bid in exchange for England hosting Euro '96 was still valid.

"We did not count on the candidature of the English," said Germany's former World Cup captain and coach. "We supported England to get the European Championship in 1996 so we expected support from them for the World Cup, we were a little disappointed."

Beckenbauer was photographed alongside Sir Bobby Charlton, his rival ambassador in the English camp. The Bayern Munich president said he and Charlton, Wembley feds 33 years ago, remained good friends despite their respective tasks in bidding for the 2006 World Cup.

Despite the gentleman's agreement, which the English FA only grudgingly acknowledged in contrast with the rest of Europe, Beckenbauer, respected throughout the game, played up

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Nursery word
5 Mahal
8 Minut
12 Census data
13 Perfect serve
14 Tour de France carrier
15 Solar phenomena
17 "I cannot tell"
18 Man of La Mancha
19 Performed cosmetic surgery
21 LBL son-in-law
24 Firmament
25 Retained
28 Favorable votes
30 Finish first
33 Marmite's man
34 1995-96 Horse of the Year
35 Commotion
36 Lair
37 Reed and Rawls

DOWN

38 Greenish blue
39 "Lazy"
41 Fictitious story
43 Well-known suitor?
46 Bird of prey
50 Brylcreem quantities
51 Orbiter between Mars and Jupiter
54 Gosip
55 Cattle call?
56 Shallow
57 Dispatch
58 Broker's advice
59 Vortex
1 Overtake
2 Malarial symptom
3 Madonna's ex
4 Classy
5 "The Way"
6 Perform
7 Witticism
8 By surprise
9 Our galaxy
10 Tom Joad
11 Kernel
16 Paid player
20 Cold War faction
22 Star of 38 Down
23 Emphatic expletive
25 Josh
26 -out a living
27 Parial shadow
31 Mrs. McKinley
32 Persona -grata
34 Family
38 "Charles in"
40 Small pie
42 Ball bearing item
43 Totals
44 Bar
45 Metrical foot
47 Suitable
48 "The Swedish Nightingale"
49 Nervous
52 Old French coin
53 Stocking stuffer

Solution time: 21 mins.

Yesterdays' answer

7-1

CRYPTOQUIP

N C G S P S Q X W K U Y Y P
G P N U F X P S P F P P U D
I K W S P S Y Q P F P I G
I G G Y - U F X D U X C N

Yesterday's Cryptquip: AT THE NORTH POLE, DO CONGENIAL PEOPLE EVER GREET EACH OTHER WITH A COLD WAVE?

Today's Cryptquip clue: S equals B

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.