

Usha storm into semifinal

Usha KC moved into the semifinal of the Cotton Group Shaheed Smriti hockey tournament yesterday, reports APB.

Dhaka Club Cup champions Usha defeated Bangladesh Air Force 3-0 after leading the first session 1-0 at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

Centre-half Khurshid and strikers Sadek and Kamal scored one goal each for the winners.

Khurshid put Usha ahead in the sixth minute from a penalty corner while Sadek doubled the margin in the 55th minute from a nice field goal.

Sadek, after receiving a through pass from Kamal, entered the box dribbling past two defenders and sounded the board with a powerful hit.

Five minutes later, Sadek set up the third goal for Kamal who easily beat the helpless Air Force goalie with a reverse hit after receiving the pass from the left.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Army beat Azad SC 3-2 in the day's first encounter to keep their hopes alive for a semifinal berth.

Sanjat Das scored twice and Rahazuddin struck the other for Army who recorded the win coming from behind. Shishu and Mokshed scored one each to put Azad in the lead twice but they failed to cash in on it.

Army collected three points from two outings.

Div I cricket

Leaders Jatrabari KC suffered their first defeat to Bangladesh Boys Club by two runs while Wanderers Club beat Eskaton SS by seven runs in the First Division cricket league at different city venues yesterday, reports APB.

Jatrabari managed 212 runs in 49.5 overs chasing a total of 214 of Bangladesh Boys at the City Club ground.

Opener Titu topscored 36 followed by tailender Liton who made 32, Himel 24, Saymon 13 while Amjad and Babu were the other scorers with 13 and 11 runs respectively. A total of 53 runs came from extras.

Spinner Apollo took 4 wickets for 36 runs in 8 overs while Sayeed and Jony claimed one wicket each for the Boys.

Earlier, Sawon made 56 and Mazed contributed 49 runs that enabled Boys to post 214 for 8 wickets after electing to bat first.

Sumon made 23, tailender Sayeed remained not out at 16 while Rana was the other double-digit scorer with 13 runs. Twenty-four runs came as extras.

Bipul of Jatrabari captured four wickets for 42 while Liton took 2 wickets.

At the Dhamondi Cricket Stadium, Wanderers defended their modest total of 165 by bowling out Eskaton SS at 158 runs.

For Wanderers, tailender Tapan scored highest 22, Pakistani opener Jafar, middle order Nehal and Mursheed scored 21 runs each. Aniruddha made 14, Javed 12, Badsha 11. Extras contributed 19 runs.

Sajid was the most successful Eskaton bowler having three wickets for 22 while Milton, Shafiqul and Shawkat took two wickets each.

Tota made not out 34 and Turkey was the other notable contributor for Eskaton.

Jafar took five wickets for 21 and Mahfuzur took two wickets for Wanderers.

WI not on Bishop's mind

TRINIDAD, Feb 19 (The Trinidad Express/Internet): "It's not something that I'm focused on."

Ian Bishop, Trinidad and Tobago cricket captain, says he is focussed on leading T&T and nothing else.

"People say it," Bishop added. "But I haven't sat down and thought about it. My only aim right now is to captain Trinidad and Tobago and to do the best for Trinidad and Tobago. Whatever happens after that, I'm not thinking too far ahead."

Bishop was saying his bit yesterday on the simmering debate over the future of Brian Lara's captaincy of the West Indies team prompted by the recent 5-0 whitewash by South Africa.

On Sunday, respected Barbadian commentator Tony Cozier added his piece in his Sunday Sun column, saying in part that, "Lara has neglected his own immense talent for so long that it has lost its edge, so that he could not give the lead where he was best equipped to do so, with his bat and was unable to unite his players behind him, a prime requirement in restoring the spirit needed against the Australians".

For the T&T captain, however, it is the chemistry of his unit and their fitness for this weekend's clash with defending champions Guyana that is of immediate concern.

The team is very focussed on that, so our main objective is to play this weekend and hopefully win," Bishop said.

But there are a few fitness concerns. While the recently injured Lara will practise with the squad, Daren Ganga, Suraj Ragoonath and Marlon Black are nursing niggling injuries.

Opener Ragoonath, who missed the first two matches of the season because of a finger injury, now has a slight groin strain. Ganga is suffering from a stiff back while fast bowler Black is feeling pain in one of his knees.

For this reason the squad of 14 will train together until Friday before it is trimmed to 13 for Saturday's crucial match.



An Usha Krira Chakra attempt at the Bangladesh Airforce goal during the Cotton Group Shaheed Smriti hockey tournament match at the Moulana Bhasani Stadium yesterday.

— Star photo

Who's to rule Rome, Totti or Edmundo?



ROME, Feb 19 (Reuters/Internet): Roma's Francesco Totti has only recently inherited the title of "VIIIth King of Rome", so the rise and fall of Edmundo, his opponent, when Roma meet Fiorentina on Sunday, offers a reminder that no player has a Divine Right to rule.

Historically, the Eternal City only had seven monarchs but Roma fans still crown their own soccer kings. Totti is the latest in Roma's Royal soccer lineage, from Amadeo Amedei to the great Brazilian Paolo.

The 23-year-old has earned the right to rule the sacred turf of the Olympic stadium with his divine talent and loyalty to his subjects in the Curva Sud — the same south bank terraces, where he used to stand as a young Roma fan.

When Edmundo let his talented feet do the talking in the early part of the season, he too ruled the hearts and minds of Fiorentina's fans, as his goals and assists took the Florentine to the top of Serie A.

Then, the temperamental Brazilian broke the advice of Florence's most famous son Machiavelli to ruling monarchs. "One who becomes King with the support of the common people must keep them as his friends," he wrote.

Two weeks ago, Edmundo abandoned his subjects in their hour of need, taking a flight to the Rio carnival on the same day his Argentine team-mate Gabriel Batistuta sustained an injury that will keep him out until April.

As Fiorentina were losing the league lead with a 1-0 defeat at Udinese last Sunday, televi-

sion showed Edmundo winning the Rio carnival's annual football competition on the smooth sands of the Copacabana.

Described by veteran journalist Giorgio Tosatti as "the single most selfish act I have seen in 40 years", Edmundo's gesture has broken the spell which his number 10 jersey had cast over Florence.

When he returned to Italian's cultural capital on Thursday, the player after whom Florentine restaurants had named a pizza found a placard posted outside his luxury apartment: "Enough: Silence and start winning", it read.

It will take more than silence to heal Edmundo's divides with his team-mates: Edmundo is at odds with Batistuta, who enjoys the status of a demi-God in Florence with his own statue at the Artemio Franchi stadium.

In the Brazilian's last match, the captain yelled at the bench to take the Brazilian off.

Others have not forgotten the player's comments as he left for Brazil two weeks ago. "No-one's asked me to stay and, if they had, I would have left just the same," Edmundo told Gazzetta dello Sport.

"(Fiorentina manager Gianni) Trapattoni would do well to send me home. That way, I'm in the sun, on the beach, in the heat."

Totti was given a first-hand view of Edmundo's petulance earlier this season when the Florentine striker reacted angrily to substitution during Fiorentina's 2-1 defeat at the Olympic stadium.

From the days his mother used to drive her promising young son to Roma's Trigoria

training centre in a rusty Fiat 500, Totti has never let success go to his head.

"Being a footballer is a privilege," said Totti recently.

As a teenager, Totti tended to put other players on a pedestal — such as former Italy international Giuseppe Giannini, the so-called "Prince of Rome", whose poster adorned his bedroom.

Then, an inspired performance for Roma in the Italian Youth Cup final — a hat-trick at the San Siro — transformed his dreams into reality.

At the age of 16, on 4 September 1996, Roma's then manager Vujadin Boskov blooded the young talent at Sampdoria and, suddenly, Totti was rooming with the Prince of Rome.

Under current coach Zdenek Zeman, Totti has added passing skills to his natural technique and eye for goal.

Last October, he won his first full international cap against Switzerland with Dino Zoff suggesting that he could become Italy's Zinedine Zidane — a key playmaker positioned between midfield and two strikers.

By January of last year, Totti had already played 100 times for his club, and, when Zeman handed him the captain's armband, fans made him Giannini's natural heir.

The Roma shirt has become a second skin for Francesco, said youth team trainer and another VIIIth King of Rome, Bruno Conti.

At the end of the season, Edmundo will officially leave Fiorentina for his native kingdom of Vasco Da Gama in Brazil; Totti already looks a wiser king and his reign is set to last longer.

Chelsea aim to end lean Forest spell



LONDON, Feb 19 (Reuters/Internet): Chelsea visit lowly Nottingham Forest on Saturday anxious to make up ground on English premier league leaders Manchester United.

United have won five of their six premier league visits to Highfield Road and the Andy Cole-Dwight Yorke golden partnership suggests more mis-

ery is in store.

The United strikers continue to prosper, Cole's goal against Arsenal on Wednesday brought their combined total for the season to 40.

United manager Alex Ferguson is confident his side can hold off all challengers.

"We are stronger than we were at this stage last year," he said. "We have more quality in depth in our squad which not only provides cover for injuries but introduces competition for places which keeps everyone on their toes."

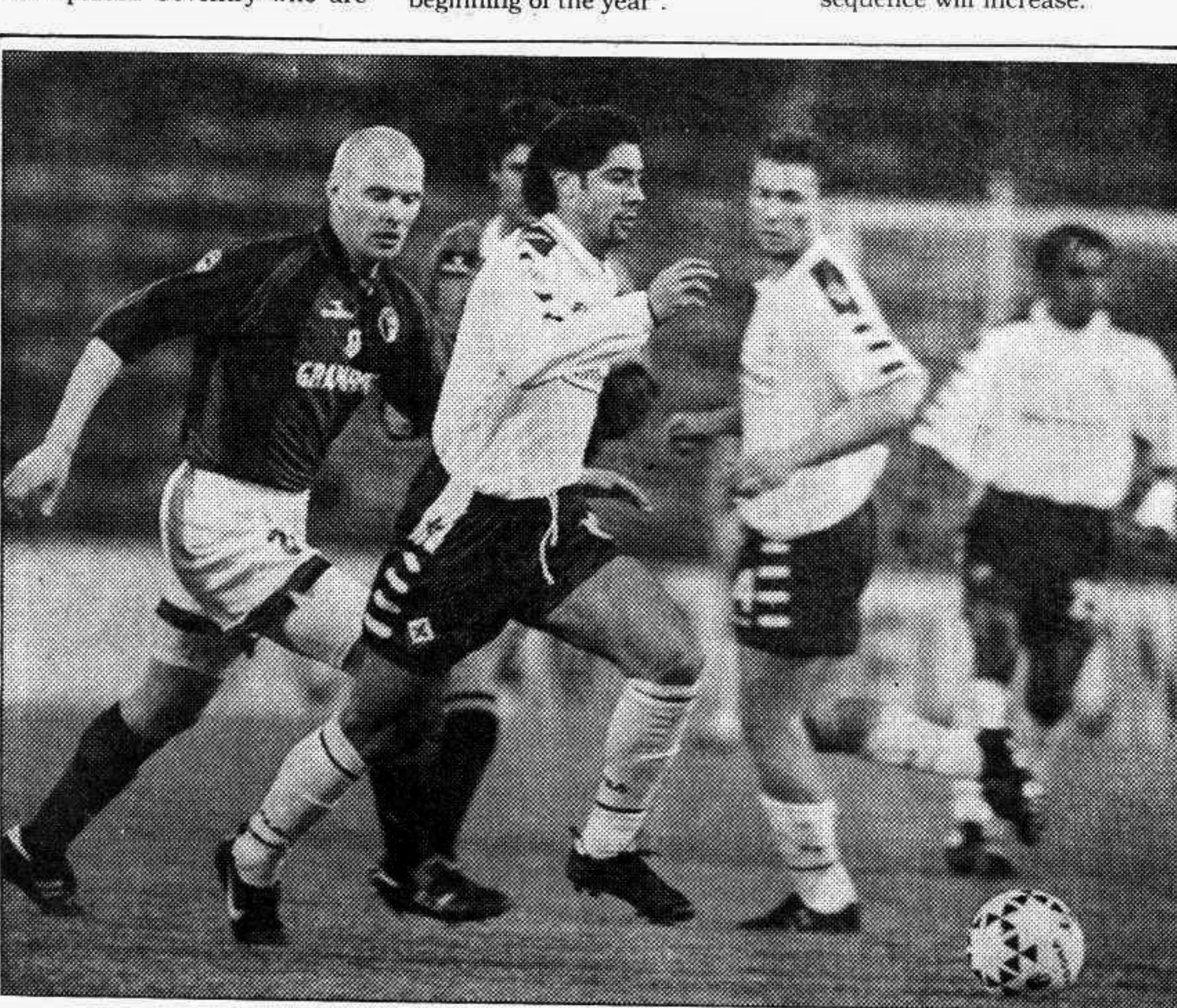
Champions Arsenal host Leicester City, with the visitors on a high after securing a League Cup final spot on Wednesday.

They are unlikely to take much away from Highbury, though — it has been 26 years since Leicester have won a league game there.

Fourth-placed Aston Villa, faltering on a run of three consecutive defeats, must wait until Sunday for their visit to Wimbleton.

Leeds United, fifth, welcome Everton who have not won at Elland Road since 1951.

Friday's statement said Blatter would be "asked to provide more details of the proposal he launched via the media at the beginning of the year".



— AFP photo

GM chess on Disappointing day for locals

Bangladeshi International Master Abdullah Al Rakib outplayed Nilopul Das of India, in the inaugural match of the fourth United Insurance Grand Masters Chess tournament at the NSC chess room yesterday, reports UNB.

On the other hand, Grand Master Niaz Mursheed lost his board against GM Yuri Sulman of Belarus.

In the day's other matches, GM Nigel Short of UK overpowered IM Ziaur Rahman, GM Alexander Wojciechowicz of Poland eliminated IM Rezaat Bin Sattar and Fide Master Enamul Hossein Rajib suffered defeat to IM Avijit Kunte of India.

The second round matches will be held today at the same venue.

England A win series

HARARE, Feb 19: Captain Mike Vaughan and pace bowler Paul Franks combined as England A defeated Zimbabwe A in the second limited over international here Thursday to take a winning 2-0 lead in the three match series, reports AFP.

Nottinghamshire fast bowler Franks took four Zimbabwe wickets for 34 as the home side slumped to an unspired 154 all out.

Newcomer Raymond Price was top scorer with 35 but no other Zimbabwe batsman made it to 20.

Because of a rain shower England A were set a reduced target of 151 in 47 overs at only a little more than three runs over an over.

It was a simple task in the end although England A were 33 for three at one point after losing Mal Loye, Darren Maddy and Andrew Flintoff.

Vaughan steamed the innings to score 43 not out and steer England A to victory with a boundary that took them to 154 for six with 7.5 overs to spare.

He was supported by Vikram Solanki who had scored 70 to make the main contribution to the England A victory in Bulawayo on Tuesday. Solanki hit a sound 29 before he was clean bowled.

England A also won the unofficial Test series 1-0 with match one drawn.

Scores: Zimbabwe A 154 (R Picre 35, P Franks 4-34)

England A 154-6.

England won by four wickets.

ICC disagrees with Graveney

LONDON, Feb 19: England chairman of selectors David Graveney on Thursday led the call for the International Cricket Council (ICC) to introduce drug testing, reports AFP.

But the sport's world governing body has no plans to introduce testing in time for the World Cup this summer.

Graveney speaking in his role as chief executive of the Professional Cricketers' Association, told BBC Radio Five, "There are other sports where you have World Championships and where all the competitors are tested to ensure that fair play exists."

Sponsors are not exactly queuing up to pump money into cricket domestically or internationally so it's crucial the image is as you would want it to be."

Graveney believes international cricket will not fully comprehend the extent of drugs in sport unless the ICC bring in standard testing worldwide.

Independent national bodies such as the England and Wales Cricket Board and the Australian Cricket Board operate their own schemes.

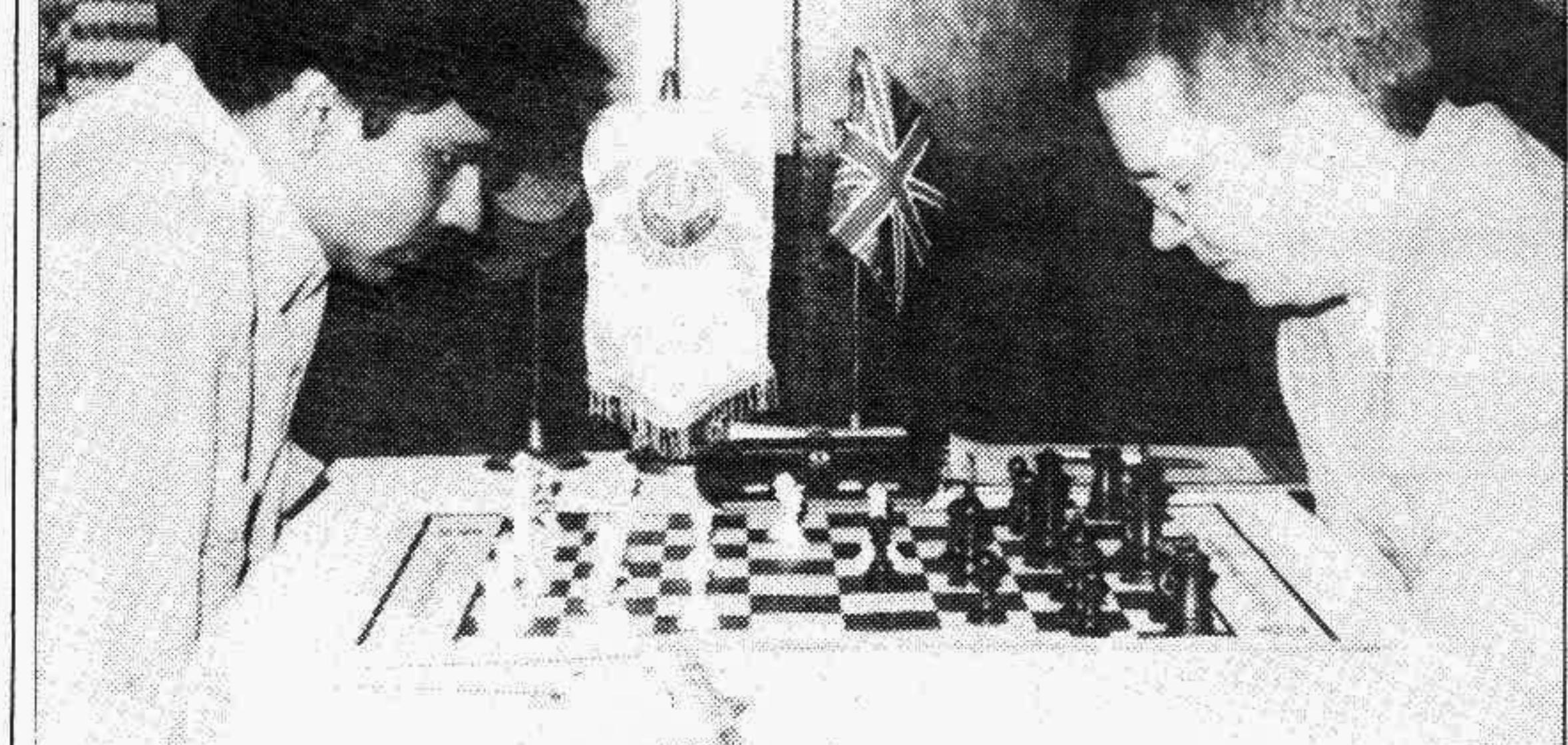
But Verokken warned the ICC it is unfair for any sport to be naive in saying we don't have a drugs problem. You don't know you have a problem until you actually try and assess whether the problems exist."

Fourth-placed Mallorca, travel to play seventh-placed Real Oviedo.

Bayern Munich are unbeaten favourites to take the title with 15 of the 18 coaches tipping them to succeed.

Only Werner Lorant, from rivals 1860 Munich, bucked the trend and selected his own side, while Hans-Rostock's Ewald Lienert and Wolfsburg's Wolfgang Wolf both declined to give their tips.

Bayern have an eight-point lead on nearest rivals Bayer Leverkusen and have undisputed



British Grand Master Nigel Short (R) ponders his next move against International Master Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh during their United Insurance GM chess tournament first round engagement at the NSC yesterday.

— Star photo

A look around Europe

Frederic Dehu but will be without suspended duo Valerien Ismael and Stephane Dalmat for the visit of Marselle.

The clubs will be hoping to avoid controversy this time around.

When they met in the League Cup in January, Marseille midfielder Eric Roy had a penalty ruled out by the referee and Lens went through 6-5 in a shootout.

Video replays later showed that Roy's shot had crossed the line after hitting the underside of the crossbar.

Marseille, who went down 1-0 at struggling Toulouse in the League last Sunday, need a good result to lift their confidence after a series of below-par performances.

Among the potential giant-killers are Second Division Wasquehal, who host Met