

Emirates, ACB strike a deal

Emirates, the international airline of the UAE, will be the official sponsor of the Australian cricket team at the ICC World Cup in England, which starts on May 14, says a press release.

The sponsorship was announced in Sydney recently at a joint media conference by Emirates' Group Managing Director Maurice Flanagan and Chairman of the Australian Cricket Board Dennis Rogers.

Under the sponsorship agreement, the Australian team will carry the 'Fly Emirates' logo on all its playing and training outfits for the World Cup.

Emirates is a global partner and official carrier for the event, which is expected to attract an audience of 500 million viewers in 80 to 100 countries.

Flanagan said: "Emirates is very pleased to sponsor the Australian cricket team for the world's premier one-day event."

He continued: "As the strongest test playing nation at present, we are runners-up in the last World Cup, to make a very strong showing again."

"We are also very pleased, through this sponsorship, to acknowledge further our commitment to the relationship we have established with Australia and the promotion of Australia as a destination through our daily services to Melbourne."

Since Emirates commenced operations in 1985, the airline has made a major contribution as a strong supporter of sports and non-sports events around the world.

NOK boss' appeal

BONN, Jan 26: The head of the German Olympic Committee (NOK), Walter Troger has called Monday for a fundamental reform of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in the wake of the corruption scandal, reports AFP.

Three IOC members have already quit and six were asked to expel following revelations about Salt Lake City's successful bid for the 2002 Winter Games.

Valladolid lose fight against forfeit

MADRID, Jan 26(Reuters/Internet): Valladolid have lost their fight against a Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) decision that they must forfeit a league victory over Real Betis.

First division Valladolid were punished for briefly fielding five non-European Union players, one more than the rules allow, in their match against Betis on January 10.

The RFEF competitions committee turned what was a 2-1 home victory for Valladolid into a 3-0 defeat.

Valladolid asked the RFEF appeals committee to overturn the decision but their appeal was rejected late on Tuesday.

Problems arose for Valladolid in the game against Betis when coach Sergio Kresic substituted Colombian midfielder Harold Lozano for the injured Jose Luis Santamaria.

That meant they went over the limit for non-EU players on the pitch. Kresic realised his mistake six minutes later, and sent on Spaniard Alberto Lopez to replace Argentine Diego Klimowicz.

Four similar transgressions since 1991 have not incurred any penalties except small fines against the coaches concerned.

The RFEF decision leaves Valladolid 16th in the 20-team first division.



Argentine youth soccer team players and officials celebrate after beating Paraguay in the final of the South American Sub-20 tournament in Mar del Plata, Argentina on January 25. The hosts won 1-0.

Nagano orders inquiry

TOKYO, Jan 26 (AFP): The Japanese Olympic Committee (JOC) Monday ordered an inquiry into the 1998 Winter Games as Sydney expressed relief that its preparations for the 2000 Games were left intact by an IOC corruption inquiry.

After the International Olympic Committee recommended the expulsion of six executive members, JOC secretary general Yoshio Yagi said he would head an inquiry into Nagano that would start as soon as possible. Kyodo News Service reported.

"First of all, I'd like to know if the reports about the questionable acts by the Nagano bidding committee are true or not priority will be given to confirming such hard facts," Yagi said.

The investigation will look into the winning-and-dining, favours and gifts lavished on Olympic officials as Nagano battled for the Games.

Earlier, Nagano Mayor Tasuku Tsukuda told a press conference the bid had stayed. "As I review the matter now, I think there was some excess," he said.

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He said Sydney is not being investigated by the IOC, but is participating in a review of the activities of IOC members.

Australia's senior IOC member Kevin Gosper said from Lausanne his main priority had been to save the Sydney Games. "I'm extremely pleased because there was considerable amount of uncertainty in the air these last days and we've taken that uncertainty away."

"I won't argue that they were in great jeopardy but you can never leave anything to chance and we got that endorsement and that's very good news."

Two top IOC officials are to visit Sydney to iron out remaining concerns, IOC officials said, and the Sydney organising committee has admitted that the sleaze allegations had damaged its campaign to raise another 230 million dollars for the 2000 Games budget.

The decision to expel the six members in March if they refuse to resign was taken by the IOC executive board after it reviewed a report implicating 13 IOC members in the scandal over the Salt Lake City 2002 Winter Games. Three members have already resigned.

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Four of the six IOC members voted to resign for expulsion at an IOC meeting at the weekend had visited Nagano ahead of the 1991 vote to give the Games to the Japanese city.

"We acted honorably in keeping with norms of international goodwill," Tsukuda added.

Some 62 of the then 94 IOC members travelled first-class, some accompanied by wives, to the Japanese Alps region in the run-up to the 1991 vote.

The visitors were lodged in top hotels in Nagano, Tokyo and Kyoto, entertained with geisha girls and flown in helicopters, according to media reports. The bid committee footed the bill estimated at some two million yen (17,700 dollars) per head.

In Australia, Sydney Games organisers acknowledge contributing 1.2 million dollars in sports funding to the 11 African nations before the 1993 vote for the 2000 Games and offering 70,000 dollars in "inducements" to two delegates the day before Sydney was chosen.

Olympics minister Michael Knight told reporters that payments to African IOC members were within the rules and limits applied at the time.

They were not the rules that Australia chose, but they were the rules at the time, they're the rules that everyone played the game under," he said. "I'm pretty happy that the rules have changed."

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West Ham's gamble on Di Canio

UNDATED, Jan 26(Mail/Internet): West Ham are poised to complete the £1.7million signing of controversial Sheffield Wednesday striker Paolo Di Canio within the next 48 hours.

Two advisers acting on behalf of West Ham flew to Florence at the weekend to meet with Di Canio's agent Moreno Roggi in an attempt to finalise a deal.

Manager Harry Redknapp last night clinched the 4 million pounds signing of Lens midfielder Marc-Vivien Foe and sees Italian Di Canio as the perfect replacement for John Hartson, sold to Wimbledon for 7.5 million pounds.

The signing of the volatile Di Canio would represent a big gamble for Redknapp, but he is desperate to secure a striker as Ian Wright is out with a long-term injury and Paul Kitson is not fully fit.

Roggi said last night: "The fee has been agreed in principle by both clubs and we should know the outcome by Wednesday."

Di Canio, 30, who received an 11-match ban for his shove on referee Paul Alcock, has been undergoing treatment for stress and depression in Italy and failed to return for his Boxing Day comeback game. Wednesday fined him but Di Canio produced a medical certificate to justify his absence and has appealed to an FA tribunal to recover his docked wages.

It is understood Di Canio is in line to receive pounds 200,000 of the transfer fee to compensate him for his loss of earnings. In return, he would drop his action.

Dinamo's cleaning lady travelled with team!

BUCHAREST, Jan 26 (Reuters/Romania): The former head of Romanian soccer club Dinamo Bucharest, on trial for fraud, told investigators he invited the club's cleaning lady to accompany the team abroad as a reward and contributed to the funeral of a local writer.

Vasile Ianul, a police colonel, has been on trial in a military court for the past two years on charges of embezzling more than 2.3 million dollars during his tenure as Dinamo president from 1991 to 1994.

Ianul asked the court to hear 67 witnesses as evidence that the club's expenses were greater than its revenue. Ianul's lawyer Anisoara Stan told Reuters on Tuesday.

Among the witnesses are the club's housekeeper, who joined the team for a match abroad, and a writer who received a sum of money to help pay for a fellow writer's funeral.

Ianul's lawyers also asked the court to bar journalists and the general public from the proceedings. The military court reserved judgment on the request until next month.

Ianul had earlier admitted giving bonuses to national players and coaches for 1994 World Cup qualifying matches, paying bribes to secure victories for his club and financing Interior Ministry activities in the early post-communist period.

Earlier this month, military prosecutors arrested Colonel Petre Burduru, who succeeded Ianul as head of Dinamo, on charges of forging identity cards to grant access to the club.

The charge was later changed to illegal trade in cigarettes, a lucrative business in Romania.

Both hearings are in military courts because Dinamo is still under the control of the Interior Ministry and its rival Steaua under the Defence Ministry.

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Argentine challenger Alberto Scurrella ( R ) is at the receiving end against Jean-Baptiste Mendy of France during their WBA super lightweight title bout in Paris on January 25. The local retained his title.

China for change in bidding process

BEIJING, Jan 26: With the Chinese Olympic Committee calling for reform of a bidding process now mired in scandal, China said Tuesday it remains an enthusiastic candidate for the 2008 Summer Games, reports AP.

The Chinese Olympic Committee said it was "shocked and deeply regretful" over the vote-buying scandal that led the International Olympic Committee to oust six members. But it trusted the IOC to curb the corruption and "crack down" on members linked to the bribery.

The IOC "failed in some respects to adapt to the rapidly changing dynamics of the Olympics, and the reform, especially of the bidding process, is a must," the Chinese committee said in a statement carried late Monday by the state-run Xinhua News agency.

The committee, however, said the 2002 Winter Games in Salt Lake City — which is at the centre of the scandal — and the 2000 Summer Games in Sydney — now tainted by bribery allegations — should go ahead.

The two host cities have paid huge efforts to prepare for the Games, which should not be denied by several members' misconducts, said the committee in a statement.

China's response underscores its hopes to land the 2008 Games for Beijing, despite lingering bitterness over the city's failed bid for the 2000 Games. Beijing lost to Sydney by two votes, and Chinese sports officials have long blamed "non-sports factors."

Because of the narrow loss to Sydney, Beijing is considered a front-runner in the quickly expanding field to host the 2008 Games. But questions persist about the steps Beijing took in the 1993 to try to win the 2000 Games.

China's capital mobilised hundreds of thousands of people to scrub road dividers, put up flags and beautify the city ahead of the March 1993 visit by IOC inspectors. Although still late winter, residents and businesses were ordered to shut off coal heaters to lessen the pollution that chokes the city.

China's sent rare 2,200-year-old terra cotta warriors to the IOC museum, released its most prominent dissident and offered to inscribe the names of IOC members on a monument at the Great Wall.

In admitting his offer of cash inducements to IOC members ahead of the 1993 vote, Australian Olympic Committee president John Coates said, "Wherever we went, China, in many cases, had been before."

An influential figure in China's Olympics endeavours said China would have to do a much better job this time around courting world opinion.

China needed to lobby sports reporters who cover Olympic affairs and "strive for each vote," he said. "Generally speaking, bidding is like marketing a product. The product's quality is the most fundamental thing."

Beijing would need to renovate facilities used for the 1990 Asian Games, build new ones and improve roads and public transport to end the traffic jams that are much worse now than in 1993, he said.

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Swiss Martina Hingis ( R ) and Russian Anna Kournikova shake hands after posting the quarterfinal victory over Nicole Arendt and Manon Bollegraf at the Aussie Open on Tuesday. The self-styled Spice Girls won 7-6, 6-2.

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