

Injury forces McMillan out

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand, Mar 4: New Zealand batsman Craig McMillan has been ruled out of the remaining two Test matches against South Africa after breaking his hand in the drawn first Test, reports AP.

McMillan had X-rays on Thursday which revealed a fracture. He was hit on the hand by South Africa's Jacques Kallis with the second new ball as the Kiwis held on to draw the opening match at Eden Park on Wednesday.

"It's part of sport," said McMillan, who finished the Test unbeaten on 22. "I am really lucky that this is the first real injury that will keep me out of the game for a prolonged period."

McMillan did not appear hurt when he traveled to Christchurch and only bandaged the hand after the X-ray.

New Zealand team physiotherapist Mark Harrison said McMillan could be out for up to four weeks.

Meanwhile, South African fast bowler Allan Donald has been asked to rest before the second Test after straining his stomach muscles during the first Test.

Donald, the highest wicket taker for his country with a tally of 262 wickets in 53 Tests, will miss South Africa's three-day game against New Zealand at Lincoln starting on Saturday.

The controversial Eden Park pitch was blamed for the champion fast bowler's injury and Donald will not resume training until just before the second Test at Lancaster Park on Mar. 11.

Donald bowled just nine overs on the fifth and final day and did not take the second new ball in the last session.

"He picked up the injury during the Test," said Craig Smith, the team physiotherapist.

On a sticky surface that was controversially glued together to last the five days, Donald, sent down 36 overs in two New Zealand innings picking up just two wickets.

"We didn't want to make it worse that's why his work load was cut down," Smith said.

"He will not bowl at all for almost a week. He will have treatment and see how he comes through the rehabilitation process."

"When there is nothing on the wicket you over strain to make things happen and in the process you don't realize the damage you do to yourself."

Smith said, although the strain was "slight" it was a concern and his progress would be closely monitored.

"At the moment it is our main injury worry."

The tourists have been given two days off before the fourth match and most senior players are expected to sit out of the game.

Pele pips Germany

MUNICH, Mar 4: Pele believes Germany is certain to host the 2006 World Cup ahead of its own country or an African nation, the Brazilian soccer idol said in a newspaper interview published Wednesday, reports AP.

"We would prefer Africa, but I believe there's little doubt it will be Germany," Pele told the Suddeutsche Zeitung. "(The Germans') problems with the English and their earlier promises to the Germans are known, and Africa isn't ready yet."

Germany has accused England, also in the running, of renegeing on promises to back their bid in exchange for supporting England's hosting of the 1996 European championships.

Pele was also skeptical of Brazil's chances at the moment, adding his country and Argentina once talked about teaming up to joint host soccer's premier event.

"Afterwards, the whole thing was forgotten," he said. "In the population, too, the mood isn't there, that people are getting excited about it. We don't even have an organizing committee."

Pele said FIFA president Sepp Blatter's controversial plan to hold the World Cup every second year was soundly rejected by FIFA's new committee of soccer greats at this week's inaugural meeting.

Only Michel Platini, who headed France's World Cup effort, supported the plan on the new FIFA Football Committee. Blatter has since publicly shelved the idea, at least until 2009.

"Almost everyone voted against the proposal, Bobby Charlton, Johan Cruyff, Franz Beckenbauer, George Weah and so forth," Pele said. "We told him (Blatter), it's more important to think first about the 2002 World Cup in South Korea and Japan — there are enough problems there."

Pele personally felt furthering soccer in developing lands was more vital than turning the World Cup into a biennial event.

"And Charlton gave us something very interesting to think about," the Brazilian said. The last two World Cups have been weak in quality — if we stayed it over two years, people would lose interest."

Pele also said the Football Committee discussed rule changes, adding he was opposed to having two referees on the field or a camera trained on the goal line.

Instead, he would prefer putting another line judge behind the goal who could make instant calls similar to tennis.

But the committee's general impression was that referees aren't well-prepared because rules aren't coordinated and enforced the same way worldwide.



Indian Grand Master Viswanathan Anand (R) makes a move against Hungarian Leko during their ninth round encounter in the sixteenth International Linares City Trophy tournament in Spain on March 3.

— AFP photo

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