

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 banded 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 A 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 four 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 his own country or an African nation, said in a newspaper interview published Wednesday, reports AP.

"I 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 reneging 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 organising committee."

Pele said FIFA president Sepp Blatter's controversial plan to hold the World Cup every second year was soundly rejected by FIFA 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 staged it every 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.

India plan in advance



NEW DELHI, Mar 4: India's national cricket selectors have dropped new opener VVS Laxman and rested paceman Venkatesh Prasad and included West Bengal's promising opening batsman Debang Gandhi and veteran medium pacer Javagal Srinath for the provisional 14-member squad for the Asian Test Championship final to be held in Dhaka from March 12 to 16.

India have secured ten points from two matches of the championship having lost to Pakistan in Calcutta and drawn against Sri Lanka in Colombo and their march into final hinges on the outcome of Pakistan-Sri Lanka match that began in Lahore today.

India will be hoping the Lankans do not get the seven points they need to edge out India to enter the final against Pakistan.

If India manages to enter the final, Devang Gandhi, who has

From Pallab Bhattacharya

been in fine form in domestic competitions this season, will open the innings with another newcomer opener Sadagopan Ramesh who displayed superb technique and ability to score runs in the recent two-test series against Pakistan and in the two Asia Test Championship matches so far.

By contrast, Laxman has not had a good run either in the series against Pakistan or in the Asia Test competition. National Selection Committee Chairman and former India captain Ajit Wadekar said "Laxman is a good batsman but it is just that he is out of form."

Paceman Venkatesh Prasad makes way for his Karnataka State teammate Javagal Srinath who did not play in the second Asian Test Championship match against Sri Lanka.

The Indian team for the Dhaka match also includes promising left arm seamer Ashish Nehra whose bowling

has impressed Wadekar, India skipper Mohammed Azharuddin and coach Anshuman Gaikwad.

"I think Nehra has the potential to come good in international cricket," said Wadekar while announcing the provisional Indian team for the Asia Test Championship final.

West Bengal's talented batsman Laxmi Ratan Shukla and all-rounder Hrishikesh Kanitkar also find berth in the 14-member side.

TEAM FOR DHAKA FINAL

Mohammad Azharuddin (capt), Anil Kumble (vice-capt), Sadagopan Ramesh, Devang Gandhi, Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar, Saurav Ganguly, Nayan Mongia, Javagal Srinath, Laxmi Ratan Shukla, Ashish Nehra, Sunil Joshi, Harbhajan Singh, Hrishikesh Kanitkar.

Courtesy: India Abroad News Service

Lankan WC hopefuls cut down to 18

COLOMBO, Mar 4: Sri Lanka has picked an 18-men squad led by skipper Arjuna Ranatunga from a 30-member pool that prepared to defend the country's cricket World Cup in England, officials said Thursday, reports AFP.

Sri Lanka has also hired former England cricket star Ian Botham to coach Ranatunga's team, which will arrive in England on April 23 to prepare for the World Cup tournament which opens on May 15.

Botham is expected to concentrate on coaching Sri Lankan pacemen, while the country will retain Roy Dias as the overall coach of the team, officials said.

The squad selected for the World Cup includes all the players from the 1996 team which won the cup, apart from Asanka Gurusinhie, who is now playing in Australia.

The state-run Daily News said that the selection had been at a "heated meeting with tempers getting frayed at time," the paper did not give details.

THE 18 MEMBER SQUAD

Arjuna Ranatunga, Aravinda de Silva, Sanath Jayasuriya, Marvan Atapattu, Romesh Kaluwitharana, Chaminda Vaas, Muttiah Muralitharan, Upul Chandana, Pramody Wickremasinghe, Suresh Perera, Nuwan Soysa, Avishka Gunawardena, Mahela Jayawardena, Ruwan Kalpage, Chandika Hathurusinghe, Hemantha Boteju, Eric Upshantha and Kumara Dharmasena.

3-nation cricket in Sharjah begins April 7

MUMBAI, Mar 4: England and Pakistan will clash in the opening match of the triangular limited-over series to be held in Sharjah from April 7-16 with India being the third team in the fray, reports PTL.

The tournament assumes added importance for it is the final tune-up event for India prior to May 14-June 20 World Cup in England.

The Indian selectors are likely to field the 15-member World Cup team, selection committee chairman Ajit Wadekar indicated to reporters here yesterday.

ITINERARY

April 7: England v Pakistan
April 8: India v Pakistan
April 9: India v England
April 10: Rest day
April 11: England v India
April 12: England v Pakistan
April 13: India v Pakistan
April 14 and 15: Rest days
April 16: Final.

Moody, Bevan hit centuries in Shield match

SYDNEY, Mar 4 (Reuters/Internet): Centuries by Michael Hussey and Tom Moody helped Western Australia reach 330 for five in their Sheffield Shield match against Tasmania on Thursday.

Hussey hit 125 not out and Moody 109 as the defending champions piled on the runs on the first day at the WACA in Perth.

Australian limited-overs batsman Michael Bevan also cracked an unbeaten century to put New South Wales in control of their match against South Australia.

Bevan made 128 not out. Recently retired Australian captain Mark Taylor hit 61 to equal his highest first class score of the season and lift the Blues to 312 for five at stumps.

In the other match, competition leaders Queensland were in a strong position in their clash against Victoria after dismissing the visitors for 188 and making 83 without loss in reply.

Moody and Hussey combined in a 198-run partnership for the fourth wicket. They came to gether with the total on 68 for three and took the total to 266 before Moody was caught behind.

Hussey went on to post his ninth career century and his first this season.

Antlers put ten past Sarawak

TOKYO, Mar 4: Japanese champions Kashima Antlers marched into the semifinals of the Asian Cup Winners' Cup by beating Sarawak of Malaysia 10-0 in the second leg of their quarterfinal on Wednesday night, reports Reuters.

Antlers won 14-2 on aggregate after winning the away leg 4-2 two weeks ago.

Antlers strike pair of Tomoyuki Hirase and Yoshiyuki Hasengawa, a former Japanese international scored seven goals between them, with Hirase notching four.

The other scorers were Masashi Motoyama (2) and Mitsuo Ogasawara.

The goal margin could have been even wider if Antlers had fielded their first team on Wednesday, most of whom were rested ahead of Saturday's first J-league game of the new season.

The match was played at the J Village sports centre in Fukushima, north of Tokyo. Motoyama, a left-sided midfielder, will be one of Japan's most important players in next month's FIFA world youth under-20 championship in Nigeria.

MU, Bayern turn on the style



LONDON, Mar 4: Dwight Yorke scored the goals but it was David Beckham who inspired Manchester United to a 2-0 victory over Inter Milan in the European Champions Cup on Wednesday, reports AP.

The talented midfielder set up both goals with right wing crosses before half time and Manchester United, whose only Champions Cup success was in 1968, will be confident of reaching the semifinals.

In other quarterfinals matches, defending champion and seven-time titlists Real Madrid were held 1-1 at home by Dynamo Kiev and Bayern Munich downed Kaiserslautern 2-0 in a meeting of two Bundesliga clubs.

MAN UNITED-INTER MILAN

It was clearly Beckham's night in the Old Trafford confrontation with Diego Simeone, the player whose self-confessed play-acting led to the Englishman's much-publicised expulsion at last summer's World Cup.

Although Simeone played inventively and forcefully in Inter's midfield, Beckham set up both Yorke's goals with precision crosses from the right.

Three Inter defenders left Yorke unmarked in the seventh minutes as he headed home

Beckham's measured cross and, when the fair-haired star launched another from the right just before half time, the Tobagan striker climbed above the Inter defense for his seventh goal in seven Champions Cup games.

"David Beckham was absolutely magnificent," said United manager Alex Ferguson. "But we had a lot of good players. Two-nil is a great result for us and we will score over there."

Inter had chances late in the game, and Simeone had a headed strike canceled out because of a teammates foul. United goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel made three great saves and Henning Berg cleared off the line from Francesco Colaninno.

DYNAMO KIEV-REAL MADRID

Andrei Shevchenko gave Dynamo Kiev a 56th minute lead at the Bernabeu stadium in Madrid but Predrag Mijatovic hit back for Real 11 minutes later as the defending titlist earned a tie.

It was Real's first Champions Cup game under new coach John Toshack, who replaced fired Guus Hiddink a week ago and the result was a disappointment for the Real fans.

BAYERN MUNICH-KAISERSLAUTERN

Two goals in four minutes

put Bayern in charge of its showdown with Kaiserslautern, the team which surprisingly beat it to the Bundesliga title last season.

Brazilian forward Giovane Elber scored the first in the 31st minute and Stefan Effenberg added the second. Kaiserslautern also were hampered by the second half expulsion of Egyptian defender Hany Ramzy for his second yellow card.

"It was tough for us in the second half, because with 10 men, they were packed in," said Munich's midfielder Mario Basler. "But we'll score a goal in Kaiserslautern, no problem."

JUVENTUS-OLYMPIAKOS

Juventus, who are bidding to make the final for the fourth season in a row, led Olympiakos 2-0 but goalkeeper Angelo Peruzzi gave a penalty in the seventh minute of injury time and the Greeks hit back for an important away goal and a 2-1 scoreline.

Struggling in the league without star striker Alessandro Del Piero who is out until next season with a serious knee injury, Juventus went two goals ahead through Filippo Inzaghi in the who scored in either half.

Newly-signed Juventus coach Carlo Ancelotti said, "We had deserved a better result."



A Dwight Yorke (No 19) header gets past the Inter Milan custodian Gianluca Pagliuca to make the scoreline 2-0 in favour of Manchester United in their Champions' League quarterfinal first leg encounter at Old Trafford on March 3.

Beckham proves a point



MANCHESTER, England, Mar 4: Manchester United players and their opponents were queuing up to pay tribute to

David Beckham after his team's 2-0 victory over Inter Milan in their European Cup quarter-final first leg at Old Trafford on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

Two goal hero Dwight Yorke praised Beckham for ignoring all the hype about facing Diego Simeone for the first time since being sent off for kicking out at the Argentina in the World Cup, and supplying two pinpoint crosses for his headed goals.

"Beckham's crossing was excellent and I just had to make sure I was in the right place at the right time," said Yorke, now the competition's joint top-scorer with seven goals.

Gary Neville also paid tribute to Beckham. "He's been playing well all season. He can take strength from the way he's coped with the stick since the World Cup," said the defender whose pass set Beckham up for his second goal delivery.

"Tonight he produced two unbelievable crosses that only he could produce."

Beckham certainly looked fired up, particularly with one crunching first half challenge on Simeone that had 'revenge' written all over it.

But he said he tried to play down all the hype, saying: "There were a lot people saying things before the game but I just wanted to get on with it and concentrate on my own performance."

Beckham claimed he was unaware it was the Argentine in his sights for the tackle. "To be honest I didn't realise it was Simeone, I just went in to win

the ball," he said. "Throughout the whole game I just wanted to focus on the way I played and not let anything get in the way."

Beckham and Simeone swapped shirts at the end of the match "it was just something I wanted to do," said the United man.

And Simeone had kind words in return only a day after admitting he exaggerated his World Cup injury to secure Beckham's red card.

"He's a good lad. I must admit I was surprised at my reception here as I thought after France



DAVID BECKHAM

they would boo me a lot more. It was just that bad," he said.

But the Inter midfielder was frustrated to see German referee Helmut Krug rule out his headed goal because of a push by a team mate.

"Too many goals are disallowed this way," he said.

World Youth Cup Mali qualifies last

NAIROBI, Mar 4: Mahamadou Dissa scored twice in the second half as Mali beat Guinea 4-1 in Accra, Ghana on Wednesday and became the 24th and final qualifier for next month's World Youth Championship, reports Xinhua.

Dissa's goals in the 59th and 78th minutes gave Mali the victory in the playoff between the two third-place finishers from group play at the African under-20 championship.

Mali will join fellow African nations Ghana, Zambia, Cameroon and Nigeria, all of which have reached the semifinals at the African under-20 championship.

Nigeria already had qualified for the 12th World Youth Championships as host of the biennial event, scheduled for April 3-24. The draw for the world tournament is set for Friday in Abuja, Nigeria.

Argentine booters end strike Violence at friendly leaves bad taste



BUENOS AIRES, Mar 4: A month-long Argentine soccer strike ended on Wednesday after a court lifted a ban on lower division matches, only hours after violent clashes between fans at a friendly match between Boca Juniors and Chacarita Juniors of the Second Division at Boca's ground.

First Division players went on strike in sympathy with their Third and Second Division peers at the beginning of February after a court ordered the suspension because of hooliganism.

Three judges ruled unanimously to lift the suspension on Wednesday following an appeal by the Argentine Football Association.

Mali book World U-20 soccer sport

ACCRA, Mar 4: Mali qualified for the World Under-20 Championship in April with a 4-1 play-off win over Guinea in the African Nations' Youth Cup, reports Reuters.

Mali join hosts Nigeria, Ghana, Zambia and Cameroon as the African teams in the World Championship. Ghana, Zambia and Cameroon qualified by reaching the semifinals of the African competition. Nigeria, the fourth semifinalists, had already qualified as hosts.

In the African Cup, hosts Ghana play Zambia in Accra. Nigeria play Cameroon in the second semifinal in Kumasi. Both matches take place today.

Angola, Mali, Guinea and Malawi failed to win a place in the semifinals.

The Union of First Division players said late Wednesday the strike had been called off after the court ruling.

Only hours before the ruling, fans clubbed and kicked each other at a sparsely-attended friendly match between First Division club Boca Juniors and Chacarita Juniors of the Second Division at Boca's ground.

Several bloodied fans were carried out of Boca's stadium on stretchers after the clashes, which sparked an immediate response by the clubs.

"If police security is required at a friendly then soccer has come to an end," Boca's vice-president Pedro Pompilio told a news conference after the match.

"This is a shame on soccer, we will investigate."

Argentine soccer has faced rising crowd violence in recent years with two court orders for suspensions of play in the last 12 months. Security has been improved at matches, but hooliganism appears not to abate.

Wednesday's incidents were unusual as they took place during a friendly with just a couple of dozen people watching from the stands.

The trouble appeared to start as a group of Boca fans stormed into the stadium brandishing wooden clubs. Chacarita vice president Armando Capriotti said his club's supporters were the "victims of an ambush."

The aggressors raced off in three cars waiting outside the stadium after the attacks. "Imagine what would happen at a real match," said Boca winger Jose Basualdo.

Chacarita player Alex Rodriguez said he had seen nothing like it in his life. "These are people that want to kill and hurt."

Argentina's soccer hooligans, known as the "Barra Brava" or "Wild Bunch" have grown increasingly violent in recent years. So far this decade there have been 37 football-related killings, compared with 16 in the 1980s.

Extortion by hooligans of clubs and shootings are not uncommon.

Fowler antics upsets Le Saux

LONDON, Mar 4: It has taken a sharp elbow to the head to wake English soccer to the fact that it has a problem — not with violence but in coming to terms with homosexuality and those who just want to be different, reports Reuters.

When Chelsea's Graeme Le Saux elbow Liverpool's Robbie Fowler to the ground in a Premier league clash on Saturday, it looked like a clear-cut violation by a man with a well-documented poor disciplinary record.

But within a matter of hours the incident had led to widespread soul-searching amid accusations of homophobia in a national sport struggling to demonstrate tolerance and sensitivity towards minorities.

The Guardian newspaper reported in a front-page article on Wednesday that Le Saux, who is not homosexual, had been subjected to persistent homophobic taunting by fellow England international Fowler throughout the match.

Liverpool have refused to comment on the incident.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP
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Saturday's Cryptquip: AT THIS FLOWERSHOW,
MAYBE I'LL FINALLY WIN THE BLOOM RIBBON.
Today's Cryptquip clue: R equals G
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.