

Ronaldo's words of encouragement for Inter mates

MILAN, Mar 15: Ronaldo urged his Inter Milan teammates on Sunday to salvage a horrible season by beating Manchester United when they meet on Wednesday in the second leg of their European Cup quarter-final, reports Reuters.

The Brazilian said he hoped to play the full match in the San Siro, despite only playing 45 minutes in Saturday's 2-2 draw with AC Milan.

"This is our most important match this season — our pride is at stake and we must be up to the task," said Ronaldo, last season's world player of the year.

Inter — who lost the first leg 2-0 in Manchester, are looking to the European Cup as their last chance to salvage a season in which they have been knocked out of the Italian Cup and are out of the title race at mid-table.

"We are playing better now, we're creating chances and are doing a good job in preparing the match with Manchester United, who are a great side who are very fast on the counter-attack," the Brazilian striker told a news conference.

Ronaldo started his first match in two months on Saturday after a knee injury, playing in the first half in Inter's 2-2 draw with AC Milan.

"I never said I was 100 per cent, but I'm satisfied with my performance last night," he said, adding that he hoped to play the entire match on Wednesday, "even though it will be difficult."

"There will be many scoring chances for both sides ... we've got to be prepared for everything and believe in our success until the very end."

Latinos refuse to play soccer at Pan Am Games

WINNIPEG, Manitoba, Mar 15 (Reuters/ Internet): No South American nations will compete in this summer's Pan American Games soccer tournament after local organisers refused to pay their association millions of dollars to participate.

Despite the intervention of influential Pan American Sports Organisation (PASO) president Mario Vasquez Rana, CONMEBOL refused to budge from its demand for financial compensation.

"We cannot afford to pay anybody and even if we could we would not do it," said Pan Am Games Society chief Don MacKenzie.

"If you pay one sport, you have to pay them all. It's a decision supported by PASO and the national Olympic committees of South America," MacKenzie added.

The decision by South American nations not to play soccer in the Games, which will be staged in Winnipeg from July 23 to August 8, applies to both men's and women's teams.

The weakened Pan Am men's soccer tournament will still feature 10 men's teams, led by Mexico, the United States and Jamaica.

But the event, which was to have five berths reserved for South American teams, will have a decided Caribbean and Central American flavour with nations such as Trinidad, Cuba, Guatemala and Honduras playing instead of traditional powers such as Brazil and Argentina.

Rounding out the 10-nation tournament will be Canada, El Salvador and Costa Rica.

"Neither side could afford to give in," Pan Am's sports vice-president Mike Moore noted. "From their standpoint, if they did this for free, they'd do everything for free."

Moore said that when he met with South American soccer officials last December, he asked why they would participate in the Olympics but not the Pan Am Games.

Their response, said Moore, was that their participation in the Olympics was a gift to the IOC. They were looking for about \$3 million to take part in the Pan Am Games.

Ye All-England women's champ

BIRMINGHAM, Mar 15: World Champion Ye Zhaoying of China won the women's singles title for the third time in a row with a win over her teammate Dai Yun at the All-England Open badminton championships here on Sunday, reports Xinhua.

Ye, joint third seed with Dai at the centenary tournament, rallied from first set down to beat Dai 9-11, 11-5 and 11-1 in an all-Chinese final.

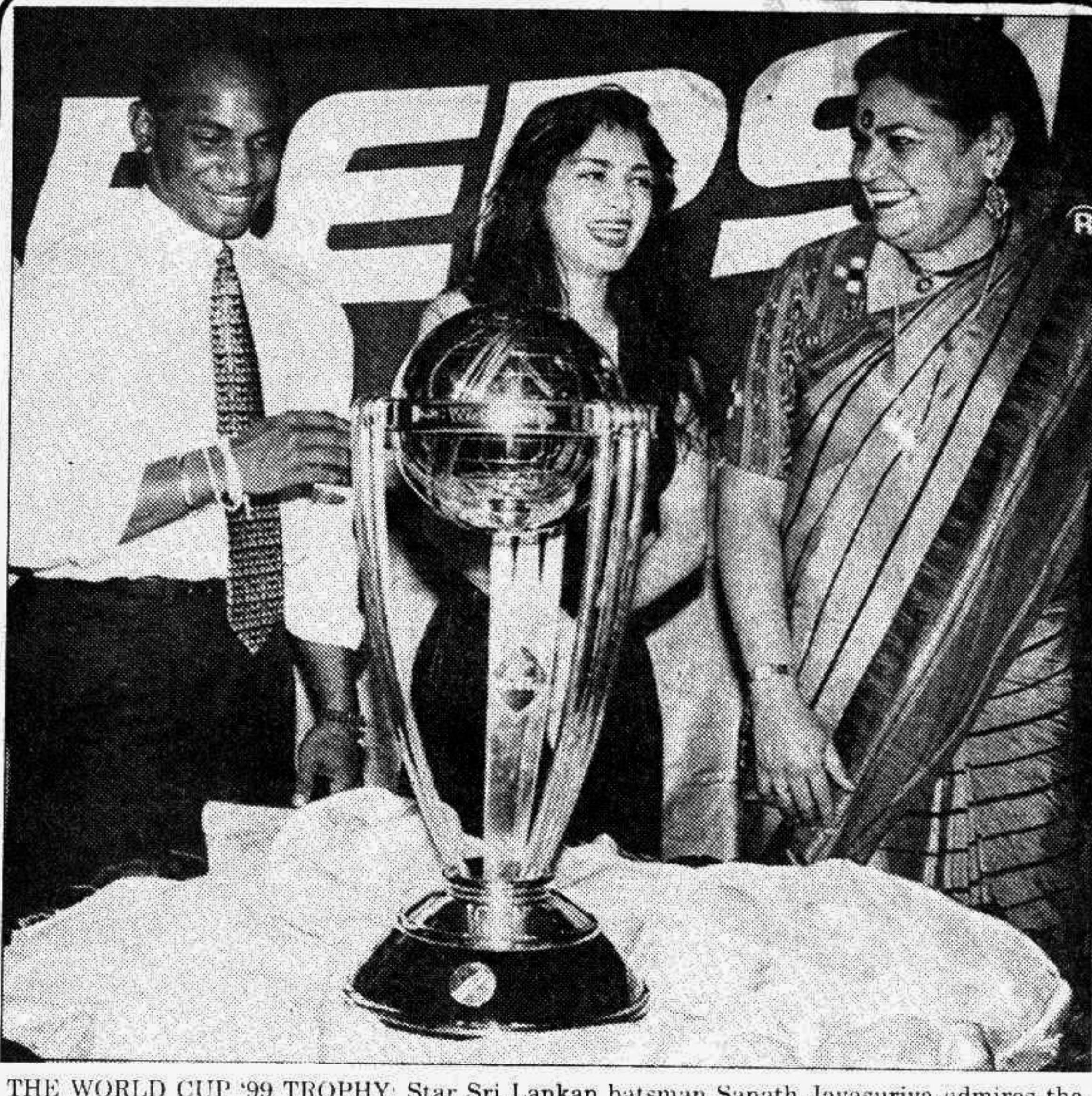
In the men's singles final, world number one Peter Gade Christensen of Denmark battled to his first All-England title with a 15-11, 7-15, 15-10 victory over Indonesian teenager Taufik Hidayat.

The experienced Dane had to fight all the way against his 17-year-old opponent, the youngest finalist in the men's singles since 1958.

Simon Archer and Jo Goode became local heroes when they took the mixed crown by defeating South Korea's Ha Tae-Kwan and Chung Jae-Hee 15-2, 15-13. It is the first gold for England since 1994 when Nick Ponting and Joanne Wright won the mixed doubles.

The men's doubles title went to Indonesia's Tony Gunawan and Candra Wijaya who beat South Koreans Lee Dong-Soo and Yoo Yong-sung 15-7, 15-5.

The women's doubles final was won by South Korea's Chung Jae-Hee and Ra Kyung-Min. They defeated China's Huang Sui and Lu Ying 15-6, 15-8.



THE WORLD CUP '99 TROPHY: Star Sri Lankan batsman Sanath Jayasuriya admires the coveted ware while popular Indian singers Usha Uthup (R) and Anaida look on during a function in Colombo yesterday.

—AFP photo

'SL in need of a victory'

COLOMBO, Mar 15 (AFP/ Internet): Sri Lanka's humiliating defeat in the Asian Test championship has affected morale and the team desperately needs a victory ahead of the World Cup, star batsman Sanath Jayasuriya said Monday.

Jayasuriya, who missed the three-nation Test series against India and Pakistan because of an injury, blamed poor batting for the loss to Pakistan in the final in Dhaka earlier Monday.

"That could have seen us through. Our batting failed," he said at a ceremony to show off the World Cup trophy that Sri Lanka will defend in England starting in May.

Sri Lankan skipper Arjuna Ranatunga and star spinner Muttiah Muralitharan also missed the final against Pakistan because of injuries.

"It is foolish to say that our morale has not been affected by the recent defeats. The only way to boost morale is by winning a recent interview.

"A score of 231 in the first

innings is not enough against a side like Pakistan."

Pakistan won the final by an innings and 175 runs.

"All we needed was for four players to do well. Two to make good scores and two to take wickets," said Jayasuriya.

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"It is foolish to say that our morale has not been affected by the recent defeats. The only way to boost morale is by winning a recent interview.

"A score of 231 in the first

few matches before we go for the World Cup," said Jayasuriya.

He said he had almost fully recovered from the right-hand injury suffered during a match in Australia. A metal plate had been inserted in the hand with seven bolts to keep it in place.

Jayasuriya will miss a triangular one-day series starting in India this week, though he will play in domestic matches before going to the World Cup.

Sri Lanka want to use the India series to re-launch their campaign and there could be a major revamp of the team.

"We plan to get more new people involved," Sri Lanka's Cricket Board President Thilanga Sumathipala said in a recent interview.

"What I'd like to do is to interchange more with Coccu and be nearer the centre. I'll have to speak with van Gaal.

"I can't spend all my time on the left. I scored two goals but I'm not enjoying it."

On the subject of his one-man support act for Giovanni, Rivaldo explained: "I just wanted to cheer him up. He's very sad at not playing."

Last season he scored the goal that won us the league title but now he's in a difficult situation."

Van Gaal, who was at pains to play down the double protest after the match, can at least be comforted by Rivaldo's insistence that he is happy at Barca — at least for the time being.

Rumours were circulating last week that Italian club AS Roma were trying to negotiate his transfer at the end of the season, something the Brazilian was quick to dismiss.

"It's all lies," he said. "I'm in the best club in the world and I'm not going to swap for one that's half the size."

Former AC Milan striker

Savicevic shone on his return to the Yugoslav league with a fine performance for Crvena Zvezda, while Hungarian Dejan

Tari, another former Serie A player, grabbed the winning goal for little BVSC Budapest in their shock win over title contenders Gyor ETO.

In the Czech Republic, Sparta Prague suffered an upset at the hands of mid-table Opava, a result which gives

hope to unlikely challengers

Teplice.

In Yugoslavia, leaders Partizan Belgrade continued their record-breaking run of form with a 3-0 away win over Mogen.

Mogen goalkeeper Darko

Ljubanovic, who joined the club from Partizan, could do nothing to stop former

team mates Vladimir Ivic, Nebojša Bajkovic and Ivica Ilev hitting the target.

Champions Obilić Belgrade, who trail Partizan by four

points, had an easy time away in Pristina, where they won 2-0 with goals from top scorer Ranko Rancic and Dragan Sarac.

Crvena Zvezda defeated their

lesser-known Belgrade neighbours Rad 3-1 to stay third, 12 points behind Partizan.

Goran Drulic opened the scoring for Zvezda and then

new signing Mihailo Pjanovic scored his first two goals since

joining the club in the winter break. Aleksandar Mutavdzic scored Rad's sole goal.

The match marked Dejan

Savicevic's return to Yugoslav football, with the crafty front man pulling on a Zvezda shirt after seven years with Milan.

Savicevic, who helped

Zvezda win the European Cup in 1991, showed plenty of his old

flair but still lacks match fitness and was substituted in the

67th minute.

In Hungary, MTK Budapest opened up an 11-point lead after

Rapid played the final 24 minutes with 10 men after

striker Daniel Pancu was sent off for dissent.

Albanian Albert Duro became the first foreign player to

wear the colours of Steaua Bucharest when he made his

debut in a 2-0 win over Universitatea Cluj. Marius Baciu and

newly-capped Romanian international Laurentiu Rosu scored the second half goals.

National Bucharest lost 1-0

against Otelul Galati, the first

home defeat that National, coached by Spaniard Ramon

Alexanco, have suffered this

season.

Sport

Rivaldo's tactical plea

BARCELONA, Spain, Mar 15 (Reuters/ Internet): Barcelona once again had cause to be thankful for the match-winning talents of Rivaldo at the weekend as the Brazilian celebrated his 100th game in Spanish football with two goals in a 3-0 win over local rivals Espanyol.

The win left Barcelona four points clear at the top of the table and on course to retain their domestic league title.

But, on a worrying night for his coach Louis van Gaal, Rivaldo hinted both on and off the pitch that he might be starting to lose his appetite for the Nou Camp life — despite his own sensational form.

Rivaldo celebrated his first goal, a quick response to some poor control from Patrick Kluivert that allowed the Brazilian to drag a shot in at the far post, by removing his shirt to reveal another Barca shirt — the number 10 of fellow Brazilian Giovanni, who is currently out of the Nou Camp reckoning.

That nudge to van Gaal was followed by a more surprising admission to the media as the Brazilian conceded: "I didn't enjoy that game at all."

Rivaldo has been asked by van Gaal to play on the left side of midfield for much of this season, inter-linking with Dutchman Phillip Cocu, who generally plays just behind him but in a more central position.

The switch outside has hardly been detrimental to his scoring record. Rivaldo has notched 15 league goals so far this season and should go on to better his tally of 19 last year.

But the former Deportivo Coruna marksman, one of the few players to shine for Brazil in their World Cup campaign in France, is clearly not enjoying his football as much as the Barcelona fans.

"I'm not enjoying playing on the left," he said. "Out there the balls take too long in arriving and by the time I'm in possession there's someone marking me."

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