

New bidding rules for 2006 Winter Olympics

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, Mar 19 (AP): The bidding for the 2006 Winter Games now comes down to 60 minutes in Seoul.

With the potential sites called off-limits for IOC members, the six cities vying for the Olympics are centering much of their efforts on a do-or-die, hour-long presentation June 18 at the IOC congress in South Korea, on the eve of the decision.

"In Seoul, those 60 minutes will be vital," said Dr Dieter Kalt, the general manager of the Klagenfurt, Austria, bid, a rank outsider compared to heavy favorite Sion, Switzerland, and Turin, Italy.

"We'll do that little extra for the Seoul presentation, make the quality of the film better," said Lance Kelly, the international coordinator for Sion's bid.

The ban on visits broke with years of persistent wooing of members with wining and dining, lavish gift-giving and other pampering, practices which are at the heart of the worst scandal in Olympic history.

Now the onus is on the little things, and a mass of paperwork mailed to every member, to make a difference. The old rules have gone.

"The race can start all over again," Kelly said.

Apart from Sion, Turin, Helsinki, Finland; Zakopane, Poland; Poprad-Tatra, Slovakia; and Klagenfurt are bidding.

Klagenfurt is sending its goodwill ambassador, skiing great Franz Klammer, to the United Nations in New York to promote the tri-nation bid from Austria, Italy and Slovenia as a symbol of international peace. It also wants to court the European Union with its symbolic bid for European unity.

But for many, Sion already has an unfair edge, since it bid twice before, receiving many of the IOC members for personalised visits now barred to the others.

"It's clear that if you bid three times, you have a psychological advantage," admitted Kelly.

In Seoul, a 15-member panel will trim the six hopefuls for 2006 down to a final pair, then immediately send that race to the general assembly for a ballot.

The bidding war between the cities had basically been suspended since December when the Salt Lake bribery scandal broke.

One thing that will surely rise now is paper consumption. Every city is making plans to let every member know the smallest in and out of the bid project. "Will they have time to read and look at it all," asked Martin Saraiangas, chairman of Helsinki's bidding committee.



Chelsea player-manager Gianluca Viali places the ball into the Varensa net to score his team's first goal in their European Cup Winners' Cup quarterfinal second leg encounter at Oslo on March 18.

— AFP photo

Cup Winners' Cup

Big four sail into semis



LONDON, Mar 19 (Reuters/Internet): In the European Cup Winners' Cup, holders Chelsea and favourites Lazio of Italy stay on course to meet in the final. Chelsea were drawn to play Real Mallorca while Lazio will face Lokomotiv Moscow. The semifinals are on April 8 and 22 with the final at Villa Park, Birmingham, on May 19.

The four favourites advanced to the semifinals with little difficulty on Thursday as Mallorca continued their dream first European season. The Spaniards beat Varensa 3-1 after a goalless first leg in Croatia to join Chelsea, Lazio and Lokomotiv Moscow in a predictable last four.

Holders Chelsea beat Varensa 3-2 in Norway for a 6-2 aggregate, Lazio cruised past Panionios 3-0 in Rome for a 7-0 aggregate and Moscow won 1-0 at Israel's Maccabi Haifa for 4-0 overall.

While those three had all laid their foundations with big victories in the first leg two weeks ago, Mallorca still had

work to do. The surprise package of the Spanish season -- they are fourth in the league and in the semifinals of the cup -- were in control from the start but could not find the net.

But two goals in two minutes early in the second half ensured victory for a team who have never won any sort of trophy.

Ariel Ibagaza got the first after 53 minutes and Veljko Paunovic doubled the lead as the Varensa defence fell apart.

Dani Garcia got the third after 75 minutes and Andrija Babacic's consolation header two minutes from time came too late to spoil the islanders' celebrations.

Greek outsiders Panionios said they were going to Rome purely for the experience and did not care about the result but Lazio, who rested almost all their first-choice players, seemed similarly uninterested in that Ed De Goey just managed to tip over.

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