

### Premier hockey from today, but..

**Sports Reporter**  
The return leg of the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League begins today, although the defending champions Mohammedan Sporting Club and their arch-rivals Abahani Krira Chakra have refused to field their teams under protest.

Mohammedan, who are scheduled to take on Azad SC in the first match, said that they would not field their team in protest against what they termed as unplayable the artificial turf at the Moulana Bhashani Stadium.

Although the league committee secretary Habibur Rahman said yesterday that the league would resume as per schedule, Abahani also sang the Mohammedan tune for the common interest of all the clubs.

It was learnt that the League Committee had earlier agreed to move the slippery portions of the turf in a meeting on March 27. It is reported that the imminent stalemate situation arose following a go-slow attitude of the Grounds Committee, which only yesterday started the re-ramp works.

Meanwhile, the League Committee has summoned an emergency meeting at 7 pm today.

### Zimbabwe announce WC 15

**HARARE, Apr 4(Reuters/Internet):** Zimbabwe were in upbeat mood as they named their final squad of 15 for the forthcoming cricket World Cup in England, describing it as one of the strongest to represent their country.

"I think this is probably one of the best teams we have assembled so far," Zimbabwe Cricket Union chief executive Dave Ellman-Brown told local media.

"It has a sound batting order and a good team of seasoned bowlers who include really good fast bowlers Healy, Streak and Henry Olunga and world class spinners Andy Whittall, Adam Hogg and Paul Strang," he said.

Zimbabwe's batting has been considerably strengthened by the emergence during the 1998-99 season of Murray Goodwin and Neil Johnson.

The impressive form of Goodwin and all-rounder Johnson has eased the burden on opener Grant Flower, whose batting propelled Zimbabwe to their recent success in the three-nation tournament in Bangladesh, and his brother Andy, the lynchpin of the team in recent years.

Alistair Campbell retains his place as captain of the squad which includes two black players, seamer Mpuemelelo Mbangwa and Olunga.

"Our cricket has come of age and I am sure we will do well at the World Cup and hopefully get to the super six (second round)," said Ellman-Brown.

#### SQUAD

Alistair Campbell (captain), Andy Flower (vice-captain), Grant Flower, Neil Johnson, Murray Goodwin, Stuart Carlisle, Dirk Viljoen, Guy Whittall, Paul Strang, Andy Whittall, Adam Hogg, Eddo Brandes, Henry Olunga, Mpuemelelo Mbangwa, Heath Streak.

### Div I cricket to start Wednesday

The super and relegation league matches of the Metropolitan First Division cricket will begin on Wednesday at the different city grounds, reports UNB.

Gopibagh Friends Association will take on Eskaton Sabuj Sangha at the City Club ground while City Club will encounter Dhanmondi Club at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium on the day.

Dhaka Wanderers Club will face Jatrabari KC at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium in the lone match on the following day.

Meanwhile, the Acme Metropolitan Second Division cricket league will begin on Thursday at the five different city venues.

Five matches will be held on the opening day.

Prograti Saha Sangha will meet Mill Barrack CC at the T&T ground; Amar Jyoti Club take on Gandaria CC at the Kalindi ground; Tejacon CC will play Azad SC at the Uttara Friends ground; Nabin Sangha will encounter West Jatrabari KC at the DOHS ground and Youngones will play Kakral Boys Club at the Mirpur Outer Stadium on the day.

### Ticket touts arrested in Mumbai

**MUMBAI, Apr 4:** Mumbai police has detected sale of bogus tickets for the Pepsi Cup tri-series one-day cricket final between India and Pakistan at Bangalore today with the busting of a gang involved in the counterfeit printing, reports PTI.

Six persons including the owner of the printing press were arrested late on Friday night following a raid on a private premises at Kamathipura in south Mumbai, they confessed that they had printed bogus tickets for the tri-series matches earlier held at Chennai and Pune, police said yesterday. They had also admitted to selling such tickets for the matches in Chennai and Pune as well as Bangalore, police said.

## Costa Rica hold Nigeria



LAGOS, Apr 4: Unfancied Costa Rica snatched a late equaliser to force a 1-1 draw and deflate Nigeria's celebrations in the opening game of the World Youth Championship on Saturday.



Nigeria's Hashimu Garba being tackled during their World Youth Cup opener at Lagos on March 3. The match ended 1-1. — Internet photo

reports Reuters.  
Championship on Saturday, reports Reuters.  
The Nigerian crowd were in buoyant mood as the tournament, taken away from them four years ago because of health and security fears, finally began. The 45,000 spectators expected to watch the hosts win the opening game, a result that appeared to be on the cards when Julius Aghahowa fired them ahead in the 20th minute.

But the Central Americans, regarded by local fans as little more than sparring partners, hit back with a penalty converted by captain Allan Melendez seven minutes from the end of the Group A game.

Nigeria dominated the first half against nervous opponents and could have gone in at half-time with more than one goal to their credit.

Aghahowa's goal capped a fine first-half performance by the 17-year-old, who plays for local club Bendel Insurance.

But, like his team, Aghahowa lost his way in the second half. Costa Rica made two substitutions, grew in confidence, created several chances and were finally rewarded when Esteban Santana was tripped by goalkeeper Sam Okoye.

"They are stronger than us but we fought a lot in the second half," said Costa Rica coach Carlos Watson.

Nigerian coach Tunde Disu said: "We threw our chances away because we lacked co-ordination in the new attack."

The game was played on a near-perfect pitch, which at least gave Nigeria an early in over those who believed they could not provide adequate facilities.

Watson also said his squad were happy with their treatment since they had arrived.

Germany meet Paraguay in another Group A game today.

There are two Group B games today in Kaduna, where Ghana meet Croatia in Kaduna followed by Argentina v Kazakhstan.

The two Group C matches in Ibadan are Australia v Saudi Arabia and Mexico v Ireland.

## Valencia stay in the hunt

**MADRID, Apr 4 (Reuters/Internet):** Valencia cranked up the pressure on Spanish Primera Liga leaders Barcelona on Saturday with a 1-0 win at Racing Santander.

Victory for Claudio Ranieri's side, secured late on through a header from Thomas Bjorklund, moved them second, just three points behind the Catalan giants.

Fourth-placed Deportivo Coruna, who went in to the weekend level with Valencia, six points off the pace, saw their own title aspirations fade as they were held 1-1 at home to Atletico Madrid.

Barcelona, who can reopen a six-point lead with victory over Oviedo on Sunday, lead the standings on 63 points, with Valencia second on 50 having played a game more. Deportivo

remain fourth on 48, behind Celta Vigo on goal difference.

Atletico had looked on course to give returning coach Radomir Antic a dream start to his second spell in charge at the club.

The Serb boss, who was reappointed coach in March after eight months away from the club, chose an attacking lineup, pairing Juninho with Juan Carlos Valeron in the midfield.

And the tactic paid an early dividend as Valeron gave his side the lead with a well-taken goal on nine minutes.

The Spanish international, picking up a loose ball just outside the area, waited past a couple of half-hearted challenges to plant a shot past Jacques Song'o.

Deportivo had most of the possession thereafter but were nervous in front of goal and were comfortably held by Atletico until halftime.

Five minutes after the break the home side passed up a great chance to equalise.

In a leading candidate for miss of the season, Pauleta Rencende was presented with an open goal 20 metres out following a miscued clearance from Atletico keeper Francisco Molina but succeeded only in striking a post.

The Portuguese striker made up for his error 11 minutes from time, though, as he managed to squeeze in a shot from just inside the area after another flap from Molina.

Atletico were against the ropes for the remainder of the game as Deportivo pushed hard for the victory.

They showed plenty of commitment as their defence held firm, though - an encouraging sign ahead of the first leg of their UEFA Cup semifinal against Parma on Tuesday.

### Watch out for flying urine

**LAGOS, Apr 4(Reuters/Internet):** Spectators at the World Youth championship have been told to beware of flying urine at matches.

The Sports Vanguard newspaper said youths had filled plastic bags with urine at Saturday's opening game between Nigeria and Costa Rica and then hurled them at unsuspecting supporters.

"When next you are coming to the stadium, endeavor to come with your umbrella," it suggested. "A lady got the baptism of urine and it was not funny."

### K'lautern lose, Bayern draw

**BONN, Apr 4:** A first-half goal by Germany striker Ulf Kirsten gave Bayer Leverkusen a 1-0 victory at champions Kaiserslautern on Saturday which sent them to second place in the Bundesliga, reports Reuters.

Kirsten, set up by Brazilian midfielder Emerson, struck from close range three minutes from the interval to enable Leverkusen to move ahead of Kaiserslautern on goal difference.

Leverkusen and Kaiserslautern, fighting for an automatic place in the Champion League, stayed 15 points behind runaway leaders Bayern Munich, fought back from two goals down to draw 2-2 at arch-rivals Borussia Dortmund.

Bayern were back on terms when goalkeeper Oliver Kahn saved a penalty from Dortmund midfielder Lars Ricken in the 73rd minute.

Each team had a man sent off.

The Munich Club had won their last eight league matches without conceding a goal and Kahn had not been beaten for a Bundesliga record of 736 minutes when Ricken profited from blunder by Bayern defender Michael Tarnat to set up striker Heiko Herrlich for the opening goal from close range in the 14th minute.

Herrlich made it 2-0 by racing into the box after Kahn had failed to clear a shot by Christian Nerlinger in the 32nd minute.

Bayern, playing their last match before visiting Dynamo Kiev for the first leg of their Champions' League semifinal on Wednesday, were reduced to 10 men four minutes later after Ghanaian defender Samuel Kuffour received his marching orders for a tackle from behind on Ricken.

Dortmund defender Stefan Reuter followed Kuffour off after a second bookable offence in the 51st minute.

Substitute Alexandre Zickler reduced the arrears from a Carsten Jancker pass in the 58th minute and Jancker levelled in the 63rd.

The match was a special occasion for Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld, who steered Dortmund to victory in the European Cup in 1997 and then became their sports director before moving to Bayern at the start of the season.

## Nakamura comes so near



**HONG KONG, Apr 4:** Japan's Mai Nakamura fell just short in her assault on the women's 200 metres backstroke world record today at the World Short-Course Swimming Championships in Hong Kong, reports Reuters.

She swam well ahead of the pack throughout the qualifying heat, more than four seconds in front, but finished just shy of the 2:06.09 world record set by China's Cihong He in 1993.

Nakamura, going flat out from the outset, clocked two minutes 06.42 seconds ahead of today's finals in the closing session of the four-day championships.

She is expected to take another shot at the record in the final. She also grabbed the gold medal in the 100 metres backstroke and the silver in the 50 metres backstroke in the championships.

After the 200 metres backstroke heat and final, her stamina will be tested today when she swims in the 4x100 relay medley.

Going head-to-head in the heats for the men's 200 metres individual medley were Australia's Matthew Dunn and Britain's James Hickman.

Dunn, ranked world number one in the event and world record holder for the 400 metres medley, seized the best time in the heat's with one minute 58.83 seconds, but Hickman, ranked number two, was close behind.

World record holder Jani Sieven of Finland was further back and well away from his record 1:54.65 in 1994.

The most likely record to fall in today's finals is the men's 1,500 metres freestyle, where Australian teenage star and world record holder Grant Hackett has vowed to beat the mark.

I've really been at ease in recent weeks, competing just for myself and enjoying it's a relaxed Hackett said on Saturday. He predicted records would tumble in coming months as swimmers push into top form ahead of the 2000 Olympics in Sydney.

Hackett, who rested on Saturday and this morning, set the 1,500 metres record in 1998 with 14 minutes 19.55 seconds.

He has set a blistering pace at the championships and biased his way to a 400 metres freestyle world record of three minutes 35.01 seconds on the second day, eclipsing teammate Ian Thorpe's record of three

minutes 39.82 in 1998.

Thorpe set a world record in the men's 200 metres freestyle on the opening day and was just behind Hackett in the 400 metres freestyle. He will show off his form again when he anchors the men's teams 4x100 medley relay in the final event.

He pulled the Australians ahead over a strong Swedish team with his closing freestyle sprint in today's heat. His team set the fastest time of three minutes 34.24 seconds.

The US team was disqualified from the 4x100 team medley for an early takeoff.

Slovakia's Martina Moravcova battled it out in the heats with world record holder Claudia Poll of Costa Rica in the women's 200 metres freestyle.

Moravcova broke her own European record on Saturday to win the final of the women's 100 metres individual medley, but Poll has lagged throughout the championships.

Moravcova turned in the fastest time in the heat, one minute 57.87 seconds, but Poll was a close second and the rivalry will be taken up again in the evening.

Australia and Japan will battle it out in the women's 4x100 relay medley after winning their morning heats.

## Can Reyna brave the 'braveheart' land?



**CHICAGO, Apr 4 (ESPN/Internet):** The strange journey of American midfielder Claudio Reyna took another twist on Thursday with the announcement that VIL Wolfsburg had agreed to sell him to Scottish league leaders Glasgow Rangers -- effective immediately.

Details were not announced by the club, but the Scotsman newspaper in Edinburgh reported the deal was worth 2.2 million dollars, some of which will go to Reyna.

Claudio Reyna is one of America's best young players, but can he hold up in the rugged Scottish Premier League with the Rangers. Reyna's credentials speak for themselves, and we are confident that he will contribute," Rangers manager Dick Advocaat said.

Reyna is expected to play his first match next Sunday.

Reyna is excited about making the move.

"I know that the Rangers-Celtic rivalry is one of the biggest in the world, and I want a chance to play in that game," Reyna said. "There's nothing like that in Germany."

"I think my stay in the Bundesliga had its ups and downs. I'm glad that I was able to finish on an up and help Wolfsburg accomplish some of its goals. I learned, and I got better as a player. I was treated well and fairly here."

The move comes at a heady time for the 25-year-old Reyna. He and his wife, Danielle, are expecting their first child any day (a boy, to be named Jack) and the move promises to continue -- in many soccer fans' minds, at least -- a rather charmed ascent.

Rangers clearly needs a player like Reyna. His strength is that he can hold the ball, and they need that settlement as they head into Champions League qualifying play.

Currently well atop the Scottish Premier League, they have a Scottish Cup tie with St. Johnstone on April 10. Reyna functions best as a complementary player anyway.

One of the most illuminating things about Bruce Arena's U.S. coaching tenure is how much better Reyna looks when paired with a player willing to do the dirty work -- like Chris Armas

and just how foolish Steve Sampson was to make Reyna "the man."

However, I have my worries. The team that he will be joining is so clearly stocked with talent that one wonders if even one of America's more talented youngsters can make a break into the starting lineup, despite Advocaat's endorsement.

But my trepidation has to do with Reyna's rep. Frankly, he is soft.

It is an open secret that he wanted out of VIL Wolfsburg, which followed an unhappy spell at Bayer Leverkusen. He had a disastrous World Cup, which could be summed up in one moment: when German midfielder Jens Jeremies socked him in the kidneys 20 seconds into the American's opening match, mysteriously removing Reyna for the rest of the tourney.

Reyna doesn't like to play hurt, and he doesn't seem to have a lot of fiber when push comes to shove. Since Reyna is so inarguably talented, one can be forgiven for wondering just what's going on in Reyna's mind.

Also moving from a league that is not only far better, but much faster in terms of play, to one that, realistically, can no longer produce teams that can compete at the European level, is an odd one.

While Rangers is clearly both more recognizable for U.S. fans and more prestigious overall, Rangers has yet to make a dent in any of the high-powered Euro competitions -- its last win was in the Cup Winners Cup in 1972. And despite routinely trading the top Scots spot back and forth between ancient rivals Celtic, the club is not exactly at the level of an Arsenal or a Real Betis.

The games differ dramatically as well. Bundesliga games emphasize ball-control, something Reyna is good at. Most

Scots matches are rough-and-tumble affairs -- and Reyna has proved not to be so good when the shots are coming his way.

Reyna also might face a conflict between Confederations Cup, where he will be expected to play for Arena, and the expanded Champions League qualifying which will include his new club. In years past, it almost wouldn't have been an issue, but with Confederations Cup now becoming a truly meaningful competition for the United States, whether to serve club or country will likely become the young man's first stern test.

One hopes the stay by the Clyde will toughen this young man up -- it would be good for him and for the U.S. national team. As Rangers is followed a bit more closely in the country than his last club, we shall all see, soon enough, for ourselves



DOING IT FOR THEIR HOMETOWN: Lazio's Yugoslav star Sinisa Mihajlovic wearing a T-shirt with the words 'Peace, No War' written on it, walks towards the fans along with teammate and compatriot Dejan Stankovic during a Serie A fixture against AC Milan at Rome on April 3. — Internet photo

### Protesting soccer-style

**ROME, Apr 4:** Lazio defender Sinisa Mihajlovic and fellow Serbian midfielder Dejan Stankovic drew loud applause from a partisan crowd as they entered the field at Rome's Olympic stadium wearing a black band on their left uniform sleeve to protest NATO raids on Yugoslavia, reports AP.

The two Serbian players embraced in front of Lazio fans before kickoff of Saturday's Italian league match against AC Milan and displayed white T-shirts under their jerseys reading -- in English -- "Peace No War."

Other Lazio players also wore the T-shirts, but not the band.

A group of Lazio supporters displayed a stripe reading "kill Private Ryan" as well as Nazi signs.

The slogan was a reference to the American feature film "Saving Private Ryan" that depicted the invasion of Europe during World War II.

Groups of Lazio fans are known to be part of right-wing extremist group.

Mihajlovic, a key to Lazio's success in the Italian Serie A this season, actively campaigned this week against NATO raids on his homeland and asked other Serbians playing in Italy to join Saturday's protest.