Decision expected next week on BskyB/MU deal

LONDON, April 9(Reuters/ Internet): The British government is expected to rule next week on controversial plans by pay TV company BSkyB to take over soccer club Manchester United Plc in a billion dollar

Executives at European Cup semifinalists United said last month that they expected a decision around April 13 on the controverisal takeover by BSkyB, which is 40 percent owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp.

United shares have fluctuated in the past few weeks on contradictory speculation about the likely decision. They hit a peak of 248p last month on hopes the deal would proceed but have since dipped to 219p on concerns it may be blocked.

The cash offer in the original 623 million pound (1 billion dollars) bid BSkyB agreed with United was 240 pence per share. Britain's Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC)

completed a five-month inquiry into the proposed deal on March 12. Its report has gone to British Trade Secretary Stephen Byers who must ultimately decide whether the deal can proceed.

"There is no real deadline. As I understand it, in 80 percent of cases, the government like to announce a decision within 20 working days, so that's how one arrives at April 13. We believe it will be around that time, United Finance Director David Gill said recently.

The takeover plan sparked heated protests from many in the game who argued that it would concentrate too much power in the hands of BSkyB. which has the rights to live coverage of English soccer's premier league under a contract which runs until 2001.

Newspaper reports this week said BSkyB had written to Byers stressing it would agree to conditions designed to deny it access to information from United about rival bids for future broadcast rights.

It has also said that United would not initiate a breakaway from the premier league, the reports said.

Passions also ran high over the Murdoch factor, with critics angry that the media magnate who owns four British newspapers could gain control of the nation's favourite soccer team.

Murdoch's involvement also complicated matters for the government, which enjoyed important support from Murdoch's Sun newspaper in the 1997 election compaign.

A green light for BSkyB to make a fresh offer is likely to lead to a flurry of bid activity among British soccer clubs as media groups seek tie-ups.

NTL Inc. one of Britain's leading cable companies, has an option to take control of premier league Newcastle United in a 160 million pound deal. It has said it will exercise it if the BSkyB takeover is cleared.

Baric agrees to coach Austria

VIENNA, Apr 9(Reuters/Internet): Croatian Otto Baric has agreed to replace Herbert Prohaska as coach of the recently humiliated Austrian national team, soccer officials said on Friday. Austrian federation presi-

dent Beppo Mauhart said Baric was the right man to lift the morale of a team crushed 9-0 by Spain on March 27 in a group six Euro 2000 qualifier. "Baric is the best candidate

considering the situation we are in at the moment. He knows Austrian soccer the best and can save our chances of qualifying," Mauhart said.

Baric, who left the financially struggling club LASK Linz in mid-January, is currently on holiday in France and unavailable for comment.

Mauhart will meet the 65year-old Croatian, the most successful coach in the Austrian Bundesliga, next week to discuss contract details.

"I am optimistic we will come to an agreement." Mauhart said.

Federation spokesman Wolfgang Gramann said Baric and Mauhart had already agreed to a basic contract and hoped to have matters settled before the middle of next week. Austria, who have never

qualified for the European championships, next host San Marino in Graz on April 28. Baric will become Austria's

25th coach since 1945 when he takes over from Prohaska, who quit two days after the 9-0 deba-

The man who led Rapid Vienna to the 1985 European Cup Winners' Cup final and SV Salzburg to the 1994 UEFA Cup final, will also become the team's first foreign coach since Slovenian Branko Elsner 13

years ago. Baric was born in the Austrian province of Carinthia and moved to Croatia with his parents at the age of four. He played for Dinamo Zagreb and Lok Za-

greb before yellow fever ended his active career. He led Austrian clubs to seven league titles (Innsbruck 1971, 1972; Rapid Vienna 1983. 1987, 1988; SV Salzburg 1994,

1995) and four Cup titles. He briefly coached Stuttgart in 1986, was the Croatian team's assistent trainer in 1996 and won the league and Cup double with Croatia Zagreb in 1997.

Confident Reynolds

JOHANNESBURGE, Apr 9: World 400-metre record holder Butch Reynolds is back on track for big time athletics, and success at the World Championships in Seville in August, is high on his priority list, reports

How the Frank Worrell McGrath may be rested from Trophy series went

ST JOHN'S, Apr 9 (AFP): The smile on Steve Waugh's face after Australia retained the Frank Worrell Trophy with a 176-run win over the West Indies in the final Test on Wednesday said it all - the

world order. The 33-year-old Waugh, whose batting in the series was only rivalled by his West Indian counterpart Brian Lara, must have been a relieved man after seeing his side level the series at

Aussies are still at the top of the

It was his first series captaining the Aussies since the

retirement of Mark Taylor. "To lose such a close one (the third Test by one wicket) and come back shows a lot of character. It was very important as this trophy means as much to us as an Ashes urn," Waugh

Waugh certainly had a baptism of fire with several of his frontline players showing signs of wear and tear-in particular leg-spinner Shane Warne.

Warne, who has even hinted at retirement, garnered just two wickets in the three Tests he played before Waugh and manager Geoff Marsh decided enough was enough and overruled Warne, a fellow selector, and dropped him from the final

The lack of effective firepower from Warne was barely improved upon by Stuart MacGill and the pair's lack of effectiveness put too much of a burden on pace spearhead Glenn McGrath, even though he responded in style taking 30

McGrath, nicknamed 'the pigeon, did not make many friends with the West Indies players, culminating in a fine of 30 per cent of his match fee for spitting on the pitch, although he was cleared of direct-

Batting

SR Waugh

JL Langer

MJ Slater

GS Blewett

ME Waugh

SK Warne

CR Miller

IA Healy

AC Dale

Bowling

Name

JN Gillespie

GD McGrath

MTG Elliott

-SCG MacGill

RT Ponting

GD McGrath

JN Gillespie

CR Miller

GS Blewett

AC Dale

SK Warne

SR Waugh

ME Waugh

Batting

BC Lara

SL Campbell

AFG Griffith

JC Adams

CL Hooper

RD Jacobs

NO Perry

CA Walsh

PT Collins

RIC Holder

LA Roberts

M Dillon

Bowling

CA Walsh

CL Hooper

NO Perry

M Dillon

reports AP.

Lamason said.

a decade.

happened last time.

sion for the next fight there and

we are awaiting a reply," WBC

executive secretary Eduardo

· "A lot of people are in favour

of that system, of announcing

the points at the fourth and

eighth round and the final score

at the end, especially after what

tion went even further Thurs-

day with a proposal to apply

"open scoring" - announcing

the points after each round - in

a coming fight, a system that

has not been used in more than

involved doubted it will work.

when the judges declared a draw

in the March 13 unification ti-

tle fight in New York's Madison

Square Garden between Lewis

and Holyfield. The fans and

almost everyone else thought

nouncing points at the end of

the fourth and eighth rounds

will diminish the chances of

The WBC hopes that an-

Lewis won handily.

But quite a number of people

A fierce controversy erupted

The World Boxing Associa-

JC Adams

PT Collins

CD Collymore

CEL Ambrose

Name

DRE Joseph

CD Collymore

CEL Ambrose

S Ragoonath

Name

SCG MacGill

199.4

108.2

119.3

208.

184.2

56.2

37.2

113

30

18

RT Ponting

Name

ing it at batsman Adrian Grif-fith — only a week after he had

enjoyed an exchange of words with Lara during the third Test. His 30 wickets, however, included the last wicket in the fourth Test to lift his career tally to 232 wickets in 49 Tests. at 22.60.

He set a new wicket-taking record by an Australian in a series in the Caribbean and was just three wickets short of the record for a series between the two teams, which was established over five Tests by Curtly Ambrose, Clarrie Grimmett and Alan Davidson.

McGrath's performances drew praise from all round, including a fulsome tribute from Lara, but the worry for the Australians is that without proper support he will suffer wear and tear. The younger Jason Gillespie, while an effective back-up, has already missed more Tests than McGrath.

Another of the Australians strengths going into the series, their batting, failed to live up to its billing with Matthew Elliott. Mark Waugh and Greg Blewett notable for being below par.

Justin Larger, though, showed that he looks like filling at last the huge gap left by David Boon at number three. His final innings of 127 was a masterpiece of patience and virtually assured the Aussies of their win.

What the batting really lacked, especially when they collapsed to 146 all out in the second innings of the third Test was the useful contributions of Ian Healy, although his wicketkeeping was still out of the top drawer.

The way Waugh singled him out for praise at the end of the final Test, saying he had a particularly great match, sounded more like a valedictory appreciation saying 'Thank you and goodnight to this veteran of over 100 Tests.

The Australians could be ex-

AUS-WITEST AVERAGES

AUSTRALIA

199

104

127

106

58

Ave

58.42

56.00

36.37

34.62

26.66

23.75

23.00

18.50

6.62

3.87

0.50

Best

5-28

4-18

2-39

2-9

3-41

2-67

1-70

Ave

12.00

16.93

21.90

22.00

29,33

31.66

WEST INDIES

134.00

Ave

91.00

28.14

25.00

24.00

22.50

20.42

20.14

17.75

17.00

8.83

5.66

4.33

2.80

23.52

0.00

0.00

Best

5-39

5-94

3-69

5-70

2-29

2-69

3-79

1-49

0.00

Ave

20.73

22.26

30.60

32.60

35.66

42.00

45.12

109.00

SR

32.30

42.85

31.49

43.62

31.87

62.72

64.91

20.47

38.68

35.22

10.00

65.00

34.74

24.39

32.74

42.65

42.94

43.78

44.65

28.33

44.53

29.82

30.95

18.42

to be a substantial

6 3 . 4

SR

24.0

39.9

59.0

76.0

57.0

59.7

60.0

50

SR

48.0

58.2

67.6

74.6

81.0

84.7

246.0

Source: Cricinfo

251.5

Œ

10

Econ

3.19

2.86

3.11

3.19

2.65

Econ

3.00

2.54

2.22

1.73

3.05

2.94

3.16

3.19

3.80

4.80

107.31

100

Runs

291

160

202

95

53

508

352

268

0 100

0 90

0 143

0 141

71

53

17

13

0 14

423

153

326

107

138

cused for performing below themselves as they had just come out of an exhausting Ashes series and one-day inter-

nationals.

Lara saved his captaincy, and revived the good name of West Indian cricket after the 5-0 drubbing in South Africa, with his quite superb double-century in the second Test, rescuing the home side from 36-4, and then with an even more remarkable 153 not out in the second innings of the third Test which scrambled the West Indies past the Aussies.

He was probably overstepping the mark with his overall view of the team's performances when he spoke after the fourth

"The team should be proud of their performances and we can look forward to regaining our position at the top," he said. The team does not look at all

strong when one takes the 45 wickets contributed by Courtney Walsh and Ambrose out of the equation. The lack of support for

Lara's batting also doesn't leave

many crumbs of comfort.

The West Indies were not helped by being without the stubborn qualities of Shivnarine Chanderpaul because of a shoulder injury while Carl Hooper, frustratingly inconsistent as ever, missed the first two Tests because of his seriously ill son, while Jimmy Adams hinted at a return to form with his 94 in the second Test.

Should all those combine to be fit and available at the same time, then allied to opening pair Sherwin Campbell, who scored a fine century in the third Test, and Griffith then the batting could be solid.

Bowling-wise, though, the cupboard looks bare and for all Lara's euphoric language they will surely find it very hard to return to the top of the world rankings.

one-dayers

ST JOHN'S, Antigua, Apr 9(Reuters/Internet): Australian strike bowler Glenn McGrath may be rested for much of the one-day series against the West Indies to ensure he is fit for the

World Cup campaign.
McGrath was a tireless performer during the four-Test series, drawn 2-2, and finished with 30 wickets. The first of seven one-day internationals is played in St Vincent on Sunday.

The reason why we bowled Glenn so much during the Test series is because there's not another Test match for four months, so he can have a bit of a break perhaps during the one-dayers," Waugh said.

"Then there's a couple of weeks off before the World Cup so he can recharge his batteries. If there was another couple of Tests coming up now we proba-bly would have had to hold him back a bit."

SQUADS

West Indies: Brian Lara (capt), Courtney Walsh, Carl Hooper, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Stuart Williams, Sherwin Campbell, Keith Arthurton, Philip Simmons, Curtley Ambrose, Ridley Jacobs, Jimmy Adams, Henderson Bryan, Mervyn Dillon, Nehemiah Perry, Reon King.

LAGOS, Apr 9
(Reuters/Internet) side two feated England files Australia: Stephen Waugh (capt). Shane Warne, Mark Waugh, Adam Gilchrist, Ricky Ponting, Darren Lehmann, Damien Martyn, Michael Bevan, Shane Lee, Brendon Julian, Damien Fleming, Adam Dale, Glenn McGrath, Paul Reiffel, Tom Moody.

Toyota Cup golf

The prestigious Toyota Cup golf was held yesterday at the Kurmitola Goff Club yesterday, according to a press release.

The tournament was inaugurated by Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen Muhammad Mustafizur Rahman, who is also president of the Kurmitola.

Vice-president of the club Maj Gen Hasan Mashud Chowdhury gave away prizes later the same day.

RESULTS Men's winner : Mainu Abelin Ladies winner: NS Lee Senior winner: Rear Admiral A A Mustafa

Junior winner: Reasat Best gross: Gurmeet Singh Ladies best gross: Kyung Sook

Second best gross: Sadiq Quddus Runner-up: Young Kee Lim Ladies runner-up : Jin Suk Yoon Second runner-up : A K M Belal Uddin

Front nine winner: Hetae Kyu Han Back nine winner: Sang Hwan Kim Nearest to pin : Mrs Hae Suk Han Longest drive : Syed Iqbal Azeem

McAllister retires from internationals

LONDON, Apr 9(Reuters/ Internet): Scotland captain Gary McAllister, jeered off the field during his country's 2-1 defeat by the Czech Republic six days ago, announced his retirement from the international game on Thursday.

The 34-year-old, capped 57 times, said the hostile treatment he had received from the Glasgow crowd and increasing pressure from the media had been behind his decision. "I am extremely disap-

pointed because I know I am still good enough to play at international level and contribute something to the Scotland side," McAllister told the Coventry Evening Telegraph. "But there comes a point

when that type of pressure from a certain section who are looking for me not to do well. whether that be the fans or in the media, becomes too much. "Last week's result against

the Czech Republic was a crescendo of a night which had a major bearing on my decision," McAllister said. The Coventry midfielder was substituted by coach Craig Brown in the 63rd minute of the

European Championship qualifier to save him from further attacks by the 44,000 crowd. The defeat saw the Scots slump to their first competitive defeat on home soil, in either World Cup or European quali-

fiers, since 1987.

Gianluca Vialli's side, who

First-half goals from Tenema N Diaye and Adama Coulibaly set Mali up for a 2-1 win over Portugal. Paulo Costa's 58th minute reply

Seattle Supersonic's Detlef Schremph (L) tries to stop Brian Grant of Portland Trailblazers

England bow to Cameroon

side definitely through. The top

two teams in each of the six

first round groups, plus four of

the six third-placed teams, all

Brazil and Uruguay both bounced back from opening meant they had some desperate match defeats to beat Honduras defending to do late on: and South Korea respectively The team from the povertywhile Zambia's draw with stricken Sahara desert nation, Spain meant that African which has never played at a seteams remained unbeaten in nior World Cup, beat Uruguay in their opening game and have During South Korea's game, maximum six points from two

qualify.

the Nigerian Broadcasting Cormatches in group D. poration placed an apology on Uruguay, who beat South Kothe screen for showing the rea 1-0 with Ernesto Chevanwrong flag during the country's ton's second goal of the tourfirst match. nament, and Portugal have England's 1-0 defeat was three points and the Asians their second by the same score-

during their NBA fixture at Seattle on April 8.

NIGERIA 1999 and Mali sprung

beating Portugal as the two

African teams qualified for the

second round of the world youth

championship on Thursday.

the competition.

of elimination.

another shock by

line and left them on the brink An own goal by Richard Cooper in the 64th minute gave The intricacies of the 24-Cameroon victory in the group team tournament mean that E match in Kano and left Engnobody has been knocked out land as the only team not to yet although England, Kazahave scored in the tournament. khstan, Honduras and South

Cooper deflected in a closerange shot by Gaspard Komol, Cameroon's two-goal hero in their opening win over Japan.

Mexico are the only other England created some late chances in a generally poor game but were kept at bay by 15year-old goalkeeper Idris Kameni, the youngest player in the

- AFP photo

tournament. In the group's other game, Japan beat the United States 3-I in Bauchi to leave both sides level on three points.

Two goals by Sao Paulo reserve midfielder Edu helped Brazil to a 3-0 win over Honduras in a group F match in Port Harcourt.

Midfielder Matuzalem scored the other goal to put Brazil third in the group on three points. Honduras opened brightly.

with striker David Suazo looking dangerous and nearly scoring with a long-range effort, but Brazil scored twice in three minutes shortly before halftime to fend off fears of an upset. Zambia and Spain each have

four points after their stalemate in Calabar earlier in the day. Both coaches agreed it was simply too hot for football.

"I must attribute the 0-0 draw to the heat," said Spain coach Inaki Saez, whose opinion was shared by his Zambia counterpart Patrick Phiri.

Bad habits start early



WIGERIA 1999 was writhing around on the pitch in apparent agony, clutching his leg, grimacing and screaming.

Korea, who have each lost both

their games, have only mathe-

matical chances of progressing.

Less than a minute later, having been carried off the pitch on a stretcher, he was running around the field as if nothing had happened to him. The incident in the 2-0 defeat by Ireland was hardly iso-

The first week of the world youth championship has shown that profesional soccer players pick up their bad habits at a depressingly early age.

The tournament has witnessed a flurry of diving and faking injury from 17, 18 and 19-year-olds, prompting FIFA president Sepp Blatter to reiterate the promise that he will clamp down on what he once described as "cheating."

Blatter admitted this week that he was amazed at the way

players recover from seemingly serious injury in seconds. He also pointed out that diving to win free kicks now

happens in all corners of the field and not just in the oppostion's penalty area. "One minute it appears that the player is dying on the field. But when he gets to the edge of

the field to be treated, he jumps up again. Maybe there is something magical in the African soil," said Blatter. Brazil's players, who come from a country where the prob-

lem is endemic, were diving all over the pitch during their game with Spain, which lost 2-0. In their case, the example has come from the top. On more than one occasion,

Ronaldo, Brazil's biggest idol, has won penalties for the national team with theatrical tumbles, the most outrageous coming in a friendly away to South Korea two years ago.

Brazil's neighbours Argentina, whose national team has often been criticised in the past for over-use of gamesmanship, have also been misbehav-

They had two players booked for diving in a 1-0 defeat by Ghana on Wednesday Blatter insisted that the new

law which comes into effect on July 1 will enshrine the principle that divers receive an automatic yellow card. But he said that referees do not need to wait until then to begin punishing offenders.

"Perhaps some referees have not been given these instructions yet," pondered Blatter, hinting he was not satisfied at the present situation. "But they should be applying this rule now because we are in a FIFA

competition.' Sometimes, however, justice

takes its own course. During Argentina's game with Ghana, German Rivarola ran past a couple of defenders but was halted with a foul on

the edge of the penalty area. He fell so theatrically, however, that the free kick was given to Ghana. And he was shown the yellow card.

Premiership preview



LONDON, Apr 9(Reuters/Internet): Chelsea, who earned a 1-1 draw in their Cup Winners' Cup semi-

final first-leg tie with Real Mallorea on Thursday have the chance to close in on Premiership leaders Manchester United and second placed Arsenal when they take on Wimbledon on Sunday.

are currently third in the table. are the only top team in league action over the weekend as both United and Arsenal will be busy with their FA Cup semifinal

Vialli may give first team chances to Uruguayan Gustavo Poyet, who had been suffering

from a knee injury, and Tore

Andre Flo. Wimbledon ended a run of three successive defeats with a draw against Manchester United before losing to Middlesbrough over the Easter period. Michael Hughes (groin) and Efan Ekoku (knee) are out

but Kenny Cunningham (hamstring) may return. Other Premiership matches over the weekend(League positions in brackets):

SATURDAY Aston Villa (6) v Southamp-

Aston Villa let slip a twogoal lead against Leicester City on Tuesday to extend their poor run to 10 games without a win. Paul Merson and Darius Vassell may be recalled after both scored in a midweek reserve

only six points from a possible 45 on their travels and have doubts over Egil Ostenstad Igroin). Stuart Ripley (calf) and Marian Pahars (knee). Matthew Oakley (rib) returns but Richard Dryden (knee) and goalkeeper

Southampton have taken

Paul Jones (back) are out. Derby County (7) v Nottingham Forest (20) Derby coach Jim Smith has

selection problems with Stefano Eranio (calf), Igor Stimac (ankle) and Rory Delap (knee) all out. Francesco Baiano (rib) and Mikkel Beck (toe) are doubtful, but Darryl Powell returns from suspension. Pierre Van Hooijdonk's last-

minute free-kick earned Nottingham Forest a point in a 2-2 draw with Liverpool on Monday and coach Ron Atkinson is likely to name an unchanged side. Stale Stensaas (groin) returns to the squad and club captain Steve Chettle hopes for a

Leicester City (14) v West Ham United (5) Leicester striker Tony Cottee

scored his 200th top-flight league goal against Aston Villa on Tuesday and his side have a doubt over Muzzy Izzet (hamstring). Gerry Taggart (influenza) and Steve Walsh (ankle) may

return. West Ham have won four of their last five games at Filbert Street and are boosted by the return of Ian Wright, out for three months with a knee injury. Rio Ferdinand (ankle) is out and Marc-Vivien Foe is away on international duty with Cameroon.

Middlesbrough (9) v Charlton Athletic (16) Middlesbrough moved up to ninth position with a 3-1 win over Wimbledon on Monday. but they have doubts over Keith O'Neill (ankle). Alun Armstrong

(hamstring) and Brian Deane (knee). Mark Summerbell (back) is out. Charlton moved out of the relegation zone with a 1-0 win over West Ham on Monday and coach Alan Curbishley will give

late fitness tests to Sasa Ilic (ankle) and John Robinson (ankle). SUNDAY

Everton (18) v Coventry City

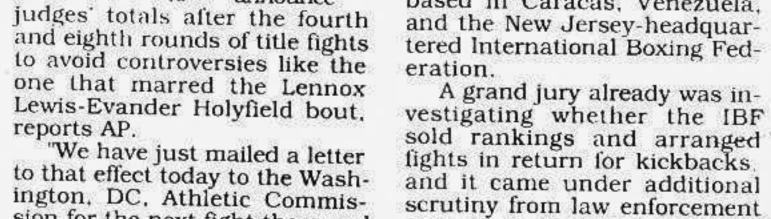
Everton have lost their last four matches and fallen into the drop zone and coach Walter Smith may recall Ibrahima Bakayoko to partner recent signing Kevin Campbell in at-

Gary McAllister announced his retirement from international football this week, but lines up for Coventry, who are unbeaten in six premier league visits to Goodison Park. They have doubts over Steve Froggatt (hamstring).

MONDAY Leeds United (4) v Liverpool

Leeds United are chasing a club record eighth consecutive win and they welcome back David Batty after a rib injury. William Korsten is also doubtful after picking up a knock.

Points system may be changed MEXICO CITY controversy erupting over deciat the same time." Apr 9: The World Boxing Council Lewis held the WBC heavyproposed a new weight crown, while Holyfield system Thursday held the title for both the WBA open scoring," Linde said. announce based in Caracas, Venezuela,



agencies in New York after the Holyfield-Lewis bout. In the letter, WBC president Jose Sulaiman proposed the new system be implemented in time for the middleweight fight between Hassine Cherifi of France and American challenger Keith Holmes scheduled

for April 24 in Washington. The judges' names would not be made public — they would be designated as A, B, and C — and only the local boxing commis-sion and the WBC would know them. Sulaiman's proposal

Holmes fight. "The intent of open scoring is to let the public and the boxers know how the judges are scoring each round as the fight progresses," WBA vice president York Van Nixon said. "It will allow parties to know how the fight is going and remove doubt

The WBA's announcement

said it will use open scoring

when Sharmba Mitchell de-

fends his super-lightweight

world title against Reggie Green

on the same card as the Cherifi-

But Green's manager Barry Linde, among others, expressed his doubts. "I'm not against



French cyclist Laurent Jalabert receives congratulatory kisses after retaining the overall leader's yellow jersey after the fourth stage of the Basque Country Tour in Lekumberri, Spain on April 8. - AFP photo