Brown hits the first ton

LONDON, Apr 16: Warwickshire's Scottish all-rounder Dougle Brown narrowly beat the Leicestershire players Paul Nixon and Chris Lewis to the first century of this season's county championship with an unbeaten 126 against Northamptonshire on Thursday, reports

Brown, who has represented England at one-day interna-tional level, was batting on the second day of his county's fourday game at Edgbaston.

His contribution helped the home side compile 300 for nine before rain stopped play in midafternoon. Former Test fast bowler Devon Malcolm took 6-116.

Nixon, with 121, and allrounder Lewis, who made 139, shared a sixth-wicket partnership of 228 against Essex, last season's bottom club.

The defending champions were all out for 424 for a first innings lead of 172.

After a delayed start at Chester-le-Street, Durham lost four wickets edging past Worcestershire's first innings total of 152. John Morris and

Jon Lewis made half-centuries. The Birmingham-born Australian Andrew Symonds made 69 on his Kent debut against Middlesex at Lord's. Robert Key, a 19-year-old, top-scored with 86 in a Kent total of 286 — 32 runs ahead on first innings.

At The Oval, Surrey's England leg-spinner Ian Salisbury took five for 44 as Gloucestershire were dismissed for 213 -129 behind.

Surrey were 156 for five in their second innings at the close, with opener Mark Butcher leading the resistance on 98 not out. Left-arm seamer Mike Smith, who took 4-93 in Surrey's first innings, struck again with 4-23.

Play was washed out on the third day of Lancashire's match against Sussex at Old Trafford. just as on the first day.

Jamie Cox, the Tasmanian who has joined Somerset as their overseas captain, made 139 on his debut in a friendly match against Cambridge University at Fenner's.

Beckham in PFA's honours list

LONDON, Apr 16: Manch-ester United midfielder David Beckham was the only Englishman nominated Friday for England's Professional Footballers' Association player-ofthe-year award, reports AP.

Joining Beckham on the shortlist were United's Irish captain Roy Keane and Tobagan striker Dwight Yorke, Arsenal's Dutch striker Dennis Bergkamp and French midfielder Emmanuel Petit and Tottenham's French forward David Ginola.

Beckham, who was sent off in England's loss to Argentina in the Frence '98 World Cup, has bounced back with some brilliant performances in United's chase for the league, FA Cup and European Champions Cup ti-

Keane has returned from a knee injury and played a vital role in United's midfield this season

Yorke leads the Premier League with 26 goals since his 12.6 million pound (20.1 million dollars) transfer from Aston Villa.

Bergkamp has recovered from a post-World Cup slump and chimed in with some crucial goals as the Gunners attempt to defend their FA Cup and league titles. However, he missed a penalty in Arsenal's FA. Cup semifinal defeat to United on Wednesday.

Petit, a star of France's winning World Cup campaign, was named to the list despite earning three red cards this

season. Ginola has returned to his attacking best since George Graham took over at Tottenham and has played a key role in Spurs' league.

Montpellier hope for the best

PARIS, Apr 16 (Reuters/ Internet): Montpellier travel to Metz for the French League Cup semifinals on Sunday, hoping to break an embarrassing semifinal jinx.

The club from southern France, French Cup losing finalists in 1994, have played five cup semifinals in the last five seasons and lost the last

"It is time for that curse to end," said manager Michel Mezy, the only man with striker Laurent Robert to have taken part in all four defeats.

To avoid yet another disappointment. Montpellier have decided to prepare for the match away from their fans, hoping to lift their first trophy since winning the French Cup in

The good news for them is that they will be playing away from home. A gifted but inconsistent side, they have not won a league match in their La Mos-

son stadium since December. Metz will be out for revenge

too as they are going through their worst season in years. Runners-up to Lens in the French First Division last season, they are fighting this time to avoid relegation, having failed to win once in their last

six league matches. Their record almost looks good compared with that of Sochaux, who have not won in 15 league matches.

They travel to Lens on Saturday with slim expectations, as the reigning French champions have pinned their last hopes of making it into the UEFA Cup on this competition.

Coach Daniel Leclercq hopes his players, who have lost their last three matches, will rise to the occasion.

"To lose against the bottomplaced team would amount to a humiliation," he warned.

Favalli has unfinished business at Lazio



years ago in Saturday's vital Serie A clash against Juventus. Favalli was owner Sergio Cragnotti's first signing when he joined from Cremonese in 1992 and an early example of the new president's determination to build a title-winning

Injury has recently relegated Favalli to the bench but the suspension of four first-choice defenders -- Giuseppe Pancaro. Paolo Negro, Sinisa Mihajlovic and Alessandro Nesta -- means the left-back will make the starting line-up.

Favalli returns to find Lazio faltering within sight of the fin-

Wenger urges F.A. to call off friendly

LONDON, Apr 16 (Reuters/ Internet): Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger urged the English Football Association on Friday to cancel England's friendly international against Hungary on April 28 to save players being injured at a critical stage of the season.

Wenger, whose side could provide up to four players for the squad as they attempt to retain their premier league title, said: "I'm reluctant to let the players travel to Hungary, partly because they may get injured at a critical stage of the season and also partly because of the situation in the region. "I would ask the F.A. to can-

cel the game. It would be wise to If our players are included I will respect it because there is no real choice. But I just think that it will be intelligent to can-

cel the game. What will probably happen is that many players won't go. so it will not be a good advert for English football. I can only give my feelings to the F.A. on this matter, but they must make their own decision.

Goalkeeper David Seaman, defenders Tony Adams and Martin Keown, and midfielder Ray Parlour were in the squad for England's recent international against Poland, and are all likely to be called up again for the Hungary match.

England's caretaker manager Kevin Keegan expressed his doubts about the match earlier this month, saying, like Wenger that it was ill-timed as the climax to the season approaches." Wenger added: 'Kevin Kee-

gan has said that he does not want the game. I don't think the players want it and I would say that 99 per cent of managers would say the same." The Hungarian F.A. said ear-

lier they were puzzled by Keegan's comments and as far as they were concerned the match was definitely going ahead.

Wenger, meanwhile, has backed Dutch striker Dennis Bergkamp to bounce back from the disappointment of missing a last-minute penalty in Wednesday's 2-1 F.A. Cup semifinal replay defeat by Manchester United.

He added: "He is particularly down and he feels very responsible. But he should feel responsible for all the times he has helped the team to win.

ishing line.

With six matches remaining. the Rome side are four points clear of second-placed AC Milan but lost their club record 17match unbeaten run last weekend with a humiliating 3-1 defeat by city rivals AS Roma.

Milan have the advantage of playing at sixth-placed Udinese on Sunday knowing how their championship rivals have fared.

The pressure of landing a first title since 1973 has started to tell on Lazio -- suggestions that nerves are involved have prompted a club, ban on media interviews until the end of the

Last week's first derby defeat in four years certainly left physical and mental scars.

Nesta and Mihajlovic, both sent off, have been suspended for three matches and one match respectively. Injury doubts hang over Argentine midfielder Matias Almeyda and

Yugoslav Dejan Stankovic. Reigning champions Juventus are in no mood to surrender

The seventh-placed side need to finish in the top four to guarantee a place in the European Champions' League if they do not win the current competi-

Either way, the Turin club will look to Saturday's match as a morale-booster ahead of Wednesday's European Cup semifinal second leg against

Manchester United at the Delle

Alpi stadium. "I imagine they (Lazio) will want to demonstrate their value, but we are Juve, "warned striker Filippo Inzaghi on Fri-

Coach Carlo Ancelotti is likely to field a full-strength side apart from injured Uruguayan central defender Paolo Montero and the unsettled Zinedine Zidane, still struggling with a knee injury. French midfielder Didier Deschamps may also be rested. By contrast, Lazio coach

Sven-Goren Eriksson will play Atilio Lombardo in the unfamiliar position of right-back while Portugal's Fernando Couto is expected to recover from a knee injury to partner Australian defender Paul Okon at the heart of defence.

Okon has been plagued by injury for the past two years and has not started a serie A match since April 1997.

Out-of-form forward Marcelo Salas may be rested, allowing Roberto Mancini to partner Christian Vieri after persistently playing the gifted striker out of position in mid-

Lazio have beaten Juventus in the league and Italian Supercup final this season.

But when the visitors won at the Olympic stadium exactly a year ago, Lazio failed to triumph again for the rest of the season.

Klinsmann wants Matthaeus there



16(AFP/Internet): Former Germany striker Juergen

invited rival Lothar Matthaeus to his farewell game on May 24. in Stuttgart but only as a spectator, it was revealed Thursday. Matthaus, 38, is still playing

but newly retired 34-year-old Klinsmann, his teammate in West Germany's 1990 World Cup winning side, decided the Bayern Munich sweeper could not take the field - a decision that may be due to the well-docu-



MATTHAEUS

mented tension that soured relations between the two, notably during their days together at Bayern.

However, the former Stuttgart, Inter Milan, Monaco and Tottenham striker wants Matthaeus there as a fan.

Klinsmann's decision not to pick any current German internationals may have something to do with the fact that the Ger-

man football federation organised a farewell match for Matthaeus but not for him.

The match will feature "VfB All Stars" - all former Stuttgart players - against Juergen's Dream Team. At Bayern both players

formed their own cliques and Matthaeus once accused Klinsmann of pressuring former Germany coach Berti Vogts into not selecting him. But Klinsmann said: "I cele-

brated my greatest successes with Lothar, we were world champions together (1990) and we played together at Inter Mi-



KLINSMANN

"Matthaeus was part of my career even though we did not always see eye to eye."

Twelve World Cup-winners and a plethora of internationals from 14 countries have accepted invitations from Klinsmann to play.

The profits will go to various good causes and some money has already been given to the Kosovo fund.

ASEAN Cup Golf Danial, the day's Don

Sports Reporter

Brig Danial Islam became the Men's champion and Naoko Yamauchi the best among the women yesterday in the reputed ASEAN Cup Golf Tournament on the green expanse of the Kurmitola Golf Club.

The event was also participated by a good number of ladies.

President of the Kurmitola Golf Club and Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. M. Mustafizur Rahman, BB, teed-off the competitors in the morning and gave away the prizes in the

FINAL RESULTS Men's winner: Brig Danial Islam Ladies'winner: Naoko Yamauchi

Senior winner: Moshin A Khan Junior winner: Salman Khan Best gross: Tareq Taher Ladies' best gross: Georgina Narayan

Men's Runner-up: Sang Wook Ladies' runner-up: Farzana Islam Men's Second runner-up: Zia

Siddique Front nine winner: Faisal Khan Back nine winner: Arshi Haider Nearest to pin (men): Tapan Chowdhury Nearest to pin (ladies): Hae Sook Han Longest drive (men): Imran

Longest drive (ladies): Yashimi Cup Winners' Cup

Ahmed

Al Ittihad in final

TOKYO, Apr 16: Al Ittihad, aiming to bring Saudi Arabia their third straight title, beat Al Talaba of Iraq 3-1 here today in the semifinal of the Asian Cup Winners' Cup, reports AFP. Defender Mohammad Al Sahafi opened the scoring in the 20th minute with striker Dalian Atkinson making it 2-0 six minutes later.

The Iraqi side hit back in the 36th minute with a goal. through Qahtan O Drain. But Saudi substitute Ahmed Bahja put the Saudis further ahead with a goal in the last minute of the match at the National Stadium.

Al Ittihad will face Chunam Dragons in Sunday's final after the South Koreans beat J-League champions Kashima Antlers 4-1 in the other semifi-

Saudi Arabia won the Cup in the past two years through Al Hilal and Al Nasr.

Girondins lack practice

BORDEAUX, France, Apr 16 (Reuters/Internet): Unlike most teams in modern soccer. French First Division title contenders Girondins Bordeaux are complaining they are playing too few games these days.

The Girondins largely have themselves to blame for the peculiar situation as they have been ousted from both domestic cups and lost to Parma in the UEFA Cup quarterfinals last month.

As a result, Bordeaux had been 11 days without a competitive game when they hosted lowly Lorient this week and they will have a 10-day gap before their next match against bottom-placed Sochaux -- a meagre three matches in one month.

Coach Elie Baup believes this lack of competition accounts for his team's sluggish performance against Lorient (0-0). The draw allowed Olympique Marseille, who crushed Nancy 4-0, to take over at the top of the standings.

their 3-0 win in Toulouse on April 3. "The problem is that players struggled to put themselves in a

competitive spirit. At times. they forgot about it because matches were so remote," he The absence of matches was the reason given by striker Syl-

vain Wiltord for failing to return from Easter holidays in time for training last week. The leading goalscorer in the first division was fined by his team but he was below par

against Lorient. France's fine results in recent years, in the World Cup and in European Cup competitions, might have had an influence on the schedule as French soccer officials tried to protect the national team as well as teams left

in the UEFA Cup. Bordeaux's arch-rivals Marseille meet Bologna in the UEFA Cup semifinals next

Chief of Army Staff and Kurmitola Golf Club president Lt Gen Mustafizur Rahman, BB, teeing off the ASEAN

Blatter's vision of future



movement.

ZURICH, Apr 16: FIFA president Sepp Blatter is pressing ahead with plans to overhaul the in

ternational soccer calendar to reduce match congestion and ultimately achieve his dream of a World Cup every two years, reports AP. At a wide-ranging news con-

ference Friday, Blatter glossed over opposition from European clubs and said an outline of the new calendar, which envisages a February-November season, should be ready by the end of this year. "It is feasible and the will is

there," Blatter said. Blatter also stressed that soccer's governing body was in good shape, with controls in place to prevent corruption scandals of the type that rocked the international Olympic

FIFA has a limit of 100 dollars on gifts from candidates bidding to host big tournaments and recently sent out guidelines on how national associations should spend grants. FIFA claims it is easier to prevent corruption among the 24-member Executive Committee which decides on the awarding of the World Cup - than the 100-plus members of the International Olympic Committee.

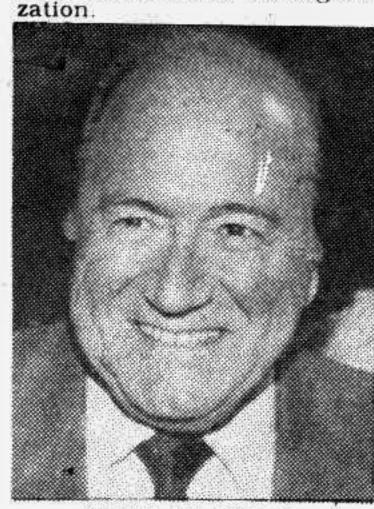
But Blatter, a Swiss former army colonel, ruled out setting up an independent investigation into claims made in a book by an English journalist that he bribed his way to victory in the race for FIFA presidency against UEFA president Lennart Johansson last year.

Blatter said there was already an inquiry conducted by a Swiss court, which has taken out a temporary injunction to stop the sale in Switzerland of "How They Stole the Game." by David Yallop.

"What I can not accept - and

the Executive Committee is 100 per cent behind me - is that my personal and moral integrity

should be questioned." Blatter Blatter, general secretary of FIFA for 17 years, was elected as its president last June to succeed Joao Havelange of Brazil. Since then, he has moved to make his mark on the organi-



SEPP BLATTER

He wants national leagues to cut their teams to 16, with 44 weeks set aside for clubs to play two games a week and specified dates for national league and cup matches, continental club championships and national team games.

If all leagues worldwide played between February and November, then players would have two months to relax and prepare for the next season. Blatter says better coordination would reduce competing demands on players who are called to play for their club and national team at the same time.

"The clubs should be happy as they would have all 11 players at their disposal." Blatter

But the plan has run into opposition in Europe, which generally begins its domestic season in July or August. German clubs are among those who have blasted the idea, saying that FIFA wants to increase international competitions at their expense. There have some suggestions that UEFA should pull out

of FIFA competitions. "There will be no boycott." Blatter insisted.

When — and if — the calendar is streamlined, then Blatter wants a biennial World Cup. taking place in odd years to avoid clashing with the Olympic Games.

Blatter said the continental championships - currently held every two years everywhere apart from Europe would act as qualifiers for the World Cup. There would thus be no need for additional World Cup qualifiers - which amounted to about 600 matches for France '98.

"We have to diminish the number of matches the player has to play every year," he said. On other matters, Blatter:

- ruled out FIFA getting involved in any potential sporting sanctions against Yugoslavia because of the Kosovo conflict.

"I can only regret what is happening at the end of the 20th century," he said. "FIFA will not interfere in this conflict."

- said he was happy with the security, stadium and logistical standards at the ongoing World Youth championships in Nige-

— reiterated his view that the 2006 World Cup should be awarded to Africa. South Africa, along with England and Germany, are regarded as favourites to host the competi-

- said FIFA would continue to study the possibility of having two referees in matches but ruled out more electronic surveillance to improve the accuracy of decisions.

Real have all but given up

championship aspirations but

they can restore some pride

with a Bernabeu win over third-

Lazio's Nesta

contests ban

ters/Internet): Lazio captain

Alessandro Nesta appeared

before a disciplinary commis-

sion on Friday to contest a

three-match ban handed down

after last weekend's Rome

minute of the torrid match

against AS Roma, which lead-

ers Lazio lost 3-1. He ripped off

his captain's armband after the

Nesta was sent off in the 81st

MILAN, April 16 (Reu-

placed Valencia on Sunday.

Barca embark on revenge mission

Both sides are at full

strength, with Luis Enrique and

Abelardo Fernandez set to re-

turn for Barcelona and Mal-

lorca happy that Argentine

striker Leonardo Biagini ap-

pears to have shaken off a mus-

in the season came when a re-

vamped Barcelona had yet to gel

as a team and were struggling

cerned his team will be coming

up against a very different

proved a lot over the course of

the season," Cuper conceded.

"They're playing like winners at

the moment, week in week out.

and it's going to be difficult for

Barcelona this time around.

And Hector Cuper is con-

"Barcelona's game has im-

Mallorca's victories earlier

Thursday.

cle strain.

with injuries.



Spain. Apr 16 (Reuters/Internet): Barcelona's next four Primera Liga games, starting with an intriguing Nou Camp clash against Mallorca

side the chance to show just how far they have travelled in four extraordinary months. The seven-point lead Barcelona currently enjoy at the top of the table is all a far cry from December when Louis van Gaal's side were 10th after a run

on Saturday, give the Catalan

of four successive defeats and a deflating European Cup exit. Those defeats were by Mallorca. Atletico Madrid, Deportivo Coruna and Villarreal -- their next four opponents in the league -- and together led to sustained calls for van Gaal's departure.

But Barcelona's recovery from that bleak mid-winter period has been remarkable. Van Gaal's side have taken all but five of the last 45 points on offer and victory in their next four games would all but secure the league title for the second successive year.

The first game of the quartet, against fourth-placed Mallorca, a team who have already beaten Barcelona three times in league and cup this season, would appear to be by far the most diffi-

But the Catalans should be

helped by an inevitable distrac-

tion for Mallorca -- their Euro-

maintain any hope of catching

Mallorca, distracted by their first European adventure, have slipped eight points behind the leaders and defeat on Saturday would leave them with few options in the title race. Also needing victory to

Barca are Celta Vigo and Valencia, who are both in action on Sunday. Celta, in second place, have what should be a comfortable home game against lowly

The Basque side surprised

Deportivo Coruna 2-1 last

weekend, however, and Celta

will have to guard against com-

Alaves.

us to take something away from dismissal and had to be pushed the Nou Camp. away by team mates as he gestured and shouted at the referee. His dismissal earned him an automatic one-match ban but the Italian Football League trebled the suspension for dissent. Yugoslav defender Sinisa

Mihaljovic and Roma's Brazilian forward Paulo Sergio were also sent off in last Sunday's match. Lazio's first league defeat since November 22. The dismissals, and bookings to full backs Paolo Negro

champions Juventus on Saturday without their entire first team defence. If Nesta's appeal fails he will also miss Lazio's visits to Sampdoria and in-form Udinese.

and Giuseppe Pancaro, mean

Sven Goran Eriksson's side face

Pan-American Games

Tickets not selling

WINNIPEG, Manitoba, Apr 16 (Reuters): With just 99 days to go before the opening ceremony of the 1999 Pan-American Games, lagging ticket sales have become the primary concern of Games organisers. Of an estimated 600,000

tickets expected to be sold for

the multi-sport Games, only

about 181,000 had been spoken for as the 99-day countdown began Thursday with the unveiling of a digital countdown clock at the historic Winnipeg intersection of Portage and Main. "We all know that Winnipeggers wait until the last moment and it'll always be a concern of ours. I would say that ticket

sales is the most urgent and ma-

jor concern," said Don

MacKenzi, CEO of the July 23 to

August 8 Games.

MacKenzi believes that as competitors and event rosters are finalised, sales will pick up. Next Tuesday in Toronto, world 100 meters record holder Donovan Bailey, who has been nursing an Achilles tendon injury, is expected to confirm he will be ready to compete in the

Pan-Am Games athletics. Organisers are counting on Bailey, who is under contract with Pan-Am to promote the Games, and other high profile Canadian athletes to generate excitement and ticket sales after two marquee events lost much of their luster.

South America's soccer association dealt the Games a blow by refusing to send any teams to Winnipeg after demands of millions of dollars in financial compensation were

The basketball tournament also became a lot less enticing

when the United States an nounced its team will likely consist of Continental Basketball Association players rather than the nation's top college stars. The CBA consists primarily of players not good enough to play in the NBA, while a squad of top college players would likely feature future NBA

Overall, venue preparations were going well. MacKenzie reported, despite an unexpected glitch at the cycling velodrome. Although the plans had been approved by the International Cycling Federation's technical delegate. officials in Switzerland were balking at the lack of

tunnel access to the track and infield as rules stipulate. We're quite surprised that they would come back to us at the 11th hour to discuss the tunnel... Like all sporting events, there's always issues to be dealt with at the end," said MacKenzie, adding that an alternate proposal was in the works.

Transportation plans had yet to be finalised, but Winnipeg Transit's specialised services manager Jarvis Kohut was confident their strategy would avoid the nightmares of the 1996 Atlanta Ölympics.

"We have 100 new buses and all others will be in working condition to alleviate the Atlanta headache of buses breaking down mid-route," Kohut said.

"We have asked for extra drivers from other cities but they would be assigned only the simplest routes," he added in reference to out-of-town drivers getting lost in Atlanta. MacKenzie said he is certain

the event will come in on budget and added that organisers' confidence in the success of the Games was growing, despite

concerns over ticket sales. "Operation-wise, we've probably got a pretty good handle on all of the divisions," he said. "That's not to suggest we

don't have a few bumps. We'll

always have a few bumps but

those are farther and fewer be-

tween and much easier to deal

Jones, Johnson bout June 5

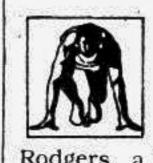
NEW YORK, Apr 16: Roy Jones Jr says he cannot resist a challenge. Well, the WBC-WBA light heavyweight champion could get one when he fights IBF champion Reggie Johnson in a 79.4- kilo (175-pound) title unification bout June 5 in Biloxi, Mississippi. reports AP. "This is the biggest fight of

Roy's career, and it's the biggest fight of my career," the lefthanded Johnson (39-5-1, 24 knockouts) said Thursday, Jones is 39-1 with 33 knockouts. The 30-year-old Jones, a

former IBF middleweight and super middleweight champion, won the WBC light heavyweight title in 1996, lost on a disquali- · fication to Montell Griffin in 1997 and regained the title with a first-round knockout of Griffin later that year. The 32-year-old Johnson

won the WBA light heavyweight title in 1992 and lost it in 1993. After failing twice to regain it, he became IBF champion by knocking out William Guthrie in the fifth round Feb 6, 1998.

'Boston Billy' will be there pean Cup Winners' Cup semifiplacency following their 5-1 nal decider against Chelsea on waltz past Real Madrid. "Two weeks without a match is a difficult situation to handle," said Baup, referring to the "I run for marks," Rodgers BOSTON, Apr 16: Rodgers staggered across the gap between their tie against said. "I've got my sights set on There will be a finish line at 3:19 — 43 minutes Strasbourg on March 20 and familiar sight at several age-group records."



the start of the Boston Marathon on Monday: Bill Rodgers, a knit hat atop his thick blond hair, his hands covered with white gloves and a big smile on his face.

Rodgers will be back in his

element, and the hundreds of

thousands of spectators lining

the course will be cheering loudly for "Boston Billy," even though he has no chance of winning. Rodgers is 51 now, and his goals are different than they were nearly 25 years ago, when he won his first of four Boston

Marathon titles.

hours, 31 minutes, 34 seconds, set by Norm Green in 1983. Army band sacked for out-of-tune

This time, he will be aiming

to break the over-50 course

record for an American of 2

anthems LAGOS, Apr 16 (Reuters) Internet): The army band which has been playing the national anthems at the World Youth Cup has been sacked following out-of-tune performances.

Pre-recorded national an-

thems replaced live versions for

the second round ties played on

Wednesday and Thursday with

local media reporting it was because the band was hitting too many wrong notes. "They play well alright but they lack precision," the ceremonial committee was quoted as saying.

Brazilian players grimaced and were clearly embarrassed at the way their anthem was played before a game with Zambia. The off-key anthem was played at about half its normal speed and was barely recognis-

Last Sunday, he tried breaking another of Green's records, 52:53, for 16.09 kilometres (10 miles), at the Cherry Blossom Run in Washington, but he missed by 1:11. However, he did finish 33rd overall among the 6,200 entrants in the

Rodgers still is a bundle of energy and youthfulness - despite his age - and never has lost his enthusiasm for racing. Last year, he ran 29 races at various road distances, up from his usual quota of 20 or 22. Since 1987, when he turned 40, he has been consistently ranked among the top masters runners in the world. In 1997,

he set six US records for 49year-olds at distances from 5 kilometers (3.1 miles) to the half-marathon (13.1 miles). This will be Rodgers' first serious Boston Marathon since 1990 and his first serious marathon anywhere since 1992. He ran in Boston's centennial marathon in 1996, but

only "on cruise control" with friends, clocking 2:53. He had intended to run Boston last year, but didn't "train properly." This time, he has been

preparing diligently since De-

cember, but even though this

will be the 58th marathon of

his illustrious career and 16th at Boston, he surprisingly has some trepidation. "This is trickier and I'm nervous, because it's my first real marathon in seven years," he said. "But I'm psyched for the

Rodgers' last "real" mar-

athon was the inaugural Viet-

nam International Marathon in 1992. Rodgers was determined to win that race and at 33.8 kilometres (21 miles), he was in front. But the heat and per cent humidity took its toll. "I started to crumble and had to walk the last 3 miles (4.8

kilometers)," he said.

slower than his previous worst marathon performance. In his last true Boston

Marathon nine years ago, he

finished fifth in the Masters Division at 2:20.46. He ran his first Boston race in 1973 and did not finish. The following year, he was 14th at 2:19.34, then made his big breakthrough in 1975, winning at 2:09.55. He broke the American record held by 1972 Olympic gold medalist Frank Shorter

and the course record of 2:10.30 set by England's Ron Hill in 1970. That was despite stopping four times for water and once to tie a shoe lace. "Winning that race changed my life," he said. "Before that, was just another American

marathoner. To crack 2:10 at

Boston was unbelievable." Rodgers went on to win Boston again in 1978, 1979 (breaking his American and course records with a 2:09.27) and 1980.

tournament at the club yesterday.