

Sport

Sydney slashes Games budget

SYDNEY, Apr 22: Sydney Olympic organisers cut the operating budget by 75 million dollars (48 million US) here Thursday after potential sponsors were frightened away by the International Olympic Committee bribery scandal, reports AFP.

Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) president Michael Knight said the sponsorship target had been cut by 50 million dollars to 813 million dollars (513 million US).

And another 25 million dollars would be stripped from other budgets to boost the existing contingency fund to 146 million dollars (92 million US).

Over the last few months the focus that has been, in the media and elsewhere, on the IOC has left us with a period where it was incredibly difficult to get out and pitch for sponsors," Knight said after a SOCOG board meeting.

The IOC was forced to expel 10 members in a million dollar cash-for-votes scandal over Salt Lake City's winning bid for the 2002 Winter Games.

Knight said the cuts were a fraction of the 2.6 billion dollar (1.6 billion US) overall budget and he still believed they could leave a 30 million dollar (19 million US) surplus to the New South Wales State which is underwriting the Games.

PCB chief remains upbeat

KARACHI, April 22 (Reuters/Internet): The surprise resignation of Pakistan's cricket coach just days before the team leaves for the World Cup will not hurt the team's chances in England, the head of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said on Thursday.

PCB chairman Khalid Mahmood also said team spirit was high despite Wednesday's announcement that Javed Miandad had tendered his resignation to the board.

"Pakistan is a very finely tuned team at the moment...team spirit is rather high, and despite this surprise resignation I expect the Pakistan team to do very well," Mahmood told Reuters by telephone from Lahore.

But he added he was shocked by the resignation, which Miandad said was due to "pressing family commitments".

Local media reports however suggested that Miandad was unhappy about the appointment of Sarfraz Nawaz as his bowling coach for the World Cup.

The News newspaper said on Thursday Sarfraz's role in Pakistan's World Cup plans was a surprise "since it is well known he never got along with Miandad...".

Sarfraz, one of Pakistan's leading pace bowlers in the

1970s, is a controversial figure who in the past has made various match-fixing allegations.

Englishman Richard Pybus has also been appointed as a technical coach for the World Cup by the Pakistan Cricket Board.

But PCB chairman Khalid Mahmood said he did not think Miandad was at odds with that appointment.

Pybus will join the team on May 1 after resolving a dispute with cricket officials in South Africa where he coaches provincial side Border.

"It (Pybus' appointment) before the World Cup.

Mahmood said on Thursday that Miandad's surprise resignation would not hurt the team's World Cup chances and that team spirit was high.

"Pakistan is a very finely tuned team at the moment...I expect them to do very well in the World Cup."

Mahmood would not comment on reports of disputes between Miandad and some of his leading players.

"It is purely an internal matter, whatever the cause. Being a responsible official of the Pakistan Cricket Board I cannot comment on that," he said.

Mahmood said the PCB executive council would meet on May 1 to discuss Miandad's resignation and would either accept it or ask him to continue as coach.

His resignation came at a high point in the team's fortunes. They won three consecutive tournaments in few months.

But media reports over the past few days have highlighted disputes between Miandad and senior players, although captain Wasim Akram has been quoted as saying there was no rift.

A prolific batsman, Miandad is Pakistan's top run scorer in both tests and one-day internationals.



certainly has not been given as an official reason (for the resignation)," Mahmood said.

Miandad gave "pressing family commitments" as his reason for quitting less than a month

Nat'l chess Zia, Lavlu split point

Defending champion Ziaur Rahman shared point with Saifuddin Lavlu in the second round of the final phase of the 25th national chess championship at the NSC chess room yesterday, reports UNB.

After the second round, Enamul Hossain Rajib, Sheikh Nasir, Khandaker Aminul Islam and Ali Amzad Mintu collected one and a half points each.

In the day's matches, International Master Abdullah Al Rakib beat his teammate IM Reefat Bin Sattar. Aminul beat Khورشad Alam and Tavebur Rahman. Sumon beat Mohammed Javed, while Rajib drew with Nasir and Mintu with Jamilur Rahman.

The matches between FIDE Master Rezaul Haq and Firoz Ahmed, and between Shawkat Hossain Pallab and Monir Hossain were in progress when last report came in.

Friday's matches: Monir vs Zia, Nasir vs Pallab, Reefat vs Rajib, Sumon vs Rakib, Firoz vs Javed, Khورشad vs Rezaul, Mintu vs Amin and Lavlu vs Jamil.



PANDEMONIUM: Keith Arthurton (C) of the West Indies is pushed by the notorious Guyana crowd as he tries to get a stump while Australian skipper Steve Waugh (R) scampers to complete a run during the fifth one day international at Georgetown on April 21.

BBC not finished yet

LONDON, Apr 22: The BBC is not surrendering its place as a leading cricket radio broadcaster despite missing out on contracts to cover a sport it has always dominated, BBC head of sport Bob Shennan said Wednesday, reports AP.

London-based commercial station Talk Radio announced Tuesday it had beaten Radio 4's Test Match Special programme for broadcasting rights for England's winter tour of South Africa.

Talk Radio's ball-by-ball commentary team will be led by former BBC pundit and England captain Geoff Boycott, who was fired by the BBC last year following a conviction for assaulting his former girlfriend.

The Talk Radio announcement prompted immediate speculation of the BBC losing its grip on important sporting events.

But Shennan said the BBC still had exclusive radio rights for England's home test matches and limited-overs internationals, plus the 1999 cricket World Cup.

"Following the acquisition by Talk Radio of the rights to broadcast one overseas cricket tour, by England, many myths and misconceptions about BBC Sport have again surfaced," Shennan said.

The BBC did not lose the contract — it was excluded from the bidding process, BBC Sport signs around 20 contracts a year, against six losses in six years.

The BBC lost its television rights for England's domestic tests to rival commercial station Channel 4, starting this season, but will share the television broadcasting for the World Cup with BSkyB.

Shennan said the BBC's sports coverage was as strong as ever and this year radio coverage featured the cricket and rugby union World Cups, Formula One, golf — including the recent US Masters — track and field, soccer and the premier horse racing events.

Fifth ODI declared a tie Guyanese crowd shames cricket

GEORGETOWN, Apr 22: Australia's one-day international with the West Indies here Wednesday ended in confusion with the home side unable to claim victory because all six stumps had been uprooted in a frightening pitch invasion, reports AFP.

English referee Raman Subba Row declared the fifth one-day match a tie an hour after stumps were taken at the Bourda Ground.

In 1993, on the same Bourda ground, Subba Row ruled a one-day international between the West Indies and Pakistan a tie when the crowd invaded the ground as the West Indies batsmen completed the two runs needed to win.

West Indies paceman Mervyn Dillon had struck two early blows, removing Mark Waugh for five and Ricky Ponting for a duck. Carl Hooper accounted for Darren Lehmann with the score on 13.

But Adam Gilchrist and Steve Waugh steadied the ship before Gilchrist was run out by Henderson Bryan for 44.

Phil Simmons put the tie further in the West Indies favour when he bowled Michael Bevan and Shane Lee before Dillon claimed a third scalp, that of Tom Moody for two.

But Steve Waugh and Warne came to the rescue with a stand of 54 which, after Subba Row reconsidered, was unbroken.

West Indies, put in by Australia, had earlier made 173-5 with openers Ridley Jacobs and Sherwin Campbell giving the home team a flying start with a first wicket stand of 83 before Shane Lee removed both.

Warne chipped in with the wickets of stand-in skipper Adams and Carl Hooper, smartly stumped by Gilchrist, before Lee took another wicket, that of Shivnarine Chanderpaul, who made a quick 27.

Stuart Williams and Simmons lifted the score to 173.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard of the fifth one-day international between the West Indies and Australia on Wednesday:

WEST INDIES
Jacobs c S Waugh b Lee 33
Campbell c & b Lee 41
Adams b Warne 7
Hooper st Gilchrist b Warne 8
Chanderpaul c Moody b Lee 27
Williams not out 30
Simmons not out 15
Extras (b-1, lb-4, w-4, nb-3) 12
Total: (For 5 wks) 173
Did not bat: K Arthurton, H Bryan, M Dillon, C Walsh
Fall of wickets: 1-83; 2-84; 3-100; 4-101; 5-153

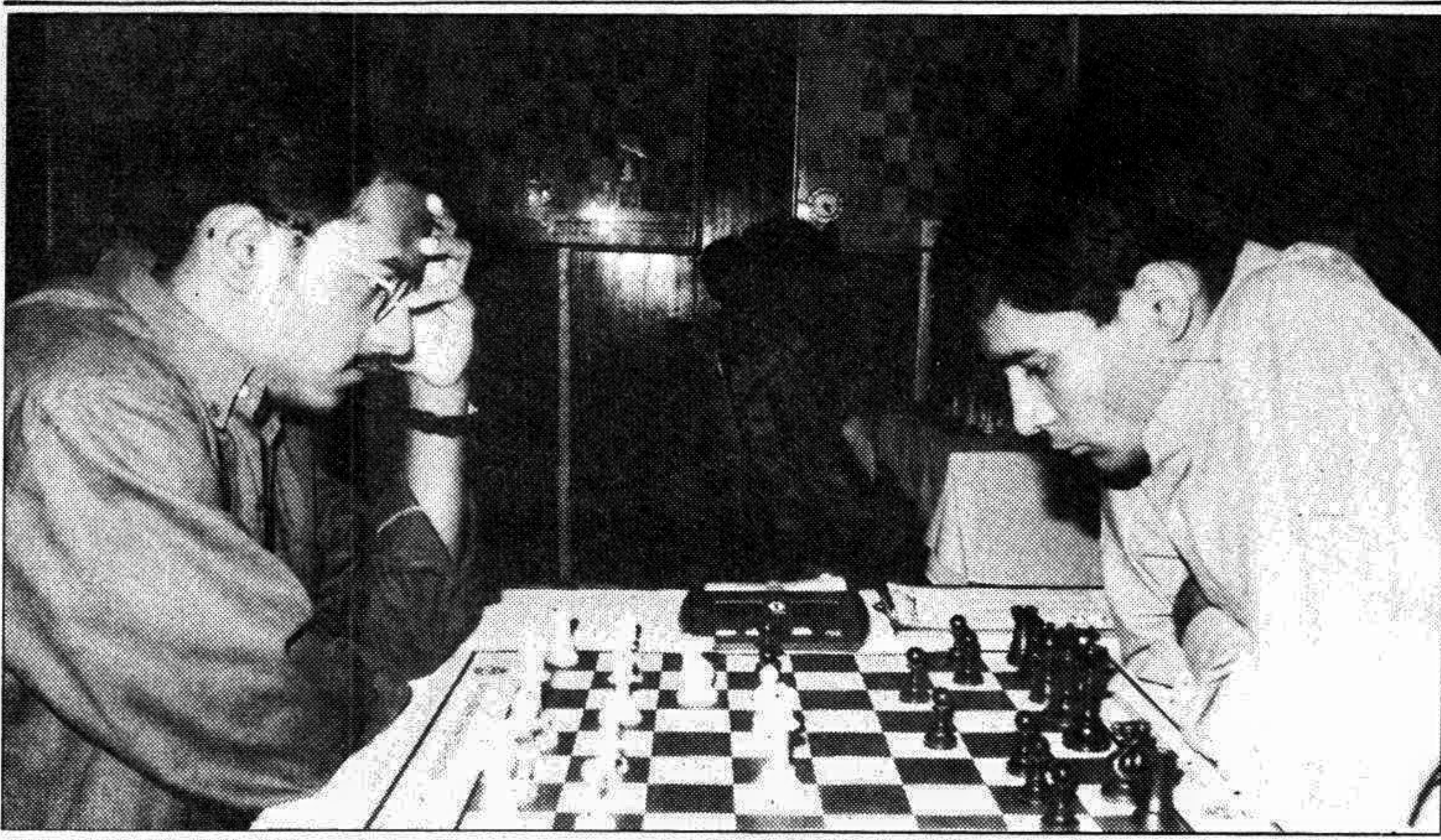
Bowler: O M R W
Fleming 6 0 30 0
Ponting 2 0 14 0
Moody 6 0 27 0
Lee 6 0 39 3
Warne 6 0 35 2
S Waugh 5 0 23 0

AUSTRALIA
M Waugh c Adams b Dillon 5
Gilchrist run out (Bryan) 44
Ponting b Dillon 13
Lehmann b Hooper 13
S Waugh not out 72
Bevan b Simmons 10
Lee b Simmons 0
Moody c Bryan b Dillon 2
Warne not out 19
Total (For 7 wks 30 overs) 173
Did not bat: P Reiffel, D Fleming
Fall of wickets: 1-26; 2-26; 3-50; 4-70; 5-116; 6-116; 7-119

Bowler: O M R W
Walsh 6 0 32 0
Dillon 6 1 25 3
Bryan 6 0 27 0
Hooper 6 0 48 1
Simmons 4 0 25 2
Arthurton 2 0 13 0

Result: Match refereed declared a tie.

Next match: Sixth one-day on Saturday, Bridgetown, Barbados.



IM Reefat bin-Sattar (R) pondering his next move against IM Abdullah Al-Rakib during their second round fixture of the national chess championship yesterday.

2008 Olympics Paris bidders' new boss

PARIS, Apr 22: Noel de Saint-Pulgent, 50, was named director general of the Paris bid committee for the 2008 Olympics, it was announced Wednesday at Paris town hall, reports AFP.

Saint-Pulgent had previously been the interministerial delegate in charge of the football World Cup.

His candidature was backed by the sports ministry, Paris town hall and the French Olympic Committee. The President of the bid committee is the Mayor of Paris, Jean Tiberi.

Steve badly shaken

GEORGETOWN, Guyana, Apr 22: Australia captain Steve Waugh said he feared for his life as the fifth one-day match against West Indies ended in chaos, reports Reuters.

Waugh suffered a whiplash injury after being shouldered, jostled and threatened when more than 1,000 fans invaded the pitch on Wednesday following the final delivery.

International Cricket Council adjudicator Raman Subba Row eventually declared the result a tie and ordered an immediate inquiry into the pitch invasion.

Waugh, who needed a police escort to reach the safety of the dressing room, said later: "It doesn't get much scarier than that on the sporting field."

"You are risking your life. It only takes one guy with plenty of drink to take out a knife a la Monica Seles and it's over for you."

"That could easily happen, it's not over dramatising it. I have whiplash to my neck and I'm happy to get away with it that lightly."

Seles, the former world number women's tennis player, was stabbed by a spectator at a tournament in Hamburg in 1993.

"My players are very upset about it and I hope it doesn't escalate to the situation where they make themselves unavailable for the tie."

"I'm not saying the situation would escalate to a boycott, I'm saying it could."

The International Tennis Federation (ITF) Thursday upheld its decision to award home advantage for the July tie to the US but reversed an earlier decision to play the match on clay, opting instead for hard court.

Under normal regulations, the match would be hosted by Australia as the last Davis Cup tie between the two nations was in the US in 1997.

However, the ITF decided two years ago to celebrate the centenary of the Davis Cup by ensuring a US tie would be played in Boston, the city where the Cup was born.

"... the guys are having to eat losing the home ground advantage when it's our turn," Newcombe said.

"And that means a lot because the Americans get to choose the ball. They'll choose a heavy ball because they know that Pat would like something really light."

Scheduled for July 16-18, the tie is set to feature the two most successful countries in Davis Cup history commemorating the first Cup tie between the US and Britain in 1900.

Whoever wins the Boston quarter-final will host a semi-final in September against the winner of the Russia-Slovak Republic quarter-final.

Waugh said he was verbally harassed as he went to meet Subba Row to help determine the result.

"As players we are sick of it," Waugh said. "Guys were being

"It's a ridiculous situation that in a professional game of sport that could happen."

The trouble came as Waugh and Shane Warne were attempting to complete a third run which would have tied the scores at 173 apiece.

Waugh had hit the final delivery into the outfield and he and Warne dashed through for two as the throw came in.

Keith Arthurton then took off the balls with Warne safely home but as fans ran on to the pitch and tried to steal the stumps the batsmen struggled to cross for the third run.

Chaotic scenes ensued as Arthurton tried to return to the stumps to complete a run out but they had been stolen by the fans.

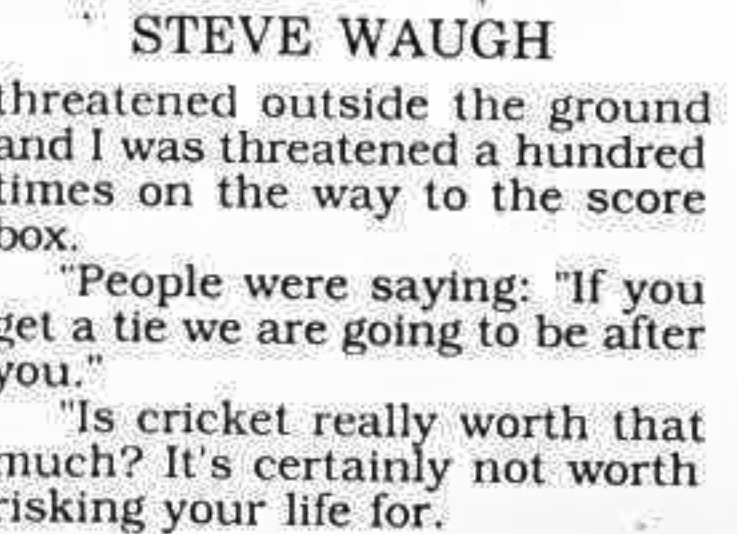
The incident mirrored a pitch invasion at the Bourda ground in Georgetown six years ago during a tense finish to a one-day match between West Indies and Pakistan.

Strachan fined
LONDON, Apr 22: Coventry manager Gordon Strachan was fined 1,000 pounds (1,600 dollars) plus costs and censured by the English Football Association (FA) on Friday for his part in a touchline bust-up at Chelsea's Stamford Bridge ground in January, reports AFP.

Threatened outside the ground and I was threatened a hundred times on the way to the score box.

"People were saying: 'If you get a tie we are going to be after you.'"

"Is cricket really worth that much? It's certainly not worth risking your life for."



STEVE WAUGH

Davis Cup Aussies threaten to boycott US tie

SYDNEY, Apr 22: Australia's Davis Cup team, spearheaded by world No. 6 Pat Rafter, are on the verge of boycotting their quarter-final tie against the United States in a row over venue, according to team captain John Newcombe, reports AFP.

"The way the guys are feeling at the moment, they're saying the Americans can have their centenary match on their own," he told the Sydney Daily Telegraph.

My players are very upset about it and I hope it doesn't escalate to the situation where they make themselves unavailable for the tie.

"I'm not saying the situation would escalate to a boycott, I'm saying it could."

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Thomas Muster of Austria gestures during his Monte Carlo Open Match against Karim alami on April 21. Muster lost 3-6, 3-6.

Early exit for top seeds

BUDAPEST, Apr 22: Top seeds Jana Novotna and Henrieta Nagyova joined the parade of high-profile, first-round eliminations at the Budapest Lotto Ladies Open on Wednesday, reports AP.

The top-seeded Novotna was toppled by unseeded Slovakian Ludmila Cervanová, 6-4, 6-3, joining No. 3 Silvia Farina of Italy and No. 4 Virginia Ruano Pascual and No. 6 Maria Antonia Sanchez-Lorenzo of Spain, all of whom were ousted Tuesday.

No. 2 Nagyova of Slovakia, fared only slightly better, winning a set before being upset by Russia's Evgenia Koulikovskaya 1-6, 6-3, 6-3.

Wednesday's results left only two seeds, No. 5 Natalie Dechy, and No. 7 Sarah Pitkowski, both from France, remaining in the dlr 142,500 clay-court event.

Eighth-seeded Spanish Gala Leon-Garcia also was beaten, 6-3, 6-2, by Czech Denisa Chladkova.

The fourth-ranked Novotna, a Czech, was making her first trip to Hungary, an early warmup for the French Open at Roland Garros, the world's premier clay-court event.

In a low-quality match both players repeated failed to hold serve. The second set was interrupted by rain for 30 minutes at 3-3. After play resumed, Novotna did not win a single game.

Dechy advanced with a 6-3, 6-4 victory over Silvia Talaja of Croatia, while Pitkowski had to overcome a first-set loss to Zsófia Gubacsi of Hungary before prevailing 3-6, 7-6 (7-3), 6-1.

Geremi going to Real

MADRID, Apr 22 (Reuters/Internet): Cameroon midfielder Geremi Njitap signed a five-year contract with Real Madrid on Thursday to become the first acquisition for the club's new coach John Toshack who replaced Guus Hiddink two months ago.

The 20-year-old internationalist will debut on July 1 after completing the current season with Turkish club Genclerbirligi.

An Ethiopian wonder woman

BOSTON, Apr 22 (Reuters): When Ethiopia's Fatuma Roba ran to her third consecutive Boston Marathon victory Monday, she did so with some familiar accompaniment — flag-waving Ethiopian fans running alongside after bursting onto the course.

It has become something of a tradition surrounding the 27-year-old Atlanta Olympic champion.

When Roba won the Olympic marathon in 1996, two Atlanta-based Ethiopian athletes, a runner and a soccer player, spontaneously broke into a run alongside her for brief stretches, one of them wearing the green, yellow and red colours of the Ethiopian flag on his track suit.

Wubshet Mamo, 20, a Boston-resident student from Ethiopia, had watched Roba's Olympic victory on TV in 1996. "There was no way for me to express my support," he said, "other than to sit and watch her until she finished."

When Roba came to Boston, Mamo and a crowd of his friends from a Boston-area Ethiopian soccer team found a way to actively make their support felt.

During all of Roba's three Boston Marathon appearances, they have met at their regular soccer training grounds an hour before the race and travelled to Heartbreak Hill, the toughest point in the course, about 20 miles into the 26.2-mile race.

After cheering and waving their flags, they have then travelled further down the course to Beacon street for a final show of support.

This year, when Roba appeared at Heartbreak Hill, Mamo burst onto the course.

"I went there to wave the flag and support her, but when I saw she was in the lead, I couldn't help it, I had to follow her," he said.

Mamo and a friend, Derege Abebe, held a huge flag aloft behind Roba, and ran alongside her wearing a T-shirt with the likeness of 1960 and 1964 Olympic marathon champion

Abebe Bikila on it.

"Winning marathons is an Ethiopian tradition, beginning with Abebe Bikila," said Bruke Tadesse, 23, a sales associate, who was not content to just accompany Roba. Briefly while holding a flag, Tadesse handed her a headband in the colours of the flag that Roba, smiling, accepted and wore for the remainder of the race.

"I was feeling tired," said Roba, whose feat of three consecutive victories in Boston has been accomplished by just one other woman, Uta Pippig of Germany.

"But when I saw them, when

in the past.

"Fatuma won regally," said Seblewongel Argaw, an executive director of a women's organisation in Boston, who was draped in a traditional striped tunic and pants from southern Ethiopia, but with the colours of the flag inserted along the midsection. "She made us all so proud."

"Their reception moved me," said Roba of the roar that accompanied her entrance into the hall and that she acknowledged with both arms raised in the air. "It makes me want to come back so they can greet me like that again."

The crowd was thinking along the same lines.

When Roba was presented with a plaque, the words "from a proud Boston Ethiopian community" inscribed on it, she was asked to say a few words.

But as Roba approached the microphone, cheers of "Yidegema! Yidegema!" ("It will be repeated" in Amharic, the official Ethiopian language) rang out. No runner, male or female, has ever won Boston four times in a row.

Answering a question about a possible fourth consecutive victory at a press conference on Tuesday, Roba revealed how heartfelt that promise was.



FATUMA ROBA

they gave me the flag, I felt something, the fatigue left me."

The colourful flag once again provided the backdrop Monday night at a celebration held by the Boston Ethiopian community in Roba's honour.

Ethiopian marathoners in Boston, including 1989 men's champion Abebe Mekonnen, have been similarly honoured

Georgia coach to call it quits

TBILISI, Apr 22 (Reuters/Internet): Vladimir Gutsayev plans to quit as Georgia coach after the European championship group two qualifier against Norway next Wednesday.

"Regardless of the outcome against Norway, I have made up my mind already," the former Georgian international said. "This will be my last game as Georgia coach."

Georgia's uninspired performance against Slovenia in their last European qualifier in Tbilisi a month ago clearly influenced Gutsayev's decision to call it a day.

The 1-1 draw left Georgia second from the bottom in their group with just four points from four games.