

Sydney Games 500 days away

SYDNEY, May 3 (AP): An avowed optimist, Michael Knight wants the Olympic bribery scandal to just go away.

Announcing cuts for the Sydney 2000 Olympic budget which he blamed in part on the scandal, the president of Sydney's organising committee said the bad times were now behind them and the way was clear to go forward.

With Tuesday marking 500 days to go and the bribery scandal still dominating Olympic news sixth months after it erupted in December, the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games wants badly to refocus attention back on the athletes and the competition.

Preparations for the Sydney Games are well advanced, with venues and Games Villages finished ahead of schedule or on track, positive if not squeaky-clean testing of the stadium and transport systems, and issuing of the huge events schedule.

The IOC's coordination commission led by Jacques Rogge inspected Sydney's preparations in late April and came away generally impressed with venues, transport, accommodation, security and coordination with international sporting bodies.

"We are very satisfied," Rogge said.

But budget problems continue to dog SOCOG.

The cuts — 50 million Australian dollars (\$32.5 million US) slashed from SOCOG's forecast sponsorship revenue and an extra 25 million Australian dollars (\$16 million US) allocated to the "rainy day" contingency fund — came after months of speculation about whether Sydney's sponsorship target was achievable.

Rogge said it was always overambitious, but accepted that the IOC's votes-for-bribes scandal contributed to damage by discouraging sponsors.

He said reform of the IOC would mean that "by games time, there will be a totally new, better functioning IOC".

Sydney organisers say the cuts will be made through "reorganisation of priorities" rather than budget slashing. The "core quality" of the Games would not be affected, although "we are not considering anything immune," Knight said.

SOCOG still has to find about 170 million Australian dollars (\$110 million US) by games time, a figure Rogge said was achievable.

While none have pulled out, sponsors are unhappy at the damage the IOC scandal has done to Olympics marketability and told Rogge so at a meeting in April.

The IOC cleaned house after investigating votes-for-bribes allegations stemming from Salt Lake City's bid for the Winter Olympics. The IOC members resigned or were fired, two were severely censured and five others were issued warnings.

The case of Phil Coles, an Australian IOC member who was censured after the Salt Lake investigation and stands further accused of receiving excessive gifts from another bidding city, has been an additional thorn in Sydney's side. His case is expected to be decided by the IOC this week.

While the scandal has simmered, Sydney organisers are gearing up their campaigns to garner public support.

More than 100,000 people attended the opening of the Olympic Stadium in March with a fireworks display and rugby league games. Other test events have been marred only slightly by a transport glitch which once sent a trainload of city-bound spectators in the wrong direction.

The path of the Olympic Torch relay is so extensive — including an underwater visit to the Great Barrier Reef — that even people living in the most remote town will not have to travel far to see it.

SOCOG's next big challenge is to sell 5 million tickets to the 1,700 events covering 18 sports, which go on sale in late May.

Knight says the necessary cuts are a "drop in the bucket" of the overall budget worth 2.5 billion Australian dollars (\$1.6 billion US). But there is no doubt having to find the savings is putting pressure on the overall budget.

Modern Body Building lift title

Modern Body Building Club of Dinaipur emerged as champions bagging 203 points in the first club-basis Weightlifting competition at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday, reports UNB.

Boldyanath Dutta of Kushtia became runners-up in the competition securing 186 points.

State Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Quader distributed prizes as the chief guest.

A total of 92 weightlifters from 16 teams took part in the meet in eight categories.

Six bidders for 2006 WC

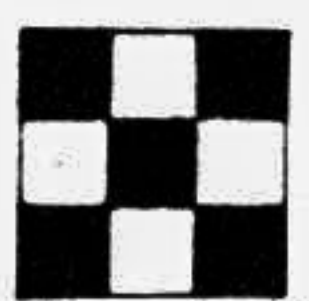
ZURICH, May 3: Six countries were in the bidding to host soccer's World Cup in 2006 after Egypt and Ghana apparently dropped out, FIFA said Monday, reports AP.

Six countries — Brazil, England, Germany, Nigeria, South Africa and Morocco — confirmed their bids by the April 30 deadline, said a statement by world soccer's governing body.

The next major deadline in the competition is July 31, by which time candidates must present their bid files to FIFA, the statement said. The winner is to be chosen next March.

Reefat's gaffe aids Enamul

Sports Reporter



International Master (IM) Reefat bin-Sattar's dramatic drive of regaining the national chess title suffered a big blow when he lost his 12th round tie in the 25th edition of the annual meet to Titas Club's Saifuddin Ahmed at the NSC conference room yesterday.

Playing with white pieces against the Modern defence of Saifuddin, Reefat, the former champion, who plays for Biman, lost the board after 33 moves.

Reefat, with yesterday's defeat, remained glued to his pre-

Jadukar Samad Kishore football

Adhamjee Chandu Sporting Club and Narinda Palash Sporting Club reached the quarter-finals of the Jadukar Samad Kishore football tournament in the city yesterday, reports UNB.

In the first match, Adhamjee outplayed Gabtali Lalkuthi Sporting Club 4-0 after leading the first half 1-0 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Narinda defeated Ganderia Power Sun Sporting Club 3-1. The match was locked 1-1 in the first half.

vious collection of 8.5 points and lost the second spot in the 16-player meet to national junior champion Enamul Hossain of Titas Club, who raised his tally to nine points after defeating Mohammad Javed in the 12th round.

Playing with black pieces, Enamul, who drew his 11th round clash with Rezaul Haque, adopted the French defence against Javed and checkmated him after 41 moves.

Defending champion IM Ziaur Rahman of Biman, meanwhile, maintained his solo lead with an easy win over fellow IM and last year's runner-up Abdullah-Al-Rakib.

Zia, with his whites, took only 30 moves to overhaul the Queen's Indian defence of Rakib and remained atop the table with 10 out of a possible 12 points.

Ali Amjad of Ansars won his 12th round clash against Taibur Rahman of BUET. Playing with black pieces, Amjad checkmated Taibur after a long spell of 57 moves.

In the day's other matches, Biman's Rezaul Haque beat Sawkat Hossain of Ansars, Khorshed Alam defeated Narayanjan's Feroz Ahmed, and Sheikh Nasir Ahmed of Ansars won his board against

Jamilur Rahman.

Playing with black pieces, Rezaul adopted the French defence to clinch the board against Sawkat after 46 moves while Khorshed, who also had black pieces and adopted the Modern defence, took 53 moves to earn full point against Feroz. Nasir, on the other hand, played with whites and defeated Jamil after 32 moves.

In the remaining match of the day, Khandker Aminul Islam of Sonali Bank got a walk-over against Monir Hossain of Narayanjan.

The 13th round will start today at 3 pm at the same venue.

Standings (after round 12): 10 points—Zia, 9 points—Enamul, 8.5 points—Reefat, 7.5 points—Rezaul, 7 points—Taibur, 6.5 points—Saifuddin, Nasir and Rakib, 6 points—Sawkat, 5.5 points—Jamil and Ali Amjad, 4.5 points—Javed, 4 points—Aminul and Feroz, 3.5 points—Khorshed and 1.5 points—Monir.

Round 13 fixture

Zia vs Khorshed
Ali Amjad vs Feroz
Saifuddin vs Taibur
Jamilur vs Reefat
Nasir vs Nasir
Rezaul vs Monir
Javed vs Sawkat
Rakib vs Enamul

Valderrama's desire

BOGOTA, May 3: Colombian soccer star Carlos Valderrama, known lately for clashing with his coaches, now says he wants to be one, reports AP.

Valderrama said Sunday he would like to coach his country's national team.

"It's one of my great ambitions, but for it to happen, I have to work hard and show that I'm up to it," he was quoted as saying in an interview in El Espectador newspaper.

For now, however, the mop-haired 38-year-old midfielder said he has no intentions of ending his playing career.

"El Pibe" will be around for a long time," said Valderrama, calling himself by his nickname in Colombia.

Valderrama, who has led Colombia in several World Cups and stars in US Major League Soccer, was transferred a week ago from the Miami Fusion to the Tampa Bay Mutiny after clashing with Miami's coach, two Worldmann. The Brazilian complained that Valderrama was trying to run the team from the field.

Should his coaching dream come true, said Valderrama, he wouldn't shy away from choosing other players with reputations for sparring with their bosses.

His dream team would include Faustino Asprilla — a star in Italian soccer — who was benched during the 1998 World Cup in France after publicly complaining when his coach removed him from a game, said Valderrama.

Maiden title for Koubek

ATLANTA, May 3: Austrian qualifier Stefan Koubek capped his surprising run at the ATP Challenge by playing "a perfect match" on Sunday to claim his first career title on the ATP Tour, reports Reuters.

The 22-year-old Koubek dismantled fifth-seeded Frenchman Sebastien Grosjean 6-1, 6-2 in 56 minutes to become the first qualifier and lowest-ranked player ever to win this clay court event.

"Today, it was just a perfect match. I was hitting winners all over the place and he didn't have a chance," said the Austrian who collected 46,000 dollars for a victory that will propel his ranking from 97th in the world to 67.

"I feel like I can keep on playing, like this forever," gushed Koubek, who also claimed fourth seed Michael Chang and eighth seed Magnus Larsson among his seeded scalps this week.

Koubek, who had to win three qualifying matches to get into the main draw here, had just the match victories on his ATP Tour resume prior to his five wins this week.

The 40th-ranked Grosjean, who reached the Lipton Championships final this year and was also gunning for his first tour title, figured to give Koubek a tougher time following his impressive semifinal win over Jim Courier.

But the Frenchman was never in Sunday's match.

He managed just one winner in the 22-minute first set and had only one break point against Koubek for the match, which he failed to convert.

Grosjean said the courts played faster Sunday than they had earlier in the week when wet weather slowed things down and he had trouble adjusting.

"I only touched the ball and it was flying," said Grosjean, who earned \$27,000 as the runner-up. "I couldn't hit the ball fast so I tried only to push the ball."

Grosjean, whose ranking is expected to rise to a career-high of 33, said he wasn't discouraged by his most lopsided defeat of the year.

Ethics panel starts working

LAUSANNE, May 3: An eight-member ethics panel, including former US Senate Majority leader Howard Baker and former UN chief Javier Perez de Cuellar, prepared Sunday for the first of a series of meetings intended to clean up the scandal-hit Olympic movement, reports AP.

The Ethics Commission of top international personalities was established last month as part of reforms in the wake of the Salt Lake City bribery scandal, in which 10 International Olympic Committee members were expelled or resigned for receiving improper inducements during the campaign for the 2002 Winter Games.

It is meant to help the IOC operate "in accordance with the best practices of international governance," draw up ethical rules, study the Olympic bidding and selection process, ensure accountability and enforce compliance with a new code of conduct.

The commission will report the outcome of its opening discussions Monday to an IOC Executive Board meeting on Tuesday.

One of the items up for discussion will likely be the fate of embattled Australian IOC member Phil Coles, who has already received a "most severe warning" from the IOC for travel and accommodation perks from Salt Lake City. He is under renewed scrutiny since his ex-wife claimed that member of Athens unsuccessful bid for the 1996 Olympics gave her jewelry.

It might also discuss the case of South Korean executive board member Kim Un-yong, who also received a "most severe warning" and is the highest-ranking official implicated in the Salt Lake affair. Kim could face expulsion if it is proved that he knew that the Salt Lake committee paid for his son's salary at a telecommunications company.



Patrick Kluivert (C), Barcelona's Dutch international striker is sandwiched between two Deportivo La Coruna defenders during their Primera Liga clash on May 2. — AFP photo

Barca in stunning form

MADRID, May 3: Barcelona may have to wait a few more weeks before being crowned Spanish champions for the second year running but their league rivals are already starting to look as though they are willing, reports Reuters.

Barcelona completely outplayed Deportivo Coruna, who started the weekend in fourth place, and romped to a 4-0 victory in the Nou Camp stadium on Sunday.

Dutch international striker Patrick Kluivert started the rout with an outstanding goal after 14 minutes.

He slotted the ball past Deportivo goalkeeper Jacques Songu's after picking up a brilliant pass near the halfway line from captain Josep Guardiola.

Barcelona nearly scored again on 25 minutes but Luis Figo hit a post. The ball bounced back and struck the prostrate Songu's on the head but Deportivo defenders scrambled it clear.

However, Figo was not to be denied and headed home Barcelona's second after 38 minutes, following a Kluivert header across the face of the goal.

Luis Enrique Martinez added the third in first-half injury time, also with a header.

Barcelona eased up in the second half but in the 78th minute Brazilian World Cup striker Rivaldo scored his 20th goal of the season, following a neat one-two on the edge of the box with Luis Enrique.

Deportivo's woes grew when Djalminha and Gabriel Schurrer were booked. They will miss next week's match against Athletic Bilbao.

The match ended on a sour and strange note for the Catalan club, though, with Figo being sent off four minutes from time in what appeared to be a case of mistaken identity.

Barcelona's Sonny Anderson and Deportivo skipper Fran Gonzalez were tussling vigorously for the ball, with Figo some distance from them, when referee Jose Losanto Omar blew for a foul.

Losanto Omar changed his yellow card for a red one after Figo protested that he was not the original culprit.

Barcelona's easy win meant they maintained their nine-point lead with 66 points from 32 games.

Celta Vigo and Mallorca both won and remain second and third, separated only by goal difference, with 57 points each.

However, time is running out for the challengers with only six games remaining and nei-

ther of Barcelona's two closest chasers had a comfortable time on Sunday.

Celta were forced to defend heavily throughout the first half against bottom-placed Salamanca and had to wait for an hour before Israeli international Haim Revivo weaved through the Salamanca defence for the only goal of the game.

Mallorca ran out 3-1 winners at Real Betis but struggled until late in the game.

Midfielder Jovan Stankovic put Mallorca ahead after 12 minutes, but Oli Alvarez equalised seven minutes after the break, heading home a Julian Filipescu free-kick.

Goals from Ariel Ibagaza and Veljko Paunovic gave Mallorca victory and kept them in contention for a place in next season's Champions' League.

Eight players were sent off on Sunday, four in Valladolid's 1-0 victory over Villarreal.

With the home side in front from Victor Fernandez's 51st-minute goal, three men were sent off after a full-scale melee on the hour, provoked by a wild tackle from Valladolid's Jose Antonio Garcia Calvo on Villarreal's Gerardo Garcia.

Villarreal played the last 20 minutes with only eight men after midfielder Igor Tasevski was also shown the red card but did not concede any more goals.

Scores across Europe

UNDATED, May 3: Rangers clinched the title in Scotland for the 48th time in their history on Sunday while AC Milan kept the Serie A title on the boil, reports Reuters.

SCOTLAND: Rangers beat archrivals Celtic 3-0 at Parkhead to win the title for the 10th time in 11 seasons, the 48th time in all, and end Celtic's one-year reign as champions.

The match was marred by three sendings off — Stephen Mahe and Vidar Riseth of Celtic and Rod Wallace of Rangers — and also some ugly scenes in the first half when referee Hugh Dallas was hit by a coin and some supporters ran on to the field.

Neil McCann scored twice and Jorg Albertz hit a penalty as Rangers stayed on course for a Scottish treble. They face Celtic again in the Cup Final at the end of the month.

Serie A: An own-goal gave minutes into injury time gave Milan a dramatic 3-2 win over 10-man Sampdoria on Sunday and put the second-placed side one point behind league leaders Lazio in a nail-biting Italian title race.

Lazio won 3-0 at Udinese and, with three matches remaining, the Rome side lead Serie A with 62 points ahead of Milan on 61 and Fiorentina on 54. Fiorentina had Argentine

striker Gabriel Batistuta sent off in a 5-1 win over Perugia.

Marcello Castellini headed into his own net to hand Milan a fortuitous victory after second-from-bottom Samp, who had French defender Salio Lassissi sent off in the first half, had twice fought back from a goal down.

NETHERLANDS: Ajax Amsterdam crushed their arch-rivals Feyenoord 6-0 on Sunday — just a week after the Rotterdam side clinched the Dutch title.

Ajax scored five times in the second half with Finnish striker Jari Litmanen finding the net twice. It was only Feyenoord's third defeat of the season and also kept alive Ajax's hopes of winning a European place through a high

score.

RUSSIA: First-half goals by Yegor Titov and Valery Kechin gave champions Spartak Moscow a comfortable 2-0 home win over Chernomors Novorossiysk on Sunday to stretch their lead at the top of the Russian Premier Division.

Dynamo dropped their first points of the season away to premier division newcomers Saturn Ramenskoye while Torpedo, who edged Spartak 1-0 11 days ago, were held to a 1-1 home draw by Alania Vladikavkaz.

Another Moscow side, Lokomotiv, rebounded from a slow start in the domestic competition with their second successive convincing win to move into sixth place.

Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka MA Mobarak will distribute prizes as the chief guest.

Goran Young Star Club reached the final of the Dhaka District Commissioner Handball League crushing Jatrabari Faruque Smriti Sangsad 22-6 at the Outer Stadium handball court yesterday, reports UNB.

Goran Young Star will take on Victoria Sporting Club in the final today at 4 pm at the same venue.

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CROSSWORD by Eugene Sheffer

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