

Ronaldo turns down Real bid

MADRID, May 8: Brazil and Inter Milan striker Ronaldo said on Saturday that he would stay at his Italian club despite the bid by Spanish giants Real Madrid to sign him for next season, reports AFP.

The 22-year-old, who has been troubled by a nagging right knee injury all season, told Spanish sports daily AS that he was honoured that the seven-time European Cup winners were interested in taking him on but he would be staying at Inter, with whom he won the 1998 UEFA Cup.

"Real's president Lorenzo Sainz contacted my agent two days ago with a view to signing me," Ronaldo said.

"However, I am happy at Inter and I am not even thinking of leaving," he added.

It had been reported that Ronaldo was threatening to quit Italy after his car came under attack by angry fans last month. His recurring tendon trouble and a complete collapse in morale, has left the team ninth in the Serie A and the fans furious at the seemingly unstoppable run of defeats.

Inter, whose president Massimo Moratti resigned on Thursday over criticism of his rehiring former coach Roy Hodgson, were tipped to win the Italian championship this season, but instead are unlikely to even qualify for the next Inter-tournament.

Ronaldo, whose car came close to being hit by a flying bottle, has decided that if the fans who whistled him during the 3-1 defeat to Udinese don't start behaving, he could be on the way out.

It rounded off a miserable injury-plagued season since being made the scapegoat for Brazil's 3-0 defeat in the World Cup at the hands of France.

He had been selected for the final after originally being omitted from the starting line-up after suffering a fit on the day of the final.

He was clearly out of sorts during the match and has only played in fits and starts for his underachieving club this season.

Bayern want Sergio

MUNICH, Germany, May 8: Bayern Munich have targeted Brazilian midfielder Paulo Sergio from Italian Serie A side AS Roma, the German dailies Bild and Münchner Abendzeitung reported here on Friday, says AFP.

Uli Hoeneß and Ottmar Hitzfeld, manager and coach of the German side who are on their way to their 15th Bundesliga title, travelled to Rome on Thursday for talks with the 29-year-old player.

Sergio, a former Leverkusen player, signed a four year contract with AS Roma in 1997 for 3.6 million dollars.

Hoeneß has said that he was having trouble signing new faces for next season because young players are scared to take on the challenge of playing at the big name club.

Hitzfeld meanwhile wants up to five new faces for next season but so far the only man secured is Nuremberg's 26-year-old midfielder Michael Wiesinger, who is expected to sign a three contract in the next few days.

Morales retains WBC crown

LAS VEGAS, May 8 (AP): Erik Morales may be little, but boxing promoter Bob Arum thinks he has a big future.

Morales, the undefeated World Boxing Council (WBC) super bantamweight champion, could become another great Mexican fighter in the mold of Julio Cesar Chavez, Arum says.

"I really believe that," Arum said of the undefeated 22-year-old from Tijuana, Mexico.

Morales defends his 122-pound (55 kilos) championship against Juan Carlos Ramirez of Mexico Saturday night on his first pay-per-view fight card.

"There are a lot of good fighters we promote — a lot of guys who have tremendous potential," Arum said. "But superstars are superstars. They don't come around very often."

"This kid is, without any question, going to be a major, major superstar. This kid has (Julio Cesar) Chavez's qualities written all over him."

Morales is an 8-1 favorite to retain his title against Ramirez, who is a replacement for former champion Wayne McCullough, who was injured in training.

Morales, who won the WBC super bantamweight title in September 1997 by stopping Daniel Zaragoza in the 11th round, has 32 straight victories since turning pro six years ago when he was 16. He has knocked out his opponents in all five of his title defences.

Morales said Arum's expectations of superstardom don't put pressure on him.

"No, I don't have pressure. My pressure is to be in good condition and give a good quality of fight," he said through a translator.

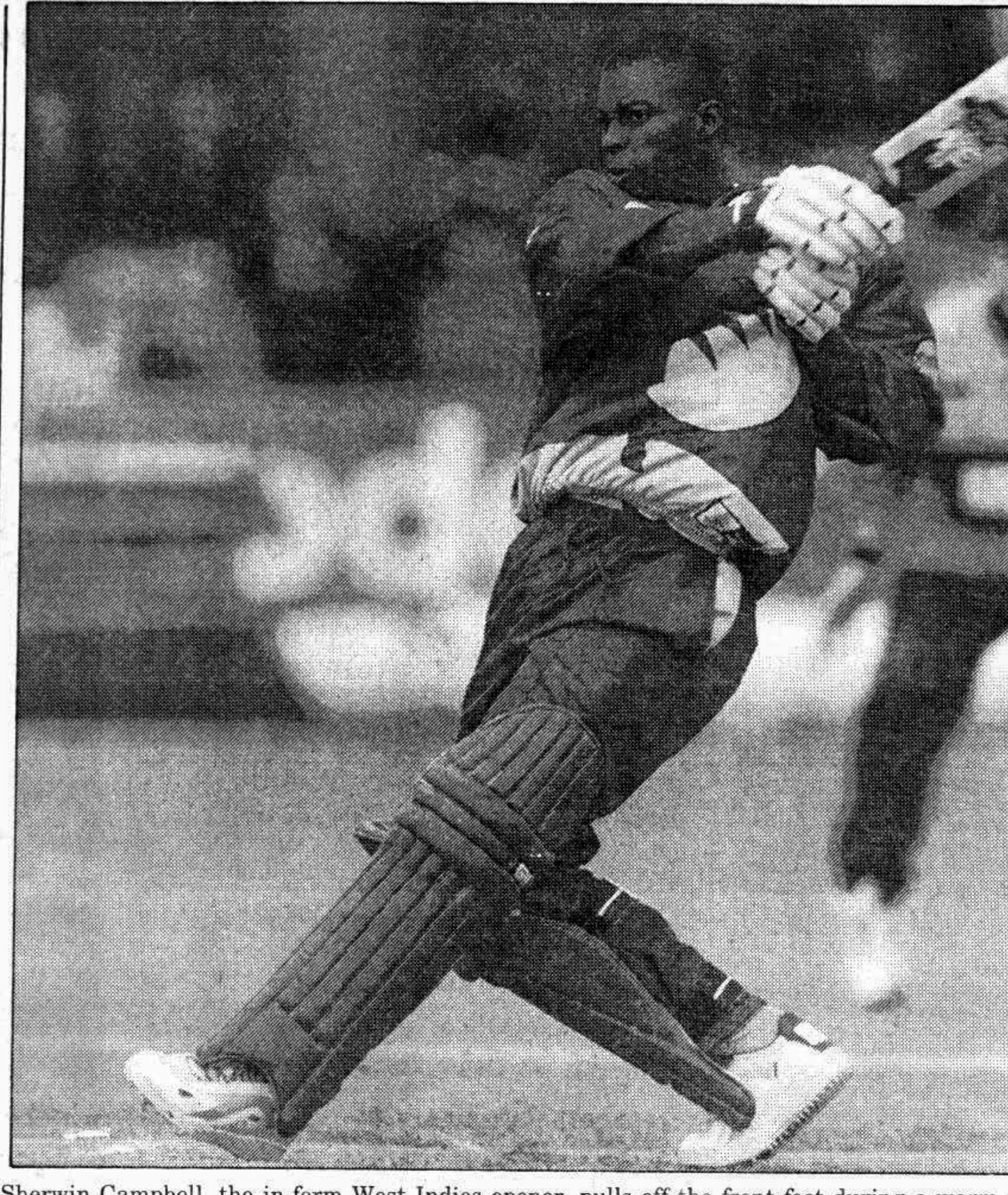
In fact, Morales said he enjoys being described as the next Mexican idol.

"I like it," he said. "I know that situation to happen I have to work very hard."

In his last defence, Morales stopped Angel Chacon in the second round on the undercard of Oscar De La Hoya's fight with Quartey Feb. 13.

It will be Morales' first fight under a three-year multi-fight contract with Arum. He will get a base dls 100,000 but could make as much as dls 350,000 for the fight with sponsorships in Mexico and money from Mexican television.

In another super bantamweight title bout, Nestor Garcia of Mexico will defend his WBA belt against Carlos Barreto of Venezuela.



Sherwin Campbell, the in-form West Indies opener, pulls off the front foot during a warm-up match against Gloucestershire at Bristol yesterday. —AFP photo

Sport

World XI keep on winning

KATHMANDU, May 8: In a rain curtailed match, the World XI Friday beat Pakistan Veterans to notch up their second straight victory in as many days. Pakistan's decision to bowl first backfired when the World XI amassed a solid 205 for seven in 33 overs with former South African Andrew Hudson scoring a strokeful 40 runs, reports AFP.

West Indian veteran Larry Gomes, who missed out on runs Friday, compensated with four wickets.

The World XI beat Pakistan by 15 runs Friday with Larry Gomes declared man-of-the-match. Early rain delayed the match which was reduced from 45 over to just 33 overs. The World XI veterans score was boosted by solid innings from Colis King, 41, David Capel, 38.

Capel further entertained the cricket-loving crowd of Nepal, with three massive sixes in one over. West Indian star Colis King was in sterling form and for the second straight day scored 40-plus runs but missed out on the man of the match award once again.

Pakistan started on a good note losing their first wicket on 48 and second wicket on 116 but could not consolidate losing wickets in quick succession to be all out for 190 runs. Sadiq Mohammad top scored with 68. Waleh Azhar Khan and Aamir Malik made valuable contribution of 27 and 22.

From the Pakistan side, Aamir Malik took four wickets, much to the satisfaction of the Nepalese audience who visibly favoured Pakistan.

The World XI on Thursday beat India Veterans by 20 runs when they met in Kathmandu.

Officials here hope the Legends Cup will firmly establish Nepal in the international cricket map.

Arch rivals Pakistan and India are pitted against one another today in a match which will decide who the World XI will play in the finals on Sunday.

The crowd trouble began in 1994, when three Australian players were cleared from Eden Gardens by baton-wielding police after missiles were thrown onto the pitch during a Test between India and Pakistan despite both their coaches criticising him earlier in the season, reports AFP.

For South Africa, the tournament favourites and indisputably the best one-day side in the world over the past two seasons, the issue has been one of scandal and acrimony behind it this week for the start of its greatest showpiece, the World Cup.

Rarely has any sporting tournament experienced so rocky a prologue.

There have been outbreaks of crowd trouble — once the preserve of football — and allegations of match-fixing. In many countries, politicians and judges rather than players have claimed headlines.

Since then, players within both the Pakistan and Indian squads have fuelled the fire, accusing teammates of deliberately losing minor one-day games in return for bribes from illegal bookmakers.

Several leading players in Pakistan, where the scandal has ranged loudest and longest, are still being investigated, with suggestions the findings will be delayed so as not to coincide with the World Cup.

In Sri Lanka, meanwhile, the reigning world champions' participation was threatened after a power struggle led to the national cricket board being suspended.

On Friday, March 14, England take on Sri Lanka in the tournament opener. Time will tell whether the traditional sportsman's phrase "it's not cricket" deserves a future.

To blur the issue even further, Shane Warne, one of the Australians who first pointed the finger at Malik, admitted last year that he himself accepted a cash gift from a Indian bookmaker when asked for information on pitch and weather conditions.

Warne admits he was naive but refutes charges of dishonesty. As does Malik.

The crowd trouble began in Calcutta — where 70,000 spectators were cleared from Eden Gardens by baton-wielding police after missiles were thrown onto the pitch during a Test between India and Pakistan despite both their coaches criticising him earlier in the season, reports AFP.

Manchester United boss Alex Ferguson, who was furious with David Elleray's decisions to send off Denis Irwin and award Liverpool a penalty in Wednesday's 2-2 draw which left United three points adrift of leaders Arsenal although they have a game in hand, has laid into Barber twice this season while his 'Boro' counterpart Bryan Robson has also voiced concerns over the referee's judgement.

The United boss slammed Barber for dismissing Nicky Butt at Arsenal in September and again for not showing Chelsea's Bernard Lamourne a red card in December when he pulled down Dwight Yorke as the striker raced through on goal.

Robson, who said there will be no place for sentimentality when his side faces his former club on Sunday, disagreed with Barber's decision to award United a crucial penalty for a challenge by Neil Maddison on Butt during the sides' FA Cup clash in January.

The second seeded Spaniard overwhelmed Gustavo Kuerten of Brazil 6-0, 6-2, but Mariano Zabala's 3-6, 6-1, 6-4 upset of third seed Tim Henman meant that Moya is unable to gather enough bonus points to unseat Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov.

Moya plays fourth seed Marcelo Rios of Chile for a place in the final, while Zabala takes on Ecuador's Nicolas Lapentti. Rios recovered from 4-1 down in the second set to beat 11th seeded German Thomas Haas 6-4, 6-4, and Lapentti ended the run of gallant French qualifier Arnaud Di Pasquale with a 6-4, 6-7, 6-2 victory.

"It was one of my best matches on clay," Moya said.

"I played great from the beginning. I took the decision to attack every ball and not to let him attack me, because once he hits the ball hard it's very difficult to return them."

"From the first ball I played very deep and very hard," he added.

Kuerten was in fine form af-

Taking a look back



LONDON, May 8 (Internet): Interesting facts and figures from the six World Cups:

England, 1979

"Sri Lanka, still to be granted Test status, gave a hint of things to come by beating India.

"England unveiled a secret weapon in 38-year-old opening batsman Geoff Boycott. Boycott bowled economically against Australia, Pakistan and New Zealand before suffering seven games in a row.

"A new rule for deciding targets in rain-affected matches was introduced. Expressly designed to produce the fairest possible solution it resulted in an absurdity in the semifinal between England and South Africa.

"South Africa fielded three brothers against England — Richard, Dayle and Barry Hadlee. Their father Walter was a former New Zealand skipper.

"Lance Cairns, a big-hitting all-rounder, also played for New Zealand. His son Chris, a big-hitting all-rounder, is in the current side.

"Don Pring represented East Africa against England.

"Seven years later his son Derek was in the England Test side.

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"The crowd, thinking the game was over invaded the ground.

"Thomson and his partner Dennis Lillee raced up and down the pitch. When the confusion was resolved umpire Dickie Bird asked Lillee how many runs he had scored. I

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