

WC souvenirs fetch \$48,900

PARIS, June 30: Shirts, soccer balls and even a piece of turf from the Stade de France stadium where France won last year's World Cup fetched 312,000 francs (48,900 dollars) at an auction held to battle anti-personnel mines, reports AFP.

The auction late Tuesday was to raise funds to help the Red Cross crusade against landmines.

A football made by Louis Vuitton and autographed by the 22 members of the cup-winning French squad went for 25,000 francs while star player Zinedine Zidane's signed jersey fetched 7,000 francs.

The piece of turf, carved from the pitch on the day of the final, was sold for 17,000 francs.

Schools h'ball

Narayanganj Adarsha Girls' School & College reached the semifinal of the 10th Bata schools handball tournament crushing Ahmed Bawany High School by 10-0 at the Sultana Kamal Women's Sports Complex yesterday, reports UNB.

Rashida scored 7 goals for the Narayanganj which led the first half 6-0.

Earlier, on Tuesday, Viqarunnisa Noon School & College booked the first berth for the semis as they trounced East Basabo High School 20-1 after leading the first half 12-0.

Diana and Eva netted six goals each while Smriti and Rapi scored three each for the winners while Shamsira netted the consolation goal for the losers.

In the other matches of the day BAF Shaheen School and College beat Sher-e-Bangla Girls' College (school section) 5-0, Lake Circus Girls High 10-1, Scholastica School beat Mirpur Ideal Institute 9-0 and Rifles School & College outplayed Kamalapur Sher-e-Bangla Railway High by 12-1 goals.

Kasparov, Karpov share points

FRANKFURT, June 30: Playing their first match in three years, Russian chess masters Gari Kasparov and Anatoly Karpov drew Tuesday after 38 moves in the first round of a semi-rapid competition in Frankfurt, reports AFP.

The two last faced each other at a 1996 tournament in Las Palmas, Spain.

Playing at the Frankfurt Chess Classics festival, the Russians are also due to match their wits against India's Viswanathan Anand, 29, ranked second in the world, and their compatriot Vladimir Kramnik, 24, who is ranked third.

Anand and Kramnik also played to a draw Tuesday, but in 19 moves.

The four are engaged in a semi-rapid competition which allows each player 25 minutes to make a move.

Over the last eight years, the two Russian masters have created one of the greatest rivalries in chess history.

They have played five world championships against each other, and a total of 167 matches since 1981.

Kasparov, 36, has gotten the better of his rival, with 28 victories, 20 defeats and 119 draws against Karpov.

United decide to skip FA Cup

MANCHESTER, June 30: Manchester United confirmed on Wednesday they have pulled out of the 1999-2000 FA Cup, reports AFP.

The decision means they will now participate in FIFA's inaugural World Club Championship in Brazil next January without fixture congestion.

In a statement the club said: "We realise that many of our supporters will be as disappointed as we are with our decision not to compete in the FA Cup."

"Manchester United see this as an opportunity to compete for the ultimate honour of being the very first world club champions."

The English Football Association offered to exempt the FA Cup holders from the competition in a bid to persuade them to play in the FIFA World Team Championship and so help England's 2006 World Cup bid.

That left United in a no-win situation, knowing that they would disappoint their fans if they agreed to pull out of the FA Cup and disappoint the FA and the Government if they refused to play in Brazil.

United agonised over their decision for two days before announcing at an Old Trafford press conference that they had reluctantly agreed to accept the FA's offer.

The decision is subject to contractual issues which still have to be resolved.

Van Hooijdonk joins Vitesse

AMSTERDAM, June 30: Dutch striker Pierre van Hooijdonk, who went on strike while at Nottingham Forest last season, signed a four-year contract with Dutch First Division side Vitesse on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

The Dutch club announced the move but did not disclose the transfer fee. Newspaper reports said it would be around 3.5 million sterling (\$5.54 million).

Van Hooijdonk has been transfer-listed since last August when he refused to return to the English club, who were then in the premier league, for three months after the World Cup finals in France.



England cricketers limbering up during a practice session at Edgbaston yesterday.

— AFP photo

Gough's vote of confidence



LONDON, June 30 (Internet report): Darren Gough has backed new England captain Nasser Hussain to dispel the World Cup disappointment with victory over New Zealand in the first Test at Edgbaston.

England failed to reach the Super Six stage of the tournament, leading to the departure of Alec Stewart as captain. But Yorkshire fast bowler Gough insists that a good England performance is more important than the personal performance of Hussain.

"I don't think the captain will make a big difference," Gough said.

People have said in the past that somebody was a great captain but in cricket, you need the players around you to win.

In the past people have had Mike Brearley and Ray Illingworth great captains, but you have to remember they had great players around them and they all played together.

What we have got to show now is that we are a good team and make the captain look very good.

But, as he has shown with Essex, Nasser is a strong captain. If he wants to say something, he won't be scared to say



DARREN GOUGH

it. In that respect, he is very good.

"We have a new manager and captain, and it will be like a fresh start. And with some new players coming in, it can only be for the best."

But England will be without the services of Gough after he suffered a leg injury a fortnight ago.

However, a resilient Gough has already put his own disappointment behind him and is gearing himself for a return to

action in the Super Cup semi-final at Warwickshire on July 10 - although he admits a more realistic target is the County Championship game against the same opposition three days later.

A return then would put him in line for an England recall for the second Test against the New Zealanders at Lord's.

"I have stopped thinking about the disappointment. Obviously I am disappointed but last season, I broke my finger so I missed out," Gough said.

"But I always come back so I have got to be realistic and not rush it. But hopefully when I come back, I will make up for lost time."

"It is a difficult injury. Ten days ago, I couldn't walk so I am improving. And hopefully, I'll be running later on this week."

"I have then got to start bowling and do little hurdles. I am hoping to get back for the Super Cup semi-final but I might not get a game before that. So it might be difficult to get selected."

"But the week after we play Warwickshire so I would like to come back then because if I can put in a good performance, I would be in for selection for the Test match, but that might be a little too soon."

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LONDON, June 30 (Internet report): Deposed England captain Alec Stewart is determined to bounce back from his demotion to the ranks and emulate Graham Gooch's prolific end to a Test career.

Gooch, England's coach for the rest of the summer while Duncan Fletcher completes his commitments with Glamorgan, compiled some of his best Test scores once he reached the latter end of his career.

It is that inspiration which Stewart is looking towards as he begins another chapter in his England career against New Zealand later this week, having been stripped of the captaincy and wicketkeeping duties to concentrate on opening the innings alone.

"I've kept myself fit and I'm looking forward to this - it's almost like starting again," admitted 36-year-old Stewart, whose place behind the stumps will be taken by debutant Chris Read on Thursday.

"I've been given the chance to open the batting, which I did in the last two Tests I played and got a hundred and a 50 - the only disappointment is that I've only had three first class innings in the last six months, but that's the way it is."

Since helping England to make a stirring fightback in the finale to the Ashes series at Melbourne and Sydney, Stewart's staple diet has been one-day cricket in the run-in to last month's disappointing World Cup exit - a factor he believes was crucial in the selectors' decision to appoint Nasser Hussain as captain.

"After the world Cup they wanted to be seen to make a change and that's what they've done," conceded Stewart. "People can't use the word scapegoat and it's up to them what they say, but a decision and a change was made and you're expected to go along with it."

"Going out of the World Cup at the first hurdle was disappointing for the crowd, the players and everybody and that's why a change was made."

But although he maintained a diplomatic stance on his first day back on England duty since being relieved of the captaincy, Stewart could not hide his frustration at the time it took the selectors to make a decision on the issue.

Stewart said: "The only relief I had was that they had finally made a decision. I kept reading that Nasser was captain, but I didn't find out until Thursday morning when I got a phone call from David Graveney telling me that Nasser was going to be captain."

"They had to make a decision and if it took them three or four weeks then that's how long it took. There was a lot of press coverage and headlines that Nasser was captain, but you just have to take it in your stride."

"It was disappointing when I got the call from Graveney because I enjoyed captaining England. I won a series against South Africa, Durban."

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Africa and I thought we fought back well in the Ashes series. We didn't do well in the one-day cricket, but they've changed the captain for Test cricket so you just accept it."

His return to the ranks comes against a New Zealand side used to being under-rated and with few pundits predicting anything but an England triumph under Hussain's new regime.

But key batsman Craig McMillan is warning England they could face a shock if they under-estimate a New Zealand

stressed McMillan, whose century against Somerset at Taunton was a major factor in the tourists' six wickets success two days ago.

"We can't rely on that any more because we have played together now for three or four years - we have a lot of experience as a team and it's now time to go out and do the job."

"We had disappointments to begin with and that was probably understandable because of our inexperience, but we have to go on from that and it's no good using that as an excuse because it doesn't wash."

McMillan added: "England have new faces and they have a new captain and a new coach and there is a lot of pride in their, which is something we are very aware of."

Coach Rolland Courbis said on Monday that he signed central defender Eric Decroix from Nantes in preparation for Blanc's possible departure.

Blanc said he was surprised by the speed with which the deal - sealed at a surprisingly low \$3 million for a 1998 World Cup winning player -- was completed.

"I was contacted for the first time on Friday and I signed in Milan on Monday," said Blanc, who is returning to Italy after a spell with Napoli in the early 1990s.

Marseille fans were outraged at the news that the club were selling one of their best players.

key figure in their return to the top of the French and European game in the last two seasons.

Their ire was mainly directed at Courbis, with whom Blanc appears not to have enjoyed a close relationship or been consulted on tactics.

"My only regret is not having won a title with OM," Blanc added.

Club president Robert Louis-Dreyfus had said he was sorry to see him go but also that it was the best solution. "But I still don't understand why people wanted me out," said Blanc.

Jan 20: v North West, Potchefstroom (day/night match).

One-day international triangular tournament between South Africa, England and Zimbabwe :

Jan 21: South Africa v Zimbabwe, Johannesburg (d/n).

Jan 23: South Africa v England, Bloemfontein (d/n).

Jan 26: South Africa v England, Cape Town (d/n).

Jan 28: England v Zimbabwe, Paarl (d/n).

Jan 30: England v Zimbabwe, Kimberley (d/n).

Feb 2: South Africa v Zimbabwe, Durban (d/n).

Feb 4: South Africa v England, East London.

Feb 6: South Africa v Zimbabwe, Port Elizabeth.

Feb 9: England v Zimbabwe, Centurion (d/n).

Feb 12: Final (reserve day 13th), Johannesburg (d/n).

One-day series in Zimbabwe:

Feb 14: Arrive Zimbabwe.

Feb 16: v Zimbabwe, Bulawayo.

Feb 19: v Zimbabwe, Harare.

Feb 23: v Zimbabwe, Harare.

Feb 24: Dept for England.

ENGLAND'S AFRICA TOUR SCHEDULE



ALEC STEWART

side, who may have an average age but are anything but inexperienced as their progress to the World Cup semi-finals demonstrated.

We are showing glimpses that we are beginning to improve as a Test-playing side and the notion that we are a young, inexperienced side has gone."

"We don't take too much notice at what people say because we're used to people putting us down and saying we're not going to give anyone much of a test. I hope they expect that because if they do they are going to get a half of a shock in this Test series."

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