

## Ultimatum on Lazio's mind

ROME, July 12: Italian club Lazio plan to make a "take it or leave it" offer for Arsenal's French striker Nicolas Anelka today and give the English premier league club until Tuesday to make up its mind, reports Reuters.

"I'll make a new offer to Arsenal (on Monday night)," Lazio president Sergio Cragnotti told reporters late on Sunday.

"I'll wait for a reply from (Arsenal vice-chairman David) Dein until Tuesday night. If it's 'No', I'll stop the negotiations."

Lazio have been holding talks with Anelka and Arsenal for a month but have failed to agree a price.

Gazzetta dello Sport newspaper said Arsenal wanted 90 billion lire (47.29 million dollars) against Lazio's offer of 52.5 billion lire in three instalments plus 14 billion lire commission.

Anelka has expressed interest in joining either Real Madrid or Lazio but newspapers have reported that Juventus are also in the race for the 20-year-old French international.

"We'll examine all the bids," Gazzetta quoted Dein as saying.

## School's h'ball

Rajbargh Police Lines High School, Ansars & VDP High School and Motiheel Model High School emerged group champions to reach the semifinals of the 10th Bata school boys' handball tournament yesterday, reports UNB.

BAF Shaheen School Teigaon and Rifles School & College meet today in a play-off match to decide who will qualify for the remaining semifinal berth as the two teams secured same number of points after the league matches.

Both the semifinals will be held on Wednesday.

In the day's matches at the Outer Stadium handball ground, Rajbargh Police Lines beat BAF Shaheen School (Kurmtila) 17-6. Ansars & VDP defeated Shaheed Nabi High School 12-10. Motiheel Model beat Rajdhan High School 16-9 and Blue Birds Academy outplayed Kamal Sher-Bangla Railway High School 8-1.

Another match of the day between BAF Shaheen School (Teigaon) and Rifles School and College ended in a 9-9 draw. Rifles School dominated the first half 5-3.

## Rejoicing the youth

Bangladeshis, residing in Singapore, rejoiced the country's victory in the Asian Youth Cricket Championship on Sunday, according to a message received here yesterday, reports BSS.

At least 2,000 Bangladeshis, who witnessed the final against Nepal, joined the Bangladesh team members to celebrate the victory, according to the leading English daily 'The Straits Times' of Singapore.

The daily in today's edition gave wide coverage of the final, in which Bangladesh beat Nepal to retain the title.

The daily reported, "Victory in the final against Nepal was achieved in relatively easy fashion as Bangladesh won by six wickets with 11.5 overs to spare."

## World Cup '99

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small, in fact far too small to stage matches that involved Bangladesh, Pakistan and India. After all, the supporters from these three countries provided the maximum spectator entertainment throughout the tournament. Someone mentioned that Bangladeshis would pull such huge spectator support, they would have found larger grounds for the Bangladesh matches. In each one of Bangladesh's matches, thousands of disappointed spectators could not get in as matches were all sold out. The "Carnival of Cricket" became a reality only due to the colourful and loud fans from the subcontinent and Bangladesh was easily the winner in the stands.

Much was written in the English Press about our supporters. They were wonderfully crazy, loud and cheered the players and the team regardless of the outcome of the match. It was treat to watch them - tiger costume and all armed with pots and pans (sourced from thousands of Bangladeshis) owned curry houses in Britain) Memorable moment was when the Bangladesh and Scottish fans joined ranks, each in their own team's jerseys, and paraded the stands from one end to the other.

The Scots had their kilts while some of us had their lungis. It was fun "extraordinary". If the South Africans wish to have some great fans in the next World Cup, get some Bangladeshis from the UK. Hats off them.

Public transportation to and from the grounds was at its low point. After the match against Australia at Chester Le Street, I waited for more than an hour for a taxi that was called in by the Durham Cricket Club (host club) Administrative Office. The taxi never showed up. I was then invited by the Bangladesh Team Manager to catch the team bus back to the hotel. Anywhere else, there would have been shuttle buses set up between the ground and the nearest public transportation place. This was the rationale behind it.

The writer was known as Yousuf Babu when he played with much aplomb for Bangladesh in the 70s. The former national cricketer now works in the States.



A star file photo of France's World Cup heroes (L-R) Thierry Henry, Robert Pires, then coach Aime Jacquet, March Desailly and Bixente Lizarazu riding on an open-root double-decker through the streets of Paris on July 13, 1998.

## Burden of being champs



PARIS, July 12: (Reuters) France celebrate the anniversary of their World Cup victory today now well aware that the title of world champions is a difficult one to live up to.

Struggling to take an automatic qualifying berth for the European championship finals next year, the French have not looked convincing since the World Cup, except in bursts up front, the one area lacking in the heady days of June and July 1998.

And with this return to earth, the euphoria of last summer has gradually died too, even if the magnificent Stade de France has done its best to keep that flame alive with guided visits to the shrine of France's World Cup glory.

But when the 80,000-capacity stadium in the St-Denis suburb was filled almost to capacity for Euro 2000 qualifiers, the fans generally went home disappointed and France looked rudderless without an injured Zinedine Zidane.

Their best result since the World Cup was to beat Russia 3-2 away in Moscow in October, their most pleasing performance a 2-0 victory with two goals by their new teenage striker Nicolas Anelka in a friendly against England at Wembley in February.

The Stade saw the worst of France, virtually unchanged from the World Cup apart from strikers Anelka and Sylvain Wiltord, the country's top scorer for champions Girondins Bordeaux.

At the Stade de France, under new coach Roger Lemerre, struggled to beat minnows Andorra 2-0 and Armenia by the same score, were lucky to draw 0-0 with Ukraine and crashed to a 3-2 defeat by the Russians amid whistles and jeers.

And they needed an 85th minute penalty to scrape past Andorra 1-0 in June in qualifier played in Barcelona.

They showed only rare flashes of the variety of attacking options they had mastered and put to great effect during the World Cup under Aime Jacquet in the absence of a prolific scorer.

Several leading European football writers, in a series of articles in sports daily L'Equipe, agreed that Jacquet's shadow is proving a problem for his successor.

Lemerre has not yet managed to kill the father," wrote Kicker's Wolfgang Tobien.

He recalled as a comparison the difficulties Bertie Vogts had in succeeding Franz Beckenbauer as Germany coach after the 1990 World Cup victory when he opted for continuity. A side full of veterans ended up as poor quarter-finalists in 1994.

Tobien called this "a programmed failure that Roger Lemerre must meditate upon."

Spanish Pao Aguilar of El Mundo Deportivo suggested it might have been better to look elsewhere for Jacquet's successor.

The big question is to know whether Roger Lemerre and his philosophy of continuity are the right solution or if, from a technical point of view, it would be better to turn the

page and pass the responsibility to club technicians like Luis Fernandez or Jean Tigana," he wrote.

Where Jacquet managed to keep France's momentum going during the World Cup when they were deprived through suspension of Zidane, Lemerre has struggled without him in the Euro 2000 qualifiers.

But Lemerre disagree that France are still under the Jacquet spell and lost without his guiding hand.

"The squad has the talent and variety to get over his departure," he said.

Lemerre has been consistent in his Euro 2000 line-ups, starting with eight or nine outfield players from the World Cup 22 plus strikers who were not in the squad, Anelka, Wiltord or Bordeaux's Lillian Laslandes.

"Anelka is the man who rounds off all the savoir-faire of the France team," Lemerre said.

As the Stade de France holds a special July 12 anniversary for visitors, Lemerre and his team look ahead to the remaining Euro qualifiers.

Their sights are fixed on the match in Kiev on September 4 when a rested side will be looking for a victory over Ukraine to retain hopes of qualifying directly as group four winners.

Anything else would leave them chasing a place in the play-offs.

If Lemerre has learned one thing in his difficult first year it is that reputations count for little and past victories - even if they have come in the World Cup final - don't earn qualifying points.

## S Korea for a solution

UNDATED, July 12 (AFP/Reuters): A row between FIFA and its Asian members over the place allocations for the 2002 World Cup is unlikely to end in an Asian boycott of the games, South Korean football officials said today.

"We definitely do not want to see any boycott of the 2002 World Cup occurring," said a source close to the organisers of the football extravaganza to be co-hosted by Japan and South Korea in three years time.

"I think some sort of compromise will be reached long before then between the Asian Football Confederation, FIFA and president Blatter and Chung Mong-Joon," he added.

The comments came after the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) walked out of the FIFA Congress in Los Angeles on Friday in protest at the number of places allocated to the region in the 2002 World Cup.

The move by Asian members, angry at being handed only four-and-a-half places at the 2002 World Cup by football's world governing body, humiliated FIFA president Sepp Blatter, who had appealed to them not to leave the meet.

South Korea's powerful FIFA vice-president Chung Moon-jung had said earlier in Los Angeles that it would be a 'scandal'



if Asia were to be denied the extra spot it has demanded.

Other delegates warned that a threatened boycott of the next World Cup would take place unless extra fifth berth, which was given to South America, is granted to Asia.

The walkout is seen as the first major challenge to Blatter's year-old presidency, prompting him to threaten punishment for the AFC and brand their move a 'disgrace'.

"While Blatter's reaction

against the AFC was strong, it's too early to predict this dispute ending in a head-to-head clash as he had to take a tough stance if he felt his leadership was being challenged," the source here said.

Japan will consult with co-hosts South Korea on how to solve the row between Asia and FIFA over the allocation of places, Japan's top soccer official said today.

"My opinion is that the (Japanese Football) Association should condone in a head-to-head clash as he had to take a tough stance if he felt his leadership was being challenged," the source here said.

Okano was speaking to reporters after returning from a FIFA congress in Los Angeles on Friday.

Okano said there was no chance of Japan boycotting the tournament. He hoped FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) would re-open talks on the issue soon.

Okano said Japan was torn between its responsibility as the co-host of the tournament and as a member of AFC.

Asian countries said they will boycott the 2002 qualifying tournament and go into the World Cup with only two countries - Japan and South Korea - unless they are given five places.

## Jack hits the road to Lord's



LONDON, July 12 (Internet report): Jack Russell is relishing the prospect of his first ever Lord's cup final and admitted: "This means as much to me as anything I have achieved in the game."

Former England wicket-keeper Russell watched his beloved Gloucestershire for the first time in the 1977 Benson and Hedges Cup final - and vowed one day to emulate his boyhood heroes.

Now, 22 years later, Gloucestershire are back at cricket's headquarters for their first final since that 64-run triumph over Kent - and it means everything to Russell after two decades in the game without a trophy.

The West Country man clinched a meeting with Yorkshire on August 1 thanks to a 24-run win over Sussex in the semi-final of the Benson & Hedges Super Cup at Bristol.

A dramatic Sussex collapse from 176 for three to 217 all out in pursuit of a 242 target, despite a brilliant 88 from skipper Chris Adams, ensured joy for Russell and his team-mates.

Russell, who retired from international cricket last winter, said: "Players tell me there is nothing like playing in finals and I'm now going to be on one of those balconies looking out over Lord's and it will be lovely."

"I've been here nearly 20 years and I've not really had a sniff of that apart from one semi-final against Notts which

we should have won. It's been a long wait to get even close - but now we're there."

"I loved Test cricket and playing for England but this means as much to me as all those times, as much as any thing I've achieved in the game - and if we win the final it will be the icing on the cake for my career."



Youth and Sport Secretary ASM Shajahan speaking during the inaugural ceremony of the central office of Bangladesh Carrom Federation at the Moulana Bhasani Stadium on July 11. Federation president Dr Sheikh Abdus Salam is also seen.

## Stankovic on the move?

MADRID, July 12 (Reuters/Internet): Mallorca's Yugoslav midfielder Jovan Stankovic was on Monday quoted as saying he wants to leave the island club.

Stankovic, whose pinpoint crossing from the left wing has made him one of the most sought after players in Spain, told Spanish sports daily Marca he had received several lucrative offers.

And the former Crvena Zvezda Belgrade player, now 28, is pleading with Mallorca to let him take what could be his last chance for a move to a big club.

Atletico Madrid have made an offer of 1,500 million pesetas (\$9.14 million) but Mallorca don't want to listen. I've also received offers from Valencia and from French clubs.

"The offer from Atletico is a one-off - it's not going to be repeated. I'm 28 now and if I miss this train it's going to be very difficult for me."

Mallorca, who are just one qualifying tie away from a place in the Champions League next season, have sold several key players over the close season, among them striker Dani Garcia to Barcelona and centre back Marcelino Elena to Newcastle United.

Midfielder Lauren Mayer is also expected to leave the club, with Roma leading the chase, while Atletico Madrid have taken Veljko Paunovic back after a loan spell.

"In the last few years the club have sold a lot of players but I've stayed here," Stankovic said. "I would have loved to have gone to a great club like Atletico."

## McGrath gets green signal for county stint

MELBOURNE, July 12 (AP): Paceman Glenn McGrath was rewarded for his great service to Australian cricket when he was cleared Monday to play for English county Worcestershire next year.

While the Australian Cricket Board is wary about exposing its contracted players to an increased work load, ACB chairman Denis Rogers admitted McGrath had earned the right to sign a county contract.

"We think he's made too big a contribution to Australian cricket to just be bloody-minded about it and that's the same attitude we had about Shane Warne," Rogers said.

Warne successfully applied two years ago to play in England.

Like Shane Warne, Glenn has given faithful service to Australian cricket, so we've reluctantly agreed to release him.

Rogers said the ACB remains concerned about the issue and that chief executive Malcolm Speed has been commissioned to put together guidelines for future requests from contracted players.

"The new world we live in is that we have a corporate governance responsibility for the welfare of Australian cricket," said Rogers.

Rogers admitted the ACB would find it hard to reject a player's request to play in England.

"We would be reluctant to exercise that right - what we want to do is find a solution that is satisfactory to us, satisfactory to the player and particularly to the satisfaction of Australian cricket," Roger said.

Speed acknowledged the physical strains on bowlers were probably more than those on batsmen, but added it was also a matter of mental fatigue during the long English season.

Speed will now discuss details of McGrath's overseas stint with the bowler and his management.

## Sanath bans mobile phones

COLOMBO, July 12: Sri Lanka's new cricket captain, Sanath Jayasuriya, said Monday he would ban the use of cellphones by players, even during practice, to restore discipline and the country's cricket glory, reports AP.

"It is a big challenge. It is a big task," Jayasuriya told reporters in his first news conference after being named Sri Lankan captain.

"I think it is not proper to use cellphones even during practice and I am all against it," Jayasuriya said.

Sri Lankan players were given free cellphones by a private company before the last World Cup and there has been criticism that some of them used the phones during practice.

Some commentators had even linked use of the cellphones to lack of performance, saying the players had been distracted. Sri Lanka, former one-day world champions, did not reach the second round of the last World Cup.

Jayasuriya said his team was practicing hard for the upcoming tour by Australia and India that starts in August. He vowed a good fight.

Jayasuriya said he was in favour of retaining former skipper Arjuna Ranatunga and batsman Aravinda De Silva on the team.

"They are a vast wealth of experience and I feel that we can make use of it. I am in favour of having the experienced players," Jayasuriya said.

"My first task is to bring back confidence and see that we come out of the dark time," he said, referring to Sri Lanka's poor show at the World Cup.

Jayasuriya is Sri Lanka's eighth captain since the country got test playing status 17 years ago.

Jayasuriya said he would open the batting and will go back to his style that made him a favourite: take a shot at everything.



THE BEST OF 'BAM BAM': Chile's super-striker Ivan Zamorano(R) shakes of the challenge of Colombia's Ivan Cordoba and sets off to score his team's winning goal on July 11.

—AFP photo

## Chile shatter Colombian dream



LUQUE, Paraguay, July 12: With one of their top strikers on the bench, Chile got a pair of goals from defender Pedro Reyes and a breakout game from Ivan "Bam Bam" Zamorano to upset favored Colombia 3-2 in the quarterfinals of the Copa America, reports AP.

As Marcelo Salas sat out the second game of a two-game suspension Sunday, Chile twice came from behind to send Colombia home. Chile will face Uruguay in the semifinals on Wednesday.

It was a stunning loss for the Colombians, who had breezed undefeated through the first round and were expected to overwhelm Chile, who finished third in their group and barely squeaked into the second round.

Chile used cagey defense to derail Colombia.

They outmaneuvered and outpaced a team that was favored to reach the finals.

Colombia came right back

and took the lead again 10 minutes later when Freddy Grisales passed to Victor Bonilla, who tapped it in past charging goalie Marcelo Ramirez.

Four minutes into the second half, Sierra and Reyes hooked up again, with the defender heading in another perfect cross to even the score at 2-2.

The goal renewed the spirits of Chile, who seemed at last to believe in its chances. Chile took control of the game, trapping the Colombians in their own end.

In the 64th minute, Zamorano got the game winner after slipping through the defense on the left side, eluding Calero with a subtle feint and tapping it home.

SQUADS

COLOMBIA: Miguel Calero, Rubiel Quintana, Jorge Bermudez, Ivan Cordoba, Roberto Cortes, Freddy Grisales, Jorge Bolano (Juan Ramirez, 45) Harold Lozano, Arley Betancourt, Victor Bonilla and Hamilton Richard.

CHILE: Marcelo Ramirez, Raul Palacios, Jorge Vargas, Miguel Ramirez, Pedro Reyes, Mauricio Aros, Clarence Acuna, Jose Luis Sierra, Fabian Estay, Ivan Zamorano and Pedro Gonzalez.

Referee: Armando Archundia, Mexico.

## Gloucester see Sussex off



LONDON, June 12 (Internet report): Gloucestershire are through to their first Lord's final in 22 years after a dramatic Sussex collapse saw them win their Benson and Hedges Super Cup semi-final at Bristol by 24 runs.

Sussex captain Chris Adams had threatened to spoil the West Country party by seeing his side through to victory as they chased a 242 target in 50 overs.

But after reaching 176 for three his team-mates committed suicide via a succession of reckless shots, after paceman Jon Lewis had opened the door with a wicket in each of his final two overs.

The stark facts show that Sussex lost their last seven wickets for 41 runs in eight overs. Adams must have wondered what was happening at the other end after he had looked to have the situation under control.

He finally was last out after hitting six fours and two sixes in his 129-ball innings - and that was the signal for hundreds of delighted Gloucestershire fans to invade the pitch.

A rapid half-century from man of the match Jeremy Snape gave Gloucestershire a challenging total to defend.

Now after several near misses veteran wicketkeeper Jack Russell, who made his county debut 18 years ago, can look forward to a meeting with Yorkshire - conquerors of Warwickshire yesterday - on August 1.

Lewis had made a quickfire breakthrough for Gloucestershire when Rajesh Rao pushed forward without scoring and edged to skipper Mark Alleyne

at first slip.

Sussex's on-song overseas player Michael Di Venuto then threatened to win the game almost single-handed with a dazzling array of boundaries. His 50 contained no less than 12 fours and he dominated a stand of 93 in 18 overs with Chris Adams.

Then Alleyne broke through with successive balls to redress the balance of the game.

First Di Venuto (62) was trapped lbw by a ball which kept low after missing an attempted pull and then Tony Cottrey departed in the same manner.

The game swung back in Sussex's favour as James Carpenter gave Adams good support in a fourth-wicket stand of 82 in 21 overs in which neither batsman looked in any trouble.

But once again the match took another - and decisive - twist as Sussex's inexperienced lower order folded.

Lewis was recalled to the attack and immediately gave Gloucestershire renewed hope when he had Carpenter caught behind for 45.

But then Adams must have looked on in dismay as a succession of batsmen perished when all that was required was to push the singles and give him the strike.

Giles Haywood was bowled by Ian Harvey off the inside edge. Umer Rashid lofted Lewis to long off, Shaun Humphries dragged a Mike Cawdron delivery onto his stumps and James Kirtley drove the same bowler to cover.

It was suddenly 204 for eight and there was no way back for Sussex as Jason Lewry was yorked by Ian Harvey before Adams perished attempting to

win what had become an almost hopeless cause.

The Gloucestershire innings had struggled to gain momentum for long periods before Snape entered the arena.

He came in with his side struggling at 158 for six in the 38th over after a succession of batsmen had contrived to throw their wickets away.

But the former Northamptonshire all-rounder hit out to such good effect that he reached his half-century off only 41 balls with five fours before being last out in the final over.

Up until then Gloucestershire had looked as if they would struggle to reach much more than 200 despite a second-wicket partnership of 64 in 12 overs between Tim Hancock (41) and Matt Windows (27).

Lewry - playing his first one-day game for 12 months - had accounted for Gloucestershire opener Kim Barnett lbw in the first over of the day with a swinging delivery.

But after the Hancock-Windows stand too many batsmen failed to capitalise after getting themselves established and paid the penalty with ill-judged shots.

Windows cut Haywood straight to backward point. Hancock was stumped after going down the wicket to Rashid who then bowled Alleyne for 20 after he played a horrible swipe in the direction of fine leg.

Russell made 30 before he inadvertently made a Kirtley delivery into a yorker by stepping down the track - and was bowled.

Rob Cunliffe was run out by Mark Robinson's direct hit from long off at the non-striker's end attempting a second run.



Newly appointed Sri Lankan cricket captain Sanath Jayasuriya(L) and his deputy Mahela Jayawardena at a press conference in Colombo yesterday.

—AFP photo