

## 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

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

BAF Shaheen School Tejgaon 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, Rajbari Police Lines beat BAF Shaheen School (Kurmilote) 17-6, Ansars & VDP defeated Shaheed Nabi High School 12-10, Motijheel Model beat Rajdhani High School 16-9 and Blue Birds Academy outplayed Kamalpur Sher-e-Bangla Railway High School 8-1.

Another match of the day between BAF Shaheen School (Tejgaon) 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 in 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

From page 13

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 had they known that the Bangladesh team 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 Bangladeshi owned curry houses in Britain) Memorable moment was when the Bangladeshi 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 "extraordinaire". If the South Africans wish to have some great fans in the next World Cup, get some Bangladeshi from the UK. Hats off to 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 would have been the rationale thing to do.

The writer was known as Yousef 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 Aimé Jacquet, Marc'h Desailly and Bixente Lizarazu riding on a open-top 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 3-0 win of Brazil.

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 goals by their new teenage striker Nicolas Anelka in a friendly against England at Wembley in February.

The Stade de France won 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.

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 the next

World Cup would take place unless and 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 very 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 consult with South Korea and deal with the issue," said Japan Football Association (JFA) Chairman Shunichiro Okano.

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

would 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.

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

"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.

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 Sheik Abus Salam is also seen.

## Sport

### 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 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."

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.

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 could leave them chasing a place in the play-offs.

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



THE BEST OF 'BAM BAM': Chile's super-striker Ivan Zamorano (R) shoves off 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



Colombia, never quite found the room to parade their offensive arsenal.

Based on an analysis of Colombia's other games, we reduced the spaces to contain the explosion of their attackers, and things just worked out," said Chilean coach Nelson Acosta.

"We showed that we're not as bad as some people think."

The expectations began to shift early, as Colombia set aside technique and finesse aside to clash with Chile in a physical battle for control of the midfield.

In Colombia's first chance on goal, Harold Lozano sent through a ball to Jorge Bolano, who blew past Clarence Acuna and let loose a cannon shot to make it 1-0 in the seventh minute. In the stands, Colombian fans began the party.

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 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're 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.

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.

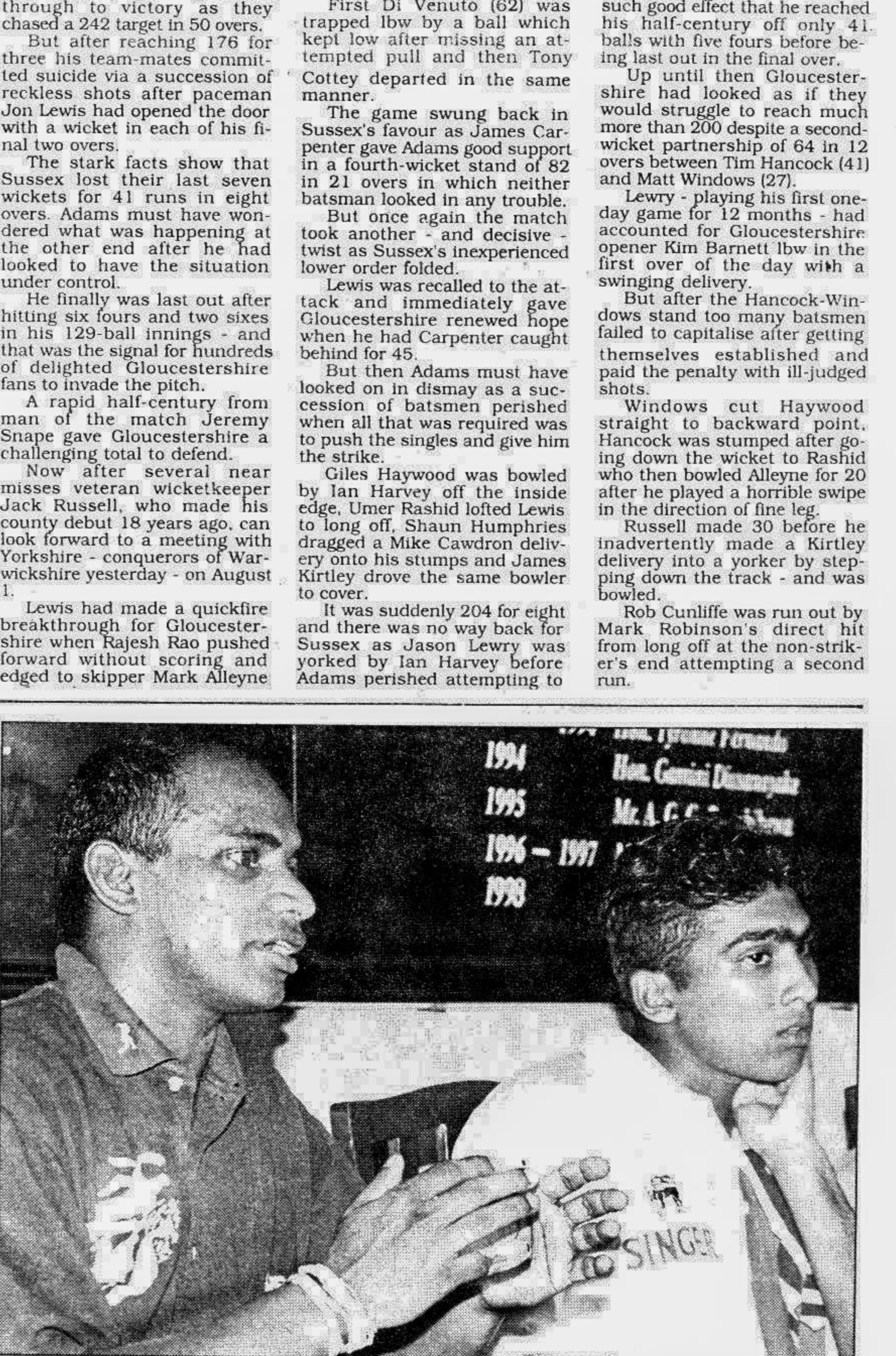
Now after several near misses, veteran wicketkeeper Jack Russell, who made his county debut 18 years ago, can look forward to a meeting with Yorkshire - conquerors of Warwickshire yesterday - on August 1.

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

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 cover.

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

— AFP photo



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

— AFP photo