

Sport

No cutting of MU fees

SYDNEY, July 12: Promoters of Manchester United's two-match tour of Australia have dropped a threat to withhold half the team's 4 million Australian dollars (US 2.7 million dollars) fee over the absence of England international David Beckham and manager Alex Ferguson, reports Reuters.

Rivkin Entertainment said last week it was considering withholding the money, claiming their contract with United was based on Beckham and Ferguson being a part of the touring party for the forthcoming matches in Melbourne and Sydney.

Ferguson said on Friday the club never intended to include Beckham on the Australian tour, although he could fly out to meet up with the squad for the China and Hong Kong leg of the trip.

Ferguson would also miss the trip to accept his Knighthood from the Queen at Buckingham Palace on July 21.

But Rivkin Entertainment said in a statement on Sunday night that the availability of Beckham, who has been on his honeymoon, would depend on a fitness test.

"Manchester United has told us they want to sort it out with Alex Ferguson and that they want Beckham to come," RE managing director Dominic Galati also told local media.

Galati said they had been told Beckham was recovering from a hamstring injury.

"They say if he's coming he'll only play in the second match or he'll be on the bench," Galati said. "They're trying to do the right thing, they don't want to let the fans down."

The statement said Beckham's fitness would be assessed "as soon as practicable" in Manchester.

"Following our most recent discussions with Manchester United we are satisfied with the composition of the traveling party and the explanations provided for the missing personnel," it said.

Women's cricket England beat India

LONDON, July 12 (Internet report): Captain Karen Smithies completed a maiden international century and then struck the final ball to the boundary to clinch a three-wicket victory for England in the third and final women's one-day international against India.

England needed four runs off the last delivery of their 50 overs at Trent Bridge to overtake the Indians' 220 for five.

Smithies hit the ball to mid-wicket and it trickled to the ropes despite despairing dives from two fielders as England reached 221 for seven with the skipper unbeaten on 110 from 146 balls.

England, having already lost the first two matches, had always been behind the asking rate until a robust 27 off 23 deliveries from Suzanne Redfern gave them a chance.

Vice-captain Clare Connor added 31 runs to her bowling haul of three for 43, which followed the left-arm spinner's hat-trick and figures of five for 49 in the second game.

A late flurry of runs from Hemlata Kalia had enabled India to post the highest score of the series.

Hemlata blasted an unbeaten 33 off 34 balls with three fours and a six over mid-wicket.

The tourists had also made a flying start with 100 coming up in the 25th over after a first-wicket stand of 77 between captain Chander Aheer (58) and Anju Jain (45).

SFA to summon Brown

GLASGOW, July 12: Scottish soccer chiefs plan to talk to national coach Craig Brown as soon as possible after a newspaper alleged he sang anti-Catholic songs on an answer-phone message to a girlfriend, reports Reuters.

The News of the World alleged on Sunday that Brown sang parts of traditional terrace songs popular with Rangers fans but which predominantly Catholic Celtic followers consider offensive and inflammatory.

"Office bearers (officials) have not had a chance to speak to Craig but they are looking to do so at the earliest opportunity," a Scottish Football Association (SFA) spokeswoman said.

Brown, a former Rangers player and a popular figure in Scotland who has made enormous efforts to break down the religious divide which had dogged the game, denies any allegations of bigotry.

"There is no way in which I can be accused of bigotry," he told a radio interview today. "I have been in football for 40 years. Everybody in Scottish football knows me and there is not one person I know who would accuse me of bigotry."

Celtic and Rangers, the two biggest clubs in Scotland, have a long history of antagonism based on their Catholic and Protestant supporters.

In May, Donald Findlay, a Rangers vice-chairman, resigned after being filmed on video singing anti-Catholic songs at a victory celebration after the Scottish Cup final.

Brown said: "I don't think there is a parallel here and I think that will emerge in any legal situation which follows."

He has said he intends to take legal action against the newspaper.

Brown, 59, is one of the longest-serving international managers in the game having taken over from Andy Roxburgh in September 1993.



Us custodian Briana Scurry meeting fans during a rally for the World Cup winning squad at the Convention centre in Los Angeles on July 11. —AFP photo

Heroines parade Disneyland



LOS ANGELES, July 12: The triumphant US Women's World Cup team celebrated their victory over China with a Disneyland parade Sunday morning, followed by a rally in downtown Los Angeles, reports AFP.

The trip to a Disney theme park has become something of a tradition for US sports champions.

On Sunday the American women, who beat China 5-4 on penalties after playing 120 scoreless minutes in the final at the Rose Bowl on Saturday, were the stars of a Disneyland Main Street parade.

As usual, Disney had put together an advertisement featur-

ing the team within hours of the game's completion, and the parade included fireworks, dances, bands and confetti.

On Sunday afternoon, the team posed for photos outside the Los Angeles convention center. Some of the players, who became the talk of the nation during their three-week championship campaign, took the opportunity to turn the tables a little, taking photographs of fans and each other in the light-hearted atmosphere.

The players, who came under intense media scrutiny throughout the tournament, are already signed up for a second media blitz.

But this time their round of late-night and morning chat shows promises to be more relaxed with the title already secured.

Brandi Chastain, who fired the winning penalty kick, has

already appeared on "Meet the Press" -- alongside US Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers.

The Sunday morning news programme featured discussion of the budget surplus, tax cuts and penalty kicks as a means of deciding matches.

"We're just doing whatever we're told, and having a good time," Danielle Fotopoulos said. "We're supposed to be on the cover of Newsweek, Time, Sports Illustrated and People."

There will be an appearance on Late Night with David Letterman. Letterman is the chat-show host who dubbed the team "Babe City" after Chastain appeared on his programme.

"It's all blur," said goalkeeper Briana Scurry, whose diving save of one Chinese penalty attempt opened the door for Chastain. "I'm sure by Wednesday I'll be hitting the wall big time."

Getting back to reality!



LOS ANGELES, July 12 (AP): The lasting image is of game-winning goal scorer Brandi Chastain sliding on her knees near the penalty spot, celebrating the US women's World Cup triumph with a full-throated roar and waving her jersey instead of wearing it.

What remains to be seen is whether a nation that fell under the spell of a sport and the female athletes who played it this summer will still love them both by next week.

"Let's be real about this," Hank Steinbrenner, general secretary of the US Soccer Federation, said Sunday. "We caught lightning in a bottle. The Queen Mother doesn't have enough money to pay these women what they deserve right now."

Steinbrenner spoke just minutes before Chastain and her teammates swept past during a parade at Disneyland.

Team members were showered with confetti as they rode a float that swept through Disneyland's Main Street. They rubbed elbows with Mickey and Minnie Mouse. Later, several hundred fans clad in red, white and blue turned out in 95-degree (35 C) heat for the rally in front of the Los Angeles Convention Centre.

The festivities marked the start of a two-day, two-coast whirlwind tour that will put the team in front of the cameras that missed them the first time around — when they criss-crossed America en route to winning the 16-nation, 32-game tournament that concluded Saturday with a 5-4 victory over China on penalty kicks following a scoreless tie.

The Americans' thrilling triumph produced the most-watched soccer game ever on US television, with the ABC network estimating that 40 million viewers tuned in. Its ratings were 4 per cent higher than the previous record, a 12.8 for the 1994 men's World Cup final, also played at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California.

Michelle Akers, the 33-year-old grande dame of the American team, did not make the Disneyland parade because she

Da Silva world's fastest student

PALMA DE MALLORCA, Spain, July 12: Brazil's Andre Da Silva caused the biggest upset of the four days of athletics at the World Student Games by winning the men's 100 metres title yesterday, reports Reuters.

Da Silva was quickest out of his blocks and crossed the line in 10.34 seconds.

The American sprinter John Capel was the favourite after running 10.03 seconds this year, but a mediocre start left him too much to do.

Capel had to settle for the silver medal in 10.35 seconds, despite closing rapidly on Da Silva over the final 40 metres.

The American sprinters are always mouthing off. I just keep quiet and I win," Da Silva commented.

was still recovering from heat exhaustion. And US coach Tony DiCicco skipped the festivities, too, saying he wanted to get back home to the wife and four sons he's barely seen since April. Both are expected to be back when the US team resumes training in August.

The Americans will meet several as-yet unnamed national teams in October's US Open Cup. The team will remain largely intact to defend its Olympic gold medal next summer in Sydney, Australia, and at the 2003 World Cup.

For the moment, satisfying demand after this World Cup will be tough enough.

Chastain turned up on Sunday morning news programme, stunned by her instant celebrity when she heard the voices of fellow guests first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and Secretary of State Madeline Albright through her earpiece.

Chastain and her teammates were paid between 25,000 dollars and 45,000 dollar, plus a bonus that has been increased from 12,500 to between 40,000 dollar and 50,000 dollars each for winning the tournament.

From Disneyland and the downtown rally, the US women were set to fly to New York for another round of television appearances on Monday.

It was a far cry from 1991, when the US women returned victorious from the World Cup staged in China. Back then, midfielder Julie Foudy was a student at Stanford University and the only person who even mentioned "finals" to her was a professor, who wasn't sympathetic about granting her extra time to finish her course work or the exam.

The goal is to take what we've learned about women's equity, what we've learned about women as equal partners and not subordinates, and export it around the world," he said. "I think we're on the cutting edge of a revolution."

The US Soccer Federation, which developed the business plan for Major League Soccer before turning the enterprise over to private investors, has launched a similar feasibility study for a women's league. And while Steinbrenner was cautious about whether the World Cup had been successful enough to launch and sustain a pro league, he had no doubts about its success in another, more important sense.

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After all, the United States played host to the men's World Cup in 1994, but the men's national team and the professional league created soon afterward are still struggling for attention in a crowded sports landscape.

Undoubtedly, most of the US women team members want a professional league of their own. And despite startup costs as high as \$100 million, they sounded determined to get it.

"This team is about making things happen," Chastain said. "If it takes each one of us knocking on doors to get that, we'll do it."

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