

An Aussie star in the making

MELBOURNE, July 17: (Internet report): A grape grower's son from Western Australia was given a chance on Tuesday to become Australia's newest Test cricketer star.

Prolific runscorer Simon Katich said he was living his dream when named in Australia's Test squad to tour Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe starting next month.

The 23-year-old's selection was widely tipped after being offered an Australian Cricket Board contract last week. But the classy left-handed batsman was stunned at his rapid elevation to the national squad after just 21 first-class matches.

"I'm absolutely ecstatic," said Katich. "Last week when I found out I had an ACB contract I was pretty over the moon, but to find out this (Test squad selection) this morning, it's what every young cricketer dreams of."

"I was just concentrating on having a preseason with Western Australia and having another good (domestic) Shield season but this is certainly a great opportunity."

Katich's promotion could be the death knell for the Test career of South Australian Darren Lehmann, who retained his one-day position but was overlooked for the Test segment of the tour to Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe.

Katich, a graduate of the Australian Cricket Academy in 1996, scored all of his five first-class centuries last season.

Also a handy left-arm wrist spinner, Katich has scored 1,632 first-class runs at an average of 52.65 with a highest score of 154 not out.

An admirer of the way West Indian great Viv Richards batted, Katich said he wanted to be known as a player who could be relied on when the going was tough.

Last season I managed to get to three-figures five times so hopefully that's something I can continue to do," he said.

"Just to be able to perform well when it's tight, we had a few tight situations late in the season - I certainly enjoy that."

Marquez vows to stop Vargas

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, Nevada, July 17 (AP): Fernando Vargas has a world title and a perfect record. Raul Marquez, who used to hold that IBF junior middleweight title, says he'll prove Saturday night that Vargas is just an overhyped fighter.

Vargas, at 1996 US Olympian, has won by knockout in each of his 16 professional fights. The California native is making his second defence of the 154-pound (69-kilogram) title he captured last December.

Marquez, a 1992 Olympian from Texas is 30-1 with 20 knockouts. He held the title for eight months in 1997.

"I'm eager to find out what Fernando is all about. I think he has talent and hype - he has a little talent and a lot of hype," Marquez said. "I think the pressure is on the champ. Fernando is a big star. I read all about him in the magazines."

Marquez, 27, lost the title when he was stopped on cuts by Yory Boy Campas in the eighth round in late 1997. It came less than three months after the left-handed Marquez needed 70 stitches to close cuts in his eyebrows in a successful title defence.

That tendency to cut easily is one reason why Marquez is a big underdog to defeat Vargas in the fight at Caesars Tahoe and regain the crown. Another reason is the talent and superior speed of Vargas, who has gotten all his knockouts by the seventh round.

SEA Games Myanmar targets boat races

YANGON, July 17: Myanmar will be hoping to bag gold medals in traditional boat racing next month in the 20th Southeast Asia Games in Drueni, a top sports official said Saturday, reports AP.

But other sports that Myanmar won gold in at the last SEA Games - women's weightlifting, wu shu, body building and women's sepak takraw have been dropped from the current edition.

Myanmar, also known as Burma, will send a 245-strong contingent, including 144 athletes to compete in 12 sports, said Maung Win, the Sports Ministry's director of sports and physical education.

"Myanmar lays high hopes on the traditional boat racing events," he said. "Myanmar's team bagged two golds and several silvers in both women's and men's events in the 19th SEA Games in Jakarta."

The 97 men and 47 women will compete in track and field, billiards and snooker, bowling, boxing, soccer, golf, karate, traditional boat races, sepak takraw, swimming taekwondo and pencak silat.

Speaking at a meeting with athletes and their team managers Thursday, Lt Gen Khin Nyunt, a top leader in the military government and head of the national Olympic Committee, urged the athletes to win.

Khin Nyunt said that even though some sports Myanmar excels in have been dropped, the country's best athletes have been selected for the Brunel lineup.

Khin Nyunt said that the government and local and foreign businesses had contributed cash and kind to the Myanmar team.

Mahmood worried about players



KARACHI, July 17 (Reuters/ AFP/ Internet): The ousted head of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) expects the country's leading players to be the next target in a campaign to end a scapegoat for the World Cup final thrashing last month.

Ex-PCB chairman Khalid Mahmood also said on Saturday he was surprised at the sudden suspension of the board by Pakistan's president Rafiq Tarar on Friday night.

"The feeling in Islamabad is that the final was a no-game. Logically, if the top hierarchy believes that the match was deliberately thrown, then the players should be the next target," Mahmood told the news agency from Lahore.

"My perception is that the board has been suspended because of match-fixing allegations which are not only unproven but false and baseless."

"I now in days to come and some of the frontline players might be made scapegoats to justify the sacking of the board," Mahmood said.

Tarar's suspension of the PCB -- he has appointed an ad hoc committee headed by Mujibur Rehman in its place -- comes a month after Pakistan lost the World Cup final to Australia by eight wickets.

Pakistan was killed for 132 and Australia knocked off the runs in 20.1 overs in the most one-sided final in the 24-year history of the competition.

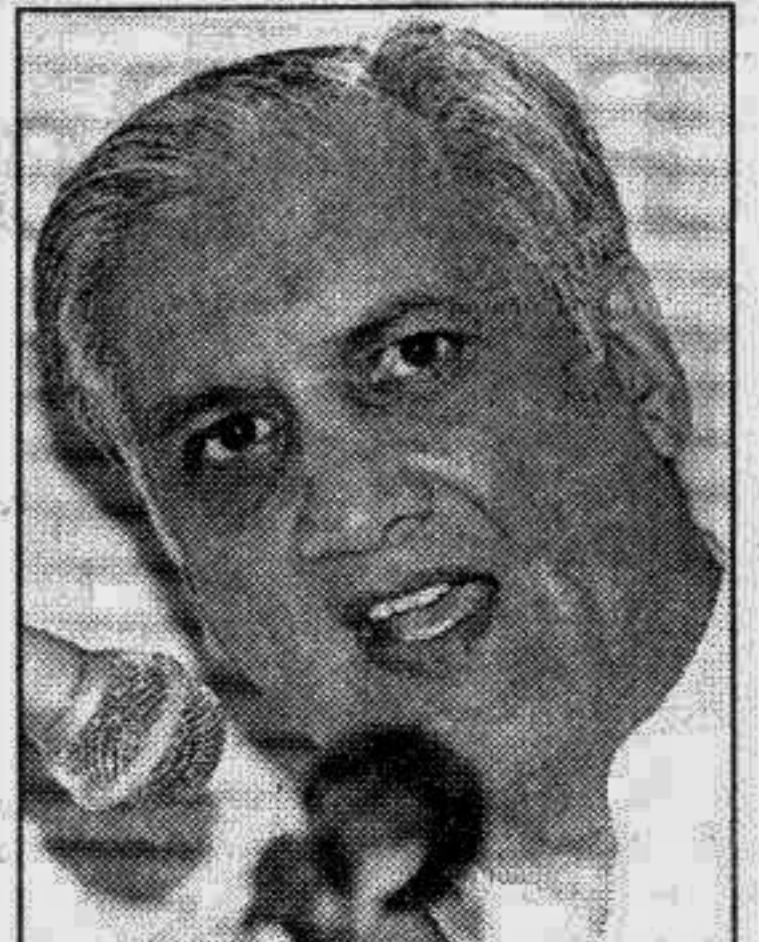
It led to accusations of match-fixing by Pakistan fans and local media.

Mahmood said: "The chief of the Ehtesab Bureau (Accountability Bureau) has been levelling accusations against the players. Now his brother is the chairman of the ad hoc committee."

Mujibur Rehman is the younger brother of Saifur Rehman, chief of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Account-

ability Bureau which is already looking into allegations that Pakistan deliberately lost the final.

"It should not be difficult to make two and two (equal) four," said Mahmood, who had 17 months left in his term.



KHALID MAHMOOD

Terming the allegations as "ridiculous", he added, "The team has performed very well except one bad game. You cannot sack the whole board for it."

"I always defended the players and I am ready to defend them even now. They are wonderful players and a very talented side. None of the matches in the World Cup was fixed. It is ridiculous."

"It is nothing but a success of a lobby that has been maligning the Pakistan team since the World Cup final."

The suspension has thrown Pakistani cricket, already reeling from the overwhelming World Cup final defeat and allegations of corruption, into disarray.

"My apprehension that certain elements were deliberately maligning the team and engineering a campaign against the board is proven by the suspension decision," Mahmood added.

Former and current Test players declined to comment.

but one dismissed board member told a local newspaper the suspension was political.

"This is all politics and nothing else. If they don't want Pakistan cricket to improve and prosper, what can we do? It doesn't matter to us," Nusrat Azeem, who was also dismissed as president of the Karachi Cricket Association, told The News.

Majid Khan, whose tenure as chief executive of the board ended on May 22, said the appointment of an ad hoc committee was a very difficult decision.

"I don't know what were the actual reasons, but it must have been a very difficult one for the President," he said from Lahore.

Pakistan went into the World Cup with a previous match-fixing inquiry into several players, including captain Wasim Akram.

The first suspicions date back to 1994, when three top Australian players, including Shane Warne, said they were offered money by Pakistan star Salim Malik to lose a Test.

Several other allegations, many of them levelled by Pakistani players themselves, were made over the following seasons following surprise one-day international results but it was said there was not enough evidence to prove the claims.

That background has led to eyebrows being raised every time Pakistan lose unexpectedly, particularly among the team's own volatile fans.

That occurred during the recent World Cup when Akram's team lost to lowly Bangladesh in one of the greatest shocks in the tournament history. Aspersions were also cast when Pakistan lost to India after being in a winning position.

Akram's players however have denied the final was fixed. But Pakistan's defeat triggered protests by their own fans who burned effigies of skipper Akram and accused the team of being "traitors and gamblers."

Mates' movement for Chavez, Lara

ASUNCION, Paraguay, July 17: The Mexican soccer team on Friday threatened to boycott the Confederations Cup next week unless two players accused of doping are absolved, reports AP.

The 22 Mexican players signed a letter of support for Raul Rodrigo Lara and Paulo Cesar Chavez, who were suspended from the Copa America after traces of anabolic steroids were found in their urine.

"We are entirely sure there was an error in the testing," the letter said. "All of Mexico knows the clean and transparent trajectory, as soccer players and people, of our companions."

It said the scandal "has stained the name and reputation of Mexican soccer players around the world" and demanded a quick solution.

"If the players are not absolved before the Confederations Cup, the members of this team will not participate in the referred to event as a sign of protest and show of unconditional support."

The tournament is to start July 24 in Mexico.

The players' position leaves the Mexican delegation in a delicate spot. On Friday, Mexican officials said they accepted the positive result.

Lara and Chavez underwent routine testing after their first-round game with Brazil, which Mexico lost 2-1. Both samples came back positive.

Lara was tested again after the next game, a 3-1 win over Venezuela, and again the result was positive.

The Mexican federation ordered the two to undergo new tests in California after the scandal erupted, and the results were negative. But the South American Soccer Confederation, which organised the Copa America, said the tests were irrelevant.

If the Mexican federation refuses to recognize the positive results it could face sanctions by FIFA, soccer's governing body, and could no longer be invited to take part in the Copa America.

The confederation's executive committee meets Saturday to analyze the case. One solution regularly under study is to let CONCACAF, the confederation Mexico belongs to, decide on the definitive punishment of the two players.

Mexico plays Chile on Saturday for third place in the Copa America. Brazil and Uruguay decide the title on Sunday.

Terrific two under the bar

ASUNCION, July 17: Two goalkeepers will take centre stage in the Copa America final here Sunday in the knowledge that regardless of the outcome - they have considerably enhanced their standing during the tournament, reports AFP.

Uruguay's Fabian Carini is only 19-years-old but has arguably been the outstanding performer in his side's run to the final.

Carini only made his Uruguayan first division debut for his unfashionable club Danubio in May.

He is one of the many youngsters brought through by Victor Pua, who is coaching the team in the Copa although Argentinian Daniel Passarella will take the helm after the final.

Pua is in charge of the "Celeste" (Sky Blue) youth teams.

Carini has impressed throughout the Copa and it was his penalty saves from Miguel Angel Benitez of Paraguay and Chile's Mauricio Aros in the quarter-finals and semi-finals respectively that saw Uruguay book a place in the final after only finishing third in their group.

Brazil, meanwhile, have Dida between the posts.

He has proved himself a worthy successor to 1994 World Cup winner Claudio Taffarel in a position that has often proved problematical for Brazil.

Dida also plays for an obscure club in Swiss side Lugano and was assured the goalkeeper's jersey when Carlos Germano withdrew from the squad just before the Copa.

Carini, Dida has two crucial spot kicks to his credit in the Copa although unlike the Uruguayan - his were not in shoot-outs.

First he denied Pedro Gonzalez of Chile in a Group B match. Next he foiled Argentina's Roberto Ayala in the quarter-final. In both cases the opposing team would have equalised if the kicks had been converted.

Women's Test Advantage England

SHENLEY, England, July 17: Seamer Clare Taylor took three wickets Friday to reduce India to 123 for five chasing England's first innings total of 329 all out in the one-off Test match, reports AP.

England won the upper hand going into the third day after Taylor dismissed Anju Jain and Anjum Chopra in her third over with India's total at one run.

She returned just before stumps to trap Hemlata Kala leg-before wicket to clinch her third victim and finished with 3-25 off 13 overs.

England won the toss and elected to bat Thursday with Charlotte Edwards scoring her maiden Test century as England reached 230 for four at stumps on the opening day.

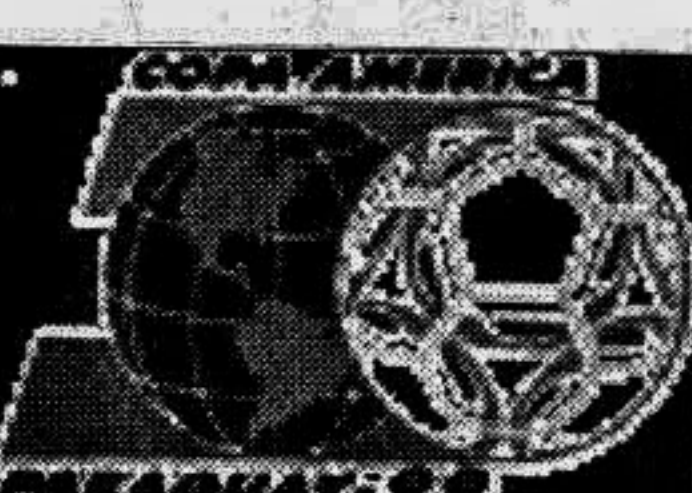
Jana Cassar, not out overnight, scored 45 as the middle-order struggled to score quick runs on the second day.

The Test continues Saturday.



BRAZIL'S STARTING LINEUP: Back row (L-R) Cafu, Dida, Joao, Rivaldo, Flavio, and Antonio Carlos. Front row (L-R) Ze Roberto, Roberto Carlos, Emerson, Amoroso and Ronaldo.

Brazil-Uruguay: Man to man



ASUNCION, July 17 (Reuters/ Internet): Penix of players in the Copa America final being played on Sunday between Brazil and Uruguay: (shirt numbers in brackets-name-position-club-age)

BRAZIL

(1) Dida. Goalkeeper. Lugano. 26. Played for Brazil in the Atlanta Olympics and reserve to Taffarel in the 1998 World Cup. Out of action for three months this year because of a legal dispute with former club Cruzeiro. Has saved two penalties so far in the tournament.

(2) Cafu. Right back. AS Roma. 29. Experienced right-back who played in the final games of both the 1998 and 1994 World Cups.

(4) Antonio Carlos. Central defender. AS Roma. 30. Played sporadically for Brazil until coach Wanderley Luxemburgo, who worked with him at Palmeiras in the mid-1990s, took over last year and made him a regular.

(15) Joao Carlos. Midfielder. Cruzeiro. 26. Promoted to the first team during the Copa America, winning his place at the expense of Odvan.

(6) Roberto Carlos. Left back. Real Madrid. 26. Player best known for his booming, left-foot shot, though it seems to have been losing its accuracy of late. Hugely criticised in Brazil for his performance in last year's World Cup.

(16) Roberto Carlos. Left back. Real Madrid. 26. Player best known for his booming, left-foot shot, though it seems to have been losing its accuracy of late. Hugely criticised in Brazil for his performance in last year's World Cup.

(17) Martin del Campo. Right back. Nacional. 24. Has won the right-back position from Leonel

(5) Emerson Ferreira. Midfielder. Bayer Leverkusen. 23. Midfielder destroyer whose main role is to stop the opposition reaching the Brazil area by fair means or foul, seemingly.

(18) Flavio Conceicao. Midfielder. Deportivo Coruna. 25. Recalled for the Copa America after injury cost him a place at last year's World Cup. Began the Copa America as reserve and has replaced the injured Vampeta.

(10) Rivaldo. Attacking midfielder/forward. Barcelona. 27. Hugely-gifted player for his club, he is often criticised for not producing his best at international level. Much admired by coach Wanderley Luxemburgo, he almost never uses his right-foot. Despite criticism, he has scored three goals in the Copa America.

(22) Ze Roberto. Attacking midfielder. Bayer Leverkusen. 24. Left-sided player and former full-back who has been a regular in the squad but has only been a regular starter in the Copa America.

(7) Amoroso. Forward. Udinese. 24. Joint topscorer alongside Ronaldo with four goals, he appears to have won the battle to replace Romario as Ronaldo's striking partner.

(9) Ronaldo. Forward. Inter Milan. 22. Formerly the world's best player until an injury plagued season this year, he appears to be back to his best at the Copa America.

(11) Gabriel Alvarez. Forward. Nacional. 24. Key member of the Nacional side which won last year's Uruguayan championship, breaking the five-year dominance of Penarol.

(12) Walter Coelho. Midfielder. Nacional. 22. One of the few Uruguayans to impress with individual skill.

(6) Gianni Guigou. Midfielder. Nacional. 24. Tough marker who has played as a substitute in every match so far and looks set to get his chance to start thanks to the suspension of Fabricio Garcia.

(10) Federico Magallanes. Midfielder. Racing Santander. 22. Left-footed attacking midfielder who scored the winning goal in both Uruguay's quarter-final and semifinal penalty shootout victories.

(9) Marcelo Zalayeta. Forward. Empoli. 20. Deceptively clumsy-looking striker who made his name at the 1997 World Youth Championship. Played for Empoli last year on loan for Juventus, who own him.

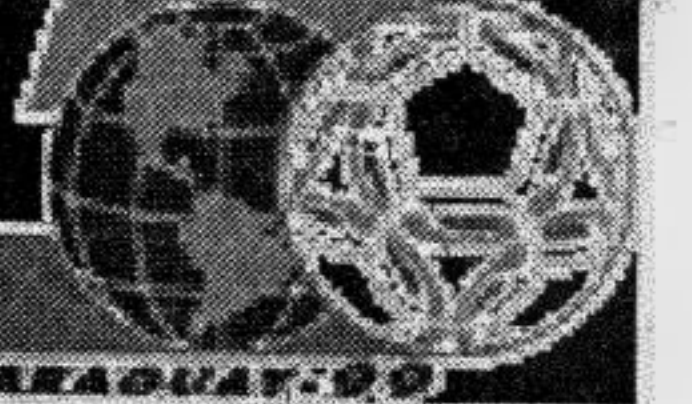
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URUGUAY'S STARTING LINEUP: Back row (L-R) Daniel Lembo, Fernando Picu, Andres Fleurquin, Fabian Carini, Marcelo Zalayeta and Christian Callejas. Front row (L-R) Pablo Garcia, Walter Coelho, Jorge Alves, Martin Martinez and Gerardo Magallanes.

Internet photo

Bitter 'Bam Bam' bidding bye?



ASUNCION, Paraguay, July 17 (AP): Chile and Mexico decide third place in the Copa America on Saturday in a game that could be the last for one of South America's great front lines.

Ivan "Bam Bam" Zamorano, half of Chile's "SaZa" attack with Marcelo Salas, surprised his teammates by announcing that he might no longer play for the national team.

The 32-year-old striker said he was disappointed with the team's performance and "tired of everything connected with" the squad.

"I've been on the national team since 1987, and one must make room for new generations," he said.

The announcement heightened the drama surrounding a match that ends a frustrating tournament for Chile and further bolsters the status of Mexican soccer on the continent.

Mexico reached the semi-

finals for the third time in their four appearances as a host in the South American championship. In 1993, the Mexicans went all the way to the finals before losing to Argentina.

Long considered a poor cousin to South American soccer, Mexico has nothing left to prove.

Led by the blond-maned Luis Hernandez, Mexico turned in another strong showing, especially in the first round, beating Chile and Venezuela and battling Brazil before falling 2-1.

The team also weathered the suspension of starters Paulo Cesar Chavez and Rodrigo Lara for positive doping tests.

The Mexican delegation said the players were banned unjustly, and their suspension rocked the training camp.

The mood at the Chilean camp is very different - a frustration that the team probably didn't go as far as it could have.

After a mediocre first round, when they lost 1-0 to Mexico and finished third in the group, Chile came alive in the quarter-finals. Trailing twice against heavily-favored Colombia, Chile rallied to win 3-2 on a gala showing by Zamorano, who scored the game-winner.

Chile was picked to beat the young Uruguayan team in the

semifinals, but the team couldn't find the net despite controlling most of the game. Salas missed a penalty and the decision went to the tiebreaker where Uruguay was one kick better.

If Zamorano leaves, his loss will leave an enormous hole. Widely considered Chile's best front-line ever, the "SaZa" duo were a big reason why the qualified for the 1998 World Cup in France.

In the Copa America, Zamorano has led Chile with three goals, and in intangible qualities such as his passion and energy on the field.

"His stature on the team has been of enormous value," said Salas, who injured a leg muscle in practice Thursday and may not play against Mexico.

"There has been no man like him," teammate Raul Palacios said. "If only God would send us new Ivan now."

Zamorano didn't go into details or rule out a possible return. But his words Thursday had the ring of a farewell.

"Leaving the national team will be very painful. I have it under my skin. It will live forever in every part of me," he said. "I gave the best of myself for the team. All my heart, all my sentiment for my fatherland."