

FIFA rejects Mexican dope tests

MEXICO CITY, July 24: Football's governing body FIFA on Friday rejected the results of anti-doping tests of two Mexican national team players and said it would impose sanctions on the South American confederation that suspended them for six months, reports AP.

FIFA president Joseph S Blatter said the association rejected the test results because they were not done in a laboratory approved by FIFA and the International Olympic Committee. The two players are Raul Rodrigo Laro and Pablo Cesar Chavez, who played for the Mexican National team in the recent *Copa America* in Paraguay. Blatter added that the two could play in the Confederations' Cup that starts here Saturday if they are needed by the Mexican team.

The analyses were done in laboratories that are not approved by FIFA nor by the International Olympic Committee. Blatter said in a news conference, "Therefore, FIFA cannot accept the findings."

Blatter said the South American Confederation (Confemebol) knew that only officially approved laboratories could conduct the tests, and that it would be sanctioned.

"We have given the regulations to all federations to make sure that if we must intervene in a doping case, it be done according to regulations," Blatter explained.

He added that the results of an anti-doping test could "seriously affect a person's integrity and we must follow exact procedures."

Olympic scam!

SYDNEY, July 24: An Australian set himself up as the phony Bangkok representative of Sydney 2000 Olympics organisers and took more than 750,000 Australian (500,000 US) dollars from Asians seeking work at the Games, Australian police said today, reports AFP.

The Filipino-born Australian, aged around 40, conned about 200 Chinese people by running a fake office for the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games from his Bangkok hotel room, Australian Federal Police said.

Police said his scheme had been going for about a month when he was caught and arrested by Thai authorities following a tip off from Australian police.

Police were checking fingerprints to establish the identity of the man, who was being held in a Bangkok prison and was refusing to identify himself, according to a report in Sydney's *The Daily Telegraph*.

The man had fake a Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) identity card and had made his own SOCOCG stamps and letterheads.

He reportedly asked Chinese nationals to pay more than 3,000 Australian dollars (2,000 US\$) to get work in Australia for 12 months, starting next at September's Olympic Games.

The cost included up to 2,000 dollars for an English language course, 900 dollars for an Australian visa and the man had already set up an English class in Bangkok to cater for people who signed up.

Olympic officials in Sydney said they believed the scam was the first of its kind related to the Games.

But Australia has been plagued by a recent surge in boat people from Asia, which authorities have blamed on people smugglers who spuriously claim the country will have an amnesty for illegal immigrants because of a shortage of people to staff the 2000 Games.

Keane very keen

LONDON, July 24: Ireland midfielder Roy Keane said on Friday he was confident he would still be a Manchester United player this season, reports AFP.

The Old Trafford captain has already rejected a new contract, prompting speculation that he would be leaving the club.

But Keane insists the ball is now in the club's court for an improved offer.

"I'm confident we can sort it out now but it is up to the club really," said Keane.

"People are speculating about what I am looking for but it is no-one's business except my family and my solicitor's."

"People are always going to speculate all they want but they will never know and that's the way it should be."

Keane told the MUTV channel: "I've just moved into a new house. I have three young children and I love playing for United."

"I could have gone abroad three years ago for a lot more money but I felt I hadn't proved myself at United."

"This time I want to make sure that this contract is right as it may be my last decent contract."

Keane admits that he wants to stay with United but talks are on hold until chief executive Martin Edwards and director Maurice Watkins return from the tour of Australia and Hong Kong.

"The club approached me with a new contract that I turned down and that's the way things are at the moment," said Keane.

"It is up to the club now. They spoke to my solicitor and talks will be renewed when they get back."

"Of course I'm not looking anywhere else at the moment because I am on a contract with Manchester United and I'm sick of saying I want to stay."

"The Press are saying that I want x amount of money but I've said all along I want to stay if it's the right deal."



German Tommy Haas makes a backhand return during his Mercedes Cup quarterfinal clash against Carlos Moya of Spain in Stuttgart on July 23. —AFP photo

European semifinalists



STUTTGART, Germany, July 24: Alex Corretja insured that the semifinals of the 1.05-million-dollar Mercedes Cup will be an all-European affair as he rebuffed potential American gatecrasher Vince Spadea 1-6, 6-3, 6-2 Friday, reports AFP.

The fifth seed from Spain joined Swede Magnus Norman, Czech Jiri Novak and Germany's Tommy Haas in the final four at the Weissenhof Club on a chilly day with temperatures staying below 20 centigrade.

Corretja, the 1997 champion, needed to kick-start his game to overcome Spadea, the world No. 26 and the only American playing singles this month in the post-Wimbledon period on European clay.

After slumping in the first with two dropped service games, Corretja levelled the sets and rolled on to win the match as Spadea tossed his racket in vain at a ball out of reach on match point after an exciting and lengthy exchange of shots.

The 14th-ranked Spaniard's two hours 11 minutes win saved face for Spain after his compatriot, second-seed Carlos Moya,

was hustled out by crowd-pleaser Haas, seeded seventh and Corretja's semifinal opponent Saturday.

Haas secured the 7-6, 7-5 result against former world No. 1 and 1998 French Open champion Moya in just over one hour, 20 minutes.

"I played a good tiebreaker, that was the match for me," said Haas, an Australian Open semifinalist in January.

"I'm pleased with my performance, but I don't want to talk about any possible titles yet, of course."

Haas' quarterfinal victory was only the second match of the week for the 21-year-old, who had a first-round bye and a walkover in the second round.

Haas joined Chile's No. 3 Marcelo Rios and No. 10 Nicolas Lapentti of Ecuador on the sidelines.

Rios wound up his summer clay court season on a limp note, crashing out 6-2, 6-2 to Czech Jiri Novak and the Chilean will waste no time in heading to Los Angeles for next Monday's start of the North American hardcourt season and run-up to the US Open in five weeks.

Lapentti, a finalist two weeks ago at the Swiss Open in

Gstaad, lost to determined Swede Magnus Norman 7-6, 4-6, 6-2.

Norman, who will face Novak Saturday, moved into his second semifinal of the year with the win against Lapentti. The last time the 49th-ranked Swede got this far, he won a title last spring in Orlando, Florida.

Rios meanwhile is not sorry to see the back of Stuttgart as he heads to the California sun-shine.

"I prefer playing in the States to playing in Europe," said the South American. "I like to play on harcourt and am looking forward to the season."

Rios is playing a full schedule starting next week straight through to the week before the US Open, which begins on August 30.

"I missed the first three months of the year with my back injury, I need to play matches," said the Chilean.

Early crowds here were sparse, with many fans apparently preferring to get a glimpse of Boris Becker.

"The now-retired German tennis icon was overseeing a try-out session of 32 young hopefuls for his Mercedes junior team at a club just a kilometre away.

Karina revives Slovak hopes

MOSCOW, July 24: Karina Habsudova revived Slovakia's Fed Cup hopes here on Saturday when she outclassed Russian Tatiana Panova to make it 1-1 in the Fed Cup World Group semifinal, reports AFP.

Habsudova saw off Panova in 1hr 21 min with a 7-6, 6-1 victory on the clay courts of Moscow Olympic Stadium.

Earlier Slovakia's rookie Ludmila Cervanova -- playing her first ever Fed Cup single was outlasted by Russian Elena Likhovtseva.

Likhovtseva took 2hr 5min to wear down 19-year-old Cervanova 7-5, 6-7, 6-3.

Cervanova blamed her inexperience for her defeat.

"It was my first Fed Cup match and I was chosen as emergency replacement for injured Henrieta Nagyova," she said.

"I was playing my best tennis in the opening match of the Fed cup semi-final, but I felt extremely tired in the third set," she added.

"Elena (Likhovtseva) is much more experienced player and this was her only advantage, which I could not overcome," Cervanova said in conclusion.

The 23-year-old Likhovtseva looked also exhausted after the match blaming time changing after her recent arrival from United States as one of the main reasons of her discomfort on the court.



—AFP photo

Slovakia's Ludmila Cervanova playing against Elena Likhovtseva of Russia during their Fed Cup semifinal in Moscow yesterday.

Villa off to good start



EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey, July 24: English Premiership side Aston Villa, worn down in intense heat and humidity, squandered a 2-0 lead but still beat Ajax 3-2 on penalties Friday in the Gotham Cup four-club friendly tournament, reports AFP.

The opening match of the event, began in 91-degree Fahrenheit heat and 70 per cent humidity, which affected the performance of the Dutch club as well as the English.

"We faded in the second half because of the heat and lack of fitness," said Aston Villa manager John Gregory.

Because of the heat, five substitutes were allowed for both teams, but Ajax midfielder Darius said he was dehydrated by the end of the match, which ended 2-2.

In the shoot-out, Alan Wright got the clincher for Villa with his side's fifth and final attempt.

Villa keeper David James saved the first two, from Jan Van Halst and Martin Reuser. Shota Arveladze and Tim De Cler scored before Richard Witschge's effort hit the crossbar.

"He's quick, inventive and is great on the ball," said Villa coach Victor Fernandez as he announced the signing.

Stone was successful, Gareth Barry missed over the top, Mark Draper made one and Wright sealed it.

Villa forward Julian Joachim opened the scoring in the 13th minute, when he capitalised on a cross-bar rebound from a shot by Dion Dublin with a firm low drive that Grim had little hope of stopping.

A few minutes later, Ajax players were stunned to miss out on a penalty chance when Villa defender Ugo Ehiogu vigorously tackled midfielder Richard Knopper just outside the six-yard box, but referee Kevin Terry saw no infringement.

Celta clinch McCarthy, Kaviedes

VIGO, Spain, July 24: Celta Vigo have continued their rebuilding for the new season with the signings of international strikers Benni McCarthy and Ivan Kaviedes, reports Reuters.

South African McCarthy, 21, moves for a fee of 1,000 million pesetas (6.31 million dollars) from Ajax Amsterdam.

"He's quick, inventive and is great on the ball," said Celta coach Victor Fernandez as he announced the signing.

Aston Villa controlled most of the play in the first half and in the 29th minute launched a nice string of plays that began with midfielder Mark Delaney working the ball from the right side to Joachim, who passed to Dublin in front of the goal for the forward to give Villa 2-0 lead.

Just as Villa appeared to be cruising, Ajax brought the ball forward, allowing Brian Laudrup to take a deliberate shot, which was deflected by James. Forward Nikos Machlas zoomed in and headed in a goal to cut the deficit to 2-1 in the crossbar.

Six minutes from time, second-half substitute Wamberto angled a left-footed shot from inside the penalty box past a sprawling James to even the score at 2-2.

By this stage Ajax were controlling the game while Villa were clearly weary. Ajax peppered the goal late in the second half, but couldn't get past James.

On Sunday, Villa will face Fiorentina, who beat Panathinaikos 3-0 with goals from Abel Balbo (31st), Enrico Chiesa (55th) and Luis Oliveira (80th).

India's DV Prasad (2.5) was held to a draw by Swiss player Ermeni in a razor sharp battle in the Catalan opening. Ermeni sacrificed a pawn in the middle game and Prasad followed up with a flurry of tactics.

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Sport

Confeds Cup

Disciplinary regulations

ZURICH, July 24 (Internet report): The following disciplinary matters will be in effect during the 1999 FIFA Confederations' Cup Mexico '99:

YELLOW AND RED CARDS

A single yellow card after the first stage will be cancelled. In other words, any player who is cautioned only once during his team's first three matches will begin the second stage with a clean record. However, any suspension from matches as a result of two yellow cards received in two different matches or from an instant expulsion will be effective on ensuing games.

Suspensions imposed or other sanctions taken by the Committee due to infringements committed during this Confederations' Cup which have not been entirely served when the competition ends, will be carried forward to the next official competition of the Confederation concerned.

When taking a decision, the FIFA Disciplinary Committee shall refer to the reports made by the referees, assistant referees and fourth official, commissioner, referee inspector and other FIFA officials present. It may also refer to television and video recordings as an additional method to the aforementioned reports. They may be used as evidence, but only as far as the disciplinary aspects of the case being dealt with are concerned and shall not affect a referee's factual decision.

Mitchell's fate by weekend

PARIS, July 24: American sprinter Dennis Mitchell should find out this weekend whether he is to be allowed to compete in the World athletics championships in Seville next month, reports AFP.

An IAAF arbitration commission is scheduled to rule on the case of the 33-year-old Mitchell, banned in April 1998 after testing positive for the anabolic steroid, testosterone.

The American authorities lifted the ban in December subject to the findings of the IAAF's appeal tribunal.

Mitchell gained his ticket for Seville when taking the 100m at the US trials at the end of June.

"I had the chance to tell the truth and the American Federation believed me," said Mitchell in Paris earlier this month.

"I know they can stop me from competing for the rest of the year and perhaps for the next two years, but I'll continue fighting," he added.

Mitchell's previous appearances in the world championships have resulted in bronze medals in 1991 and 1993.

The case concerning Sri Lankan sprinter Susanthika Jayasinghe, silver medallist in Athens at the 1997 world championships who tested positive to nandrolone in March 1998, has been put back to an unspecified date.

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