

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 Rodriguez Lara 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 (Conmebol) 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 must be 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 SOCOG 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 850 dollars for air fare 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."

"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."

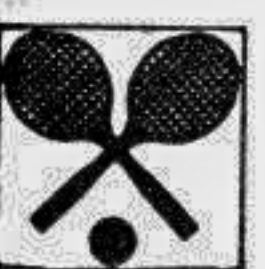
"Of course I'm not looking anywhere else at the moment because I am on a contract with Manchester United and I'm sick of saying I want to stay."

"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 injured 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.

Moya 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 sunshine.

"I prefer playing in the States to playing in Europe," said the South American. "I like to play on hardcourt 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.



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

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 Dennis 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 Martijn Reuser. Shota Arveladze and Tim DeCler scored before Richard Witschge's effort hit the crossbar.

Ajax keeper Fred Grim had stopped Villa's first shot, from captain Gareth Southgate. Steve

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: UEFA Cup hopefuls 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 39th.

Six minutes from time, second-half substitute Wamberto angled a left-footed shot 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).

Only 23,755 spectators turned out for Friday's matches, far below the 78,000 who watched the opening day of the Women's World Cup at the same stadium on June 19.

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 medalist in Athens at the 1997 world championships who tested positive to nandrolone in March 1998, has been put back to an unspecified date.

Mixed day for Indians

BIEL, Switzerland, July 24: Junior national champion Sunderrajan Kidambi caused a major upset by posting a facile victory against highly rated Grand Master Ognjen Cvijan on a mixed day for Indians in the fifth round to the International Open Chess tournament here, reports PTI.

National champion and double GM norm holder K Sasikiran (3), who was back in the reckoning with his fourth round win, made some tactical mistakes to lose the fifth round and IM V Saravanan (2.5) also let go the chance by failing to grab any point against German Oliver Koeller.

Kidambi employed the Grunfeld defence with black and made a positional pawn sacrifice on the queen side to wrest the initiative.

The youngster was on song as he declined a draw offer from his seasoned rival and played bravely to win a couple of pawns in the middle game.

The Indian handled his material advantage blemishlessly in the ending when Cvijan threw in the towel.

Russian GMs Sergey Volkov and Nukhim Rashkovsky meanwhile shared the lead by garnering 4.5 points each when they accounted for IM's Tyomkin (Israel) and Bagirov (Azerbaijan) respectively.

Sasikiran's loss was a major setback for the Indian camp as he was considered a bright prospect to grab his third norm and the GM title -- which would make him the fourth Indian to do so.

Sasikiran needs to log 8 points from 11 rounds and with six round remaining, he is left with a tough task of winning all his rounds.

Sasikiran lost to Latvian GM Janis Klovans in the Caro Kann defence with the Indian playing black pieces.

Klovans with white played a novel idea by advancing his king side pawns and kept his king in the centre to obtain in microscopic advantage.

GM Pravin Thipsay (3) was held to a draw by Taleb Moussa of the United Arab Emirates in a Sicilian defence. Though Thipsay obtained a technically won position, he came under severe time scramble and missed the right sequence which enabled Moussa to hold the game.

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

Cuba, USA renew rivalry



WINNIPEG, Manitoba, July 24: A powerful Cuban team led by world record holder Javier Sotomayor and world champions Ivan Pedroso and Yoelbi Quesada hopes to continue its Pan American Games mastery beginning here today, reports Reuters.

While US superstars Maurice Greene, Michael Johnson and Marion Jones will be in Europe competing on the lucrative Grand Prix circuit, the Cubans

will have their best at these hemispheric games.

High jumper Sotomayor and fellow Cubans Pedroso and Quesada, the world long and triple jump champions, will be in Winnipeg to defend their Pan American titles.

World-class hurdler Anier Garcia and 800-metre runner Norberto Tellez also will seek gold for the Cubans.

US men's coach Ralph Lindeman is not conceding the gold-medals race, though.

"I like to feel this is the best

(US) Pan American Games team since 1987," he said. "I would be thrilled with 10 golds, and I think we can get 10 golds."

Cuba's men and women each claimed nine golds at the last Games, at Mar del Plata, Argentina, in 1995.

The United States went home with five men's gold and nine for the women with Brazil earning four men's championships and one women's title.

As inspiration, Lindeman has frequently reminded his charges that no US male has won Pan American Games gold. "In the 100, 200, 400, 4x1 relay and 4x4 relay since 1987."

A trio of national champions — decathlete Chris Huffins, hammer thrower Lance Deal and discus thrower Anthony Williams — lead the US squad.

The United States also should do well in the 100 metres with Tim Harden the chief threat, the 400-metre hurdles, the pole vault and the relays.

Brazil, with Claudenei da Silva and Andre da Silva in the sprints and marathoners Vanderlei de Lima and Eder Fialho, also expects a strong showing.

The Brazilians will also introduce newly crowned South American women's long jump record holder Maurine Maggie, who leaped 7.26 metres (23 feet, 10 inches) last month for the best performance in the world this year.

Angela Williams who could be the next great US female sprinter, will challenge the Bahamas' Chandra Sturup and former Cuban Liliana Allen over 100 metres, with a number of islands sprinters in the mix for the women's 200 metres.

Allen, winner of the past two women's 200 metres and a double medalist in the women's 100, will be wearing a different coloured vest this time, though. She now competes for Mexico.

The men's 100-metre final, traditionally a spotlight event, lost much of its glamour last month when world record holder Greene, Trinidadian training mate Alo Boldon and Canadian champion Bruny Surin decided to skip the competition.

Donovan Bailey, whom organisers paid almost \$200,000 to promote the games, will be here, but the Canadian, who lost his 100 metres world record to Greene last month, will compete only in the 4x100-metre relay.



Scene from the colourful opening ceremony of the Pan Am Games in Winnipeg, Canada on July 23. —AFP photo

Anelka adopts new approach



LONDON, July 24 (AFP): A time bomb is ticking under European football following wintertime Frenchman Nicolas Anelka's decision to try to buy out his contract with English Premiership club Arsenal.

That is the fear of many in the game after Anelka appointed formidable Belgian lawyer Jean-Louis Dupont to challenge whether Arsenal can legally prevent him joining the club of his wishes.

Anelka wants to terminate his Arsenal contract, which still has three years to run, and join Italian team Lazio, reportedly by paying the London club a mere 900,000 pounds (1.4 million dollars) compensation.

Arsenal say Lazio have not matched their asking price, believed to be around 22 million pounds (33 million dollars). They only want to do business with Lazio's Italian rivals Juventus.

But now Anelka has asked Dupont to examine the legal possibilities under European and English laws to terminate an employment contract, in the Belgian's own words, regardless of Arsenal wishes.

If the law proves to be on Anelka's side, in effect Arsenal would not be able to demand a transfer fee for him.

"It will be a total disaster for football," said Martin O'Neill, the manager of English Premiership club Leicester City, this week.

"Some players might make a lot of money from it but future generations may not have football clubs to play for."

"This could send clubs to the wall -- everyone should be warned," added O'Neill.

Dupont is the man who secured the landmark Bosman ruling which gave out-of-contract players in the European Union the right to move to a

new club without a transfer fee, thereby allowing them to command massive pay deals.

If Dupont wins Anelka's case, transfer fees would effectively cease to exist even for players still under contract.

A players would be able simply to hand in his notice and negotiate a new deal with another club when he felt like it, like any other European Union employee.

Any compensation the player had to pay his old club would relate to his wages and purchase price, not a notional sell-on value -- 900,000 pounds as opposed to 22 million in Anelka's case.

The money Lazio normally would have spent on the transfer fee would go towards satisfying the player's personal terms, as it does currently under Bosman.

Leicester is one of the many clubs who rely on selling their best players for inflated fees in order to survive against the financial giants like Manchester United and Arsenal in English football's top flight.

That lifeline would be cut if Anelka wins, theoretically threatening the existence of hundreds of clubs in Europe.

Anelka is not the first to have pursued this course of action. Earlier this month Belgian club Ghent were forced to accept a reduced transfer fee from Dutch side Vitesse Arnhem for teenage defender Pieter Collen after the player threatened to go to court.

While it all looks worrying for the clubs, players and agents will be rubbing their hands at the prospect of even bigger pay-days.

But even English players' union representative Gordon Taylor admits that won't be good for the game.

"If we go down this road it will make the game very unstable and a paradise for agents," he said.

"The minute a player goes to a club he will always be thinking about about how to move on. I know the view of the European Commission is played out should be treated the same as any other worker, but I've never considered that to be the case in professional sport."

In the case of Anelka, Taylor believes Arsenal may only have themselves to blame.

The Londoners' manager Arsene Wenger provoked outrage in France when he snatched Anelka, then 17, away from Paris Saint Germain in February 1997.

Nicolas Anelka is getting a lot of stick -- and perhaps deservedly so -- but he's almost being taught the principles of thinking about himself as number one, and the money number one," said Taylor.

"This was a young player who was playing in France. Under the normal system -- as it was -- he would have stayed with PSG. He was taken away from there by Arsenal, offered a great deal of money and given a great deal of money."

Penev new CSKA Sofia chief

SOFIA, July 24: Former Bulgarian international striker Lyuboslav Penev was unanimously elected president of his former soccer club CSKA Sofia on Friday, reports Reuters.

The 32-year-old player had said in a press interview earlier that he would give up playing if he was elected president of CSKA.

But it was unclear whether he would immediately break his contract with Celta Vigo, the team he joined a year ago for 2.3 million dollar after playing in Spain since 1989 for Atletico Madrid, Valencia and Compostella.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
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5 One of Snow White's
8 TV clown
12 Misplace
13 Blueprint addition
14 Pincode
15 Three digits after "I"
17 "Pretty Woman" star
18 Grit your teeth
19 Fairy king
21 Pest, to Rover
24 In the manner of
25 Chums
28 "Let's Make a Deal" emcee
30 Lagniappe
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34 Reef stuff
35 Harem room
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37 Autumnal stone
38 Dismal
39 You can't

stand to have it
41 Takeout request
43 10 percent taxes
46 Frighten
50 Teeny bit
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