

## Change in Indian captaincy certain?

MUMBAI, July 25 (Internet report): News reports here suggest it is almost certain that a new captain will be named next Wednesday in Nagpur after Mohammad Azharuddin told the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Saturday that he will be able to "establish his full fitness" on August 5, which is 11 days from now and a week after the national selection committee appoints the captain for the tri-series in Sri Lanka.

Quoting unnamed sources, The Hindu reports, the selectors may be asked to name the captain till the quadrangular tournament in Nairobi. The Indian team is scheduled to play from the last week of August, limited over tournaments in Sri Lanka, Singapore, Kenya and also (should the Government and Board agree) the five match series in Toronto.

Azharuddin met the BCCI president, Raj Singh Dungarpur at the Cricket Club of India (CCI) on Saturday evening and explained to him that he underwent arthroplasty of the acromio-clavicular joint of the right shoulder. He was operated in London by Dr. Ian Bayley, on June 19, a day before the World Cup final.

## Owen returns next week

BELFAST, July 25: England international Michael Owen is near the end of a "long dark tunnel" and will be back in training within 10 days, Liverpool manager Gerard Houllier said on Saturday, reports AFP.

Owen's fitness problems and the length of time it is taking him to recover from a hamstring injury, has dominated Houllier's mind while he has had his new-look squad in Northern Ireland for a pre-season tournament.

After the impressive 2-0 win over Dutch side Feyenoord which secured Liverpool the trophy, Houllier had a double reason to be pleased.

"We have had some good news about Michael while we have been out here," he said. "The doctor has kept me fully informed."

For Michael, when he starts training again it will be the end of a long, dark tunnel for him. I can see that being within a week to 10 days."

Owen's treatment has been the source of much speculation this week. Houllier has admitted a difference of opinion with club physio Mark Leather over the treatment, and Leather has not accompanied the squad to Ulster for this four-team tournament.

Owen has been sent to German specialist Dr Hans Muller-Wohlfahrt who also looks after Bayern Munich and the German national side.

He is now back in England having intensive treatment, and Houllier believes the 19-year-old will be playing again within a week of the season starting on August 7.

## Keegan for foreigners

LONDON, July 25: England coach Kevin Keegan believes the foreign invasion of British football can help raise the standard of home-grown players, reports AFP.

Keegan, who admits he is likely to continue picking players from the reserves of some Premiership clubs while stars from other countries take first-team places, has hit out at critics who claim the influx of foreigners hurts the development of domestic players.

"Stop moaning, work harder and if you still don't make it, then accept it because you are not good enough and not because of the foreigners over here," he said.

Keegan, who signed the likes of Frenchman David Ginola, Colombian Faustino Asprilla and Belgium's Philippe Albert when he was in charge of Newcastle, added: "My view is that English youngsters are going to have to be a bit better to force their way through and I think that is a good thing."

"The auntie is down for the kids of this country. Are they going to hide behind the excuse 'there are too many foreigners, we won't get our chance', or get off their backsides, work even harder, become even more dedicated?"

"If they give it their best shot and don't make it that will be because they are not good enough, not because Arsene Wenger (Arsenal manager) or Gerard Houllier (Liverpool manager) has fetched foreigners in."

## No one near Matthaeus

BONN, July 25: Bayern Munich's veteran star Lothar Matthaeus has been voted German footballer of the year by a massive margin, reports AFP.

The 38-year-old won the award following a poll of just under 1,000 sports journalists.

He won 556 votes, ahead of Hertha Berlin striker Michael Preetz (161) and Bayer Leverkusen striker Oliver Neuville (49). Oliver Bierhoff, the AC Milan striker and Germany's captain, was fourth (35).

Matthaeus won his 137th cap for Germany in Saturday's 4-0 defeat by Brazil at the Confederations' Cup in Mexico.

The sweeper, who also won the award in 1990, helped Bayern win their 15th German title last season and reach the European Cup final, only to go down to Manchester United.

He is due to play his last game for Bayern on December 15 before joining the New York-New Jersey MetroStars on a one-year contract.



Geoff Allott (L) is ecstatic after getting the edge from England's Dean Headley yesterday. —AFP photo

## Ban slapped

From page 13

Akram, Malik and Ijaz Ahmad were named as prime suspects last September in an interim report which recommended that the three players should not be selected until the investigations were completed.

But no action was taken by the PCB executive council which eight days ago was suspended by president Rafiq Tarar amid fresh controversy surrounding allegations that the side "threw" the World Cup final against Australia in June. Rehman was then appointed as the chairman of the ad hoc committee. Incidentally his brother, Saif, who is known to be a close friend of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif head Ehtesab Cell.

"Although the ad hoc committee has not been officially informed of the accusations by the Accountability Cell, the charges framed are serious enough to suspend the three cricketers," Mujeeb Rehman said.

"The interim report of the PCB probe committee had also recommended the same last year. So I don't think we are doing anything new. I believe that this should have been done last year."

Rehman said five other players questioned in the probe would be available for selection "as they have not been reported to be active in corruption."

"They are said to be just beneficiaries. But their role will also be investigated."

Pakistan, in the coming season, are scheduled to participate in a triangular series in Sharjah in October before flying to Australia for three Tests and a tri-nation series involving India and Australia.

APP said that the EB investigations showed that players tried to influence the PCB not to take any action against them.

"The EB investigators say that from the information

available from the PCB, the players influenced the executive council and (asked) that before the final action was taken, the board should await the final report of the probe committee, thus intentionally delaying matters for the benefit of the players," APP said.

APP said the allegations against Akram were made on the basis of the interim report of the probe committee which relied on the evidence provided by former captains Aamir Sohail and Rashid Latif and discarded Test fast bowler Ata-ur-Rahman.

"Akram associated with Ata-ur-Rahman and induced him to play badly in the match (against New Zealand)," said the agency, adding: "Wasim Akram disclosed to Ata-ur-Rahman that the match was fixed and the other players conspiring with Akram were Ijaz Ahmad and Salim Malik."

"For the purpose, Akram proposed to pay Ata-ur-Rahman 300,000 rupees (\$6,000) to 400,000 rupees," the report said. Pakistan lost the match by seven wickets.

On the second allegation, APP said Akram purposely lost to India in a 1996 Sahara Cup match.

"Wasim Akram left the field when Rahul Dravid and (Mohammad) Azharuddin were scoring freely. Vice-captain Aamir Sohail took over and captured two wickets by readjusting field placing."

"On returning to the field, Akram angrily demanded why Aamir Sohail had made changes in the field placing," APP said.

Akram is considered the best fast bowler of the modern era. He is the only bowler to capture 300 or more wickets in both forms of the game. In 88 tests, he has captured 378 wickets while 275 one-day internationals have produced 387 wickets.

## Final wasn't fixed

From page 13

showpiece event. The officers at times stayed at the same hotel as the team. The move came on the orders of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who had been requested to give approval for this purpose by the EB, who are headed by Senator Saif-ur-Rehman.

The IB officers, who travelled with the team throughout the tournament in different garbs, confirmed that the final against Australia was not fixed, as feared by the masses and projected by some lobbies in the government.

However, the IB in their report sent to the EB have reported that they were aware of the presence of the brothers of Wasim Akram and Inzamam-ul-Haq in London during the World Cup, who were allegedly busy in placing bets on some of the matches. The IB had gathered information that before the game against Bangladesh, the two allegedly placed large sums of money belonging to some cricketers with the book-makers William Hill and Ladbrookes.

But the interesting thing is that the IB officers were unable to provide solid evidence regarding the involvement of any cricketer in match-fixing or betting.

However, the IB have reported several instances of the players staying out late, visiting casinos, night-clubs, bars, etc. The names of Ijaz Ahmad and some other players have been prominently mentioned in the report with reference to indisposed behaviour. Ijaz has been accused of visiting a casino on the night before the final — a charge he has denied vehemently accepting that he did go to a casino with a friend, but at least two nights before the final at Lord's.

## Pak trader offers to sponsor Sahara Cup

TORONTO, July 25 (Internet reports): A Toronto-based Pakistani Canadian businessman has offered to sponsor the annual Indo-Pakistan five-match series of one-day international cricketing organisers' hopes of going ahead with the 1999 event which is known as Sahara Cup.

If the offer is accepted, the tournament will be known as "Bulk N Bitz Cricket Cup," said an official of DBS Group of companies which agreed to sponsor the popular Toronto event, reports The Dawn newspaper of Pakistan.

The official told the on Saturday that Bilal Chapti, the president of the DBS Group has formally submitted the offer and the deal is being negotiated with the "relevant authorities."

He declined to give more details. Asked to comment on reports that the Sahara officials are no more interested in sponsoring the event, the official said: "We understand that perhaps they are not sponsoring the cup but only the International Cricket Conference (ICC) or the London-based Trans World International can confirm or deny the report."

Bilal Chapti, he said, made the sponsorship offer for the promotion of the game. To another question, he said the Bulk N Bitz Company is part of Canada's DBS Group Holding Inc.

The Sahara Cup, which has the approval of the ICC, is played here in September every year at the Toronto Cricket, Curling and Skating Club. The two-team event was launched in 1996 with Pakistan winning the inaugural contest by three games to two (3-2).

## Division II hockey Utdy thrash DHC

Sports Reporter

Utdy Club blanked Dhaka Hockey Club by five goals to nil in one of the two Green Delta Insurance Second Division Hockey League matches played at the Moulana Bhasani Stadium yesterday.

The winners led the first half 4-0. Sohag and Tanveer scored two goals each while Mamun added the other to the winners' bag.

In the day's other match, Tejaan Agragami Club posted a 2-1 win over Shishu Kishore Sangha.

Asif and Shakhawat scored one goal each for the winners while Imron pulled one back for the Shishu Kishore Sangha.

## Menacing Murali

LONDON, July 25: Sri Lanka off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan continued his remarkable run by taking another seven wickets as Lancashire recorded a third successive win in the English county championship on Saturday, reports Reuters.

Muralitharan's seven for 114 at Southampton gave him a total of 55 victims in five matches as well as setting up an eight-wicket victory over title challengers Hampshire.

Hampshire made 402 in their second innings but still left the visitors needing only 92 to win, which they achieved for the loss of two wickets.

The 20 points gained improved Lancashire's prospects of playing in the top division next season, when the 18 counties will be split into two leagues for the first time.

Middlesex, another of the traditionally strong clubs also on the borderline, held out comfortably for a draw against Somerset at Taunton.

Australian Justin Langer made 127 not out and Owais Shah 110 not out, sharing an unbeaten second-wicket stand of 240.

Somerset had declared on 523 for three, with Piran Holloway reaching an unbeaten 114.

Worcestershire, set a daunting 475 to win, reached 138 for one against Leicestershire in Worcester.

Philip Weston was 81 not out, threatening to frustrate third-placed Leicestershire's hopes of making up ground on runaway leaders Surrey.



MAKING HIS MARK: Brazil's superstar in the making Ronaldinho (No 7) scoring off a rebound against Germany in their Confederations' Cup clash. —AFP photo

## Brazil batter Germany



GUADALAJARA, Mexico, July 25 (AFP/AP/Reuters): Newly crowned Copa America champions Brazil thrashed Germany 4-0 in the opening game of the FIFA Confederations Cup here on Saturday while the United States deservingly beat New Zealand 2-1 in the other fixture in Group B.

**Brazil-Germany**  
Brazil coach Wanderley Luxemburgo had chosen not to bring many of his Copa stars — notably, Ronaldo, Rivaldo, Roberto Carlos and Amoroso — to Mexico for this eight-team tournament but an inexperienced side produced a compelling win over their main group B rivals.

It was a four-goal blitz in the last half hour of the match that gave victory to the team ranked the best in the world by FIFA. After a lackluster and highly defensive first half, a young Brazilian squad came together with brilliant soccer in the second.

The Brazilians seemed like two different teams. In the first, they were indecisive, and while they dominated the ball they couldn't seem to get off a clean shot. Forwards Ronaldinho and Christian repeatedly got tripped up as they advanced into the penalty box.

The second half was another story. The Brazilians played gracefully as the young players following in the tradition of their idols with a brilliant passing and ball-handling.

"That was the strategy," said Alex, a 21-year-old who scored two of the four goals. "Come in with a team heavy on marking and in the second half to bring out a more offensive team."

In the second half we started out more rested and we took advantage of the Germans' weariness," added coach Luxemburgo.

The first goal came in minute 16 of the second half. An off-balance Ronaldinho headed the ball into the center of the field, and Ze Roberto shot a drive straight off goalie Jens Lehmann's hands.

Ten minutes later, German midfielder Michael Ballack tripped up forward Warley in the penalty box. Brazil's 19-year-old sensation Ronaldinho took the penalty. Lehmann blocked his shot to the left, but Ronaldinho easily tapped in the rebound to the right.

The matchup was seen as a test of the youth of each of the soccer powerhouses. Both countries fielded young teams, devoid of many of their major stars.

Brazil comes off the Copa America triumph less than a week ago, and many players on both teams are starting pre-season with their European clubs.

Guadalajara residents — 90 per cent according to one survey — were upset about the rosters, which lacked Brazilian superstar Ronaldo and Rivaldo and top German forward Oliver Bierhoff.

Nonetheless, Guadalajara's love affair with Brazil continued. The 58,000-seat Jalisco Stadium was a sea of yellow and green.

During World Cup competition in 1970, Brazil are based here. That year, Pele carried the team to their third World Cup victory. Brazil came back in 1986 but are eliminated by France in the quarterfinals.

"In 1970 and 1986 I was too young but now I can enjoy it," said Hector Sandoval, a con-

"I'm happy to have gotten a goal," Ronaldinho said after the game. "I feel like I grew during this game, and I think Brazil will grow even more during this competition."

In the 40th minute, Warley centered to Alex, who headed the ball into the net to Lehmann's right. Only three minutes later, Alex dribbled the ball up the middle all alone, easily faking out Lehmann and tapping in his goal.

Luxemburgo remained cautious after the match when asked whether Alex and Ronaldinho marked the future of Brazilian soccer.

"Both are great players," he said. "But the team has other players who have great ability and who can stake a claim for a place in the team for the qualification phase of the 2000 Olympics."

Germany had few scoring opportunities, and most were shot wide.

Their best opportunity came in minute 39 of the first half, when a long shot bounced off the hands of Dida and Michael Preetz tried to tap the ball in. Brazilian defender Evanilson cleared it.

Oliver Neuville also made a nice center to Michael Preetz in the 13th minute of the second half, and Preetz headed it straight into Dida's hands.

"After the first goal, our defense sank because we're still in the physical preparation phase, and the Brazilians showed their technical superiority," said German coach Erich Ribbeck.

The game began rough, with three yellow cards in the first half — for Emerson and Vampeta of Brazil, and for Mehmet Scholl of Germany.

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struction worker in a Brazil jersey and joker's hat. "We're celebrating, drinking a few beers — and dancing samba, of course."

Four teams are based in Guadalajara — Brazil, Germany, New Zealand and the United States. Four others are in Mexico City — Mexico, Bolivia, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. After a round-robin in each city, the top two teams of each group will advance to the semifinals.

Brazil and Germany have played 16 friendlies but the soccer heavyweights have managed to avoid a confrontation in official tournaments. Brazil has won nine of those friendlies and Germany just three.

"Although we have won by four goals, Brazil was playing a very powerful German team although the climate at Guadalajara did not really permit them to play at their full potential."

Ribbeck did not mind his words even though he had admitted before the start of the tournament that the Germans had been somewhat reluctant to take up their invitation to this tournament.

He said: "We must change many things, many tactics and many combinations of players, of course. There will be many changes."

**USA-NEW ZEALAND**

Meanwhile, the United States consolidated their recovery from last year's World Cup debacle with an impressive win over the New Zealanders.

The US were the worst performing of the 32 finalists in France last season but have since replaced the much-criticized Steve Sampson with new coach Bruce Arena.

Arena's first year in charge has been marked by some hugely impressive performances and results.

America seemed to adjust better to the sweltering heat and played a more thoughtful game than their opponents who were frequently reduced to hitting long balls.

The first goal came after 26 minutes through the hard-working Brian McBride and from that moment the Oceanians never looked like getting back in the match.

The States took a 2-0 lead after 57 minutes thanks to Jovan Kirovski, who headed home from close range.

New Zealand reduced arrears in injury time through their skipper Chris Zorich following a well-taken freekick but it was too little too late.

**STANDINGS**

Team	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Brazil	1	1	0	0	4	0	3
United States	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
New Zealand	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Germany	1	0	0	1	0	4	0

## Tough times for Italians

MILAN, July 25: Italian football had little to celebrate at the weekend, with Perugia's Interotto tie abandoned after a missile-throwing while Juventus were whistled by their own fans during a goalless draw, reports AFP.

Perugia beat Trabzonspor 2-1 in Turkey last week but were 2-1 down in Saturday night's home leg after conceding a goal two minutes from the whistle, sending the third-round tie into extra time.

The crowd trouble started when Perugia had a goal disallowed, followed shortly by a strike from Trabzonspor which made it 3-1. Missiles rained

down and the referee suspended the match for five minutes.

Play re-started and Perugia had another goal disallowed after the same German linesman flagged for off-side. More coins and plastic bottles came in from the home fans, this time prompting the referee to call off the match.

It was Perugia's second game to be abandoned in as many days — on Thursday their 'friendly' against Libya ended in a mass brawl among players.

Perugia's new coach Carlo Mazzone would not be drawn on the hooliganism on Saturday, saying: "All my players made mistakes, some of them major ones, perhaps because they are not in peak shape."

"But after their second goal, a lot of strange things happened."

Perugia boss Alessandro Gaudenzi criticised the match officials, saying: "It's incredible. Both of Guidoni's goals were perfectly valid. But we will come back from this."

Trabzonspor should now be awarded a 3-0 win by UEFA, while Perugia bow out the same way that fellow Serie A club Fiorentina left last season's UEFA Cup: beaten by a UEFA committee after their match was abandoned following the explosion of a powerful firework.

There were no sparks though in Juventus' home match at Cesena against Ceahlaul, with the Italians qualifying after their 1-1 draw in Romania.

The club, who reached three consecutive European Cup fi-

nals before losing to Manchester United in last season's semi-finals, were whistled by the crowd at the end of a disappointing performance.

Juventus, resting all their major offensive weaponry — Alessandro Del Piero, Filippo Inzaghi and Zinedine Zidane, dominated possession. But despite several chances, neither Nicola Amoruso nor Yugoslav newcomer Darko Kovacevic could find the net.

Coach Carlo Ancelotti said: "In my opinion, we didn't deserve to be whistled at. But all the same, it's something that does you good — it's a reminder that you must always try to do better."

Juventus now face Russian club Rostov in next week's semi-finals in their bid to earn a UEFA Cup place.

## Nantes make winning start

AMIENS, France, July 25: Nantes beat Bordeaux 1-0 here Saturday in the traditional curtain raiser to the French season, reports AFP.

The Champions' Trophy pits the First Division champions (Bordeaux) against the French Cup winners (Nantes) and this time it was the Cup winners that prevailed.

The Canaries made a good start and Bordeaux goalkeeper Ulrich Rame was nearly outfoxed by an early raid from Antoine Sibierski after four minutes.

## Nations' cup drawn Aug 28

JOHANNESBURG, July 25: The draw for next year's African Nations' Cup finals has been set for August 28 in Lagos, the Confederation of African Football announced on Saturday, reports Reuters.

The Nigerian capital is also to be the site of next year's final. The Nations Cup is being co-hosted by Ghana and Nigeria.

No details were given on the seedings for the draw but both hosts, holders Egypt and the 1998 runners-up South Africa are expected to be put at the head of the four first round groups.



New Zealand's Ivan Vicelich (L) fouls USA's Joe Max Moore during their Confederations' Cup match at Guadalajara on July 24. —AFP photo