

Azhar to submit fitness report Thursday

NEW DELHI, Aug 1 (Internet report): Deposed Indian skipper Mohammad Azharuddin is expected to submit his medical fitness certificate on August 5, a day before the selectors are to meet at Baroda to choose Indian national squad for the coming one-day tournament in Sri Lanka and Singapore.

But it will be up to the selectors to decide whether this report itself is enough to consider him for inclusion in the team or ask for a cricket board-conducted physical fitness test, board sources said in Mumbai today.

The selectors are to meet on August 6 to choose the remaining members of the team which would be led by newly appointed skipper Sachin Tendulkar. Tendulkar is expected to attend the meeting at Baroda along with national team coach Anshuman Gaekwad.

Azhar had undergone a shoulder operation at London on June 19. Last season when Mumbai stars Vinod Kambli and Ajit Agarkar had submitted fitness certificates after long injury lay-offs, the Board did not these sufficient.

The duo was put through a tough physical regimen in Mumbai, in front of then team physical trainer Andrew Kokinos and Doctor Ravinder Chanda, before considering them for inclusion in the team to play in the home triangular series. It is being heard the Board has made up its mind to drop Azhar from the national side altogether.

Whatmore gets down to SL task

COLOMBO, Aug 1 (AP): New Sri Lanka coach Dav Whatmore will start re-building Sri Lanka's battered cricketing pride when he takes control of the national team training this week.

Whatmore, who arrived here Saturday, will formally take over the Sri Lankan squad from Sunday at an annual fee of 50,000 pounds sterling, cricket officials said.

Sri Lanka's Board of Control for Cricket said Whatmore, who was last month freed by the English county Lancashire, will begin work immediately with the 30-member squad named for the upcoming triangular with Australia and India.

Whatmore will be fully responsible for the national squad that will prepare for the next World Cup after their humiliating exit from the May World Cup tournament in England.

Whatmore, 45, who was born in Colombo but played seven Tests for Australia in 1978 and 1979, guided Sri Lanka to their shock World Cup success in 1996 before joining Lancashire the following year.

Many believe Whatmore's entry was instrumental in bringing about the downfall of disgraced skipper Arjuna Ranatunga. The two men were known to have serious differences of opinion over bringing in young blood to the team.

Wells, Nixon inspire Leicester

LEICESTER, England, Aug 1: Leicester fought back against New Zealand on the second day of a four-day tour match on Saturday, reports Reuters.

New Zealand left-arm paceman Shayne O'Connor took five for 65 but Leicester reached 333 for nine in their second innings.

England one-day batsmen Vince Wells made 101 and wicket-keeper Paul Nixon 99.

Earlier the tourists had finished on 260 in reply to Leicestershire's first innings of 125. Daniel Vettori's 112 providing the bulk of the runs while Andrew Penn was unbeaten on 69.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the second day of the four-day tour match between Leicestershire and New Zealand on Saturday.

LEICESTERSHIRE: First innings 125 all out (A. Penn 6-51)

NEW ZEALAND: First innings (overnight 250-8) M Bell c Wells b Ormond 0 0 S Fleming c Brimson b Boswell 12 0 C McMillan lbw b Dakin 0 0 C Harris c Sutcliffe b Boswell 4 0 D Vettori c Brimson 112 0 M Croy b Ormond 0 0 B Walker c Nixon b Ormond 5 0 A Penn not out 69 0 S O'Connor c Smith b Ormond 13 0 G Allott b Ormond 0 0 Extras: (b-6, lb-5, nb-10) 23 Total: (All out) 260 Fall of wickets: 1-12; 2-14; 3-14; 4-26; 5-53; 6-76; 7-116; 8-207; 9-260

Bowler O M R W

Ormond 19.4 6 63 5

Boswell 15 4 71 3

Wells 6 0 35 0

Dakin 12 5 37 1

Brimson 13 5 23 1

Maddy 2 0 18 0

LEICESTERSHIRE: Second

innings

D Stevens lbw b O'Connor 9

D Maddy lbw b O'Connor 38

I Sutcliffe b O'Connor 0

B Smith c Walker b O'Connor 37

A Habib c Croy b O'Connor 4

V Wells c Croy b Vettori 101

P Nixon lbw b Penn 99

J Dakin c Bell b Vettori 18

S Boswell b Penn 0

M Brimson not out 0

J Ormond not out 1

Extras: (w-3, nb-10, lb-4, b-7) 24

Total: (For nine wickets) 333

Fall of wickets: 1-17; 2-21; 3-60; 4-70; 5-107; 6-270; 7-329; 8-329; 9-329

Bowler O M R W

Allott 18 1 98 0

O'Connor 24 10 65 5

Penn 16 3 64 2

Astle 10 4 36 2

Vettori 23 9 54 2

Harris 7 1 25 0



American Jeff Tarango plays a forehand to Spaniard Alberto Portas in their Croatia Open semifinal match on July 31. — AFP photo

Fall of the German empire?



BONN, Aug 1: German newspapers and commentators heaped scorn on the national soccer team on Sunday, saying the world was laughing at them following their humiliating 2-0 defeat by the United States in the Confederations Cup.

"I'll decide when the time comes," he said. "I'm not thinking about that right now. At the moment the only thing that matters is European championship qualification. If we don't achieve that then they are going to chop my head off."

The Berliner Morgenpost newspaper said Ribbeck had lost all authority with the team and added that the defeat was the worst in recent history. "Humiliation," the paper wrote. "End of a soccer power."

The Morgenpost said the incompetence and arrogance that accompanied some of Germany's most humiliating defeats in the past were becoming visible again.

"German soccer is now standing before the ruins," it wrote.

Germany's former coach Franz Beckenbauer warned the team were in danger of falling into a hole and would no longer be as feared by opponents.

"We have to watch out that no one starts feeling sorry for us," Beckenbauer said. "We've

got to be careful now."

But Beckenbauer tried to look at the bright side. He said the team's thumbing could help win support for Germany's bid to host the 2006 World Cup.

"We've opened the gate a bit for 2006 because we've become a bit more likeable now," Beckenbauer said.

Another former national trainer, Bertl Vogts, said the German virtues such as engagement and fight were missing. "The motor won't start if there's no fuel on hand."

The Sunday tabloid Bild am Sonntag said the whole world was laughing at Germany.

The German failures have returned to Frankfurt from a trip that ended with a huge embarrassment," wrote columnist Wilfried Pastors.

He said they played like a bunch of "losers" against the Americans and seemed to have their suitcases already packed for the trip home.

"Opponents are no longer going to respect Germany the way they once did -- that was once a huge advantage for German teams," Pastors said. "These days Germany is being dominated and laughed at."

With the 6-0, 6-2, 55-minute semifinal victory, he jumped past Australian Patrick Rafter into the number one spot in the ATP's world rankings. On Monday, Sampras will begin his 27th week at the top, breaking a tie with Ivan Lendl for the all-time record.

The match gave Sampras his 16th consecutive match victory, a stretch in which he lifted his sixth Wimbledon crown. The 12-time Grand Slam champion, who has finished a record six straight years at the top, reflected on his latest milestone.

"I cherish every year being number one," he said. "It's different from winning a Grand Slam, more like a career achievement."

Agassi, the top seed and defending champion, eliminated another unheralded Australian, Andrew Lle, 6-4, 6-2 under the lights.

Sampras holds a 14-10 lifetime advantage over Agassi. The Wimbledon final, which Sampras won 6-3, 6-4, 7-5, is the only time they've played three times in 1998, with Agassi winning twice.

"It won't be easy, that's for sure," Sampras said of the final. "I've got a lot of respect for Andre. He's probably the best player I've played during my career."

Sales scores triple ton

LONDON, Aug 1: David Sales hit an astonishing 303 not out as Northamptonshire, once 58-6, recovered to 579 all out on the second day of their county championship game with Essex on Saturday, reports Reuters.

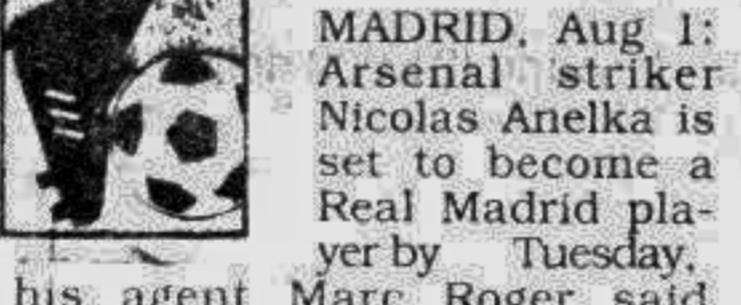
As the runs flowed freely, Australian batsman Stuart Law led the Essex fightback with 117 out of his side's 258-3.

But it was Sales, 21, who stole the show with the highest individual first-class score of the season. He is the youngest Englishman to hit a triple century.

Northants started the day on 458-7 with Sales on 218 and piled on the agony as Essex made it worse for themselves by conceding a record 98 extras.

Sales hit 46 fours and two sixes.

Anelka Madrid bound?



MADRID, Aug 1: Arsenal striker Nicolas Anelka is set to become a Real Madrid player by Tuesday, his agent Mario Roger said Sunday, reports AFP.

"I am very cautious -- experience has taught me to be that way -- but I hope that everything will be resolved by Tuesday," Roger said.

Spanish newspaper reports on Sunday backed Roger's assessment.

Several reports said the wantaway French international is set to leave Arsenal for Real, although there is still no agreement on a transfer fee.

The newspaper AS reported that the English Premiership club and Real are still 3 million dollars apart on the sum to be

paid for the 20-year-old French international.

Real Madrid president Lorenzo Sanz told the ABC newspaper on Saturday that he was confident of sealing a deal worth around 33 million dollars. Reports Sunday said the fee could be as high as 35.5 million dollars.

Sanz said he was personally negotiating a deal with Arsenal vice-president David Dein and that he was delighted to be signing a player considered among the greatest in world football."

Sanz said that Anelka was due to sign a contract with Real Madrid for six years.

"If we can complete the signing of Anelka it would be one of the biggest acquisitions we have made in years," Sanz told Spanish television.

"A few weeks ago we thought

it would be impossible to sign him but now we are hoping he will be a Real Madrid player very soon."

Spanish sports daily AS predicted that Anelka would sign a deal on Monday, probably in London.

If Arsenal do agree to sell Anelka to Real Madrid, it will mark a complete turnaround.

Arsenal had originally said they would refuse to sell the player to Real because of alleged illegal approaches to the player which prompted a complaint to FIFA -- while Real had previously branded 31 million dollars "too much" to pay for the striker.

Arsenal's subsequent attempts to sell Anelka to Italian clubs Lazio and Juventus broke down, largely over the players personal demands.

Banks cautions MU



LONDON, Aug 1: The row over Manchester United's participation in the FA Cup this season reared up again on Sunday when former Sports Minister Tony Banks warned there would be disastrous repercussions if United bowed to pressure to re-enter the Cup and pulled out of the World Club Championship, reports AFP.

"If they go back into the FA Cup and pull out of the World Club Championship then that would be bloody disastrous. That is where the pressure is now. That is what really worries me," Banks told The Sunday Telegraph.

"We didn't go to the World Cup when it started, not the European Cup, and that sort of arrogance and natural conservatism does enormous damage to English football."

He is the youngest Englishman to hit a triple century.

John Barnwell said: "If it was a manager saying those things, he'd be brought up for bringing the game into disrepute."

"I just wanted to punch Houldier in the face. And if I was younger, I would have. He would have deserved it."

If Ince stands by his reported comments, he seems certain to face a disrepute charge and FA spokesman Steve Double confirmed the ruling body would be investigating.

In a double page interview Ince said he was furious at the way Frenchman Houldier had him no longer needed at the club.

"It's disgraceful the way Houldier has treated me and other players at the club," the 31-year-old was quoted as saying.

People should know what he is really like. I've played under some great managers like Alex Ferguson, Terry Venables, Glenn Hoddle and Roy Hodgson -- they all treat their players with respect.

But Houldier doesn't know what the word means. He comes from France and I can't even believe he's managed a team before because he certainly

Turkey keen to host 2008 Games

ISTANBUL, Aug 1: Turkey will apply to be candidates to stage the 2008 Summer Olympics, Turkish Olympic Committee president Sinan Erdem said today, reports Reuters.

Graham Bean, the FA's compliance officer, will be writing to Paul to get his observations," Double said.

Houldier won support from the League Managers Association, whose chief executive

John Barnwell said: "If it was a manager saying those things, he'd be brought up for bringing the game into disrepute."

Ince added: "For someone who has been at the club two minutes to turn round and say you're not wanted here and to try and ruin my career...well, I just couldn't get my head round it."

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