

Wright told to grow up

LONDON, Sept 21: Nottingham Forest striker Ian Wright has been told to grow up by Wolverhampton Wanderers' full-back Kevin Muscat in the wake of his sending-off last weekend, reports AFP.

Wright was sent off after a running battle with the Australian during the 1-1 first division draw with Wolves on Sunday.

On Tuesday Wright wrote in his regular column in The Sun newspaper: "He is a nobody. He knows it, I realise it and a hell of a lot of other people think it."

But Muscat hit back on Tuesday, saying: "He had a highly illustrious career but you would have thought he should have grown up.

"He kicked the ball away to get his first booking and then lashed out at me to get his second. He has only himself to blame - not anyone else. It was his ill-discipline."

"I'm told he has apologised to his manager and team-mates - and he should do. He has let them down."

Wolves manager Colin Lee came to Muscat's defence. He said: "I am a big admirer of Ian Wright's and for football's sake I don't want to see him getting sent off."

"With all his experience and his tremendous attitude to the game I wouldn't have expected a little incident like this to spark off such a major reaction."

Wright's anger was sparked near the end of the televised match when Muscat allegedly shotted over and prompted Wright to leave a ball that went straight to the Wolves number two.

The striker, already booked for kicking the ball into the stand after a decision had gone against him, had furious words with Muscat and then taunted him by peering at the back of his shirt in the pretence of finding out his name.

Three minutes from time Wright was sent off for a wild challenge that caught the Australian across the shins and was further irritated when his offer of a handshake was refused.

"I can sleep well and look in the mirror each morning, which is more than a certain Wolves player can probably do," the former England international also wrote.

"This guy isn't even worthy of mentioning his name. The unwritten code of gentlemen's conduct between players in these situations was broken and it sparked the worst kind of reaction in me."

"All it would have taken to sort the situation out was for him to say: 'Sorry, I was out of order.' It would have been finished with. But this bloke is not big enough to do that."

Berlusconi not pleased

MILAN, Sept 22: AC Milan may have snatched all three points against Galatasaray, but the Champions League win failed to convince the club's waspish owner Silvio Berlusconi, reports AFP.

Brazilian striker Leonardo scored one and made the other just before half-time, but it was goalkeeper Christian Abbiati who kept the scoreline 2-1 with a series of crucial saves at the end.

Berlusconi, who watched Milan suffer in the second half after seizing the initiative in a scrappy opening 45 minutes, needed just four words to sum up Tuesday night's Group H tie: "Great Abbiati, small Milan."

Even Leonardo wouldn't be drawn on the quality of his team's football, saying: "The important thing was to win."

Abbiati, who scampered back to clear Erdem Arif's header off the line in injury-time, said: "I don't think I did anything heroic in the second half. At the end, I made a mistake coming out and then made up for it."

"I think we had a great first half and we knew that Galatasaray would improve in the second. It was only logical, and it happened."

"But in my opinion, there is only one reason why the second half was difficult for us: we conceded a goal straight away. That frightened us a bit and perhaps we needed to react in a way that we failed to do."

"However, we won, we're at the top of the group and I can't understand why there's all this discussion about it," he told the Gazzetta dello Sport.

Midfielder Gennaro Gattuso shared the general perplexity, saying: "We knew that Galatasaray were an aggressive team and they certainly were in the second-half. But if we hadn't conceded that goal straight away, I think that things would have worked out differently."

"We mustn't always look just on the negative side of things."

Laudrup new Danish asst. coach

COPENHAGEN, Sept 22: Michael Laudrup, one of Denmark's greatest ever players, on Tuesday accepted an offer to become assistant coach to the national side, the Danish football federation announced, reports AFP.

Laudrup, 35, who ended his career after last summer's World Cup, will act as Morten Olsen's number two after signing a two-year contract which takes effect July 1 next year, when Olsen takes over the reins from current coach Bo Johansson.

"I had some doubts but the idea of working with Morten Olsen appealed to me," said Laudrup. "I get on very well with Morten - we're on the same wavelength."



Hertha Berlin's Andreas Schmidt (L) takes a bi-cycle kick during the Champions' League match against Chelsea at Berlin on September 21.

Sport

Spartak cling on for a draw

MOSCOW, Sept 22: Nine-man Spartak Moscow, so impressive in the 1999/2000 European Champions League up to now, squandered home advantage when scraping a 1-1 draw against Sparta Prague here Tuesday, reports AFP.

Spartak, who had two players red carded in the second half, went into the night's round of matches as Group G leaders after an impressive 3-1 away win over Willem II last week.

And the Russians tried to stun their Czech guests with an opening burst but the visitors defended stoutly, counter-attacking on the break.

In the 17th minute Sparta were rewarded for their efforts when striker Vratislav Lokvenc scored with a header after a well-taken corner kick from Vladimír Labant.

Spartak poured forward looking for an equaliser and seconds later Russia's international midfielder Yegor Titov missed a clear chance, when he tamely shot the ball into Czech goalkeeper Tomas Postulka from five metres.

Spartak, despite dominating play in the first half, failed to pose a serious threat to the Prague outfit, making too many unforced mistakes. Postulka made several easy saves from several long-range efforts from Spartak before the break.

In the second half Spartak moved up a gear, seizing the initiative only for their attacks to be snuffed out by Sparta on the edge of the penalty box.

However, the Moscow side drew level with a stroke of luck in the 73rd minute, when midfielder Titov softly lobbed the ball to Spartak substitute Artyom Bezrodny, who poked the ball past the helpless Postulka from close range for his first ever Champions League goal.

Spartak made life difficult for themselves when Brazilian striker Luis Robson was given his marching orders in the last 10 minutes of normal time, following defender Yury Kovtun, who was ordered off 10 minutes earlier for a wild tackle, setting up a tense final period for the Spartak fans.

Sparta created several scoring chances in the final five minutes of the match but Spartak clung on grimly.

India beat Canada

SYDNEY, Sept 22: Indian men's coach Vasudevan Baskaran was relieved after his team topped Canada 3-2 on the opening day of a pre-Olympic field hockey tournament here today, reports AFP.

India have struggled to keep pace with the elite nations in recent years and, building toward next year's Olympics, have been finding victories difficult to achieve.

Placed ninth in the 1998 World Cup, India did not get to play in the Champions Trophy in Brisbane this year.

Today's win reversed a 2-1 defeat to Canada when India finished last in the four-nation Australia Cup in Canberra last week.

Already qualified for the 2000 Olympics, India beat the Australia Cup winners Canada with a counter-attacking game but Baskaran still had concerns about the number of errors committed which allowed the Canadians back into the game.

India went ahead early with the only goal of the first half through Anwar Khan.

Canada's 32-year-old captain Peter Milkovich, a veteran of over 240 internationals, equalised with a smart deflection midway through the second spell but India went ahead again when Deepak Thakur produced a brilliant diving, backhanded smash from the top of the circle.

Ajit Singh effectively made the game safe with a breakaway field goal with three minutes remaining but Milkovich was not done and added a penalty to reduce the margin in the final minute.

The Indians play hosts Australia Thursday.

Davis Cup

Kafelnikov's forecast

BRISBANE, Sept 22: Yevgeny Kafelnikov predicts Russia can afford to "sacrifice" Saturday's doubles and still beat an under-strength Australia comfortably in their Davis Cup semifinal this weekend, reports AFP.

"I feel we're going to win both singles on Saturday, lose the doubles on Sunday and I make third point on Sunday, so we win 3-1," the world No. 2 said Wednesday.

Kafelnikov also rubbed the condition of ANZ Stadium's grass court and questioned Australian Davis Cup debutant Wayne Arthurs' mental character.

He said he would trounce the 28-year-old Arthurs and that Russian No. 2 Marat Safin would upset Lleyton Hewitt in a battle of teenagers to grab a 2-0 lead on Friday night.

"I expect to beat both of them because I'm playing well," said the 25-year-old Russian.

"I have no other expectation for myself than to win both matches. And I think Marat's going to beat Hewitt on the first day."

"When the going gets tough, Marat will tough it out," Kafelnikov added. "He has won his last two Davis Cup matches by staying mentally tough."

Russian captain Shamil Tarashchikov complained about the grass court.

"It is in a bad condition," said Kafelnikov, suggesting the court had originally been prepared to suit the games of Pat Rafter and Mark Philippoussis and changed once both players pulled out injured.

Viele's losing debut

TOKYO, Sept 22: Monique Viele, a 14-year-old making her professional debut, made a first-round exit Wednesday with a 6-3, 6-1 loss to fellow American Jane Chi at the 520,000 dollar Toyota Princess Cup tennis tournament, reports AP.

"I wasn't feeling down at all. I was actually happy just to be out there," Viele said.

"It was tough just like playing with my little sister," said the 25-year-old Chi, ranked 69th in the world. "I didn't want to lose, though."

And the Russians tried to stun their Czech guests with an opening burst but the visitors defended stoutly, counter-attacking on the break.

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"It is in a bad condition," said Kafelnikov, suggesting the court had originally been prepared to suit the games of Pat Rafter and Mark Philippoussis and changed once both players pulled out injured.

Eleven coaches have fallen by the wayside in the 22-club league since the start of the competition in late July.

Although Portuguesa are not one of São Paulo's big clubs they have done well in the last few years, reaching the final in 1996. Zagallo complained his modest squad had been upset by a political turmoil in the club.

"I had some doubts but the idea of working with Morten Olsen appealed to me," said Zagallo. "I get on very well with Morten - we're on the same wavelength."

American Jane Chi in action at the Toyota Princess Cup in Tokyo yesterday.

— AFP photo

June its rule to allow 14-year-olds to receive one wild card into WTA events.

"I think she presented about 50 per cent of her potential and ability," said Viele's coach, Rick Macchi. "When you are nervous, then the movement goes. If she would have been relaxed, she might have won that match."

The rain halted most of the day's matches, but Viele and Chi duelled for 80 minutes under the closed roof of the Ariake Colosseum.

The two played evenly at the start and tied the first set at 2-2 before Viele's double-fault and a couple of unforced errors cost her the fifth game.

A majority of Viele's first serves either sailed long or landed in the next, and she nervously bounced the ball more than a dozen times before serving. Romain Martens, the chair umpire, cautioned Viele on a couple of occasions, and Viele somewhat reduced the number

of bounces.

Chi again broke Viele's serve in the ninth game with her punching a forehand approach shot out of Viele's reach and a pair of unforced errors from Viele's part.

"The way she served, taking a lot of time bouncing the ball, kind of threw me out of rhythm in the first set," Chi said. "And I just tried to hang in there and keep it going because I knew that sooner or later I would be able to break her."

"I read in the newspaper that she has serves of up to 150 mph (240 kph)," said Chi, of Medford, Massachusetts. "She was a new player. I didn't really know anything about her. Just the whole thing was a new experience."

While Chi and Viele were playing top seeds of the tournament, including Lindsay Davenport and Monica Seles, were watching the match. Both Davenport and Seles, who have first-round byes, were idle Wednesday.

"That's really nice that they came and watched me play," Viele said. "I'm very, very happy and hopefully someday I'll play against them, too."

Viele said she chose the Toyota Princess Cup from among several offers because she always wanted to come Japan on her first trip abroad.

Macchi said Viele may come back to Tokyo in February to play in a tournament.