

Sport

Sanz warns UEFA again

MADRID, Oct 23: Real Madrid's influential club president Lorenzo Sanz has fired another warning shot across the bows of UEFA, insisting he and his allies at Europe's top clubs are still not happy with the Champions League pay-out, reports Reuters.

Sanz, the secretary and de facto leader of the G-14 group of clubs, warned European football's governing body it is facing another row over the share-out of the television rights for the competition.

"UEFA are playing around with us," Sanz was quoted as saying in Spanish sports daily Marca on Friday. "And we're not disposed to let them do it."

"We're not ready to accept the distribution of money as they've been announced."

"They offered us certain things and now the offer is not even half the amount promised at the start."

"We're not ready to let them walk all over us."

The G-14, which includes clubs such as Manchester United, Bayern Munich and Inter Milan, have been meeting since November 1998 to discuss matters such as TV revenue and their players' availability for international friendlies.

No details were released of what was discussed at the last meeting, which was held in Madrid last Friday.

At the first meeting of the closed group, it was decided to accept UEFA's proposals for the expanded Champions League, which is currently in progress.

That decision effectively put a stop to a rival plan, put forward by Media Partners, for a Europe-wide competition involving the biggest clubs.

Real Madrid had been one of several clubs to give a positive response to the Media Partners plan and there has been speculation in the Spanish sports press that the idea was raised again at the last meeting in Madrid.

The full list of G-14 members is: AC Milan, Bayern Munich, Olympique Marseille, Porto, Real Madrid, Ajax Amsterdam, Borussia Dortmund, Barcelona, Inter Milan, Juventus, Liverpool, Manchester United, Paris St Germain and PSV Eindhoven.

Dispute over Sydney tickets

SYDNEY, Oct 23: A new Olympics row has broken out in sports-mad Australia over revelations that as few as one in 10 tickets to the best events of the Sydney 2000 Games will be available to the local public, reports Reuters.

The Sydney Morning Herald newspaper reported today that only 10 per cent of tickets had been allocated to ordinary Australians for the premier events of the games.

The daily described the allocation a "morsel" and accused the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games of secrecy.

The Herald said it had invoked Australia's anti-secrecy laws and formally requested the committee to release details of tickets available to Australians in every session of every sport.

The Games are already plagued by controversy over high-priced tickets being reserved for the rich and privileged while seats for ordinary Australians sell out.

Olympics Minister Michael Knight has been quoted as saying that ordinary sports goers will be unhappy. Olympics organisers are bracing for a public backlash.

Most seats at the top events will be filled by sponsors, media, international patrons, VIPs, athletes, sports federations, International Olympic Committee members and premium ticket buyers, according to information given to committee members.

The organising committee has said in the past that 52 per cent of Olympic tickets will be available to the Australian public.

Committee chief Sandy Holloway now says the 52 per cent is not guaranteed ceremony by ceremony and sport by sport.

Sydney's Olympics has been dogged this year by political embarrassments.

Mid-year, organisers decided to drop US and Japanese marching bands which had been hired for the opening ceremony. That decision has been partly reversed.

Earlier, the Games were caught up in an International Olympic Committee corruption scandal.

COE approves

STRASBOURG, France, Oct 23: The Council of Europe (COE) on Friday welcomed the creation of an international anti-doping agency to stamp out drug taking in sport, reports AFP.

An anti-doping working group within the Council of Europe have been examining the issue since being invited by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to participate in the creation of the agency earlier this year.

Following a meeting here on Thursday and Friday the group made a number of recommendations including that the independence of the agency be ensured, in particular in relation to the compiling of a list of banned substances and the appointment of testing laboratories.

The group, which includes 33 European states as well as Australia and Canada, also proposed the inclusion of South Africa in their executive committee.

European Union Sports Ministers will further discuss the setting up of the international anti-doping agency during an informal meeting in Finland from October 25-26.

Rivaldo out of MU's reach

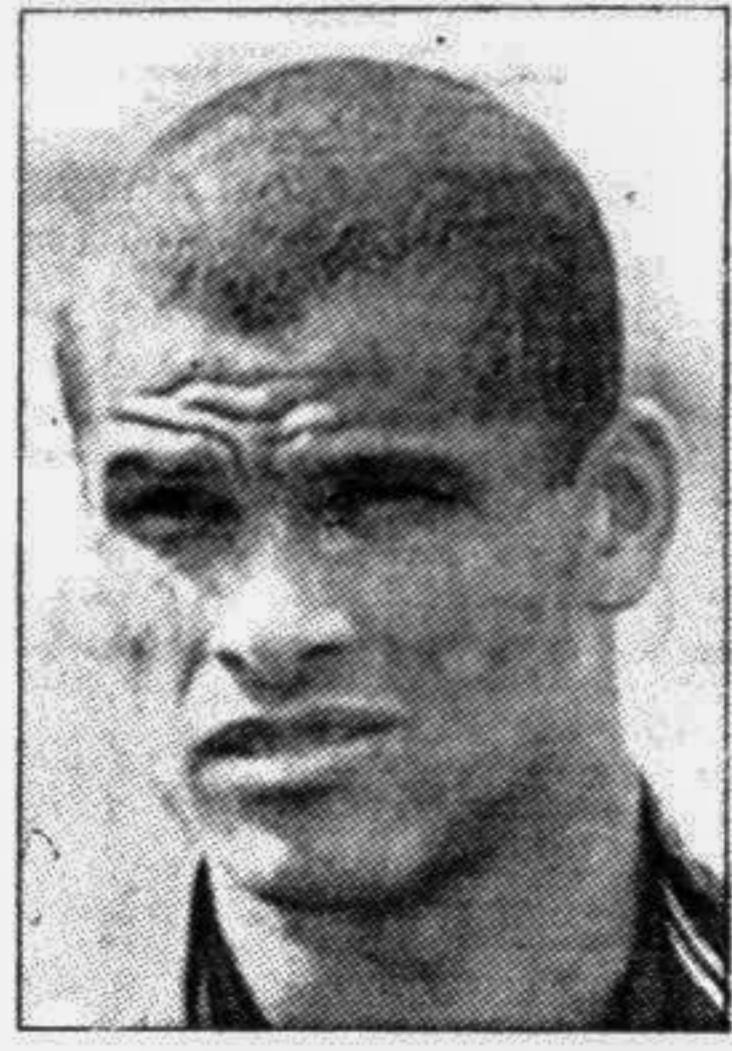
MANCHESTER, England, Oct 23: European Cup holders Manchester United have admitted they wanted to sign Brazilian international Rivaldo in the summer but could not afford the Barcelona star, reports AFP.

Chairman Martin Edwards revealed in United's official magazine that, even as the richest club in the world, United could not fund the deal.

"There is no doubt at all, that we would have loved to have had the Brazilian here, but the problem was that Barcelona don't want to sell him. If they did what would the transfer fee be?"

"They paid 18 million pounds [30 million dollars] for him so they are going to want 20 million plus, and on top of that his personal terms are at least three times above what we pay our top player at the moment."

Edwards explained: "We have certain constraints as a public company in that we have responsibilities to the City and if bringing in certain players means absolutely destroying our wages structure it becomes difficult for us."



RIVALDO

"We have spent 40 million pounds on players in the last two seasons and that is more than we have made."

The United supremo dismisses speculation United were chasing Juventus midfielder Edgar Davids during the close season saying: "As far as Edgar Davids is concerned there was

never any truth in that at all, at no time did Alex Ferguson ever mention Edgar Davids to me."

Edwards also said he hoped Ireland midfielder Roy Keane would stay at Old Trafford.

He said: "We did offer Roy more than our highest paid player at the moment. All I know is that he said he wanted more time to think about it and didn't want to commit himself at the start of the season."

But Edwards revealed he has doubts about whether Sir Alex Ferguson would want to stay on at the end of his contract in three years time.

"As for Sir Alex, it's a difficult one because there are a number of things to consider."

"If he is still there in the background with all the success he has had, is that going to be a comfort or a hindrance to any successor? Secondly, is that something Sir Alex wants?"

"It would be very difficult for him to be there without actually feeling a need to be involved."

"He is a hands-on person and I think it would be difficult for him to resist that - but we have got three years to think about it and he will have a view on it, and we will have a view on it nearer the time."



Schalke's Gerald Asamoah (R) tries to control the ball during the Bundesliga match against Eintracht Frankfurt on October 22.

Sampras skips Eurocard Open

STUTTGART, Germany, Oct 23: Pete Sampras has withdrawn from next week's 2.45 million dollars Eurocard Open because of a flu, organizers said Friday, reports AP.

Sampras, a former No 1 who is now No 3 in the world, has not played since late August.

He missed the US Open because of a herniated disc in his lower back.

Sampras became the second start to withdraw from the Stuttgart tournament. Patrick Rafter dropped out because of a shoulder injury, which requires surgery.

All other Top 50 players have signed for the indoor tournament, one of the Super 9 events.

Schett sails into last four

MOSCOW, Oct 23: Second seed Barbara Schett of Austria bounced back from a disastrous first set to score a 1-6, 6-4, 6-3 win against unseeded Italian Silvia Farina in the quarterfinal action at the Kremlin Cup on Friday, reports Reuters.

"I have never beaten her before but it was a big win today, especially after losing the first set 1-6," said Schett, who had previously lost all three matches against the 25th ranked Farina.

It looked like another easy win for the 27-year-old Italian, who took the opening set in just 28 minutes, until Schett began to fight back.

"In the beginning of the second set I got my rhythm back and she had to fight for every point. It was a nice comeback for me," said the 23-year-old Australian after reaching her second Kremlin Cup semifinal.

Today, Schett, ranked number eight in the world, will take on fifth seeded Belgian Dominique Van Roost, who eliminated Julie Halarde-Decugis of France 6-1, 4-6, 6-1 after surviving a major scare the day before.

Van Roost was just a game away from losing her match to 15-year-old Russian Lina Krasnoruktskaya on Thursday but kept her cool to win the next six games for a 6-2, 2-6, 7-5 victory.

"It was completely different match for me today against Julie," said a smiling Van Roost. "I have lost to her our last two matches, also lost the last set 0-6, so this win is especially sweet for me."

In the other semifinal, fourth seeded Nathalie Tauziat of France, who knocked out Germany's Anke Huber, will meet unseeded American Lisa Raymond, a 6-3, 7-5 winner over Al Sugiyama of Japan.

Tauziat, who is making her Kremlin Cup debut this year, said she had big reservations against coming to Moscow after her fiasco in the Russia-France Fed Cup tie earlier this year.

"It was really tough for me to come here and to play on the same court where I lost all my three matches and everyone said that I helped Russia to win," she said. "So I had to think twice before coming here again."

Chicago Marathon today

CHICAGO, Oct 23 (AP): Khalid Khannouchi the United States' best hope for an Olympic medal in the marathon.

There's just one problem: He's not an American citizen yet.

The Moroccan-born runner's request for expedited citizenship was rejected in June, leaving on hold his hopes of running in the Sydney Olympics as an American.

"We're still working on it and I'm always positive that I'll get my citizenship," said Khannouchi, the 1997 LaSalle Banks Chicago Marathon champion and a favourite to win again Sunday. "Hopefully, I'll be able to run in the Olympics as an American. I want to give something back to this country."

Without Khannouchi American prospects are dim. Besides Khannouchi, the favourites in Chicago on Sunday are world recordholder Ronaldo da Costa of Brazil; defending champion Ondoro Osoro of Kenya, and South Africa's Hendrik Ramaala, who is running his first marathon.

The top American in the field, Todd Williams, has a personal best of 2:11:17, more than five minutes behind da Costa's world record of 2:06:05.

The outlook isn't much better among the women. Ireland's Catherine McKiernan, who has won all three marathons she's entered, has a personal best of 2:22:33, while Joyce Chepuchumba of Kenya won last year's race in 2:23:57.

The top Americans in Sunday's field, Kristy Johnson and Debbie Hickman, have run 2:29:05 and 2:33:06, respectively.

"It's always darkest before the dawn," says Carey Pinkowski, the Chicago Marathon's race director, of the United States' long-distance prospects. "It's got to get better. So I'm not going to give up on it. We'll have another Frank Shorter or Alberto Salazar."

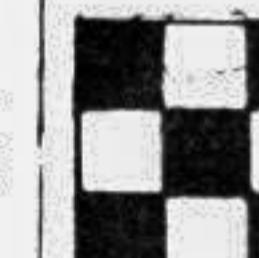
Right now, though, the best hope is Khannouchi. He played soccer as a boy, then took up running when his father encouraged him to try an individual sport. After only a year of formal training, he won the Moroccan cross country championship. He also won junior titles at 5,000 and 10,000 meters.

But Morocco had other elite runners and Khannouchi didn't get the support he wanted from his country's running federation. So in 1993, he moved to New York without money or a job.



Nobel laureate German author Guenter Grass (R) chats with former world No 1 tennis player Steffi Graf during a reception in Oviedo, Spain on October 22.

— AFP photo

Kasparov defeats 'The World'

NEW YORK, Oct 23: A worldwide team of Internet chess players Friday resigned its game against world champion Garry Kasparov after a gripping, four-month battle on a Microsoft website that broke new ground in chess theory, reports Reuters.

Kasparov, 36, considered by many experts to be the best player in the history of the ancient game, was about to promote his only remaining pawn to a second queen in a technically complex endgame while "The World" team ran out of opportunities to even force a draw.

The game, described by Kasparov and Microsoft as an experiment for chess playing on the Internet, was closely fought with a new move in chess theory played by "The World" in the Sicilian Defence on its 10th turn that surprised the champion.

Kasparov opened with the white pieces on June 21 at a ceremony in New York and the contest lasted longer than many expected, ending on Friday on the 62nd move.

"Kasparov Wins!" the Microsoft website www.zone.com/kasparov/home.e.asp announced. "Despite a valiant challenge from a resourceful World Team, a superior position by Garry Kasparov at move 62 forced resignation by the opposition."

Microsoft gaming zone production manager Eddie Ranchigoda said more than 50

per cent of the Internet voters opted for resignation, which under the rules conceded the contest to the Russian.

The company said that over the course of the game, the site hosted more than 3 million visitors from more than 75 countries.

Kasparov declined immediate comment on the outcome



KASPAROV

but he said by telephone from Moscow that next week he would discuss his analysis of the game.

On the website on Thursday when it was already clear that he was heading for victory against the Internet all-comers,

he issued a statement through game commentator Danny King, a grandmaster from England.

"At move 10, I congratulated 'The World' on a great opening novelty, and to that I would like to add it was a phenomenal middle game, a crazy human endgame," the statement said. "And now we have a computerised queen and pawn ending of mathematical precision."

"Within our game we have covered all the elements of modern chess. I thank 'The World' for a great fight."

Kasparov also promised to address a minor controversy of a week ago, when some fans on the site angrily accused Microsoft of mishandling a crucial move suggested by one of four strong teenagers advising the voters. The move 58...Qf5 was sent in late by Irina Krush of the United States — the de facto leader of the team which was also assisted by grandmasters — and the Internet audience voted instead for 58...Qe4, considered weaker.

Kasparov told King, however, that according to his analysis, even 58...Qf5 would have led to defeat for "The World" team.

Entry to the site and to vote every two days on a move was free.

Both sides were able to use computers. Grandmasters from the respected St Petersburg School of chess joined the effort by publishing in-depth analysis on their website.

USOC to set up new ant-drug agency

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colorado, Oct 23 (AP): Seeking to quell criticism of its anti-doping programme, the US Olympic Committee is expected to approve an independent agency to control everything from test samples to sanctions.

The new agency would take domestic drug testing entirely out of the USOC's hands and remove the USOC and its governing bodies from the hearing process.

The USOC board of directors, meeting Saturday and Sunday, will vote on whether to approve funding of up to 24 million dollars for four years for the new agency, double the amount the USOC now spends on drug testing.

"Hopefully, one of the byproducts of this would be to take up out of the glare of the kind of criticism that we get," says USOC spokesman Mike Moran.

The issue of independence is similar to one faced by the International Olympic Committee, which wants to have its World Anti-Doping Agency operating by early next year.

US drug adviser Barry McCaffrey, who has criticised the IOC's drug-testing efforts, met Wednesday in Washington with IOC vice president Dick Pound at a Senate Commerce Committee hearing on drugs in the Olympics.

This was the IOC's third appearance of the year on Capitol Hill. IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch is to appear before a House committee in December to discuss IOC reform.

The sharpest criticism of the IOC at the hearing came from Doriane Coleman, a Duke law professor who helped set up out-of-competition testing in the United States in the 1980s. She called WADA "a false start" because it lacks independence and accountability.