

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 going to accept the distribution of moneys 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.

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 would 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 would 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.

A 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 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



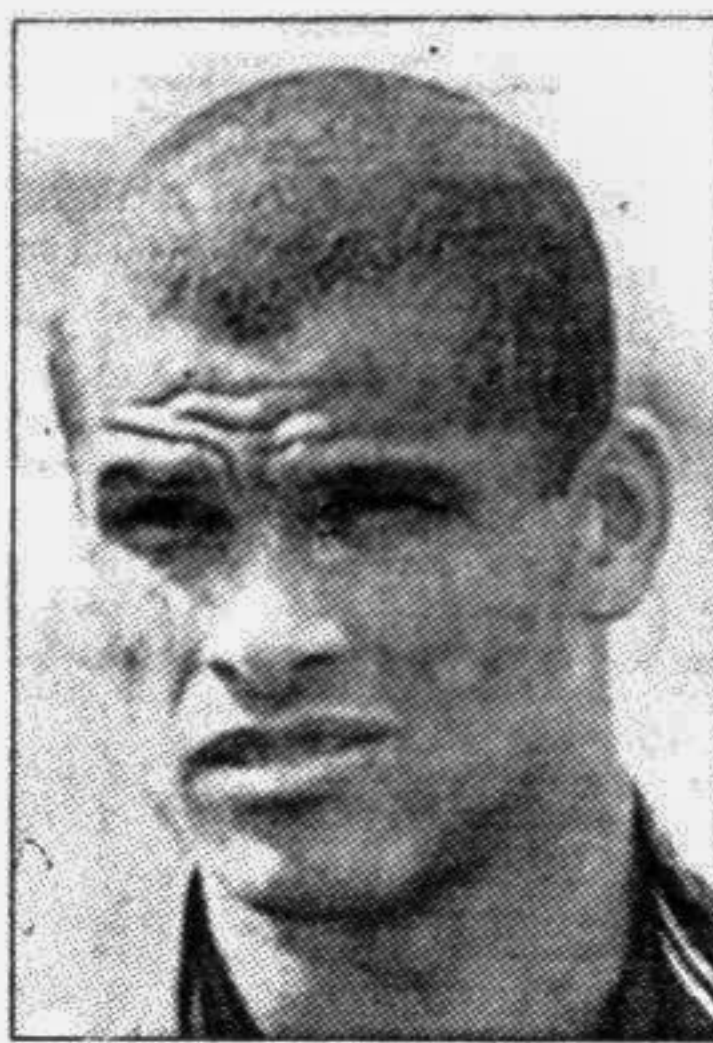
MANCHESTER, England, Oct 23: European Cup holders Manchester United have admitted they wanted to sign Brazilian international Rivaldo in the summer but could not afford the Barcelona star, reports AFP.

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.

— AFP photo

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.

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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 Austrian after reaching her second Kremlin Cup semifinal.

Today, Schett, ranked number eight in the world, will take on fifth seed Belgian Dominique Van Roost, who eliminated Julie Halard-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 Krasnorutskaya on Thursday but kept her cool to win the next six games for a 6-2, 2-6, 7-5 victory.

"It was a 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 Ai Sugiyama of Japan.

Tauziat, who is making her Kremlin Cup debut this year, said she had big reservations against coming to Moscow after her flaccid 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 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 is 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 record-holder Ronaldo da Costa of Brazil; defending champion Othello Osoro of Kenya, and South Africa's Hendrick Ramaia, 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 Chepchumba of Kenya won last year's race in 2:23:57.

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

"It's always darkest before the dawn," Carey Pinkowski, the Chicago Marathon's race director, said 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 Gunter 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.

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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

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Hamed wrestles title



DETROIT, Oct 23 (AP): Both sides agreed it was a rough and tumble fight. What they couldn't agree upon was where to put the blame.

Flamboyant WBO featherweight champion Prince Naseem Hamed said he would win by knockout. Instead, he used a series of body slams and take-downs worthy of the WWF and won a unanimous decision over WBC titleholder Cesar Soto in their 12-round unification bout Friday night.

"He's a paper champion," Soto said through an interpreter. "I know in my heart that I'm the real champion because I came to fight. He came to wrestle."

"I don't know if I was fighting a fighter or Hulk Hogan," he said, referring to the flashy American wrestler.

Bob Arum, who runs Top Rank Boxing and promotes Soto, called it the worst fight he had ever seen.

"It made me puke," Arum said. "That wasn't boxing. That was wrestling."

Hamed said it was Soto, the Mexican warrior who has never

been knocked out, who started the rough stuff.

"Bob Arum was watching a totally different fight," Hamed said. "He just didn't want his guy to get beat."

Hamed, an Englishman of Yemeni descent, was clearly the favourite of the crowd, announced at 12,500. There are an estimated 250,000 to 300,000 people of Arab heritage in the Detroit area and chants of "Naseem, Naseem" echoed around the arena as the fight wore on.

The fight turned early in the ninth round when the unbeaten Hamed bloodied Soto's nose. Hamed kept jabbing at it in brief flurries the remainder of the round and Soto appeared hurt.

"I broke his nose," Hamed said. "He took it well. There was blood all over his face, but he came back."

Hamed, looking fresher, kept jabbing and dancing away in the 10th, but things deteriorated after that as both fighters went back to clutch and grab tactics. Hamed drew boos from the crowd for a takedown in the 11th round. The 12th was filled with more hanging on and the fight, fittingly, ended in a clinch.

Hamed, heavily promoted by HBO, which televised the fight, is noted as a hard puncher. Yet this bout was mostly a wrestling match.

With celebrities like retired Detroit Lions running back Barry Sanders, local light favorite Thomas Hearn and heavyweight Lennox Lewis looking on, Hamed cut his entrance — which can last up to 10 minutes — to just four.

Still, it looked like he was still playing for entertainment alone as the fight started slowly with few punches thrown in the