

McGrath's words of wisdom

SYDNEY, Oct 29: Australian pace spearhead Glenn McGrath says his Pakistani counterpart Shoaib Akhtar should concentrate more on team goals than worry about setting bowling speed records, reports AFP.

Much of the focus since Pakistan arrived in Australia last week has been on Akhtar and his stated aim of becoming the first bowler to hurl down a 100-mile an hour (160 kilometre per hour) delivery.

McGrath, who requires six wickets in next week's opening Test in Brisbane to reach 250 Test victims, said Friday he was more concerned about being the world's best bowler than the fastest.

He claimed all the hype surrounding Akhtar could serve to put pressure on the Pakistan pace demon.

McGrath said Australia should not become obsessed with Akhtar as that could play into the hands of Pakistan's other primary pace weapon, captain Wasim Akram.

Akhtar rose to prominence at this year's World Cup in England when he consistently registered the fastest speeds and bowled distinctly quicker than McGrath.

"I'm not out to be the fastest bowler in the world, or to be remembered as the fastest. My goal is to be remembered as the best fast bowler," McGrath said.

"I guess all the hype and beatup is probably putting more pressure on Shoaib, taking away from what he should be doing."

"He will be out there thinking 'okay, I want to beat the 100-mile an hour mark,' whereas he probably should be concentrating on how he's going to bowl to certain people and how to get them out and more from a team oriented viewpoint.

"We don't want to focus too much on Akhtar. I think Wasim Akram is one of the best bowlers in the world and probably one of the greatest of all time."

"If we start focusing too much on other guys, the main strike bowlers like Wasim could have a field day."

Romario ends goal drought

RIO DE JANEIRO, Oct 29: Romario broke his month-long goal drought in the Brazilian championship, scoring twice in Flamengo's 3-2 win over Portuguesa, reports Reuters.

The former Brazil international scored first on Wednesday with a fifth minute penalty and then added a clinically taken 43rd minute strike to help lift Flamengo back into the top eight of the tournament.

His personal tally is now 11.

Luis Alberto scored the winner late in the second half after Portuguesa, who have won only one out of five matches since sacking veteran coach Mario Zagallo, had levelled the scores at 2-2.

Romario's previous goals in the competition came on September 26, though he scored four in a Copa Mercosur match against Universidad de Chile earlier this month.

In Wednesday's other games Coritiba came from behind to beat Palmeiras 2-1 and relegation threatened Parana hampered Atletico Mineiro 4-1.

The top eight teams qualify for the quarter-finals.

U-23 team gets Ronaldo



RIO DE JANEIRO, Oct 29: Brazil striker Ronaldo will miss next month's friendly away to Spain and will instead travel to Australia with the under-23 squad, national team coach Wanderley Luxemburgo said on Thursday.

There was head-scratching all round as Luxemburgo announced both a senior and an under-23 squad and amazingly included himself and his star player with the latter.

Winger Denilson, who has struggled to live up to his billing as once the world's most expensive player, was also included for the Australia tour along with Ronaldo Assis, hailed as the latest Brazilian sensation.

They will line up alongside players who are barely known in Brazil itself, such as defender Milton do O and midfielder Mozart.

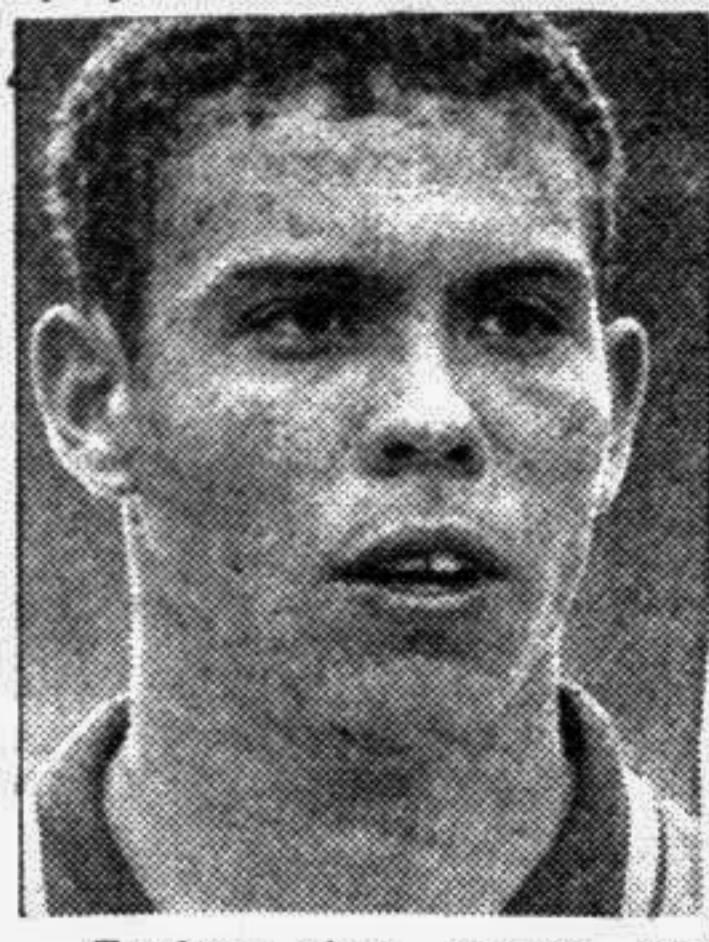
A total of 41 players were picked and there was further confusion as Luxemburgo named a senior squad with no goalkeepers, saying that he wanted to see the weekend's Brazilian championship games before making his final decision.

Brazil are away to Spain in a full international friendly on November 13 and play away to Australia on November 14 and 17. The last two matches will be used as warm-ups for the Olympic Games qualifying competition in January and February.

The decision to send

Ronaldo and Luxemburgo to Australia is apparently to placate local organisers, who wanted Brazil to end a strong squad.

Ronaldo will not take part in the Olympic qualifiers, although he may be included in the Games themselves as one of the three permitted over-age players.



Earlier this month the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) issued a press release giving an assurance that it would include top-line players in squad for Australia.

The squad for the Spain match was made up entirely of foreign-based players as the match coincides with the quarterfinals of the Brazilian championship. The squad will be coached by Luxemburgo, assistant Candinho.

Porto striker Jardel, repeatedly overlooked by Luxemburgo

despite regularly scoring for his club, finally earned a call-up.

As usual, Luxemburgo left indisciplined Vasco da Gama striker Edmundo out of either squad.

Goalkeepers: to be named

Defenders: Cafu (AS Roma), Antonio Carlos (AS Roma), Aldair (AS Roma), Cesar (Paris St Germain), Cafu (AS Roma), Evanilson (Borussia Dortmund), Roberto Carlos (Real Madrid), Silvinho (Arsenal).

Midfielders: Emerson Ferreira (Bayer Leverkusen), Marcos Assuncao (AS Roma), Ze Elias (Bologna), Rivaldo (Barcelona), Giovanni (Olympiakos), Ze Roberto (Bayer Leverkusen).

Forwards: Elber (Bayern Munich), Sonny Anderson (Olympique Lyon), Jardel (Porto), Savio (Real Madrid).

Under-23 squad for Australia matches:

Goalkeepers: Renato (Corinthians), Silvio (Sao Caetano), Alexandre (Ponte Preta).

Defenders: Mancini (Atletico Mineiro), Michel (Santos), Dede (Borussia Dortmund), Athirson (Flamengo), Cris (Cruzeiro), Alvaro (Golias), Fabio (Venezia), Luis Alberto (Flamengo), Milton do (Parana).

Midfielders: Marcos Paulo (Cruzeiro), Fabiano (Sao Paulo), Mozart (Coritiba), Adriano (Atletico Paranaense), Felipe (Vasco), Alex (Almeiras), Denilson (Real Betis).

Forwards: Ronaldinho (Gremio), Ronaldinho (Inter Milan), Fabio Junior (AS Roma), Warley (Udinese).

Premiership Preview

Gloomy Gunners shift focus



LONDON, Oct 29: Newcastle United face an Arsenal backlash at Highbury on Saturday as Arsene Wenger's Champions League failures will put a shocking few days behind them by returning to the top of the Premiership, reports AFP.

Arsenal exited Europe's elite competition prematurely for the second successive year after their 1-0 defeat by Fiorentina at Wembley on Wednesday.

Then on Thursday star midfielder Patrick Vieira was handed a six-match ban, starting on November 20, over the spitting incident and tunnel bust-up which followed his sending-off at West Ham on October 3.

To add to their anguish, midfielder Emmanuel Petit did more damage to the knee ligament injury which had kept him out for nine weeks before his return against Chelsea last Saturday and winger Ray Parlour pulled a hamstring in the Fiorentina defeat.

This time, thanks to European body UEFA's generosity, they still have the UEFA Cup to contest but the Premiership prize will be what Wenger craves most.

Last Sunday's stunning 3-2 win at Chelsea, the only bright spot in the last 10 days during which they also lost 4-2 at home to Barcelona, put them within a point of leaders Leeds.

Wenger is determined to remain optimistic.

And he received support from an unexpected quarter this week when West Ham manager

Harry Redknapp said the Euro exit would help the Gunners win the title.

From Arsenal's point of view, I think they're the favourites for the title now. If you're a betting man, get your money on Arsenal," Redknapp said.

Newcastle, yet to win a Premiership game away from home this season, moved out of the bottom three last weekend but will be without Kieron Dyer (leg) while goalkeeper Ray Givens is struggling with a damaged wrist.

Warren Barton is suspended and Andy Griffin is out of action with a back problem.

Leaders Leeds saw their 10-game winning streak end in the 4-4 draw at Everton last Sunday, but a home game against West Ham looks a home bet for David O'Leary's impressive young side.

West Ham have won once in their last 27 matches at Elland Road.

Leeds are flush with cash as well as points.

This week they announced a new three-year sponsorship deal worth more than 5 million pounds (8.25 million dollars) with cider company Strongbow.

The extra cash means David O'Leary has more than 30 million pounds in his transfer kitty.

Manchester United righted themselves with a 2-1 Champions League success at Croatia Zagreb in midweek but they have still lost four of their last six games.

Fixtures (kick-offs 1400 GMT unless stated)

Saturday: Arsenal v Newcastle, Derby v Chelsea, Leeds v West Ham, Leicester v Sheff Wed, Man Utd v Aston Villa, Middlesbrough v Everton, Wimbledon v Southampton

Sunday: Coventry v Watford (1600 GMT), Sunderland v Tottenham (1500 GMT)

Monday: Liverpool v Bradford (2000 GMT)

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