

Mushy poised for the chop

BRISBANE, Nov 10 (Internet report): Leg-spinner Mushtaq Ahmed is likely to be made the scapegoat for Pakistan's first Test drubbing against Australia in Brisbane.

Mushtaq, formerly one of the world's most feared slow bowlers, had a wretched time finishing with figures of just three for 214 from 40 overs.

He was also struck a sickening blow to his private parts while batting late on day one.

Pakistan captain Wasim Akram insists his side will improve and he did not anticipate wholesale changes following Australia's 10-wicket win at The Gabba.

However, unless Mushtaq takes a bag of wickets against South Australia this weekend, he seems certain to make way for Saqlain Mushtaq for next week's second Test in Hobart.

"Mushy didn't have a good game but hopefully Saqlain will be fit for the next game so he will come back into the side," Wasim said.

Saqlain is recovering from the knee surgery he underwent after a very successful season with county champions Surrey.

He took 58 wickets with his right arm off-spinners in only seven games to top the first-class averages in England and guide Surrey to their first title since 1971.

Saqlain was Pakistan's leading wicket-taker during the World Cup with 17 victims, including a hat-trick against Zimbabwe.

Curators' course

Sports Reporter

A two-day course for curators will begin at the Bangabandhu National Stadium this morning under the auspices of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

Around 60 to 70 groundsmen from different districts will take part in the course which will be conducted by BCB's Director of Development Eddie Barlow.

Cricketers' Forum greets CWAB

The Cricketers' Forum has welcomed the formation of the Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB) by the present generation of active cricketers of the country, says a press release.

The Forum feels that, this is the culmination of a long felt need for a national association of cricket players, and should serve as a very effective organisation to promote and safeguard the interests of all cricketers in the country.

The Cricketers' Forum hopes that the interests of cricket and more importantly, of those who play it will be well served by the members of CWAB.

The Forum has also offered its every cooperation and assistance to the CWAB.

The Cricketers' Forum also expressed its deepest shock and anguish at the death of the great West Indian fast bowler Malcolm Marshall.

Inter-varsity soccer final today

Dhaka University will take on Rajshahi University in the final of the inter-university football competition at the DU central playground today, reports UNB.

Rajshahi University moved into the final beating Islamic University 2-0 in the first semifinal yesterday at the same venue.

Selim and Ripon scored for the winners.

In the day's second semis, Dhaka University also defeated Chittagong University 2-0 with Iqbal scoring both the goals.

England A win NZ tour opener

CHRISTCHURCH, Nov 10 (Internet report): England A opened the New Zealand leg of their winter tour with a comprehensive victory over the local Academy XI by six wickets at Lincoln, Christchurch.

There were several moments of alarm for England A along the way, caused initially by the number of wides and no balls conceded during the Academy innings and then by the loss of three wickets in the space of eight overs at the start of their innings.

However, a stand of 108 in 20 overs between Mark Alleyne (53) and Aftab Habib (46 not out) eliminated the possibility of an embarrassment as they reached their victory total of 184 for the loss of just four wickets.

Apart from the quite unacceptable number of extras (51), it was a thoroughly efficient performance in the field as the hosts were dismissed at 183 for nine from their 50 overs.

The quicker bowlers enjoyed a pitch that gave them some assistance, after the diet of low, slow turners they had been forced to endure in Bangladesh.

Lanka's tour tie drawn

BULAWAYO, Zimbabwe, Nov 10: Rain and bad light forced a draw in the three day match between Zimbabwe President's XI and Sri Lanka on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Sri Lanka, who resumed on 194 for three, were dismissed 40 minutes after tea for 438 in reply to the home side's first innings of 325.

Bad weather prevented any further play.

Russell Arnold made Sri Lanka's top score of 75 and off-spinner Andy Whittall was the best of the Zimbabwean bowlers with a career-best six for 151.



60 MILLION PLUS SMILES: Brazilian superstar Ronaldo (L) and Denilson, who have cost their respective clubs in excess of 60 million dollars, attending a press conference at Sydney yesterday. Brazil play Australia in two friendly internationals on November 14 and 17.

Olympic soccer crisis

Italian league boss for talks



MILAN, Nov 10: Italian League president Franco Carraro called on Wednesday for talks with the world's top football and Olympic officials in a bid to head-off a looming crisis over the Sydney Games, reports AFP.

A storm is brewing because the European Football Union (UEFA) have pencilled in a string of Champions League and UEFA Cup matches for the period covered by the Olympic soccer tournament (Sept 13 - Oct 1).

European clubs fear that national Olympic coaches, who are entitled to select three 'over-23' players, will bring top stars such as Brazilian Ronaldo or Argentinian Gabriel Batistuta.

Carraro told the Gazzetta dello Sport that he was calling for a round table with officials from the International Olympic Committee, world soccer's ruling body, FIFA, and UEFA.

Carraro, who will seek the backing of Leagues across Europe at a meeting in Milan on November 22, made it clear he wants UEFA to back down over its calendar and for Sydney to become a soccer showpiece.

Commenting on the round-table, he said: "Everyone would be able to make suggestions and then, in the interests of football, we are bound to find a solution that we can put into practice."

"The Olympics must be respected as the fullest possible expression of sport on Earth," he said.

"Every self-respecting international soccer calendar has to take it into account... yet UEFA, by inserting three rounds of the Champions League and two of the UEFA Cup in that period, haven't taken the slightest notice."

Banging the drum for Italian clubs, he said: "Our interest, and those of everyone in Europe, is to keep the national championships from being falsified, i.e. that teams should be able to field a team at full strength and not with a few important players unavailable due to the Olympics."

"A solution could be to bring the league season forward to mid-August and then suspend it for the duration of the Sydney Games."

But he added: "Our gesture would be of little use if UEFA do not do as much with the European cups."

FIFA president Sepp Blatter told the paper that his federation would be willing to join Carraro's round table.

But he recalled that introducing a unified soccer calendar around the world, precisely to avoid the growing problems of club/international fixture lists, has been one of FIFA's crusades.

And in an apparent message to UEFA, he said: "Competition between the Olympics, the Champions League and the clubs would be damaging for the entire movement that FIFA is responsible for."

UEFA secretary general Gerhard Aigner said the union was open to suggestions. But he seemed to pass the buck to the

Play-off against Scotland

Fingers crossed for Owen

LONDON, Nov 10: Michael Owen will partner Alan Shearer in the England attack against Scotland on Saturday if he can prove his match fitness in the build-up to the Euro 2000 play-off, coach Kevin Keegan said on Tuesday, reports AFP.

A question mark still surrounds Liverpool striker Owen, who has suffered five months of hamstring problems and that could open the door for in-form understudy Andy Cole and Kevin Phillips.

"It's really a case of if Michael's fully fit then there has to be a place in the England side for him because he gives you something," said Keegan.

"If you talk about him being 100 percent by Saturday, then in himself, yes I think he will

be. He's a young lad and he's very fit.

"But if you're talking about being match-fit then that's where your slight doubt comes in because he hasn't played that many games."

Owen himself is desperate to play.

"I've got no problems at all with my fitness," he said. "My hamstrings are totally cleared up and I'm not getting any stiffness or problems afterwards."

Real Madrid winger Steve McManaman and Arsenal midfielder Ray Parlour were among those not training and Keegan admitted both needed to put in some work to be fully match-fit in time for the weekend.

England captain Shearer, Liverpool midfielder Jamie Redknapp and Arsenal centre-half Martin Keown also missed training, while Keown's club-mate Tony Adams was involved for only half the session.

Manchester United striker Cole was another absentee after suffering a kick to his calf.

But Keegan added: "As long as Andy trains by Thursday he will be fine. He doesn't miss matches. When he gets kicked he comes back quickly."

Keegan will not name his team until much nearer kick-off for the vital play-off ties which will decide which of the home nations goes forward to next year's finals in the Netherlands and Belgium.



Alex Di Rocco (R) of Sedan is under pressure Strasbourg's Habib Beye during their French First Division encounter at Reims on November 9.

Euro 2000 Festina to sponsor world champs

LYON, France, Nov 10: Watchmakers Festina Tuesday announced a sponsorship deal with world champion's France for next year's European Championships in Holland and Belgium, reports AFP.

Festina became the French football team's official watchmakers with the new deal.

Each player in the French national team will be presented with a watch engraved with their own name in the next few days at their Clairefontaine training base.

Festina have long been involved in sport and back the Festina cycling team. That gave them some unwanted headlines in 1998 when the team was thrown out of the Tour de France after their masseur was arrested on the Franco-Belgian border with a car boot full of drugs.

All the key members of the disgraced team have now left the outfit.

Johnston's advice for Kewell

SYDNEY, Nov 10: Former Liverpool star Craig Johnston has appealed to Harry Kewell not to make the same mistake as he did by opting for club over country, reports AFP.

Johnston, who won multiple English league championship and FA Cup winner's medals with Liverpool in the 1980s, was at the centre of a similar row to the one now revolving around Kewell.

The 21-year-old Leeds star has withdrawn from the Soccerex team to play Brazil here on Sunday.

Leeds at first refused to release the attacking midfielder, then agreed that he could play in the Sydney match, only for Kewell to announce he would not be available because of injury.

The latest in a series of withdrawals has brought into question Kewell's commitment to playing for his country.

"In my time in England I made a decision and in a lot of ways I've regretted that decision ever since," Johnston said Wednesday of his non-appearance for Australia at international level.

"If I had a child of my own whom I could coach, I would make sure he turned up to every match possible for his country without getting into trouble on the domestic front," he told Australian Associated Press from London.

"From my personal side, I can see both sides of this situation and it's very difficult. One of the big problems is the immense travel distance to Australia which isn't good for club or country."

But Kewell has to do what's best for Harry the international and the club player. He's closer than anyone to the situation and he's a big boy."

Johnston, who was born in South Africa but raised in Australia by Australian parents, pleaded for supporters and officials to think about a long term solution to the problem rather than react hastily now and regret it later.

Johnston represented England twice at under-21 level, but never wore the green and gold because of ongoing disputes with Australian soccer officials.

The high point of his career came in 1986, when he was a key member of the Liverpool team which won the league and FA Cup double.

Johnston is convinced that Kewell is the best footballer Australia has produced.

"I was at the Arsenal-Real Madrid game last night where some of the world's finest footballers were on show and very senior football officials said Kewell was the best young footballer at the moment."

Kafelnikov crushes Clement

MOSCOW, Nov 10: Top seed Yevgeny Kafelnikov began the defence of his Kremlin Cup title by crushing Frenchman Arnaud Clement 6-3, 6-2 in under an hour on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

After breaking Clement twice in each set, Kafelnikov said he was intent on becoming world number one again next year. He held the world's top spot for six weeks this year.

Former Kremlin Cup winner Goran Ivanisevic overcame a shaky start to move into the second round with a 6-4, 7-5 win over third seeded Frenchman Sebastien Grosjean.

Two other seeds were beaten on Tuesday. Nicolas Escude beat Younes El Aynaoui of Morocco, the fourth seed, 7-6, 7-6 and fellow Frenchman Cyril Saulnier, a qualifier, knocked out eighth seeded Czech Jiri Novak 2-6, 7-6, 6-4.

Early exit for Kournikova

VILLANOVA, Pennsylvania, Nov 10: Twelfth-ranked Anna Kournikova lost to 70th-ranked Justine Henin of Belgium 7-6 (8-6), 6-4 in the first round of the Advanta Championships Tuesday night, reports AP.

Kournikova struggled throughout with her serve, failing to hold serve four times in the second set.

In a 51-minute first set, Henin rallied from double set point to win the tiebreaker. Henin broke serve at 3-3 as Kournikova double-faulted twice, Kournikova double-faulted at game point in the second set, allowing Henin to rally from 0-40 for a break to tie the set 1-1.

Like father like daughter



CHARLESTON, West Virginia, Nov 10 (AP): Laila Ali is starting to sound like her father.

Muhammad Ali's daughter predicts she will knock out her opponent — a 28-year-old accounting student — when she fights for the second time as a professional boxer Wednesday night.

Laila Ali is not as boastful as the three-time heavy-weight champion, and she dispenses with any taunts or glove pointing. But the 21-year-old woman speaks her mind, calmly and quietly.

"My goal is to win," Ali said. "I'm not saying my goal is to knock her out. I'm saying it's going to happen."

Her opponent, Shadina Penrybaker, who will make her pro debut in the four-round bout, isn't so sure.

"I'm not good at predicting the future," Penrybaker said. "I know one thing I can guarantee you, I'm not going to hit the canvas."

Penrybaker, who trains in the Pittsburgh area, was 2-1 as a amateur.

"In order to win, I know I'll have to knock her out or beat her half to death," she said.

Alli wouldn't say whether this fight at the Mountaineer Race Track and gaming resort in Chester will end as quickly as her first one. That bout took all of 31 seconds, a knockout of April Folwer on Oct. 8 in Verona, New York.



LAILA ALI

Penrybaker was skeptical of Ali's debut.

"If you ask me, it was staged," she said. "I watched it twice. It was so quick, it just didn't look real to me. I think it was a publicity stunt. But time will tell."

As a child, Penrybaker idolized Muhammad Ali and dreamed of becoming a boxer.

"Watching him knock people out, that excites me," she said. "The art that he had and the way that he did it, it made me want to be a fighter. And the way he talks garbage. It's exciting."

Now the daughter is doing the talking.

"She talked some garbage in the newspaper," Penrybaker said. "That's basically what it is: garbage."

Alli remembers watching tapes of her father's bouts yet had little interest in his career. She didn't pay attention to boxing until three years ago when she found out women were fighting professionally.

"I wasn't interested because of my father. I took up boxing because I like to fight and I could make money doing it," Ali said.

She hasn't tried to mirror his techniques and strategies.

"My dad is my dad, I'm never going to be like him," she said. "It wouldn't be smart to fight like him. Boxing has changed. Women fight differently. It wouldn't make any sense."

A supportive but concerned Muhammad Ali attended Laila's debut. She's not sure if he'll be there Wednesday night.

"If you had a daughter, every fight, you would be concerned," she said. "I don't think he's ever going to be at ease with it. That doesn't mean he's not going to support me though."

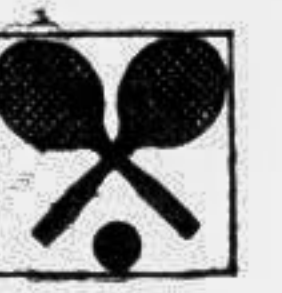
Alli, 5-foot-10 and 166 pounds, recently sold her nail salon in Los Angeles. She said she isn't too concerned about whether the public will accept women's boxing.

"I've just got my eyes focused on a smaller picture, just doing what I'm doing," she said. "I'm so new to the sport."

If it does take off, Ali thinks she could help it happen.

"If I wasn't any good, I don't think people would care what my name was," she said. "Being a good fighter and being likable and being what people want to see, I think, yeah, that's possible."

Good day for Swedes



STOCKHOLM, Nov 10: Swedish players swept to a trio of first-round victories on Tuesday, dominating the home Stockholm Open with straight-set runaways, reports AFP.

Top seed and two-time holder Thomas Enqvist had the day's most lop-sided scoreline, taking less than an hour to humiliate clay-bred Spaniard Fernando Vicente 6-0, 6-1.

Vicente failed to make an impression at the Kugliga Hall, the temple of the game in the capital.

The world number 50 was run over by Enqvist, seventh in the world and a qualifier into the final for the eight-man season finals in Hanover in a fortnight.

Enqvist won the title at home in 1995 and 1996 and is fresh from a Super 9 crown two weeks ago in Stuttgart.

"I'm so glad to be back home, this is my favourite tournament of the year," said the winner. "I long for this event all season."

"I'm surprised that it went so easy. Usually in the first round I'm more nervous. But I had almost no unforced errors, everything went so smoothly."

Big-swinging veteran Magnus Gustafsson administered a

short, sharp tennis lesson to an Iberian teenager, hammering Juan Carlos Ferrero 6-3, 6-1.

The 32-year-old Gustafsson is playing here for the 11th year and produced his best effort with the quarter-finals in 1998.

He missed a month of the spring season with back problems after becoming the oldest winner on the ATP Tour this year when he beat Frenchman Fabrice Santoro.

Ferrero was a player who gave Tim Henman, seeded second here, trouble in the second set of last week's Paris Open, forcing the Briton to three long sets before going down to the loss.

Gustafsson cut through him effortlessly.

Sixth seed Magnus Norman won a countryman duel with compatriot Mikael Tillstrom 7-5, 6-4.

It was a victory for last month's Shanghai Open titleholder against the finalist in Singapore a week later on the ATP Tour's Asian swing.

Norman has won five titles in 1999 and leads the Tour along with Andre Agassi. The Swede next plays South African Wayne Ferreira, a 7-6 (7/3), 6-3 victor against Ville Luukko, the first Finn to play here in the main draw in 11 years.

Third seed Nicolas Lapentti of Ecuador advanced over Peter Wessels of the Netherlands 6-4,

7-6 (7/5). The South American talent reached the semis at the weekend in Paris Bercy, losing in straight sets to top seed Andre Agassi.

Lapentti has qualified on eighth spot for Hanover, his first time in the field of a season wrap-up. He began the year ranked 11th in the 90s and now stands eighth.

"I set myself a new goal, which was Top 10," said Lapentti, handsome enough to have caught the eye of women's star Anna Kournikova. "I'm in the Top 10 now, it's been a great year."

Tommy Haas stayed in the chase for the alternate's spot at the wrap-up event in Germany with a 7-5, 3-6, 6-4 victory against Francisco Clavet, another hard-luck Spaniard on the day.

The German fourth seed is hoping to join compatriot Nicolas Kiefer in Hanover.

In the second round a day after the second seed set the winning pace with a demolition of his day one opponent, Austrian Stefan Koubek.

If both seeds keep winning, Haas and Henman could meet in a Saturday semi-final, with the winner all but certainly wrapping up the Hanover alternate's opening.

Ancelotti hails charges



FLORENCE, Italy, Nov 10: Juventus coach Claudio Ancelotti paid tribute to his defenders on Monday and promised that Lazio would face a tough battle for the Italian league title, reports AFP.

Ancelotti, speaking after his team drew 0-0 with Torino in Sunday night's derby, is delighted that Juventus have Italy's best defensive record with only five goals conceded.

Juventus are second in the table, three points behind Lazio, and gathering pace after an erratic start to the season.

"We've had too many ups and downs so far and we need to be more consistent," he said during a coaches' seminar here on Monday. "But this Juve really is a competitive team."

"A lot of questions were being asked about us, but we've shown we can do well. We're in a good position and I'm not surprised about it."

"Our defence is a source of pride for me," he went on. "So many things have been said and written about it, but (Ciro Ferrara and his men have proved they are more than just reliable."

The only disappointment so far is a poor scoring record. Sandwiched between Lazio (23) and AC Milan (21) in the league table, Juventus' figure of 10 goals look miserly.

Alessandro Del Piero and Filippo Inzaghi, who had talked pre-season about scoring nearly 60 between them - as they did back in 1997-98 - have so far only managed five.

"We haven't scored many goals so far, but it's not a problem. They'll come," he assured.

"Alex has been fit and ready for a while now, he just needs to get back his scoring touch..."

and 'Pippo' isn't finishing like he can, but he's kept fighting and he's doing well."

Lazio have set a punishing pace in the Serie A, but Ancelotti said: "Everyone is hoping they will be able to keep it up. They're a good team and they're on form, despite all the commitments they have."

"But the championship is getting serious now and I'm sure it will be undecided right to the end. There are still a lot of determined challengers, perhaps with the exception of Fiorentina, who are a bit further back and who seem to be concentrating more on the Champions League."

"AC Milan are out of Europe. Inter are paying the price for all the changes but will bounce back and AS Roma and Parma are both on the way up. And we're certainly looking to stay in the top group."

Juventus' next match is against AC Milan, but their hopes are also being pinned on the outcome of Lazio's forthcoming derby with AS Roma.

"A lot of people will be supporting Roma," Ancelotti said. "And not just Roma fans."

Ancelotti's analysis of the Serie A leadership was shared by AC Milan coach Alberto Zaccheroni, who doubted that Lazio could sustain simultaneous campaigns in Italy and Europe.

"Lazio are the best team at the moment, but the hard times will come for them too," he said.

Look at Inter. They made a great start and now they're paying the price for having new management, just as we did last season. Every team are subject to highs and lows and Lazio can't go on as they are."

Football teaches you that it is difficult to remain concentrated on two competitions at

the same time. You only have to look at what's happened to Fiorentina - and that could happen soon to Lazio."

Zaccheroni, who received the "Golden Bench" award here after being voted the Serie A's top coach by his peers, is all too familiar with the demands of fighting on two fronts.

Last week, his men had a place in the Champions League second round wrapped up until they lowered their guard and conceded two goals in the last four minutes to lose 3-2 to Galatasaray.

"We didn't live up to expectations in the Champions League," Zaccheroni admitted. "We didn't play with the same spirit and courage we've shown in the Serie A."

As for his award, he said: "I'm pleased with it, because it's one that comes from my colleagues. I just hope I don't get a phone call like the last coach who won it."

The 1998 winner was Gigi Simoni, who received a call here from Inter Milan not to congratulate him, but to announce that he had just been sacked.

Fire stops FA Cup fixture

WYCOMBE, England, Nov 10: An FA Cup game between Wycombe Wanderers and non-league Oxford City had to be abandoned in extra time when a fire broke out at Wycombe's Adams Park, reports AP.

Playing a replay to decide who advances to the second round, the teams were locked 1-1 after extra time and were about to start a penalty shootout Tuesday night when the fire alarm sounded and the ground was evacuated.