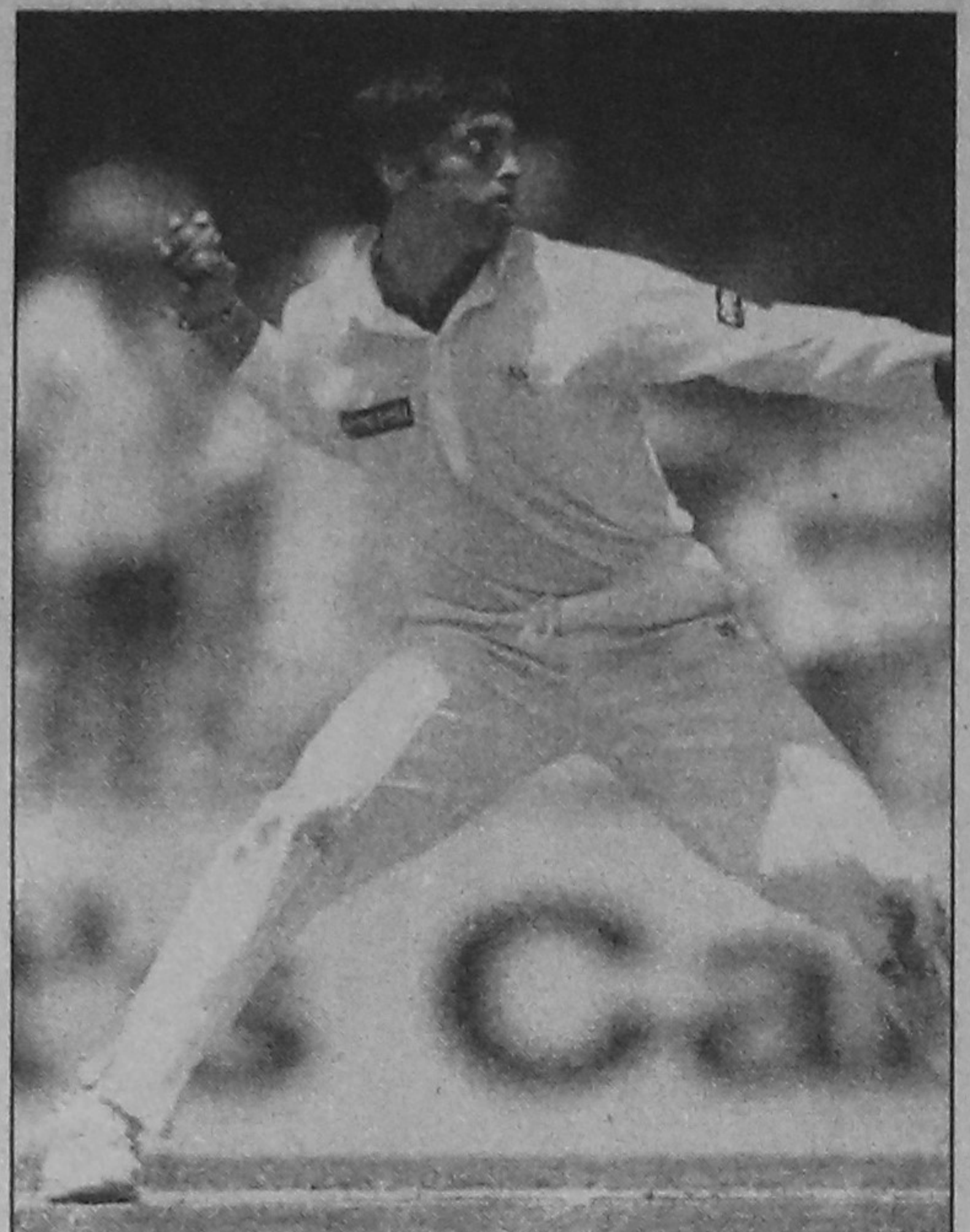


Shoaib 'shocked' SYDNEY, Dec 31: Pakistani bowler Shoaib Akhtar said he was "totally shocked" after being banned Friday from international cricket by the ICC...

Akhtar's action illegal

KARACHI, Dec 31: The International Cricket Council (ICC) has banned Pakistan express bowler Shoaib Akhtar from international cricket over his bowling action...



An AFP file photo of Pakistani express bowler Shoaib Akhtar.

Sylhet secure second spot

Sylhet secured the runners-up spot in the National Cricket League with a three-wicket victory over hosts Khulna in the ninth round clash at the Shamsul Huda Stadium in Jessore yesterday.

Ctg walk away with title

Favourites Chittagong clinched the inaugural National Cricket League title with one-match to go after defeating hosts Barisal by 189 runs in their ninth round clash at the Abdur Rab Serniabad Stadium yesterday.

NATIONAL CRICKET LEAGUE TABLE. Table with columns: Team, M, W, D/2 pts, D/0 pts, L, Points. Rows include Chittagong, Sylhet, Dhaka, Khulna, Rajshahi, Barisal.

Rajshahi collect the points

Rajshahi earned two batting points by virtue of their first innings lead against Dhaka in their ninth round National Cricket League clash which ended in a draw at the Cricket Garden in Rangpur yesterday.

Notts will wait

NOTTINGHAM, England, Dec 31: The banning of Pakistani paceman Shoaib Akhtar by the ICC, cricket's international ruling body, on Friday...

Hussain's passionate plea

CAPE TOWN, Dec 31: Nasser Hussain will ask his England team to "dig deep" in the fourth Test against South Africa which starts at Newlands on Sunday, reports Reuters.



NASSER HUSSAIN

ACB keeps mum

SYDNEY, Dec 31: The Australian Cricket Board remained silent on the ban imposed on Pakistani fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar by the game's ruling body today over his bowling action, reports AFP.

Bad news for Leboeuf

LONDON, Dec 31: Chelsea's French World Cup winning defender Frank Leboeuf could face a lengthy ban after it was announced on Thursday that he had been charged with misconduct by the Football Association over his actions when he was sent off against Leeds, reports AFP.

Brimming with confidence

SYDNEY, Dec 31 (AFP): Mark Waugh looked forward to playing his 100th Test in the New Year as India, battered and bruised by rampaging Australia, prayed for a change in fortunes.



MARK WAUGH

Scifo to join Charleroi

BRUSSELS, Dec 31: Veteran Belgian midfielder Enzo Scifo will join First Division Charleroi for a season on a two-year contract with an option to become club president after that until 2008, according to media reports today, says Reuters.

Thuram wants to stay at Parma

ROME, Dec 31: French international Lilian Thuram wants to stay at UEFA Cup holders Parma until his contract expires in 2004, he told the Italian sports daily Gazzetta dello Sport on Friday, reports AFP.

Redford passes away

SYDNEY, Dec 31: Australian marathon swimmer Des Renford, who swam the English Channel 19 times, died late Thursday night at a Sydney hospital, his manager said, reports AFP.

Redford passes away

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Real Madrid's star striker Raul Gonzalez (R) poses for photographers after receiving the World Top-Scorer-of-the-Year trophy from his club president Lorenzo Sanz in the Spanish capital on December 30. International Federation of Football History and Statistics announced the award.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Shaffer. A crossword puzzle grid with clues for Down and Across words.

CRYPTOQUIP. A word puzzle where letters are substituted. Includes a grid and a key for the puzzle.

Redford passes away. A short article about the death of Des Renford.

Real Madrid's star striker Raul Gonzalez (R) poses for photographers after receiving the World Top-Scorer-of-the-Year trophy from his club president Lorenzo Sanz in the Spanish capital on December 30. International Federation of Football History and Statistics announced the award.