

Asian Cup 2004 China likely to host finals



CAPE TOWN, Jan 4: Daryll Cullinan made a fighting century to keep South Africa on top on the third day of the fourth Test against England on Tuesday, despite a fiery performance by England fast bowler Chris Silverwood.

An Asian Football Confederation (AFC) official, who declined to be identified, told AFP that China, which lost out to Lebanon to host the 2000 Cup, "is considered favourite."

"They were put as standby for the 2000 Cup. China will be considered favourably," he added.

AFC general secretary Peter Velappan announced that China, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Thailand had applied to host the event following the December 31 deadline.

He said a decision would be made during this year's Asian Cup in Lebanon from October 12-29.

"All the five interested countries will be making individual presentations to the executive committee for an objective decision to be made," he added.

Thailand played host in 1972, Iran in 1976 and Kuwait in 1980. Saudi Arabia, despite having won the cup three times, is making its first bid.

Velappan said in a statement the AFC was happy with progress in preparing stadiums and other facilities in Lebanon.

The other official said China's chances would be boosted by the fact that the tournament is normally rotated between East Asia and West Asia.

The 1996 tournament was held in the United Arab Emirates and this year's event is in Lebanon.

Hence it is only logical that "it comes back to East Asia," the official added.

Bastl, Santoro progress

DOHA, Jan 4: Switzerland's George Bastl upset sixth-seeded Jiri Novak of the Czech Republic 6-2, 7-5 in Monday's first round of the Qatar Mobil Open, the first of 58 events of the ATP Champions Race 2000, reports AP.

Earlier in the day, No. 3-seed Fabrice Santoro of France advanced to the second round with a 6-4, 6-1 victory over German wild card Lars Burghsmuller.

After the match, Santoro, 27, described the new Race format as "tough to understand." Santoro, who lost in the 1998 finals, said the system forces players into participating in too many games, increasing their risk of injury.

Qatar's top player, Sultan Khalifa, succumbed 6-3, 6-4 to Spanish veteran Alberto Berasategui, saying afterward that he found it difficult to recover from Berasategui's early hard strikes.

"In the second set, I felt that I got a couple of bad calls and this seemed to take my power away," he said.

In Monday's other singles match, Argentinian Franco Squillari booked his ticket to the second round by defeating Jan Sinnerink of the Netherlands 6-2, 6-4.

Black Caps'

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O'Connor 5 2 29 1
Nash 6.3 0 27 1
Harris 9 1 27 1
Vettori 8 1 24 4
Astle 4 0 26 1
NEW ZEALAND
Spearman c Jacobs b Dillon 42
Astle c Dillon b Adams 32
Fleming not out 59
McMillan c Jacobs b Rose 13
Cairns not out 27
Extras: (lb-4, nb-12, w-5) 21
Total: (For three wkt in 54) 194
Fall of wickets: 1-54; 2-98; 3-137.

Bowler O M R W
Walsh 6 0 32 0
King 5 0 27 0
Adams 3.4 0 29 1
Perry 5 0 24 0
Dillon 9 0 37 1
Campbell 1 0 4 0
Rose 6 0 37 1

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