

Sport

315-Dollar fine on MacGill

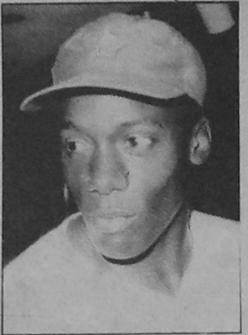
SYDNEY, Jan 29: Discarded leg-spinner Stuart MacGill as fined 500 dollars (US \$315) for dissent and using abusive language in an Australian interstate cricket match today, reports Reuters.

Henry humiliates England



CAPE TOWN, Jan 29: Zimbabwe paceman Henry Olonga sent England to a hefty 104-run one-day defeat on Friday, reports Reuters.

pacers Ealham to deep square leg, where Hick took a fine running catch. The tall left-hander and Grant Flower put on 56 for the first wicket, but Flower, on 23, skied a ball from medium pacer Alleyne to Hick at backward square leg in the 11th over.



OLNOGA ... m-o-m

Johnson's composed performance was the sole reason they managed to post a respectable total at a ground where batting after dark is made more difficult by the ball's exaggerated movement through the air.

Table with 4 columns: Player, Runs, Wickets, Extras. Includes names like Goodwin, Flower, Solanki, Caddick, Carlisle, Alleyne, Gough, Whittall, Rennie, Streak, White, and Extras.

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Friends become foes in battle of N Africa

LAGOS, Jan 29 (Reuters/Internet): Tunisian defender Samir Trabelsi and Moroccan midfielder Hassan Kachoul will put friendship aside when their teams clash in the African Nations Cup on Saturday.

"We must beat Morocco so we don't take the next plane home and I look forward to giving Kachoul a hard knock," Trabelsi told Reuters on Friday.

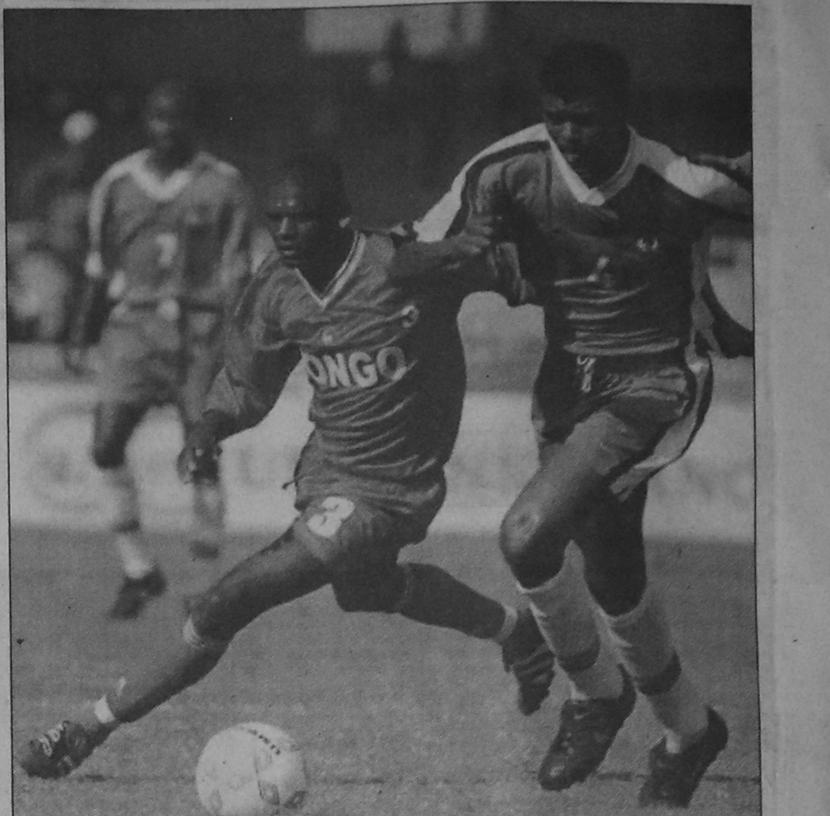
Tunisia, 4-2 losers to Nigeria in the opening group D game, need a win against Morocco to keep alive their hopes of remaining in the tournament.

"Some of the Tunisian players are my friends but I have told them that on Saturday I'll show no mercy because Morocco need the six points."

The two countries battled to a 1-1 draw when they met in the 1978 Nations Cup in the Ghararian city of Kumasi.

Kachoul, who played for several clubs in France, had a brief spell with Spain's Extremadura before joining Southampton last season. He was in Morocco's 1994 and 1998 World Cup squads.

While Trabelsi played in the match against Nigeria, Kachoul was on the Moroccan substitutes' bench against Congo.



Ivory Coast's Cyrille Domoraud (L) and Pius Ndiefi of Cameroon battle for the ball during their African Nations' Cup game in the Ghanaian capital of Accra on January 28. —Internet photo

African Nations Cup

Congo keep 'Super Eagles' on the ground



LAGOS, Jan 29: The Indomitable Lions of Cameroon roared, the Super Eagles of Nigeria were almost felled.

Nader al-Sayed proved unbeatable. The Belgium-based goalkeeper conceded only one goal in 570 minutes as Egypt won the title two years ago and he kept a blank sheet against Zambia this week.

Cameroon outlasted Cote d'Ivoire 3-0 in Group A with Patrick Mboma scoring a superb goal. Nigeria could only draw 0-0 with minnows Congo in Group D and Egypt beat Senegal 1-0 in a top-of-the-table Group C showdown.

The results virtually assured Cameroon and Ghana of quarter-finals places, left Egypt needing one point to win their pool and Nigeria facing a possible struggle to reach the knockout stages.

Fans at Surulere Stadium in Lagos flung plastic bottles on the pitch in the closing stages after a dismal showing by the Eagles, whose build-up was marred by customary disputes with officials over cash.

It was a day when Cameroon confirmed they could emulate their 1984 and 1988 cup-winning teams, Egyptian striker Hossam Hassan emphasised he is the leading predator in Africa and Congo once more took their lowly status.

EGYPT-SENEGAL It was a business as usual for defensive masters Egypt, who edged ahead when Hassan avoided a flying boot to head a Mohamed Omara cross goal-keeper Oumar Diallo into the net.

A red defensive curtain was erected after half-time in the Nigerian town of Kano and when Senegal did break through in the closing stages,

Windies aim to travel in style

BRIDGETOWN, Jan 29 (Internet report): The West Indies Cricket Board is to appoint new, enlarged management staff in an attempt to halt the team's recent dismal record on overseas tours.

The group would likely comprise a manager, coach, assistant coach, a physiotherapist and a sports psychologist and would work with the team "on a ear-round basis", WICB president Pat Rousseau said in a radio interview.

The (management) team we're putting together and the work we expect them to do as a unit over the next 12 to 18 months should turn things around when we go overseas," Rousseau said.

The appointments will be made before the home series against Zimbabwe, starting March 16.

The West Indies have lost 10 Tests and 14 of their 15 one-day internationals in their past three series overseas. That contrasts with one Test series each at home, against Australia in 1995, in the past 26 years.

Meanwhile, Curtly Ambrose argued that unless Caribbean pitches were prepared differently, the West Indies' performance on tours would not improve. He said: "Some pitches are too friendly. When our batsmen bat on flat, slow pitches in regional tournaments and believe they are ready, they find conditions overseas totally different and we find it hard to cope."

India down

From page 13

st 50 in Test cricket after averaging seven Tests and 13 innings.

Or for that matter, Kapil himself had his first four-wicket haul in an innings after the same number of Tests. The 33-year-old bowler and the batsman who is fielding the better. Let us be frank about one fact: As Jayantle, Kapil, Dada and Tendulkar, Ajay Jadeja and Mongia, substitute batsmen have failed to prove that they have the talent to replace them.

But can India come out of this rut? Former cricketer-turned-commentator Arun Lal as a simple answer. "Let it be known that for games we lose, the players will not be paid match fees. You will immediately see a rise in the level of performance."

Former selector Samabaran Banerjee is of the opinion that the team is not being chosen properly. "We did away with the best one-day opening combination that we had. We destroyed the combination between Sachin and Saurav. Out of every three matches, they provided a solid start in one. All our opponents were wary about this combination."

"And it is high time that our bowlers should be told that some runs are expected of them in the present Australian series, only Kumble had placed a price in his wicket. The rest just came and went."

True words by both. The players are now assured of their money even if the team loses all its matches. The ICCI should also put in another clause here, that is of not allowing two players to share the sponsorship of one particular company or organisation. That will be enough to stop the WorldTel player promoting the other or the Kingfisher-man helping another one out. Unless that is done, factionalism and favouritism will exist in Indian cricket. And the paying public will lose their money supporting a team of selfish individuals.

Primera Liga preview

Barca's chance to go atop

BARCELONA, an 29 (Reuters/Internet): Barcelona make the short trip up Montjuic to face Espanyol on Saturday with the Spanish league leadership in their sights for the first time since October.

Louis van Gaal's side have been playing catch-up in the league title race ever since a run of four successive defeats in a bleak period in November allowed current leaders Deportivo Coruna to break clear.

Fourteen points from their last six games have seen Barca close back to within three of the leaders, however.

And with Deportivo not in action until Sunday, victory in Saturday's match (kick-off 2000 GMT) will take Barcelona back to the top of the table, at least for 24 hours.

Barca hopes of getting the win they need will be boosted by the return of Patrick Kluevert, who is available after serving a five-match suspension.

The Dutch international is set to hook up once again with Rivaldo and Luis Figo in a three-man forward line that should prove too strong for Espanyol, despite their decent run of late.

Espanyol coach Paco Flores, who has guided his side to two successive victories since taking over from Miguel Angel Brindisi, is convinced his side will be taking on the eventual league champions on Saturday, although he remains confident his side can make it a hat-trick of wins.

Barcelona will win the league and they'll win it by a long way," Flores predicted on the eve of the derby.

"We'll beat them on Saturday, of course, but they'll still turn out to be the champions."

Other matches being played this weekend (league positions in parentheses, kick-off 1600 GMT unless stated):

SATURDAY: CELTA VIGO (4) v ATLETICO MADRID (15) 2000 GMT

CELTA are still struggling for the form that had them earmarked as potential champions earlier in the season but they have carved out two successive wins, against Oviedo and Sevilla despite playing poorly and they should be able to add a third here.

Real are suffering a renewed injury crisis after a costly 2-1 win over Real Betis in midweek, which saw Brazilians Savio Bortolini and Julio Cesar join the long-term casualty list. They will welcome the return of Fernando Hierro and Raul Gonzalez, however, following their run-out with the national team.

Bilbao were unlucky to be held to a 2-2 draw at the Bernabeu earlier in the season and will be confident of taking advantage of any tiredness in the Madrid ranks.

REAL MADRID (7) v ATHLETIC BILBAO (5) (1830 GMT)

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REAL SOCIEDAD (19) v RAYO VALLECANO (8)

Javier Clemente's side continue to slide down the table, although they will take some heart from a brave performance in last weekend's 1-1 draw with Atletico Madrid, a game they finished with nine men. Rayo are also slipping after their great start to the season and have now gone five away games without scoring a single point.

VALLADOLID (16) v DEPORTIVO CORUNA (1)

Deportivo got back to winning ways last week with a 2-0 victory over Real Betis, a result that should boost their confidence a world of good. Valladolid, who continue to flirt with the relegation zone, will be without Brazilian midfielder Rodrigo Fabri, who was sent off in last weekend's 1-0 defeat to Athletic Bilbao.

REAL ZARAGOZA (3) v SEVILLA (20)

Zaragoza will be without their suspended striker Savo Milosevic but should still be able to keep the pressure on Barca and Depor with a win against the league's basement side, who have not managed victory away from home all season.

Diego not interested in Cuban Job

HAVANA, Jan 29: Argentinian football legend Diego Maradona, undergoing rehabilitation for cocaine addiction here in Cuba, is set to kick-off the Cuban Cup Final on Sunday, reports AFP.

The 39-year-old, who arrived in Cuba 11 days ago, undergoes treatment for drug addiction after spending a week in a Uruguayan clinic following a cocaine overdose a month ago, played down the rumours that the Cuban Football Federation had offered him the post of national coach.

"Am I going to kick-off the match? Well it would seem churlish to turn the invitation down," the dyed blond said standing on the steps of the clinic where he is being treated.

"I will be on the pitch with the ball come kick-off time," the troubled former World Cup winner added.

Maradona, who admitted last week he faced death if he relapsed into cocaine addiction, remained coy about the rumours linking him to the Cuban job.

"I do not want to cost anybody the job and I said that to the Federation's President," said Maradona, who got into further hot water on Wednesday after an altercation with a photographer, whom he punched and whose car window he smashed.

"However, anything I do for Cuba I will do it with love and passion," he added.

Dutch Cup Peeters strike ousts Ajax

ROTTERDAM, Jan 29: An injury-time goal by Roda JC striker Bart Peeters put defending champions Ajax Amsterdam out of the Dutch Cup in the third round on Friday, reports Reuters.

Ajax lost defender Christian Chivu in the 64th minute when he was sent off after two bookable offences. It was the third time this season that the 19-year-old Chivu had received a red card.

On a hard and bumpy pitch Roda were the stronger and they deserved the victory. But it was not until injury time that Peeters hit the net when he deflected a Kevin van Dessel shot with his heel.

In the quarter-finals Roda will face either Utrecht or second division side Go Ahead Eagles Deventer, who play their third-round match on Sunday.

CAF penalises Nigeria

LAGOS, Jan 29 (Reuters/AFP/Internet): The Confederation of African Football (CAF) fined Nigeria 2,000 dollars and warned that the teams' future African Nations Cup matches could be played behind closed doors, after fans unhappy with a draw against Congo rioted, reports AFP.

In a statement issued on Saturday, CAF said it had fined the Nigerian Football Association (NFA) an amount of 2000 dollars for the unruly crowd behaviour after the Super Eagles' match against Congo Brazzaville here on Friday.

"CAF issues a strict warning to the public not to repeat such kind of behaviour. In the contrary, the matches concerning Nigeria will be played behind closed doors," the statement said.

Nigerian fans threw bottles onto the pitch and besieged their star-studded team's dressing room after the tournament favourites, who had won their opener against Tunisia 4-2, drew 0-0 with minnows Congo on Friday afternoon. The team were locked inside the changing-room for their own safety.

"Police had to use teargas to disperse the mob who laid siege to the dressing room where the players had taken refuge. Police dispersed the irate local fans with tear gas after they smashed the window of the team bus. The fans had hurled plastic bottles onto the pitch towards the end of the match."

Meanwhile, the Nigerian squad have hit back urging the supporters to be "more civilised".

"You don't win all matches, our fans should understand that and be more cultured and civilised in how they react to our performance," team coach Jo Bonfrere said on Saturday.

"We didn't go out there for a 0-0 draw. We always want to win for our country...our fans. That we drew shouldn't make the fans be unruly," said Tijani Babangida, a second-half substitute in Friday's match.

Team captain Sunday Olish said: "I'm disappointed with the attitude of the fans. Why cheer us when we did not lose?"

Soccer is treated with almost religious devotion by many of the West African country's 108 million people.

The players said they were worried the fans may not give them support in their final Group D match against Morocco on Thursday.

"I think the fans may support Morocco when we play them," said defender Furo Iyememi.

Substitute striker Benedict Akwuegbu, who missed an easy scoring chance against Congo, added: "I won't be surprised if the fans don't show some understanding when we play Morocco."

The Nigerians now have four points from two games. Morocco, with three points, could go top of the group if they beat Tunisia on Saturday.

Referee disciplined

LONDON, Jan 29: Rob Harris, referee in charge of the English FA Cup fourth round match between Tranmere Rovers and Sunderland on January 28, has been suspended until February 29 after a breach of rules, the BBC reported on Friday, reports Reuters.

Tranmere played with 11 men for a short period near the end of the game after having Clint Hill sent off. Substitute Stephen Frail went on to the pitch at the same time as none of the match officials noticed.

An FA referees' commission banned Harris as he had "less than proficiently applied the laws of the game relating to a substitution," the BBC said.



A Nigerian fan cheering on the players during their match against Congo on January 28. —AFP photo