

Arjuna, Aravinda back in Test fold

COLOMBO, Feb 18: For 1er captain Arjuna Ranatunga and his deputy Aravinda de Silva have both been selected for the Sri Lanka squad that will play a three-Test series in Pakistan from February 26, reports Reuters.

The Sri Lanka cricket board said late on Thursday that spinner Rangana Herath had also been included in the squad.

The three will replace Indika de Saram, Chamara Silva and Muthumudalige Pushpakumara, who are currently with the Sri Lankan squad a playing a one-day international series in Pakistan.

Sri Lanka has already won the three-match series 2-0.

Ranatunga, who led Sri Lanka to the World Cup win in 1996, was replaced by Sanath Jayasuriya after the team's poor showing in the same tournament in England in 1999.

Both Ranatunga and De Silva have shown good form in domestic cricket of late.

SQUAD

Sanath Jayasuriya (captain), Mahela Jayawardene, Marvan Atapattu, Arjuna Ranatunga, Aravinda de Silva, Romesh Kaluwitharana, Russel Arnold, Tilkekaratne Dilshan, Pramodya Wickramasinghe, Chaminda Vaas, Nuwan Zoysa or Eric Upashantha, Ravindra Pushpakumara, Muttiah Muralitharan, Indika Gallage, Ranga Herath.

Smokey Warne!

WELLINGTON, Feb 18: Police had to intervene after Australian cricket player Shane Warne snatched a bag from a young fan and refused to give it back, Television New Zealand (TVNZ) reported here today, says AFP.

The boy had taken a photograph of Warne, the Australian vice captain, at Thursday's abandoned one-day international against New Zealand.

Warne apparently was not going to return the bag unless the film in the camera was handed over to him.

"Warne was upset, I think, at the fact he had been photographed while smoking (a cigarette)," Inspector Greg Gilpin of Wellington police said Friday. Two police constables were called over by the father of a friend of the boy to help retrieve the bag from the cricketer, TVNZ reported.

"(Warne) was certainly agitated and upset by what had occurred," Gilpin said.

"He was obviously intent on getting the camera and probably over-reacted to the situation."

After a police sergeant became involved, Warne returned the bag.

Australian manager Steve Bernard said: "I think we'll let this one go through to the keeper."

Leg spinner Warne was early last year paid 118,000 US dollars by a pharmaceutical company to quit his 40-a-day habit and promote its anti-smoking gum and patches.

2nd ODI today Black Caps draft Wiseman

AUCKLAND, Feb 18: The New Zealand cricket team today added off-spinner Paul Wiseman to the side, ahead of Saturday's one-day international against Australia, reports Reuters.

In our opinion the pitch at Eden Park may favour the slower bowlers and we want to be able to call on another spinner if the conditions dictate tomorrow," convenor of selectors Ross Dykes said.

Wiseman's inclusion brings the team pool to 13 players ahead of the day-night game at Auckland's Eden Park — now the first of a shortened five-match series after Thursday's wash out in Wellington.

A final line-up will be announced at the toss, a team spokesman added.

BCCSL polls not now

COLOMBO, Feb 18: The Board of Control for Cricket in Sri Lanka (BCCSL) elections scheduled for next month to replace an interim governing body have been indefinitely postponed, a senior cricket official said Friday, reports AP.

The sports ministry, which ordered a fresh election on March 11 to nominate a regular board, postponed it without giving any official reason, the official said, under condition of anonymity.

A five-member interim committee was set up to run Sri Lankan cricket during the past 11 months after a brawl broke out at the previous election.

Thilanga Sumathipala, who won the last election with 79 of the 127 votes, said Friday that the postponement was "a move by interested parties because they fear to face democratic election."

"It is unconstitutional and contrary to the sports law, as it deprives the entire membership...their fundamental right to elect," Sumathipala said in a statement.

He was prevented from taking office after his opponent, Clifford Ratwatte, won a court order.

Ratwatte, relative of President Chandrika Kumaratunga, accused Sumathipala of vote buying and rigging. Ratwatte received 11 votes.

Sumathipala said, however, that he would contest the upcoming election.

The voters are representatives from district cricket boards, affiliated clubs and former cricketers.

Sumathipala's opponent this time is Jayantha Dharmadasa, whose family owns Sri Lanka's top private hospital, Nawaloka.



Mexican Francisco Palencia takes a tumble while chasing the ball during their CONCACAF Gold Cup encounter against Guatemala in Los Angeles on February 17. —AFP

Collymore says sorry

LEICESTER, England, Feb 18 (Reuters/Internet) : Troubled striker Stan Collymore was fined two weeks wages and warned about his future conduct by English Premier League club Leicester City on Thursday after trouble during a training trip to Spain.

The striker admitted setting off a fire extinguisher in a late-night incident which led to Leicester being sent home in disgrace from their Spanish training camp.

"I take it fully on the chin," he told Sky Sports television. "I would firstly like to apologise to the gaffer (manager) and to all at Leicester City."

The former England striker, who joined Leicester from Aston Villa only seven days ago, said the players had been "having a drink, and a laugh and a joke."

It seems as if one or two people did not take it in the spirit in which it was meant."

He also said that "a million players have done it, a million players will do it in the future" and complained that high-profile players could no longer have fun.

Collymore was ordered by the club to undertake regular community service work for the rest of the season but manager Martin O'Neill insisted the player's actions at the La Manga complex on Tuesday night were not a "sacking offence."

"In football parlance he's been given a yellow card, which effectively means he will be in grave danger of losing his job if he receives another one," said

O'Neill. The fine, believed to be 30,000 pounds (dollars48,190), is the maximum Leicester are allowed to impose.

In addition, the Leicester players will have to pay a 700 pounds (dollars1,124) bill for damage caused to the bar, plus the entire costs of the curtailed trip, including air fares

amounting to an estimated 15,000 pounds (dollars24,100).

O'Neill also confirmed he has cancelled plans for an end of season trip to the Caribbean. But he was adamant he still does not regret signing Collymore, who missed most of last season whilst at Aston Villa after undergoing counselling for stress and depression.

"After what has happened I can understand it if my wisdom

is being questioned," he said. "Other people are now saying 'told you so' then I can't have them at the moment."

"I am certainly not pleased with Stan, nor any of other people," said his management staff, all very contrite today.

"But without trivialising the incident, which has caused great embarrassment to Leicester City, I do believe Collymore is entitled to a second chance."

"To be honest, I am not pleased when we signed him but I think he would be a good sort of incident would hit the headlines. I did not expect it to be so quickly."

"But unless it was serious, like someone physically hurt, I do not think he did deserve to be sacked."

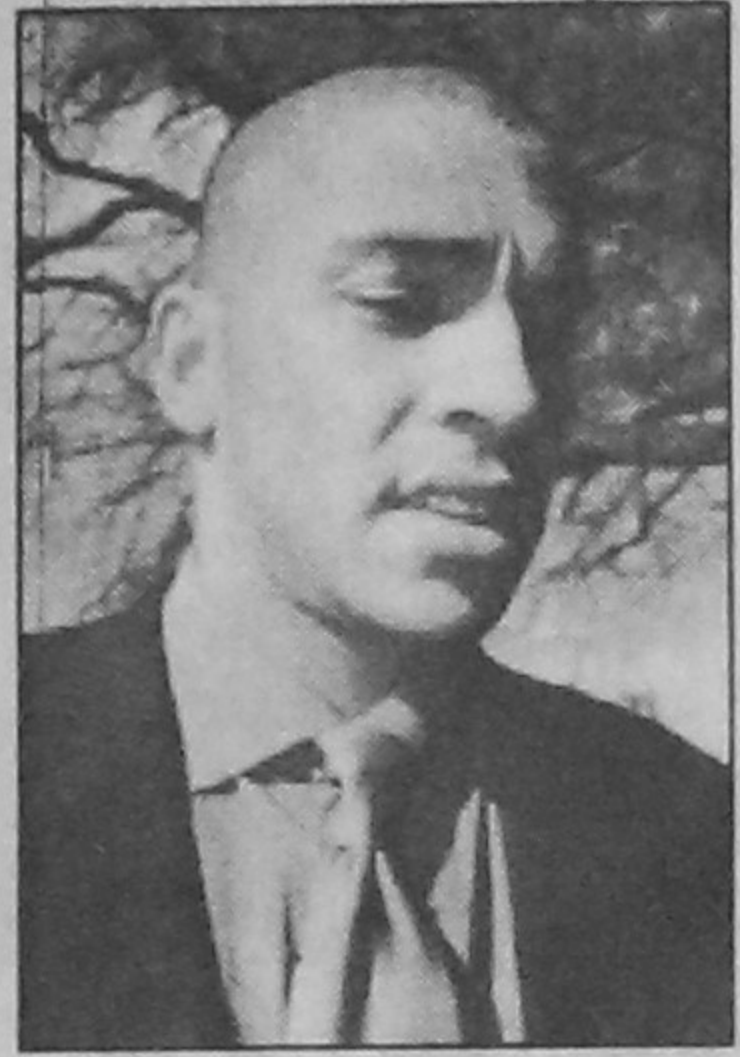
O'Neill said the fact that the players were up after midnight at La Manga was due to a misunderstanding.

"I had imposed a 11:30 curfew, which I meant everyone in bed by 12," said O'Neill, who was on the trip himself.

"But it seems that it was interpreted as the player to be back in the hotel by midnight."

"However, from the perspective of the club, I believe the vast majority of players were not involved in anything untoward that happened."

"I may be proved wrong but I still believe Stan Collymore is a risk-taking player."



COLLYMORE

World football calendar

No solutions in sight

ZURICH, Feb 18: Four of soccer's most illustrious names wrestled with the problem of a coordinated global calendar on Thursday — but failed to solve the scheduling puzzle, reports Reuters.

FIFA's football committee, a body that includes Pele, Franz Beckenbauer, Sir Bobby Charlton and Michel Platini, avoided the biggest issue barring the appearance of a world calendar — the dates for a unified season.

A FIFA proposal to play all matches worldwide from February to November, continued to be opposed, particularly by UEFA, who remain adamant any calendar must be based on the European model, which runs from August to May.

"A lot of people get frightened by February-November and it may well be fine if you can find your windows to fulfil your obligations," said Charlton. "It may well be that nothing has to change."

The fact everyone has been going in different directions has always created a problem.

"At the end of the day everyone has to give a little. What suits one doesn't suit the other and that's the debate."

"The world's a big place. It's a difficult problem."

UEFA made its position clear 48 hours earlier, following a two-day clubs workshop, that included the G-14, an increasingly influential lobbying group comprising powerful clubs like Manchester United, Bayern Munich, Real Madrid and AC Milan.

At the end of those meetings, UEFA general secretary Gerhard Aigner said he would have Juventus president Roberto Bettega explain their stance to FIFA president Sepp Blatter and other members of the football committee.

An unruffled Blatter said he had received the message but his differences were not with UEFA but with the clubs.

"I haven't received anything from UEFA. That statement came from the clubs, and we have had representatives from other very important clubs here," said Blatter. "Mr Bettega said he agreed with what was said here but that it will be very difficult for us (UEFA) to change the season calendar into the Gregorian calendar."

Today we have identified at least five points where everyone agrees.

"Naturally we have not yet

tackled the problem of how they will be implemented in the seasonal calendar and that's the big problem that is still there."

The football committee's recommendations centred on reducing the fixture list and workload on today's players.

The committee said a limit should be imposed on how many internationals (official games and friendlies combined) a national association may play a year.

It also suggested that a rest period of at least four weeks should be built into any calendar.

A total of 46 dates should be reserved for national league and cup competitions, with an additional 16 dates set aside for international club tournaments.

"I'm a director of a club (Manchester United) that's as powerful as any in the world and we think a calendar should be put in place," said Charlton. "We've recommended that qualifying matches should be harmonised as well as the domestic calendars."

There are so many matches played at different times taking away players from clubs.

"We tried very much to get the clubs to have a chance to have their own calendar but they don't want to buy a player who will be in 25 games a year."

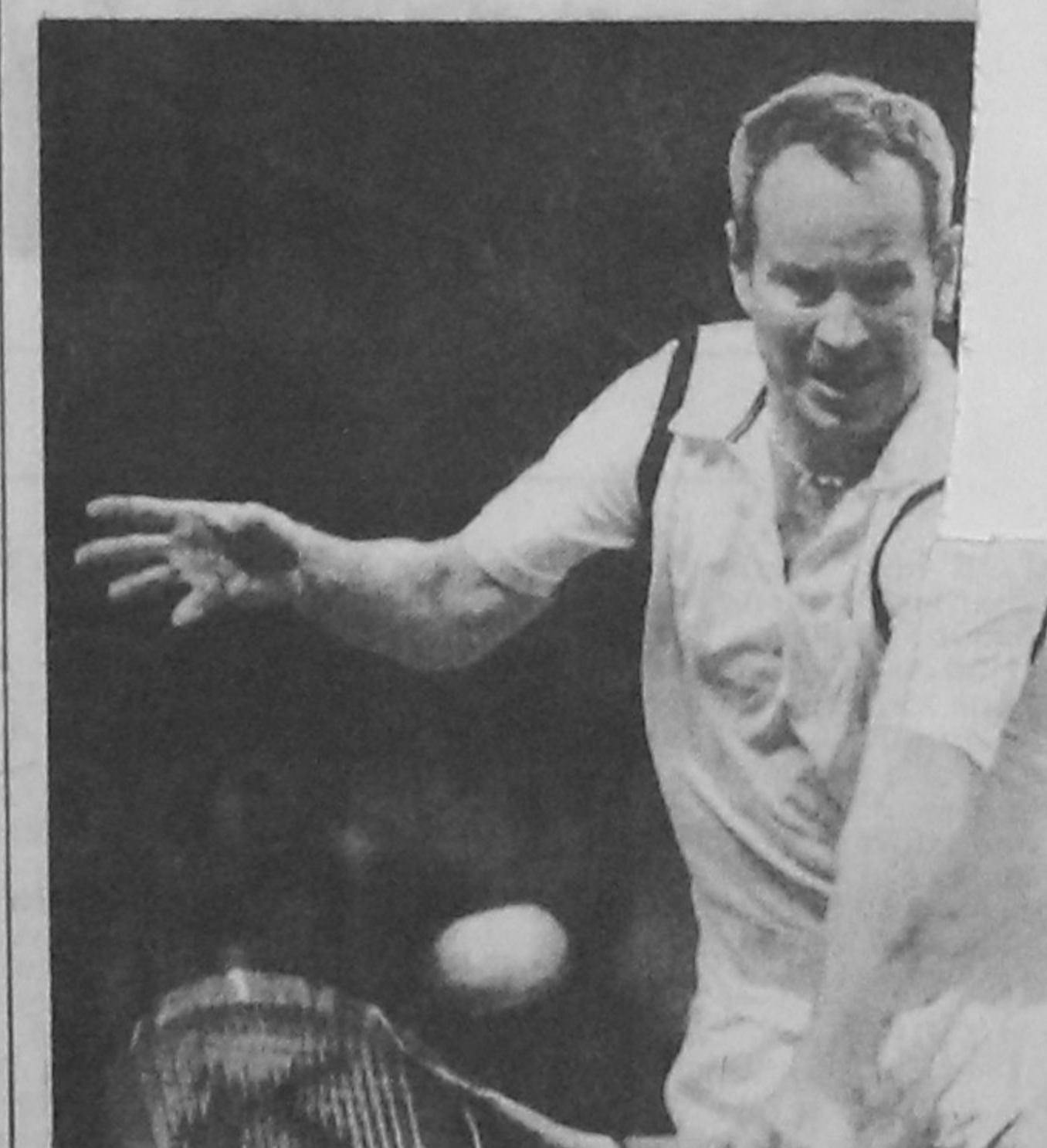
"We release a player the way the other side of the world — that's a lot wasted for one match of time."

The committee amended that preliminary petitions for continental championships — like the European championship — serve as World Cup tournaments.

But Pele said he did not think a plan would be so simple.

"A calendar can be made but it's not too easy," said Charlton. "I'm not sure it's possible to have tournaments in Europe and UEFA is very strong."

"I don't know if it's possible to make a calendar from the championships and for the World Cup."



American tennis star John McEnroe in action against Sweden's Mikael Pernfors during the Tournament of Champions in Dublin on February 17. —AFP photo

said: "It's always been in the back of my mind to give everyone a run but I just think it's crucial where this series finishes off."

"This is just as important as the one-dayers and the test series against the South Africans. After what happened last time England were in Zimbabwe, people are very keen to ensure this tour ends on a successful note."

England suffered a 3-0 whitewash in the one-day series in Zimbabwe three years ago.

Like Fletcher, Graeme Hick is also back in the country of his birth and his first innings for England in Zimbabwe was a match-winning 87 not out on Wednesday.

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