

World TT C'ships China, Sweden meet in men's team finals

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 25: Sweden will play China in Saturday's men's final of the World Team Table Tennis Championships here after former world champion Jan Ove Waldner clinched a 3-1 win over Italy Friday, reports AFP.

Waldner beat Italy's Yang Min 18-21, 21-14, 21-14 in the second singles and followed up by defeating Mondello Massimiliano 21-16, 21-14 in the reverse singles to give his team the decisive edge.

Defending champions China had steamrollered Japan 3-0 in the other semifinal in just 90 minutes.

Sweden took nearly 50 minutes more than that to subdue Italy. At first, it looked as though Italy would run the Swedes to the wire when Massimiliano Mondello beat Jorgen Persson 9-21, 21-15, 21-18 in the first tie.

Then Waldner weighed in with his win over Italy's Yang Min, another member of the Chinese Diaspora of table tennis champions.

It was the evening's most interesting battle and lasted 35 minutes. Waldner, a spidery retriever, mixed cagey defence with shrewd attack. Quite often the Swede was content to allow the chunky Yang Min to smash his way to error.

After Waldner had evened the match score at 1-1, Peter Karlsson beat Valentine Piacentini 21-19, 21-17 relatively easily before what was expected to be a close encounter between Waldner and Massimiliano.

However, the Italian could not flummox Waldner who appeared to improve as the evening wore on. Waldner sauntered to a 21-16, 21-14 win in 16 minutes to give the tie and match to Sweden.

Ponting keeps fingers crossed

HOBART, Feb 25: Injured Australian batsman Ricky Ponting gives himself a 50-50 chance of being fit for next month's three-Test series against New Zealand, reports AFP.

Ponting injured his ankle in a fielding mishap during Australia's win over Pakistan in the final of the tri-series tournament at the Sydney Cricket Ground earlier this month.

In his regular column for the Launceston Examiner, the Tasmanian said Friday his ankle was improving slowly but was hit and miss about passing a fitness Test in Sydney on Wednesday.

"The main problem is the running and twisting and turning, obviously pretty vital in a Test match," he said.

"Swimming, walking and even a couple of games of golf haven't been a problem."

He said most of the swelling had gone, but there was still fluid protecting the strained ligaments and getting strength back had been a slow process.

Antiguans attack WICB office

ST. JOHN'S, Antigua, Feb 25: More than 300 angry Antiguans protesting the non-appointment of Vivian Richards on the new West Indies management team broke down the gates of the West Indies Cricket Board's headquarters here Thursday, reports AFP.

The protesters broke through the fence that leads to the building which formerly housed the prime minister's office and defaced the WICB's signboard logo with the words "No Viv, No Board."

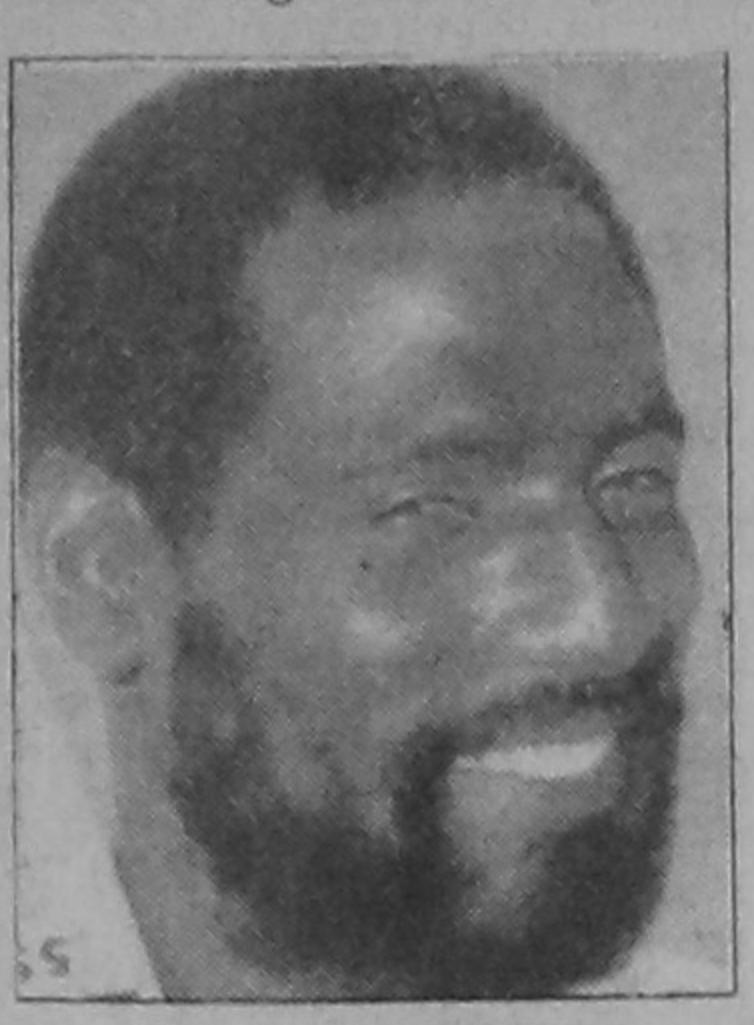
They also smashed a window and took away a large photograph of the Kensington Oval.

Police, who were on patrol, made no arrests as the demonstrators made their way through the streets of St. John's chanting slogans calling for the removal of the WICB if cricket legend Richards was not given a role to play before terminating at the prime minister's office.

Later in the day, the protesters forced an audience with Prime Minister Lester Bird after they picketed his office. Bird told the demonstrators

that he could not intervene, but he will take their concerns to the CARICOM Heads of Government when it convenes in St. Kitts next month.

Marching under the banner



VIVIAN RICHARDS

of Concerned Citizens for Justice, the protesters ended day two of what is said to be a sustained action vowing, "No Viv, no cricket."

"We are not going to relent until the West Indies Cricket Board meets our demands," said Terrance Small, secretary of the Antigua Cricket Association, one of several ACA executives members who joined the march.

Small said the demonstrators are accusing the board of a conspiracy to exclude Richards from serious consideration for the position of coach of the West Indies cricket team.

"How can you explain requirements after Viv broke off his contract with the British Broadcasting Corporation to fill in for Malcolm Marshall as coach (at the World Cup) and his subsequent appointment as coach to the tour of New Zealand?" he asked.

"We are going to keep up the process. We will begin the petitioning process (Friday) and once that is completed it would handed over to the prime minister who would take that petition to the CARICOM heads."

"Outside of that we will continue with our protest action. We are not going to allow the WICB to ride roughshod over our cricketing heroes," Small added.

World paying homage to Sir Stanley

LONDON, Feb 25: Tributes from the soccer world flooded in on Thursday following the death of Sir Stanley Matthews.

Matthews died in hospital, aged 85, reports AFP.

Sir Stanley's death came just

days after he suffered a back injury at his apartment in Tenerife.

Former Bolton striker Nat

Lofthouse, who played against

Matthews in the 1953 FA Cup final, insisted he will never be

forgotten.

"He will be sadly missed. He was a real gentleman. I often think that his family can be very proud of him."

"This is tragic. Very very sad. But what a player - there will never be another Matthews. I don't think so. But somebody wanted him elsewhere."

Matthews was a unique footballer and undeniably Britain's first soccer superstar in the days before television transformed players into the icons they are today.



SIR STANLEY MATTHEWS

He turned professional with Stoke aged 17, was capped 54 times for England and made 710 Football League appearances for Stoke and Blackpool.

He went on to become one of England's greatest players and European footballer of the year

in 1956.

Matthews was knighted in 1965 and made his last Football League appearance in the same year at the record-breaking age of 50 years and five days.

He may not have possessed the flamboyance of George Best or the great Pele and he might not have scored goals as freely as other wingers.

But in the pantheon of soccer greats, Matthews stands shoulder to shoulder with all the game's legends.

It's hard to imagine another footballer enjoying a playing career spanning 31 years or to be still playing in the top flight at the age of 50.

And no player is likely to play for England at the mature age of 42.

But it says nothing of the drama and romance which will forever be associated with Matthews.

When Sir Stanley was born they simply broke the mould.

Never were those qualities better illustrated than in those flickering movietone images of the FA Cup final for which he became famous.

The year was 1953. The match was Blackpool against Bolton and it will forever be known as the Matthews final.

Stan had tasted the disappointment of being on the losing side in 1948 when Manchester United beat Blackpool 4-2 - a year he had been named player of the year.

Now here he was, at the grand age of 38, in his third cup final.

Witnesses tell of a magic uniqueness in the history of Britain's national game.

Bolton cruised into a 3-1 lead and it looked as if Matthews was to leave empty-handed once more, but then came the most played exhibition of soccer trickery in movietone history.

Kafelnikov in last eight

LONDON, Feb 25: Top seed Yevgeny Kafelnikov completed a straight sets win over former doubles partner Daniel Vacek to move into the quarterfinals of the 800,000-dollar London Indoor Open ATP Tour event here on Thursday.

Kafelnikov won 6-2, 7-5 before launching an attack on the tournament venue in London's Docklands.

The court has been laid on top of an ice rink used by the London Knights ice hockey team.

Kafelnikov, the Russian former world number one, took the first set comfortably against Vacek and should have sealed victory at 5-4 ahead in the second.

But his concentration slipped as he served for the match and Vacek broke back to raise hopes of a fightback.

However, Kafelnikov immediately broke back and despite a double fault on his first match point, he held out to complete his victory over the Czech and set up a last-eight clash on Friday with France's Fabrice Santoro.

Tim Henman's conqueror Mariano Zabaleta later set up the chance to make himself even more unpopular with the home crowd with victory in his second-round match against France's Cyril Saulnier.

The Argentine player won comfortably 6-4, 6-1 on Court One and now faces another Briton, Greg Rusedski, in the quarterfinals.

But the 25-year-old Swede found his rhythm, particularly on his first serve to take the next two sets 6-3, 6-4 and set up a quarter-final with sixth seed Cedric Pioline.

Frenchman Pioline continued his superb run of form by overcoming American Jeff Tarango in straight sets, winning 6-3, 6-4.

The quarterfinal line-up was completed when Swiss teenager Roger Federer, one of the ATP Tour's rising stars, defeated Goran Ivanisevic in straight sets.

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Captain of the Raninagar Cricket Training Centre (L) receiving the trophy for the Bir Shrestha Captain Mohiuddin Jahangir Smriti Gold Cup from Rajshahi Mayor Mijanur Rahman during the prize-giving ceremony at the Western Railway Ground in Rajshahi

— Star photo

French First Division preview

Worries for Lyon, Marseille

PARIS, Feb 25: Lyon and Marseille - big-spenders and under-achievers both - have been hit by problems ahead of their crucial French league showdown on Saturday night.

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Second-placed Paris St Germain, who are also bidding for Cup and League Cup glory, are at home to relegation strugglers Nancy on Saturday and will be without suspended defender Alain Cisse and possibly striker Laurent Leroy.

With defenders Jimmy Alagena, Edouard Cisse and Greg Paisley also long-term injury-victims, PSG's defensive stocks are running thin.

The good news for coach Philippe Bergeron, however, is the imminent return from injury of former Arsenal striker Kaka Diawara.

Nancy have injury concerns over Brazilian striker Ze Alcino, who has a thigh problem.

Third-placed Auxerre make the tricky trip to Corsica to face Bastia, who are always dangerous on home territory while promoted Sedan, in fifth spot but only one point away from second place, face the journey to seventh-placed Metz.

St Etienne will be looking to continue their surge away from the relegation zone as they visit fellow strugglers Troyes in the Champagne country.

St Etienne will be without their ace Brazilian striker Alex, who has returned home after a family bereavement.

Troyes have their problems, too, with striker Samuel Bouteille suspended.

Other Saturday matches see Bordeaux host Nantes, Montpellier at home to Lens - who will be without suspended striker Pascal Neuma - and Rennes playing Le Havre.

FIXTURES:

Saturday: Paris St Germain v Nancy, Metz v Sedan, Rennes v Le Havre, Troyes v St Etienne, Montpellier v Lens, Bordeaux v Nantes, Bastia v Auxerre, Lyon v Marseille

Sunday: Strasbourg v Monaco

Detectives 2:30 Lonely Planet 3:30 Discovery Profile Series 4:30 Splat 5:00 Beyond 2000 5:30 Discover Magazine 6:30 Serial: Reen (Navan Nishan, Mohan Vandar) 7:00 Serial: Eba (Jombe Mawja (Gorgi Nandil) 7:30 Serial: Shesh Prashna (Ranjeet Mallik, Anuradha 8:00 News in Bangla 8:30 Serial: Andolon (Rituparna Sen, Gupta) 9:00 Serial: Nil Chander Alo 9:30 Bharat Bhraman 10:00 News in Bangali 10:30 Bangla Movie-Din Jaave 1:00 Grillosaja 1:30 Bangla Movie 4:00 Serial: Eba (Jombe Mawja (Gorgi Nandil) 4:30 Serial: Shesh Prashna (Ranjeet Mallik, Anuradha 8:00 News in Bangla 8:30 Serial: Andolon (Rituparna Sen, Gupta) 9:00 Serial: Nil Chander Alo 9:30 Bharat Bhraman 10:00 News in Bangali 10:30 Bangla Movie-Din Jaave 1:00 Grillosaja 1:30 Bangla Movie 4:00 Serial: Eba (Jombe Mawja (Gorgi Nandil) 4:30 Serial: Shesh Prashna (Ranjeet Mallik, Anuradha 8:00 News in Bangla 8:30 Serial: Andolon (Rituparna Sen, Gupta) 9:00 Serial: Nil Chander Alo 9:30 Bharat Bhraman 10:00 News in Bangali 10:30 Bangla Movie-Din Jaave 1:00 Grillosaja 1:30 Bangla Movie 4:00 Serial: Eba (Jombe Mawja (Gorgi Nandil) 4:30 Serial: Shesh Prashna (Ranjeet Mallik, Anuradha 8:00 News in Bangla 8:30 Serial: Andolon (Rituparna Sen, Gupta) 9:00 Serial: Nil Chander Alo 9:30 Bharat Bhraman 10:00 News in Bangali 10:30 Bangla Movie-Din Jaave 1:00 Grillosaja 1:30 Bangla Movie 4:00 Serial: Eba (Jombe Mawja (Gorgi Nandil) 4:30 Serial: Shesh Prashna (Ranjeet Mallik, Anuradha 8:00 News in Bangla 8:30 Serial