

UEFA Cup semifinal Turkish fans may attend second leg

STRASBOURG, France, April 13: European football chief Lennart Johansson on Wednesday hinted that Galatasaray's fans will be allowed to attend the controversial UEFA Cup semi-final second-leg tie against Leeds at Elland Road next Thursday, reports AFP.

UEFA decided to postpone their decision on the subject until Friday afternoon to fully evaluate written submissions from both sides.

Reports were received on Tuesday from Leeds, the Football Association (FA) and the relevant local and national security authorities, with Galatasaray believed to have responded Wednesday afternoon.

The FA appeared to have made clear the tie will be staged at Elland Road, with any suggestion the game is switched to a neutral venue now seemingly a non-starter.

The only aspect on the agenda is whether the 1,700 Galatasaray supporters, with the Turkish club's full allocation having already been sold - mainly to the business community - will travel.

UEFA president Johansson and FIFA chief Sepp Blatter, discussed a range of footballing issues here with European Members of Parliament.

The talks included the repercussions of last week's events when Leeds fans - Christopher Loftus and Kevin Speight - were murdered following violent clashes in Istanbul on the eve of the first leg, which Leeds lost 2-0.

"There are Turks all over the place in Europe and they will, one way or the other, get to the game," Johansson told BBC Radio.

"I predict there will be no problems in Leeds when Galatasaray go and that we can keep things well under control inside the stadium."

"Although what happened in Istanbul is significant for us, we will do our utmost to do everything we can and not give in."

Leeds chairman Peter Ridsdale is determined the Turkish club's fans should not travel because he believes it is his club that will suffer the consequences.

"We would get the blame if anything happened," said Ridsdale. "Let's not forget that two people were murdered in Istanbul last week. Tensions are running very high."

"I'm not trying to do this to get back at Galatasaray. We're genuinely trying to take a responsible attitude and provide a safe environment for a football match to take place."

Should UEFA perform a dramatic about turn and decide the game will go ahead at a neutral venue, then Ridsdale will think twice about his team playing in the return.

Lewis loses WBA belt

NEW YORK, Apr 13: A US federal judge stripped heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis of his World Boxing Association (WBA) title on Wednesday for agreeing to fight Michael Grant instead of the higher-ranked John Ruiz, reports Reuters.

Judge Lewis Kaplan's ruling in New York is not likely to affect the April 29 Lewis-Grant fight at New York's Madison Square Garden.

Lewis, who won the undisputed heavyweight titles from Evander Holyfield last November, still holds the World Boxing Council and International Boxing Federation titles.

The court ruling means that the June 10 fight between Holyfield and Ruiz will be for the vacant WBA title. It also means that promoter Don King is back in the heavyweight picture because he promotes both Holyfield and Ruiz.

Cup Winners' Cup Shimizu S-Pulse book final berth

CHAIANG MAI, Thailand, Apr 13: Japan's Shimizu S-Pulse notched a 4-2 victory over Bangkok Bank on Thursday in a penalty shootout after playing to a scoreless tie in the first semifinal tie of the 10th Asian Cup Winners' Cup Tournament, reports AP.

Bangkok Bank failed to take advantage of their greater number of scoring opportunities in the first half, while Shimizu gained momentum in the second half but also failed to notch a goal.

A 30-minute extra-time period also went scoreless, setting up a penalty shootout.

Alternating shots between teams, with Shimizu going first, four of the Japanese - Masaaki Sawanobori, Ryozi Morioka, Teruyoshi Ito and Alessandro Dos Santos, a Brazilian native - hit the mark.

For Bangkok Bank only two players - Apichat Thevechalermdit and Amarit Eakwong - were on target, leaving Shimizu with the win.

Shimizu will play for the championship on Saturday against the winner of the other semifinal match, between Novokhor of Uzbekistan and Al-Zawra of Iraq, who were tied 1-1 after the first half.

Novokhor was a late replacement for Al-Ahli of Saudi Arabia, which dropped out of the tournament at the final stage.

Bindra drops a bombshell



NEW DELHI, Apr 13: The Indian cricket board hushed up information that three Indian Test players were betting against their own team, a senior official revealed here on Thursday, reports AFP.

Inderjit Bindra, former president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), said three players were reported to the board over the last few years but no action was taken.

"Between 1996 and 2000, the BCCI was told repeatedly that three players were indulging in betting, but the matter was glossed over," Bindra said in a television programme to be telecast on Saturday.

Two tour managers and one coach had also mentioned in their reports that some players were taking part in unlawful activities.

"Every Indian board member knows about the identity of the players, it's no secret."

Bindra, who was president of the BCCI from 1993-96, however declined to name the players.

"It's better if the current administration speaks on the subject," Bindra said.

"In 1996, I came to know that some players were betting on matches."

"I immediately hauled them up and warned them to desist from such activities. But it went on."

Bindra's revelations come as

the cricketing world was still reeling from the sacking of South African skipper Hansie Cronje after he admitted providing information to Indian bookmakers.

Bindra, meanwhile, joined



INDERJIT BINDRA

another former BCCI president, N.K.P. Salve, in asking the current regime to conduct an independent probe by the government's investigating agency.

"The board should ask the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to probe the whole gamut of allegations about match-fixing in some of the off-shore tournaments India is participating in," Bindra told the

Times of India newspaper.

Till an independent inquiry clears these venues of all the charges, India must stop playing there," he said.

The Times of India also reported Thursday that BCCI president A.C. Muttiah had told former all-rounder Manoj Prabhakar to "desist from casting aspersions against anyone unless he is prepared to name him and substantiate the charge."

Prabhakar alleged in a magazine article three years ago that an unnamed teammate offered him 25,000 dollars to play poorly in a one-day match in 1994.

The BCCI conducted its own inquiry under former Supreme Court chief justice Yashwant Chandrachud, who absolved Indian players of the charge in the absence of any evidence.

International Cricket Council president Jagmohan Dalmiya, a former BCCI secretary himself, summoned Muttiah and other officials to Calcutta on Tuesday to discuss the issue.

Federal sports minister Sukhbir Dhindsa has also called for a separate meeting with Indian cricket officials on April 27.

Meanwhile, South African cricket chief Ali Bacher and ICC chief executive David Richards will attend a special meeting convened by Dalmiya in Calcutta on Monday to take stock of the match-fixing scandal the Times of India reported.

Indian govt gets involved



NEW DELHI, Apr 13: New Delhi police insisted Wednesday they had a strong case against disgraced South African cricket captain Hansie Cronje as the government formally backed detectives investigating the match-fixing scandal, reports AFP.

"Our investigations are continuing and we have built up a very strong case," said police spokesman Ravi Pawar, as a third suspect, Kishan Kumar, denied any betting links with two Indian bookies who were allegedly in contact with Cronje.

Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani on Wednesday for the first time extended his government's formal support to Crime Branch detectives, who had initially courted international outrage for pointing a finger at Cronje.

"The Delhi Police have done the right thing and not committed any mistake on the issue," Advani told reporters in the central city of Indore.

"The fear that the Delhi Police acted in haste, does not stand in the event of Cronje's admission on the issue," he said, adding: "The whole country, specially those who are

great admirers of this game, are worried over the issue. The game has suffered because of this."

A top police source, meanwhile, said a crime branch team in Bombay was investigating possible links between the Cronje case and Dubai-based Bombay underworld don Dawood Ibrahim - wanted in India for more than a 100 crimes.

"We expect some arrests to take place in Bombay," he said.

It was the New Delhi police who triggered the scandal, when they announced Friday that they had filed charges against Cronje and three teammates for fixing matches during last month's one-day series against India.

The United Cricket Board of South Africa sacked Cronje on Tuesday, saying he had admitted to accepting 10,000 to 15,000 dollars in cash but only for providing information and forecasts on matches.

Cronje later said he had held talks with contacts but received any financial reward, and he refuted all charges relating to actual match-fixing.

Board chief Ali Bacher said the board did not know whether the money handed to Cronje related to the January-February series here between South Africa, England and Zimbabwe,

or South Africa's tour of India in February and March.

Meanwhile, South African High Commissioner to India Maite Nkomo-Mashabane said Wednesday that Pretoria was willing to cooperate in any way with the police here.

"We are still waiting to hear what our Indian friends suggest," said Mashabane, who had gone to the foreign ministry on Monday to request access to tapes of alleged telephone conversations between Cronje and the bookmakers here and in London.

"Of course we are willing to cooperate. This is why we have asked for this information, because we think it's vital," she said.

The Indian sports ministry on Wednesday also offered all help to the police and called cricket skipper Saurav Ganguly and coach Kapil Dev for a meeting later this week.

The Sowetan newspaper in South Africa quoted foreign ministry sources Wednesday as saying any decision on Cronje's extradition to face the charges in India would be up to President Thabo Mbeki.

Crickets world governing body, the International Cricket Council, said Wednesday it had ordered a full inquiry into the scandal.

'It's no national crisis'



CAPE TOWN, Apr 13: President Thabo Mbeki's government Wednesday urged South Africans not to treat the match-fixing scandal surrounding sacked cricket captain Hansie Cronje as a "national crisis", nor to fall into a collective depression, reports AFP.

"During discussion in cabinet, the observation was made that as important as this matter may be... it should not be converted into a national crisis," chief government spokesman Joel Netshitenzhe told reporters after the bi-weekly cabinet meeting here.

"It must be dealt with by the sporting community, it is not a national political crisis at all," he added.

"It is necessary in South Africa not to hype ourselves to the extent that (we believe) South Africa is collapsing, that there are serious problems, and

go into a depression as a nation."

"It does happen that individuals make mistakes from time to time," Netshitenzhe added. "We must take it in our stride."

He said that Mbeki, currently attending the South Summit in Cuba, had been briefed on Cronje's admission Tuesday that he had accepted 10,000 to 15,000 dollars in cash from a bookmaker for providing information and forecasts on cricket matches.

"The President, like the nation as a whole, is worried that such allegations will impact on our image abroad. He is concerned that no stone be left unturned to get to the bottom of this affair."

Earlier, Mbeki's spokesman, Parks Mankahlana, told the South African Press Association (SAPA) news agency that the President had been disappointed at Cronje's admission.

"It's very disappointing. The President shares that disap-

pointment with everyone," Mankahlana said.

Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad told reporters that the cabinet was keen to set up a judicial commission of inquiry into the scandal as soon as possible.

"It's the government's intention that we don't delay this matter longer than is necessary," Pahad said. "It is impacting on very many aspects of South Africa's image abroad."

Pahad said the probe would investigate all aspects of the scandal, including the possibility that international gaming syndicates may be operating in South Africa.

Sports Ministry spokesman Graham Abrahams earlier told AFP that Sports Minister Ngconde Balfour would meet officials of the United Cricket Board of South Africa (UCB) in Cape Town on Thursday to discuss terms of reference for the probe.

'Story is incomplete'



LONDON, Apr 13: England captain Nasser Hussain says only half the story of the scandal in South Africa has come to light, reports Reuters.

Hussain told BBC Television on Wednesday he was shocked to hear that sacked South African captain Hansie Cronje had admitted taking money from a bookmaker.

"I've got to know Hansie very well during the course of the winter," said Hussain, who led England on their recent tour of South Africa and Zimbabwe.

"However, only half the story has come out. Perhaps he's been unfortunate or perhaps he's done something more sinister. It's been a very bad week for cricket if that's the case."

"It's more than just an admission, but who it comes from still seems unbelievable."

England's victory at Centurion Park, Pretoria, in the first test of their 2-1 series defeat to South Africa has come under scrutiny from investigators probing match-fixing allegations.

The January test ended in high drama after the middle three days had been washed out. At Cronje's suggestion both cap-

tains forfeited an innings to make it possible to avoid a draw.

In the event England won by two wickets in a match hailed at the time as a ground-breaking result for cricket. Cronje was praised for his bold stance. South Africa won the series 2-1.



NASSER HUSSAIN

"When I finish my career I don't want to think that whenever we have won a match it's because somebody took a bung," Hussain said.

Hussain said it was very easy for the captain of a cricket team

to influence the result of match.

"As a captain it's very easy to fix things," he said. "You are in charge of the game and tactically all the decisions are yours."

"As a batsman it's even easier. How do you decide whether someone had a bad day or they got out on purpose?" The England captain said he had never offered money to throw a game. "I've heard the rumours, but luckily the England cricket team don't play that much in Asia where the problems seem at their worst."

"Since the allegations first surfaced, the England cricket board are always reminding us to be careful."

Cronje admitted on Tuesday he had accepted up to \$15,000 from a local South African and an Indian bookmaker during a triangular one-day series with England and Zimbabwe in January.

Cronje, who has denied any involvement in match-fixing but admits providing information and forecasts, was sacked as captain on Wednesday.

England teammates Herschelle Gibbs, Nicky Boje and Pieter Strydom were charged by Indian police last week with "cheating, fraud and criminal conspiracy" during a one-day series in India last month.

Hansie on web game

JOHANNESBURG, Apr 13: Fans who have not abandoned disgraced former South African cricket captain Hansie Cronje can bowl him out of a New Delhi jail in a website game, reports Reuters.

"We felt that we needed something to lift South African spirits after the shock admissions by Hansie on Tuesday and thought a game in which the public can help Hansie would be the best option," said John Kuhn, spokesman for the website.

Cronje loyalists can log onto www.gal.co.za and throw cricket balls at the wall of a jail cell, while a tiny version of "I want to break free" by British rock band Queen blares out of the computer speakers.

But if the player fails to hit the wall enough times in the allocated time, the wall stays up. Cronje stays in jail and South African Sports Minister Ngconde Balfour pops onto the screen and starts crying "Oh, Hansie, my captain, my captain".

Kiwi cricketers recuperating

WELLINGTON, Apr 13: Three New Zealand cricketers with back injuries, including pacer Geoff Allott, should be recovered in time for the Singapore triangular series in August, New Zealand Cricket said on Thursday, reports Reuters.

All-rounder Dion Nash, medium-fast bowler Geoff Allott and spin bowler Daniel Vettori are all recovering well, New Zealand team spokesman Gilbert Enoka said in a statement.

Allott, 28, withdrew from the team after taking 20 wickets in nine matches at the World Cup last year and Enoka said his injury was the most serious of the three.

Geoff has a difficult fracture to manage but we are hopeful he will be back bowling at full pace and available for selection by the time the team is named to go to Singapore and Africa in August, Enoka said.

"The medical experts have told Geoff to begin a careful build-up programme and they will be monitoring him closely to make sure he's not doing any further damage."

The Singapore tri-series, starting on August 20, pits New Zealand against India and South Africa.

Nash, 28, who missed the recent series against Australia because of a stress fracture and has suffered career-threatening back injuries before, is now on a full build-up programme, said Enoka.

Vettori, 21, who missed the final test against Australia last month, has been diagnosed with a less serious injury than the stress fracture first feared.

Indian firm buys cricket telecast rights for ME

BOMBAY, Apr 13: Indian entertainment company B4U has bought the cricket telecast rights from India and Pakistan for the Middle East, officials said Thursday, reports AFP.

"We have got the Middle East telecast rights for all international matches played from now on in India and Pakistan for the next five years," chairman Kishore Lulla told this news agency.

Lulla said the Middle East cricket telecast would be in partnership with the private Gulf-based ART television network.

Lulla declined to provide financial details of the transaction, but said B4U had bought the rights from UK-based sports promotion company TWI.

Most Indians and Pakistanis are passionate about cricket, which has the status of the national game in both countries.

Cricket is also avidly followed in the Middle East which has a sizeable South Asian population.

Zimbabwe's tour of England on

LONDON, Apr 13: English cricket officials said on Thursday this summer's tour by Zimbabwe would go ahead as planned despite the political problems in the southern African country, reports Reuters.

"In the light of the current political situation in Zimbabwe we have discussed the Zimbabwe cricket team's forthcoming tour to England with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Zimbabwe Cricket Union," Simon Pack, international teams director of the England Cricket Board, said.

"All parties are agreed that the tour can go ahead as planned and we look forward to welcoming the team to this country for their first tour later this month."

Zimbabwe will play two tests and take part in a triangular one-day series with England and West Indies.

Thousands of veterans of Zimbabwe's independence war have occupied between 500 and 1,000 farms in support of President Robert Mugabe's call for the redistribution of land from whites to blacks who were stripped of land under British colonial rule.



Former South African captain Hansie Cronje, who was sacked on Tuesday for his involvement in a match-fixing scandal, can still claim to have admirers as two of them are wishing him during the first one-day international against Australia in Durban on Wednesday.

Imran fears for cricket

KARACHI, Apr 13: Former Pakistan cricket hero Imran Khan warned on Wednesday that the game of cricket would face further disgrace if an extensive inquiry was not launched into match-fixing practices, reports AFP.

"A worldwide inquiry has to be the only solution otherwise the game may lose the respect it has earned in a hundred years," Imran told this news agency.

"The future of the game is at stake."

"The respective boards should not support the accused players like Hansie Cronje was initially supported by South African Board until his confession," he said.

Imran's reaction came after South African captain Cronje Tuesday shocked the cricketing world by admitting he was not "entirely fair" with his country's cricket board.

Cronje was reported to have told the managing director of United Cricket Board of South Africa (UCBSA) that he took between 10,000 and 15,000 dollars for providing information to bookmakers during January's tri-series competition in South Africa.

"This new episode reveals that match-fixing is common in all teams; previously they were happy throwing muck on Pakistan and India alone," Imran said.

"South Africa has been considered as one of the most professional sides in the international cricket. If any player

from their team falls from the grace then there is definitely some thing very seriously wrong," said Imran, 47.

Indian police on Friday filed criminal charges against Cronje and three other South African players for fixing matches in the one-day series held in India last month.

Imran played alongside Cronje when Pakistan won the 1992 World Cup in Australia.

"He comes as one of the most respected cricketers and if he is involved then there is something very dangerous going on," Imran said.

Cronje was sacked as captain and his contract with the UCBSA suspended.

"Shane Warne and Mark Waugh confessed that they passed on information in 1994 but now a question mark hangs on Australian team as to how much were they involved," the cricketer-turned-politician said.

"Even talking to a bookie is a crime and all involved must be banned for life."

Imran lashed out at Pakistan authorities for holding on to a match-fixing inquiry report conducted by Lahore High Court judge Malik Mohammad Qayyum.

"Why they are holding the inquiry (report) is hard to understand. It should have been made public so that the truth comes out," he said.

Imran appeared before the inquiry commission in 1998 and said match-fixing existed in cricket, but he gave no evidence.

Pakistan initiated an inquiry in September 1998 in which some 60 former cricketers, officials and others testified. No action has so far been taken on the report's findings.

Judge Qayyum had reportedly said former Pakistan captain Wasim Akram, Salim Malik and Mushtaq Ahmed were engaged in match-fixing.

IMRAN KHAN

Seles, Pierce advance



AMELIA ISLAND, Florida, Apr 13: Gaining steam as the night wore on, Monica Seles beat and Lomb title defence with a 7-6, 6-0 victory over Anna Smashnova on Wednesday, reports AP.

The third-seeded Seles played evenly with the 40th ranked player in the world Wednesday until the first-set tiebreaker, which she started with an ace, continued with a pair of backhand winners and closed with a 7-0 shutout.

Seles lost only seven points in the 16-minute second set. The fifth game was most impressive. Teasing off on Smashnova's serve, Seles hit three straight winners that left her opponent rolling her eyes and looking skyward in confusion.

"I didn't want to have another long set," Seles said. "I just said, try to step up your game and go for your shots. If you lose, at least lose that way. Don't lose playing something that's her game or not my game."

Seles' game included serves over the 160 kph (100-mph) mark and an array of service returns that barely allowed Smashnova to get into the points.

The nine-time Grand Slam champion showed no ill effects from an ankle injury that bothered her at the Ericsson Open two weeks ago. She lost 6-0, 6-0 to Martina Hingis in the semifinal and left the court to boos from a normally adoring crowd.

But this is a new week, a new season. And Seles overcame some early awkwardness to look right at home in this, the first clay-court tournament of the year.

"It's such a difference moving to this compared to the hard courts," said Seles, who hadn't been on the clay in eight months before this week. "It takes time to adjust for everybody. I mean, we're humans just like everybody else."

Top-seeded Mary Pierce had little trouble in her first match on clay, either. She overpowered Tracy Singland 6-1, 6-3.

Also advancing to the round of 16 were 14th-seeded Silvija Talaja, who beat Alexandra Stevenson 4-6, 6-2, 6-2; 10th-

seeded Amanda Coetzer, who defeated Magui Serna 6-4, 6-4; 15th-seeded Chanda Rubin, who beat Anastasia Myskina 6-1, 3-6, 6-4; and sixth-seeded Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario, who beat Tara Snyder 6-4, 0-6, 6-4.

There were a few mild upsets: Patty Schnyder defeated fifth-seeded Sandrine Testud 7-6 (4), 7-6 (0). Nicole Pratt beat 11th-seeded Al Sugiyama 6-1, 7-5, and 16th-seeded Lisa Raymond fell to Sonya Jeyaseelan 6-4, 6-4.

Jeyaseelan upset Venus Williams early in this tournament last year. On Thursday, she'll play a round-of-16 match against Paola Suarez, who knocked Serena Williams out Tuesday night.

Pierce's match took just over an hour and would have been shorter had Singland, the 198th-ranked player in the world, not started bombing serves in at more than 160 kph (100 mph) to extend the second set.

Even that didn't prove too big a problem for Pierce, who won this tournament two years ago and has become something of a fan favorite at Amelia Island Plantation.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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