

BCCI decides to get tougher

CALCUTTA, India, Apr 19: Indian cricket chiefs responded to the match-fixing controversy which has rocked the sport by deciding to draw up a strict code of conduct for their players on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has assured it will formulate a code of conduct for its players and implement the same as soon as possible," said a statement from International Cricket Council (ICC) president Jagmohan Dalmiya on Tuesday.

Dalmiya's statement came after a meeting between the ICC and the BCCI on the match-fixing crisis.

It said the BCCI would direct all its present and former office bearers, members, players, officials, coaches and managers to subject themselves to a Delhi police enquiry.

The BCCI is to ask the government to provide proper security for those wishing to disclose facts relating to match-fixing, the statement said.

It said the ICC welcomed the BCCI's suggestion to draw up a code of conduct.

The statement added that in the meantime the ICC suggested guidelines under which "it will be an obligation on the part of the players to report to the team managers any approach made to them by bookmakers, or knowledge of reports relating to other players."

The ICC also suggested that failure to make such a report would be a punishable offence, and any player found guilty of accepting money from a bookmaker would be punished.

...the penalty will be exemplary including a sizeable suspension and that the season will be made public," the statement added.

It also said the findings of a probe into allegations of match-fixing two years ago would be tabled in parliament, put on the Internet and a copy of the report provided to Delhi police.

Hansie Cronje and South African team mates Herschelle Gibbs, Pieter Strydom and Nicky Boje have been charged by Indian police with match-fixing during a one-day series between India and South Africa last month. They have denied the accusations.

Cronje was subsequently sacked as South Africa captain after admitting taking between \$10,000 and \$15,000 from a bookmaker for information and forecasting during a triangular one-day series against Zimbabwe and England in South Africa last January.

Bindra's appeal

NEW DELHI, Apr 19: Cricket players around the world are involved in match-fixing, a former chief of India's cricket board said Wednesday, urging honesty from the sports officials in dealing with a widening scandal, reports AP.

"Cricketers from all parts of the world are involved in (match fixing) in one way or the other," Indrajit Singh Bindra told reporters. But he didn't name any players.

Indian police have produced purported phone conversations and charged former South African captain Cronje and his teammates Herschelle Gibbs, Nicky Boje and Pieter Strydom with fraud, conspiracy and deceiving and defrauding spectators. Cronje admitted receiving about 10,000 dollars and said he had "forecast" some matches, but denied fixing them.

The scandal has shaken up India's cricket establishment, provoking widespread demand that Indian players and officials also be investigated. An Indian film actor and a businessman have been arrested in the scandal involving Cronje and are lodged in the high-security Tihar prison.

Police are also investigating the role of other bookies. "I hope and pray that the officials of the Indian board act with fortitude, courage and honesty keeping in mind the practical problems and difficulties they are presently facing," Bindra said in a statement.

"Total transparency and willingness to expose oneself for accountability is the need of the hour for the board and board officials. The same also applies to the International Cricket Council and its officials," he said.

No Davenport for a month

NEW YORK, Apr 19: Top-ranked Lindsay Davenport will be sidelined for another month due to a foot injury, thus delaying the start of her clay court season leading to the French Open, the only Grand Slam she has not won, reports AFP.

"It's pretty tough," Davenport said. "I hurt the top of my foot in the semi-finals in Miami. I still can't put weight on it. Hopefully, it will be ready to go in another month or so but I don't know what to expect."

The 23-year-old American expects to be ready to play on the red clay at Roland Garros, but likely will only have one tune-up, in Madrid or Strasbourg, in the week before the French Open begins in Paris May 29.

Davenport, who replaced Swiss teen Martina Hingis atop the rankings earlier this month, has made considerable adjustments to her game in the past few weeks.

"I have been trying to hit more topspin to cut down on my errors," she said. "You have to be more patient on clay and be much more consistent with your shots."



A Leeds United fan removing flowers, which were put up by club supporters in memory of the two killed in Turkey on April 5, from outside the Elland Road Stadium yesterday ahead of today's UEFA Cup semi-final second leg match between Leeds and Galatasaray. — AFP photo

UEFA Cup semi-final second legs

Battle takes a back seat



PARIS, April 19: Thursday night's UEFA Cup semi-final, second leg matches have paled into insignificance since the deaths of two English supporters in Turkey two weeks ago, reports AFP.

Leeds trail 2-0 to Galatasaray with the Elland Road leg in England to come and Arsenal have a slender 1-0 lead to protect at the Felix-Bollaert stadium in Lens.

The deaths of two English supporters and the diplomatic repercussions between British and Turkish governments and their respective football officials have made the on-pitch events of little relevance.

British and Turkish authorities are crossing their fingers that there are no more incidents like the ones in Istanbul on April 5 when 40-year-old Kevin Speight and Christopher Loftus, 36, were stabbed to death in a brawl.

Galatasaray coach Fatih Terim said he expected no trouble during the match will go ahead amid heavy security measures. "I believe the return game will be played in a secure atmosphere. I have no doubts over it," Terim told a news conference.

The game will be played without any Turkish spectators under a UEFA ruling over security fears.

The Istanbul-based club had previously demanded the game to be moved to a neutral ground on the grounds that Elland Road offered players very little protection from possible reprisal attacks from Leeds fans.

But the Galatasaray coach

appeared to have shed his fears over the proximity of British supporters to the pitch at the Leeds' home ground.

"I wish Ali Sami Yen (Galatasaray's home stadium) was like that. It changes the atmosphere of the game. Anyway, football games in Britain are generally played without incidents," Terim said.

West Yorkshire Police have also advised Galatasaray supporters to stay away from Leeds as the Turkish club announced they would be travelling with 11 members of an anti-terrorist squad.

Interior Minister Sadettin Tantan confirmed the special force would travel after a request from Galatasaray.

Assistant Chief Constable Paul Garvin said: "Our advice to Turkish fans is not to attend the match. We hope people will heed our advice."

"Turkish supporters have no ability to buy legitimate tickets, so they have no reason to go to the ground other than for potential trouble and to risk injury to themselves. We would encourage Galatasaray fans not to travel."

"We are working closely with Leeds United. We want to see the match on Thursday go ahead safely."

Meanwhile UEFA have entrusted one of their youngest referees to officiate at this high-security match.

Slovakian schoolteacher Lubos Michel, 31, is the man who must keep order as Leeds bid to recover their deficit.

Although he has never refereed either side before, Michel is a well-known face to British supporters.

He was criticised by Arsenal for failing to dismiss Gabriel Batistuta for a nasty challenge on Lee Dixon when Fiorentina

defeated the Gunners at Wembley in the Champions League earlier this season.

Most recently he took charge of Manchester United's 0-0 draw in Valencia last month and was also the man in the middle when the Spanish side beat Rangers in the first group matches of the competition last September.

Meanwhile Leeds played Arsenal on Sunday in a controversial Premiership clash. Leeds, reduced to 10 men when Ian Harte was sent off in the 44th minute, suffered their sixth successive defeat - and a 4-0 their worst for three years.

Arsenal, in such stark contrast, made it seven straight wins to leapfrog above United into the third and last Champions League place.

Lee Dixon could consider himself lucky to have stayed on the pitch however after clearly striking Harry Kewell on the face just half-way.

Arsenal only have Dennis Bergkamp's second minute goal as a cushion in Lens but should they go through it would be their first European final since 1995 when they lost to Real Zaragoza in the Cup Winners Cup.

Lens midfielder Jocelyn Blanchard, who injured his knee in a clash with Arsenal's Emmanuel Petit in the first leg, will not feature and Lens official Didier Senac said he would be undergoing tests on Friday to discover the extent of the damage.

Apart from Cyril Rool, unavailable for several weeks with a groin injury, Lens are at full strength. Alex Nyarko, who had a slight knee problem and Olivier Dacourt, who had a muscular injury, are set to be in the squad.

Champs sent packing



MONTE CARLO, Apr 19: Gustavo Kuerten, the former world number one, had lost his first match here three times in the previous four years -- but the Russian made no mistake in downing his friend and doubles partner Daniel Vacek of the Czech Republic 6-3, 6-3.

Kuerten scored his 14th win in 18 meetings with Vacek and he was always in command after recovering from a slow start that saw him trail 1-3 in the first set. The victory -- his first in four clay court contests this year -- took him just 62min.

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Irani greeting for Warne

CHELMSFORD, England, Apr 19: Shane Warne was hit out of the ground by Ronnie Irani and returned figures of 0-44 on his county debut for Hampshire on Wednesday, reports AP.

At least it didn't rain. The Australian leg-spinner's long awaited first appearance came in the Benson and Hedges Cup one-day competition against Essex and the local team didn't give him much joy at Chelmsford.

Irani, a one-time England allrounder, struck Warne for a huge six out of the ground. It went so far that the umpires had to call for a replacement ball.

The blow meant that Warne's first eight overs cost 31 runs while Stephen Peters, a 21-year-old not yet capped by Essex, came up with a reverse sweep to hit the famous leg-spinner for four.

With Irani hitting 50 and Peters 43 off 42 balls, Essex recovered from 72 for four to 201 for nine with the Hampshire reply to come later.

Gibbs partied that night

CAPE TOWN, Apr 19: South African opening batsman Herschelle Gibbs has admitted he soiled his pants at a Cape Town nightclub on the day he put in a dismal performance in the second of three one-day matches against Australia last week, reports AFP.

Gibbs, named by Indian police as one of four South African players allegedly involved in match-fixing, said his partying before the Friday match at Newlands here had "nothing to do with anybody."

"I don't have anything further to say," Gibbs told the Cape Argus newspaper Tuesday. "I was at the nightclub and it has got nothing to do with anybody else."

Gibbs made just five runs in the match, which Australia, the current world one-day champions, won by five wickets, leaving the series tied one-all.

The tournament was finally clinched by South Africa on Sunday with a four-wicket win.

South African cricket's convener of selectors Rushdie Magid declined to comment beyond saying that management never imposed curfews before a match.

Gibbs has vehemently denied being involved in match-fixing during South Africa's tour of India earlier this year.

South African captain Hansie Cronje was sacked a week ago after he confessed to having taken what turned out to be 8,200 dollars for providing information and forecasts.

He denied ever being involved in match-fixing.

Brett Lee can bowl faster!

SYDNEY, Apr 19: Australia's pace bowling sensation Brett Lee believes he can bowl even quicker deliveries than the ones he unleashed in the final one-day international against South Africa in Johannesburg last Sunday, reports AFP.

In an exceptionally quick second spell, Lee sent down two deliveries to Jonty Rhodes and Mark Boucher which registered 156 kilometres per hour on the speed gun at the Wanderers ground.

They were the fastest balls of the international season and the quickest recorded since Australian tearaway Jeff Thomson nudged the 100 mph (160 kmh) barrier in the mid-1970s.

"He (Brett Lee) said after the game he reckons he can go quicker than that," said Lee's brother and Australian all-rounder Shane at Sydney Airport Wednesday.

Brett Lee climaxed an impressive rookie season at international level by taking 3-32 in Australia's final match of a long and gruelling campaign.

Australia will not return to action until August when they play South Africa in three matches in indoors at Colonial Stadium in Melbourne.

"We've got about three months off now. It's been a long hectic season, especially for the guys who have played Test and one-dayers, so it will be a well deserved break. It's been a good 18 months for Australian cricket," Shane Lee said as the Australian team arrived home from South Africa.

Glenn relishing the prospect

WORCESTER, England, Apr 19: Australian pace bowler Glenn McGrath claimed Tuesday he was hoping to be used sparingly in the English County Championship by his new employers Worcestershire, reports AFP.

Apart from a short break just before the World Cup last summer McGrath has been in continuous action for two years, he told the Press Association on arriving to start the season with the Pears.

McGrath said: "I've basically been going two years on the road now. I had just a short break after last summer's World Cup -- but to be honest the body feels great."

"If I bowl well enough, then we won't have to worry about over-bowling me! But in all seriousness I'm sure in chats with Graeme Hick (Worcestershire captain) we'll work out the best way to bowl me."

Lewis appears before ECB

British police to inquire



LONDON, Apr 19: Scotland Yard confirmed Wednesday that they are to probe allegations of cricket match-fixing following revelations made by England all-rounder Chris Lewis, reports AFP.

The development comes after the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said that they have passed information they received Tuesday from Lewis to the police.

Lewis had a two-and-a-half-hour meeting with the sport's chiefs over his claims in the News of the World newspaper that he had heard of three England players involved in match-fixing.

"We are liaising with the ECB as part of our ongoing inquiry. Any information passed or made available to police will be considered as appropriate," a Scotland Yard spokeswoman said.

Lewis said in the article that sports promoter Ashim Kheterpal had told him the "famous" trio had accepted money to influence the result of matches, but he refused to identify them.

After receiving legal advice and taking his solicitor with him to the meeting with ECB international teams director Simon Pack and Gerard Elias QC, chairman of the disciplinary

committee, Lewis elected to break his vow of silence.

"Mr Lewis indicated his desire to continue to co-operate fully with the Board and has put all information in his possession into the hands of the Board," an ECB spokesman said.

Lewis' earlier silence prompted a wave of criticism from leading figures like Darren Gough, Angus Fraser and Raymond Illingworth, who all urged him to come clean and help preserve the diminishing integrity of the game.

The allegations link English cricket with the murky world of match-fixing and illegal betting, a problem which had previously been largely associated with the sub-continent and one-day tournaments in Toronto and Sharjah.

Police are still investigating Lewis' claims that last September he had been approached as an intermediary for the England team to influence the result of a Test during last summer's series against New Zealand, although after interviewing all the players involved they have cleared them of any wrongdoing.

His allegations last weekend, however, are far more sinister and leave the whole of English cricket, players and officials alike, under suspicion until the investigation is completed.

His claims will also form part of the worldwide inquiry implemented by the International Cricket Council, the world's governing body, at an emergency meeting of their executive board at Lord's on May 2 and 3.

As a result, the Board is passing this information to the police. At the same time, the Board will continue its investigations with a view to determining whether evidence exists in relation to betting and match-fixing which might justify disciplinary action under the Board's regulations.

Chris Lewis

Two attendants flank Euro 2000 mascot 'Benelucky' during the presentation of official clothes for the championships at Ajax Arena, Amsterdam on April 18. — AFP photo



Two attendants flank Euro 2000 mascot 'Benelucky' during the presentation of official clothes for the championships at Ajax Arena, Amsterdam on April 18. — AFP photo

Belgrade in search of peace



they got a marathon? With Belgrade, the question is, how do they manage to have one, given the problems they have encountered over the past decade.

The city, bombed by NATO last year, is preparing for the 13th edition of the gruelling race after last year's event coincided with the devastating attacks from NATO.

Even then, the organisers decided to go ahead with a symbolic version of their race, and a group of fifty runners, some of whom had come from countries across Europe, ran together for the 42.195 kilometres, while a couple of thousand citizens competed in the five kilometre fun-run.

This year's event on Saturday attempts to get back to as close to normality as anything can be in a Belgrade still under sanctions.

Race director Dejan Nikolic told AFP: "We felt that we had to make a gesture last year, and we

were surprised and pleased that so many people just turned up."

"Obviously, with the sanctions, we are still not on as firm a basis as we would like, but at least we have maintained the race in the face of incredible odds, and we can only expect things to get better."

After Kenya swept the men's and women's event in Boston with victories for Elijah Lagat and Catherine Ndereba respectively, as well as Tegla Lorup's London victory in the women's event, the Kenyans are out in force again.

Jimmy Muindi winner of December's Honolulu Marathon is the favourite coming second in the 1998 Belgrade event just ahead of surprise Commonwealth champion, Thabiso Mqhal of Lesotho, who also lines up again.

There will be much interest in how Lameck Aguta fares. The Kenyan won the Boston Marathon in 1997, then suffered an horrific car crash on Kenya's dangerous roads shortly afterwards.

He has taken almost two years to get back on the roads, and after a few shorter races takes on the marathon for the

first time, saying that he "would like to run 2:08, 2:09".

Given that the course record is 2:12:27, set in 1994, by Russia's Vladimir Bukhanov, Aguta is not the only one who would be pleased by such a time.

Laurence Pele of South Africa, seventh in London in 1997, is the fastest man on paper (2:09:10), but Stephen Rugut, winner in Carpi last year, and Paul Yego, winner in Sao Paulo and Cancun, will be among the several Kenyans aiming to keep the title in East Africa (98 winner was Reuben Chebutich).

This year's Belgrade Marathon is also the Balkan Championships, one of the oldest in the world, dating back to 1929. With runners from nine countries, including Bosnia Herzegovina and Macedonia.

The women's race will be closely contested, with Yugoslav champion and record holder, Suzana Ciric, a four-time winner facing the 1994 champion, Cristina Pomacu from Romania.

Despite the problems in Belgrade, overall total prize money is just short of 100,000 dollars, with 15,000 dollars to the men's winner and 10,000 dollars to first woman.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer