

Braschi to referee Champions League final

PARIS, May 23: Italy's Stefano Braschi was chosen Monday to referee the European Champions League final which takes place on Wednesday night, said a spokesperson for European football's governing body UEFA on Monday, reports AP.

The final, between rival Spanish sides Valencia and Real Madrid, will be held at the Stade de France in Paris.

He will be assisted by three fellow Italians, Gennaro Mazzei and Piergiuseppe Farnetti will have the roles of assistant referees while Domenico Messina will act as the fourth referee.

Theodore Theodoridis of Greece will be the UEFA delegate for the final and Dutchman Leonardus van der Kroft has been assigned the job as referee's assessor.

Braschi is considered to be the best Italian referee along with Pierluigi Collina.

At 43 years old, he has been refereeing since 1974 and has been officiating in international matches since 1996.

Killing of Leeds fans Five stand trial in Istanbul

ISTANBUL, May 23: Five Turks stood trial on Tuesday in the stabbing deaths of two British soccer fans, but faced lowered sentences after the prosecutor said they were provoked by Leeds United supporters, reports AP.

The Turks face between nine and 15 years in prison if convicted of killing Christopher Loftus and Kevin Speight in violent street clashes in downtown Istanbul on April 5, the night before Leeds United played Turkey's Galatasaray in a UEFA Cup game.

ICC asks

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Sri Lanka and the pair were subsequently fined.

Malik was clearly stung by the Australian reaction.

"Instead of questioning the paper's credibility they are questioning my credibility," he said.

"Just wait for a few days more and every question will be answered."

The latest allegations come just a month after the International Cricket Council announced tough new measures aimed at eliminating corruption which has tarnished the game's image.

They include the setting up of an independent Corruption Investigation Agency and life bans for any players or officials found guilty of match fixing or betting offences.

But former Test off-spinner Tim May, now head of the Australian Cricketers' Association, has warned that he is considering legal action over the latest claims.

"It's very important that your reputation remains intact. I'm fully aware of that and I say that with a very clean conscience," he said.

Cricket has again been under the microscope since former South African captain Hansie Cronje admitted receiving money from a bookmaker to provide information.

The ICC is awaiting a report from Pakistan following a judicial inquiry into allegations of corruption against players, including Malik.

Bridgetown Test

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ulation catch after batting 149 minutes for 112 balls and eight fours.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at the close on the fifth and final day of the drawn second cricket Test between West Indies and Pakistan at Kensington Oval on Monday:

PAKISTAN: First innings 253 (Yousuf Youhana 115; Courtney Walsh 5-22)

WEST INDIES: First innings 398 (Wavell Hinds 165; Saqlain Mushtaq 5-121)

PAKISTAN: Second innings (overnight 345 for seven)

M Wasim lbw b King 82
Nazir c Adams b King 131
Younis c Jacobs b King 23
Inzamam c and b Walsh 29
Youhana c Adams b McLean 19
Razaq c (sub) Gayle b King 72
Moin b Adams 14
Akram c Hinds b Adams 0
Saqlain b McLean 33
Waqar not out 1
Extras: (lb-4; w-1; nb-10) 15
Total: (For 9 wickets dec in 153.4 overs) 419

Did not bat: Mushtaq Ahmed.

Fall of wickets: 1-219, 2-232, 3-248, 4-294, 5-294, 6-341, 7-341, 8-411, 9-419.

Bowler O M R W
Ambrose 37 16 54 0
Walsh 34 6 102 1
King 29 9 82 4
McLean 23.4 4 113 2
Adams 26 9 51 2
Cpaul 2 0 13 0

WEST INDIES: Second innings
Campbell c (sub) Afridi b Akram 8
Griffith lbw b Waqar 5
Hinds c Moin b Mushtaq 52
Chanderpaul c M Wasim 16
Mushtaq 16
Adams not out 34
Sarwar not out 11
Extras: (lb-1; lb-1; nb-4) 6
Total: (For 4 wickets in 52 overs) 132

To bat: Ridley Jacobs, Nixon McLean, Curtly Ambrose, Reon King, Courtney Walsh.

Fall of wickets: 1-15, 2-15, 3-41, 4-113

Bowler O M R W
Akram 7 1 24 1
Waqar 4 0 14 1
Saqlain 21 12 23 0
Mushtaq 20 5 64 2

Result: Match drawn.
Man-of-the-match: Wavell Hinds.

Real or Valencia?



PARIS, May 23: European football reaches its climax on Wednesday with a celebration of Spanish talent as mighty Real Madrid and lower-profile Valencia compete in the Champions League final at the Stade de France, reports AP.

The tradition of seven-time winners Real Madrid, who need to win to play in the competition next year, squares up against Valencia whose last success on the continent was the 1980 Cup Winners Cup.

Vicente Del Bosque's Madrid side have already beaten last year's finalists Manchester United and Bayern Munich in their last two ties and on paper are favourites against Hector Cuper's men.

Yet the striking power of Claudio Lopez, set to move to Lazio for about 36 million dollars after the final, and the skill and industry of Basque-born skipper Gaizka Mendieta, could tip the balance Valencia's way.

Cuper may introduce 21-year-old defender Gerardo Garcia, due to the suspension of Italy's Amedeo Carboni, or could field Joaquim Bjorklund.

It's certainly been a long season for Valencia who had to qualify from the preliminary rounds.

"I believe we have an equal chance of winning the final," Cuper told Tuesday's France football magazine. The humble and low-profile Cuper, who took Mallorca to the Cup Winners Cup final last season, would become the first Argentine coach to win Europe's premier trophy should Valencia win.

Injury problems have loomed for Madrid concerning four players from their last league game against Real Valladolid.

Hierro, who played in his first match for two months after hamstring problems, has already ruled himself out of the match.

Brazilian striker Savio has a left knee problem. Frenchman Nicolas Anelka took a knock to his right knee and defender Michel Salgado has damage to his right ankle.

Anelka, dubbed Madrid's miracle man on the front page of Tuesday's France Football, took half a season to score a goal, then fell out with his teammates, skipped training to earn a suspension and a huge fine.

Just a month ago he was forced to train on his own after preferring to have a weekend off than prepare for matches. He earned a 45-day ban, which was eventually reduced, and a financial penalty worth about 300,000 dollars.

Yet his goal at Bayern Munich earning Real their final appearance has brought him hero status in the capital city.

At least their other key players in Raul, who scored twice at Old Trafford, and Argentine

midfielder Fernando Redondo, have not picked up any injuries and are set to feature.

Real Madrid president Lorenzo Sanz knows only too well that a small matter of 29 million dollars rides on beating Valencia - the money they would make just by qualifying for next year's Champions League.

The players are also on a 350,000-dollar bonus each in the 80,000-capacity stadium to the north of Paris, according to As newspaper, and defeat would only earn them a quarter of that sum.

It is better to keep calm and it is better if I say nothing to the

agents at the end of their contracts, gave increased power to rich clubs who could afford to pay high wages.

Plus the increased television money in Spain, particularly to Barcelona and Real Madrid, meant again they could attract better players.

Real has a budget of 18 billion pesetas (108.18 million dollars) and a debt estimated at between 25 and 40 billion pesetas according to estimates.

In Spain, football has blanket media coverage. Sporting daily Marca is the best-selling of all Spanish daily newspapers of any category. A new coach at Real Madrid is treated with the

same media coverage as a ministerial appointment by the government.

Barcelona and Real are covered by literally dozens of journalists and a third of television news is football-related.

During this media bombardment, the players, who benefit financially yet suffer from relentless pressure, have their lives continually under the microscope.

That scrutiny will continue for Wednesday's final.

Italy's Stefano Braschi has been chosen to be referee and will be assisted by three fellow Italians. Gennaro Mazzei and Piergiuseppe Farnetti will have the roles of assistant referees, while Domenico Messina will act as the fourth official.

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The demand for tickets has, of course, been phenomenal for both clubs who have each been allocated 17,000.

Police had to intervene on several occasions to calm people down and prevent scuffles as people queued outside Valencia's stadium.

Real Madrid decided to have a draw among the 40,000 of their supporters who requested tickets and there have been long queues at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium to get the forms for the draw.

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Matthaeus' testimonial Maradona off to Munich

HAVANA, May 23: Argentine soccer star Diego Maradona boarded a flight Monday afternoon bound for Frankfurt, Germany, where he will be a guest at Lothar Matthaeus' official farewell game, and airport official confirmed, reports AP.

At 4:45 pm local time (2145 GMT), Maradona boarded Condor Airlines flight N 1196 on a Boeing 767 bound for Frankfurt, said a foreign ministry official assigned to the airport.

Matthaeus will play his official farewell game on Friday in Munich when a world selection faces the German national team. Although it's officially his farewell game, Matthaeus is then slated to travel with Germany to the European Championship, which should be his last major tournament.

Other world soccer stars invited to Friday's game include Rivaldo, David Beckham and Roberto Baggio.

Maradona has been in Cuba since January for treatment for a heart condition and the drug abuse that caused it. Doctors for the former captain of Argentina's national team said that Maradona was fit enough to make the trip, but he must return to Cuba right after the game to resume his treatment.

Matthaeus has described Maradona as the best player of his generation. The two faced each other in the 1986 and 1990 World Cup finals.

They will all attend a week long training camp on the Spanish island Mallorca, starting this Saturday, with the final squad being announced on June 1st.

Hassler, who has 97 caps, last played for his country in July 1998 when Germany were thumped 3-0 by underdogs Croatia and sent home from the World Cup at the quarter final stage with their tails between their legs.

The diminutive 33 year old never ended his international career though, always hoping

to consider naming Kaiserslautern's Mario Basler however, went coolly unheeded. Basler, who was thrown out of Bayern Munich this season for a late night scuffle at a pizzeria when he should have been at home recovering from injury, can now consider his international career under Erich Ribbeck officially over.

Hertha Berlin striker Michael Preetz and Leverkusen winger Oliver Neuville, both regulars in recent times, lost their places and must hope injury strikes a team mate to have a chance. 1860 Munich's Martin Max, who topped the Bundesliga's scoring table this season, has also been placed on call for what would be his debut ap-

pearance.

Bavaria defender Jens Jeremies, who has a broken collar bone, is yet to prove his fitness.

"The key to my choosing the squad was having alternatives for every position so that I could replace any one player with someone of similar quality," Ribbeck said.

"The toughest decision was omitting Oliver Neuville who has been in the side since I took over. Still I believe we are in a position to have a good team which is more than just competitive."

"It's not appropriate to talk about defending our title," Ribbeck added. "That was four years ago. There are new play-

ers now and a new coach. It is almost idiotic to say we have to defend our title. For me our 1996 win is just not an issue any more."

Oliver Kahn remains the number one in goal, especially after Jens Lehmann's awful season at Dortmund which ended in a tooth and nail fight against relegation.

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