

Six months here & the other 6 there?

HAVANA, May 27: Diego Maradona says in an interview released Friday that he now hopes to split his life between his native Argentina and Cuba, where he has been undergoing drug abuse treatment since January, reports AFP.

"I'm not thinking about returning to Argentina," Maradona said in an interview with the weekly newspaper Gramma International. "I'm going to ask Fidel (Castro) for permission to stay here and I'm thinking about spending say, six months of the year in Argentina and six months here."

"It's a decision I have to think about carefully," the former captain of the Argentine national team added in his first interview with the Cuban media. "Argentina is a difficult country, with a lot of corruption and poverty."

"In Cuba I feel like I'm at home," Maradona is quoted as saying in the English translation of his interview, conducted in Spanish. "The people have given me care and support that nobody else in any other part of the world has ever given me because the world is materialistic. It's almost rotten."

Ronaldo in Rio for long rest

RIO DE JANEIRO, May 27: Ronaldo arrived home in Brazil today to begin a long period out of the spotlight after surgery on a knee injury last month, reports Reuters.

"I'm here to rest. That's all I can do at this stage," said Inter Milan and Brazil striker Ronaldo as he arrived at Rio's international airport.

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In the tie-breakers, Joynal, Joynal, and Tipu of Jessore converted correctly but none of Jhenidah players could score.

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Maradona looked over-weight but in cheerful mood, waving at the fans before kick-off. Playing for the Bayern XI under his cherished number 10 shirt, he pleased the crowd with delightful passes, clever back-heels and other tricks which made him a living legend.

He left at halftime to a standing ovation after demon-

Foes play like friends



BERLIN, May 27: Diego Maradona made an emotional return to the soccer stage for the farewell game of his old rival Lothar Matthaeus on Friday, reports Reuters.

The Argentine with the magical skills, on the mend from a life-threatening heart condition blamed on drugs and drink, almost stole the show from the perennial German.

The pair, who have fought many battles against each other over the years, looked like joyful teenagers on the pitch of Munich's Olympic Stadium.

The real star of the night was record-breaking Matthaeus as the game between a Bayern Munich XI and Germany on his favourite playground was being played in his honour. It ended 1-1.

But Maradona, eager to show the world that his passion for football is still alive, might have been the happier of the two.

The hero of the 1986 World Cup is 39 years old, like Matthaeus, but — unlike the captain of Germany's 1990 World Cup-winning side — it had been a while since he felt the thrill of a high-profile match. "When Lothar invited me I didn't hesitate for a second," said Maradona. "Like me, he is a man who lives for football and it is simply amazing that he is still playing at top level at this age."

While Matthaeus is warming up for his last major tournament, the European Championship starting on June 10, Maradona has other things to worry about.

Under treatment in Cuba since mid-January, the kid from Buenos Aires shantytown who became a soccer icon appears to be making a reasonable recovery.

Doctors gave him the go-ahead for Friday's party, asking him to return immediately after the game.

Carsten Jancker opened the scoring for Bayern after 10 minutes and Thomas Haessler, back in the Germany team after a two-year absence, levelled in the 26th minute.

Juergen Klinsmann, who has had his arguments with Matthaeus, came on in the second half to show there were no hard feelings between the two greatest German players of the

past decade.

Maradona and Matthaeus have a rich history in common and have faced each other in two World Cup finals.

In 1986 in Mexico, Maradona enjoyed the finest moment in his turbulent career with a 3-2 triumph over Germany. But four years later in Rome Matthaeus took revenge, leading his men to a 1-0 victory over Maradona's Argentina.

The second half for Bayern was probably the one which meant the most to him as he played his last match for them in March, leaving club closest to his heart to start a new adventure with New York-New Jersey MetroStars.

In the 82nd minute it was his turn to leave, with 47,000 people chanting his name. He had tears in his eyes and was still clearly moved when he came



A combo picture shows Lothar Matthaeus (R) and former Argentine superstar Diego Maradona entertaining the crowds during the former's farewell soccer match between the German national team and Bayern Munich at the Olympic Stadium in Munich on May 26. — Internet photo

back shortly afterwards for a lap of honour in a white t-shirt saying "Thank-you" in German, English and Italian.

The atmosphere was amazing," he said. "I will never forget that moment. It will stay with me for ever."

Nobody cared too much about the score.

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Maradona packed his boots and headed back for Cuba, where he plans to stay until the end of the year.

"I want to get 100 per cent healthy," he said. "I'm not there yet but I'm working on it."

Playing eight more matches would mean he would retire on a high note after the Euro 2000 final on July 2 in Rotterdam — a prospect which seems unlikely given Germany's dismal showings of late.

Middlesex openers Mark Ramprakash and Ben Hutton had reduced the arrears by 24 when a heavy hailstorm drove the players from the field two balls after lunch, and the match was abandoned as a draw.

The 34-year-old left-arm spinner, overlooked by the England selectors so far this season, picked up two more wickets on the final day to finish with six for 92 from 38 overs as Northants were dismissed for 319, giving them a first-innings lead of 102.

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The cricketers are understandably wary of such tournaments in these turbulent times, since each dropped catch or run out will be eyed with suspicion.

Kapil wanted the Indians to pull out of the Asia Cup till the match-fixing scandal was resolved, but was overruled by his country's cricket board.

Pakistan will play under the shadow of the just-released judicial report which banned former captain Salim Malik and questioned the attitude of senior cricketers like Wasim Akram, Inzamam-ul Haq and Mushtaq Ahmed.

The slow left-armers haul was his best in the competition for Middlesex since September 1996, while Bloomfield ended with four for 46 from 16 overs.

Northants needed to make early inroads if they were to put any significant pressure on the visitors. But Ramprakash moved fluently to 16 from 26 balls, getting in some practice for Thursday's second Test against Zimbabwe, before the heavens opened for a quarter-of-an-hour.

Umpires John Hampshire and Allan Jones then inspected the conditions, accompanied by the two captains, and they quickly decided that no further cricket was viable.

Tufnell then tidied up the innings, sending back Davies who top-edged a sweep to wicketkeeper David Nash, and Devon Malcolm courtesy of another slip catch by Langer.

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