

## Sport

## Kepler, King cross swords over inquiry

JOHANNESBURG, June 7 (Internet report): Former South African captain Kepler Wessels, one of the most vociferous critics of Haasie Cronje, has crossed swords with Judge Edwin King over the legitimacy of the commission of enquiry being launched into match fixing in Cape Town tomorrow.

Speaking to Cape Talk radio, Wessels said the commission was making a cover-up.

"I've got several doubts that it's going anywhere," said Wessels. "The news filtering through hopefully is not right because it smacks a little of a cover-up."

Wessels hinted that there were people with vested interests in the game who would do anything to show that the Cronje incident was an isolated affair, and also to prove Cronje innocent.

"They're going to marshal all their forces," said Wessels.

Wessels added that he felt that the mindset cultivated during the years of isolation was hampering a thorough and impartial investigation.

"They're scared, which is a characteristic of the isolation era. Somewhere else (in the rest of the world) the pressure (on Cronje) would be immense."

Judge Edwin King, the man charged with heading the investigation, was outraged by Wessels' comments. "These statements are impudent, insulting and unwarranted, completely devoid of truth. There will be no cover-up of anybody, no cover-up whatsoever."

The commission starts tomorrow, and will question current and former team-mates of Cronje about various instances where match-fixing has been alleged. It is thought that Cronje will only appear after all the other statements have been taken, to put his testimony in context.

## Talbot's bonding ploys to unite pool rivals

CALOUNDRA, Australia, June 7: Australian will fight for Olympic swimming gold medals but head coach Don Talbot has devised bonding strategies to ensure rivals don't disrupt his team, reports AFP.

Talbot wants to unite his 44-strong team with the idea of battling the world rather than each other at the Sydney Olympics even though Australian teammates loom as the biggest gold medal threats in several key events.

That work has already begun three months out at a training camp at Caloundra on Queensland's Sunshine Coast.

"Even though each one may be rivals to each other, we're trying to beat the world if we can. We talk about that quite a bit," Talbot said here yesterday.

"We've got a psychologist on the team whose aim it is to create situations where we can deal with those things."

"Camaraderie, being a team in other words, is an important part of our preparation. We still want that competitive spirit with each other. But ... I think you can manage being friends with somebody who may be your arch-rival in the water. That's what we aim to do."

"Many people use hate. I don't like that."

Just two weeks ago the swimmers were fighting it out with each other at the Olympic trials.

But Talbot hopes to be able to bond them into a tight-knit unit by the time the Games come around in September.

Talbot described the team as better than the one which won two golds, four silvers and six bronze at the last Olympics in Atlanta and possibly capable of surpassing the 1996 Melbourne Olympic swimming team which won eight gold medals.

## Tennis ball

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MA: It's not mystery. It was the role model thing as you were saying. When I was young, I watched Wasim and Waqar bowling. They were fast bowlers and I wanted to become a fast bowler. Basically, I'm a fan of West Indian fast bowlers since I was very young. My case is very similar to that of other young boys. They are watching cricket. You see that there are four, five, six fast bowlers in the Pakistan team.

Playing with the tennis ball does help the aspiring fast bowlers in Pakistan. It helps one to develop a very quick arm action. With tennis ball you have to use your full strength. When you are 15 or 16, it also helps you to learn how to swing the ball. Shaheen Akhtar and myself have learnt fast bowling on tennis ball, playing in the same town.

DSS: Against whom you wouldn't want to bowl with the new ball?

MA: I will not want to face Imran with the new ball. He has got so much time before playing shots that even if you are a fast bowler... you will just feel that you are a medium pacer. He has got the timing and height. Same delivery we bowl to other batsmen, thing would be different.

DSS: Who is going to win the Pepsi Asia Cup?

MA: Looking at our performance here so far, in Sharjah and in West Indies, we are doing really very well. And, I think, Inshallah Pakistan will win this tournament.

DSS: How is the Dhaka wicket?

MA: You can't say it's a good bowling wicket. I like the stadium and the atmosphere. The crowd is very good here. But the wicket is very flat here like Sharjah.

## Zoff counts on quality



GEEL, Belgium, June 7: Italy coach Dino Zoff rounded on his critics here Tuesday, saying that his struggling team still enjoyed popular support and were ready to make a major impact at Euro 2000, reports AFP.

Italy, who open their campaign on Sunday against Turkey at Arnhem, have lost four of their last seven games - the most recent setback coming with last weekend's 1-0 defeat to Norway.

Their ratings on national television have plummeted over the past year, sparking claims that they have also lost the affection of the Italian public.

But Zoff, a World Cup winner back in 1982, was quick to dismiss the mood of pessimism surrounding Italy and their chances at these championships.

"I'm not convinced about these figures... I don't think there's been a fall in enthusiasm," he insisted.

"We are all enthusiastic here and so are the Italian fans. Obviously they want to see results and we haven't fully provided them."

"But this is the moment that counts. Qualifying was our objective and we achieved it. Now is the moment to show what we're capable of."

He went on: "Clearly, I want us to do well and to go far in this tournament... and I think we can do that."

"This is going to be a tough European championships - but not only for us. It's very balanced and it's top quality, so that's going to make it very difficult."

The difference between making progress and being left behind could be very small. But we're certainly confident we can do well."

Asked to single out the four likely semi-finalists he said: "France are a team with great names and it's an exporting country when it comes to football."

## Bosnich, Viduka worry for Socceroos

SYDNEY, June 7: High-profile Australian stars Mark Bosnich and Mark Viduka are in doubt for the three-game international football series against Paraguay, beginning here on Friday night, reports AFP.

Bosnich's troublesome hamstring threatens to keep him out of the entire series and had also jeopardised his career with English champions Manchester United.

"I'm rehabbing it continuously and vigorously and I'm having a fitness test tomorrow and hopefully I'll be A-OK for Friday," Bosnich said Wednesday.

"I am hopeful, I'm positive and if I play on Friday I'll continue to play - if selected - for the other two games, that's down to the boss."

"If I don't make it Friday, then I won't risk it for the other two games."

Viduka missed the last three league games of Glasgow Celtic's season because of an ankle injury which had been treated in Scotland and Melbourne.

"I'll have to see, I'll have to talk to the physio," Viduka said. "At this stage it's pretty weak, I haven't been doing anything on it."

While not doing any physical work, Viduka did plenty of sidestepping when asked about his club future, with speculation rife he will leave Celtic and join either Leeds United or Fiorentina.

Viduka, the reigning Scottish Premier League player of the year and top scorer, had yet to speak to new Celtic manager Martin O'Neill but said "the best thing is to talk to him one on one and see what he has got to say."

Viduka said he enjoyed playing alongside Leeds star Harry Kewell when teaming up for Australia, and when asked if he would like that acquaintance more regular at Leeds, he was coy but admitted the English premier is "the most high profile league in the world and everyone would like to play in it."

Viduka said any new club must accept he's committed to regularly flying home to represent Australia.

They know that, it comes with me," he said.

Bosnich warned media off asking him about his future at United, where new signing Fabien Barthez - the hero of France's 1998 World Cup win - was expected to be the first choice keeper next season.

Bosnich's recurring hamstring problems and a personal clash with manager Alex Ferguson had put him on the outer at Old Trafford.

Bosnich said he would not play in the Olympic Games, as he thought a younger keeper should get the opportunity, but undoubtedly he wouldn't risk a month away from the European season when there was a chance of a move to another club.

Viduka said he was keen to play in the Games, and was likely to be one of Australia's three over-23 players.

## Phillips best in the Premiership

LONDON, June 7: England striker Kevin Phillips has been named the English Premier League's player of the year by the competition's sponsors Carling.

"Preparations have been made. The fire brigade has been doing exercises in Charlton; police have been doing exercises; we have had an international game, Belgium v Portugal, as a test case there, so we feel that every precaution that should have been taken has been taken so that the match can go through there."

"We have to rely on the green light that is being given by everybody involved - these people are professionals, the fire brigade, police, Ministry of Interior and UEFA."

"Everybody knows what they are talking about, they all feel confident that the game can go through there."

Asked if he was saying the Belgian authorities would be in complete control in the event of trouble in the stands or around the stadium, de Graeve said: "Yes, that's what I'm trying to say."

The England-Germany match kicks off at 1845 GMT on June 17.

Phillips is the league's top scorer, netted 30 times in the league for Peter Reid's Sunderland side in their first year after winning promotion.

The award is timely boost for the 26-year-old, whose performances have earned him a place in England's Euro 2000 squad, not least because England coach Kevin Keegan was on the panel which selected the winner.

"You can't argue with the stats and 30 goals in one season is a phenomenal strike rate. If he can continue this form during Euro 2000 he will make himself a national hero," the panel said in a statement.

Phillips, who played in England's 2-1 win over Malta on Saturday, is expected to be on the substitutes bench for England's first Euro 2000 game against Portugal on Monday.

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