

EURO TREATS

BRUSSELS, June 14 (AP): Euro 2000 diary for Wednesday, the fifth day of Euro 2000.

NEESKENS AVOIDS COMPARISONS

HOENDERLOO, Netherlands: Dutch legend Johan Neeskens said here after training on Tuesday that there was no way you could compare the 1974 and 1978 sides, which reached World Cup finals those years, and the current squad.

Neeskens, along with Johan Cruyff the best of a magnificent generation of players, said: "I did play in a very special squad but each set of players is different and today's squad is also very good."

Looking ahead to Friday's game against Denmark, he thought left winger Jesper Gronkjaer and striker Jon Dahl Tomasson were players to watch. "They do have some good individual players who can win the game themselves but they also play well as a team," Neeskens added.

Of one thing he had no doubt. "We are definitely in the very strongest of the four groups. We have very tough opponents and if we get through we will have really earned our quarter-final place."

EURO 2000 BEING RESEARCHED!

BRUSSELS: The governing body of European football UEFA is to publish a research document two weeks after the final of Euro 2000, analysing the tactics employed and any changes in the way the game is being played. To do so, it has called up experts such as Roy Hodgson of England, Andy Roxburgh of Scotland, Angel Iordanescu of Romania, Bert Vogts of Germany, Gerard Houllier of France, Jozef Vavro of Slovakia and Rinus Michels of the Netherlands.

NEW BALL MAKES BARTHEZ EDGY

WAVRE, Belgium: French goalkeeper Fabien Barthez is adamant -- the new hi-tech football being used at Euro 2000 is a mistake. "It's only good enough for the beach. The trajectory can vary at any moment. But it's true that it's the same for everyone. Barthez on the other hand likes the new rule which stipulates that goalkeepers have six seconds to get rid of the ball once it is in their hands. "It's not a problem for me because I have always tried to get the ball quickly back into play. It also allows me to be more precise and kick deeper with my clearances."

Speed talks to Warne

SYDNEY, June 14: Australian Cricket Board chief executive Malcolm Speed said Thursday he had asked Shane Warne about the alleged sex scandal which has tainted the team. The ACB did not release details of the telephone conversation but a spokesman said disciplinary action had not been considered.

The ACB will delay any action until after Speed meets Warne face-to-face later this month when the ACB boss travels to England for a meeting of the International Cricket Council.

Warne has remained tight-lipped since a London newspaper last Saturday accused him of harassing a 22-year-old nurse with "disgusting" phone messages.

Bacher himself

From page 13

The report said that after further discussions involving Bacher it was agreed that if the West Indians "agreed to blow the match" they would be paid extra as an inducement.

"After another protracted negotiation session with the West Indian players they voted to return to the field and to lose the match," said Soller.

Robin Binckes, a sports promoter whose company handled media liaison and negotiated sponsorship on both tours, said Soller's claim was "totally mystifying."

He recalled a strike threat by the West Indians over sponsorship rights before the first day international at the Wanderers on December 7, 1983. "I was not in the meetings with the players but I was around the dressing room at the time. I do not recall either Tessel or Soller."

Binckes was negotiating a sponsorship at the time which resulted in the Yellow Pages company sponsoring the rest of the series.

Far from going out and losing the match, the West Indians won and went on to win the series 4-2.

The tourists also won a second match at the Wanderers in the same series.

During the 1982/83 season, the West Indians played two one-day matches at the Wanderers on successive days, winning one and losing one. Binckes said he could not recall any dispute during the earlier tour.

Bacher told Reuters the UCBSA would be releasing a statement on the allegations later on Wednesday.

"I never made an offer that they would receive more money if they deliberately lost the match," Bacher told Beeld.

Bacher on Monday stunned the cricket world with sensational claims about match-fixing in international cricket, including matches of the 1999 World Cup in England.

Bacher told the commission he had been told by former Pakistan cricket chief executive Majid Khan that two World Cup matches involving Pakistan, against India and Bangladesh, were "fixed."



FRIENDS AFTER ALL: A Norwegian(R) and a Spanish supporter partying in the streets of Rotterdam on June 13 prior to their national squads' Euro 2000 clash. Norway won 1-0. —AFP photo

Ramprakash worry for England

First Test starts today

for England.

Still, some have been saying this five-match series represents a great chance for England to beat the West Indies.

But the odd fact remains that the last time England won a Test series against these opponents Manchester City could give their local rivals a decent game of football and the country still counted its money in pounds, shillings and pence.

Ramprakash faced only three throw-down deliveries from opening partner Mike Atherton and was in obvious discomfort from a back problem.

Yet England do have a chance to redress the balance this summer. Since losing the England order, is receiving treatment from England physiotherapist Dean Conway.

It was a worry with only 24 hours to go before the serious business starts against West Indies' pace spearhead of Curtly Ambrose and Courtney Walsh.

If the problem continues to prove troublesome, England could move Warwickshire left-hander Nick Knight up to his favourite opening position and perhaps call in Yorkshire's Michael Vaughan.

On the other hand, absolutely typical: just when England thought the West Indies' top order was showing signs of frailty ahead of the opening Test, the tourists enjoy a run feast against virtually the same Zimbabwe attack that had made the host nation's batting look decidedly second-rate a few days earlier.

Now a sunny Arundel, where West Indies drew with Zimbabwe on Monday is a long way from overcast Trent Bridge during a Test match. And just as everyone should have got too wound up about Brian Lara's repeated failures facing modest county attacks, perhaps they ought not to read too much into his 175 against his fellow tourists. One innings does not a summer make.

But Edgbaston is not normally a spinners' pitch — in 1995 the West Indies won a Test there in barely three days on a seamers' paradise.

Pace bowlers will more Tests than off-spinners and in Ambrose and Walsh the tourists have two greats.

Ambrose has said this series will mark the end of his Test career and rest assured he will want to go out in style. As for world Test wicket record-holder Walsh, now on the way to 500 dismissals, he has probably forgotten more about bowling in English conditions than most players will ever know after yeoman service leading the Gloucestershire attack.

With two from Reon King, Franklyn Rose and Nixon McLean to support the dynamic duo the tourists have a sound pace attack.

In an unprecedented move England named their playing

Knight knights Lara

a lot of advice. He was very good with me. He sat me down and chatted about things.... and gave me a few tips."

Knight is trying to resurrect his England Test career as a middle-order batsman and says he's fortunate to be playing. He is largely due to the injury to Michael Vaughan, who broke bone in his hand a month ago.

"One was my debut and the other I got my maiden Test half century," Knight said. He also described how he fainted briefly after being hit on the head while fielding at short leg.

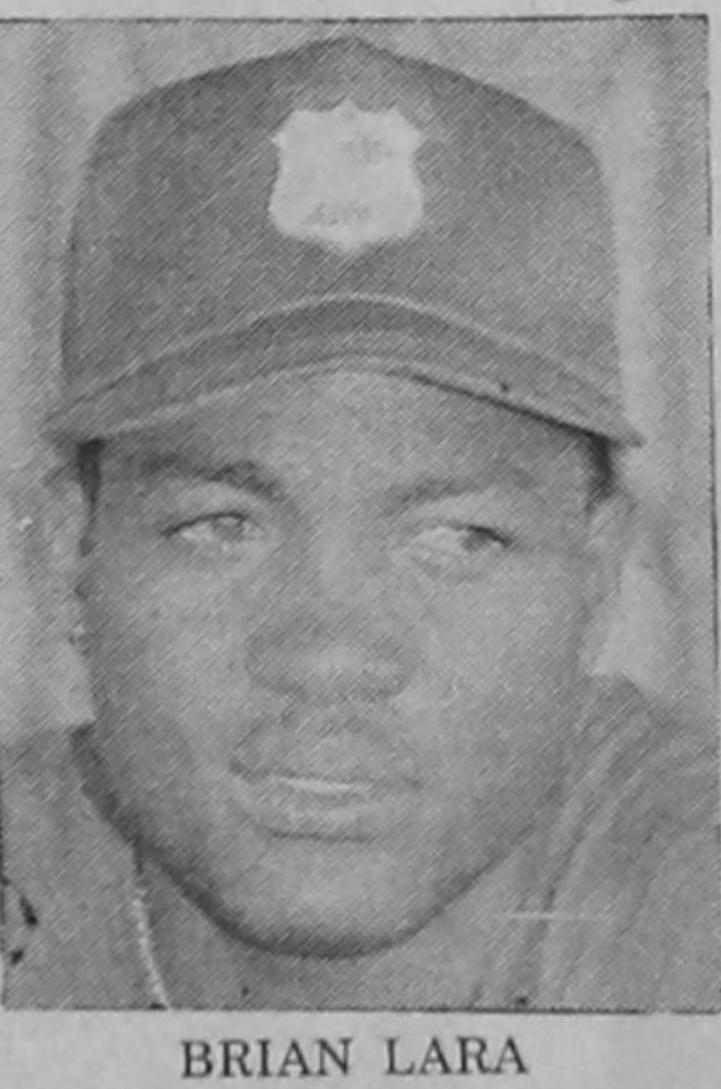
"I didn't know what was going on."

At times you feel like going up to him and saying 'What's going on here?'" Knight said. "He's a fantastic player." Knight added. "One of his biggest assets is when he's in and playing, you can't control him. He scores at such a phenomenal rate, you can't stop him. That gives the bowlers enough time to work on the covers."

When asked what makes Lara such a great player, Knight quipped: "I wish I knew."

Knight said Lara was a great asset to the West Indies and the younger batsmen, especially the left handers who look up to him.

"He's the figurehead in their cricket. I'm sure he's passing on



BRIAN LARA

"If you don't think like that you are not human." Knight said. "I've been given an opportunity and it's up to me to take it."

Knight was dropped after failing to make an impact as an opener after his debut against the West Indies at Old Trafford in 1995. He has scored 636 runs at an average of 29.02 with a solitary hundred.

After scoring 44 in England's innings win over Zimbabwe at Lord's, he failed in both innings in the drawn second Test at Trent Bridge — one and six.

Knight is optimistic about his chances against the West Indies, where the ball will come to the spokesman added.

OCG captures three 'fixers'

LONDON, June 14: Police here Tuesday arrested three men in connection with allegations of attempts to fix cricket games, reports AFP.

An operation by Britain's Organised Crime Group (OCG) led to the arrests at addresses across London, a spokesman for Scotland Yard said.

Officers from the OCG arrested two men, aged 35 and 44, at their home addresses in north London shortly after 7am (0600GMT).

The third man, aged 42, was arrested at his west London home shortly before 11am, the spokesman said.

The OCG investigation was launched after an allegation of attempted corruption was reported by a player to the England and Wales Cricket Board on August 3, 1999.

The England and Wales Cricket Board passed this information on to police. The men arrested today have been taken to a west London police station for questioning and inquiries are continuing, the spokesman added.

Kumar made to name names?

NEW DELHI, June 14: A former Indian film actor who was arrested in connection with match-fixing charges against Hansie Cronje claimed here Wednesday he was forced by the police to implicate people in the scandal, reports AFP.

Kishan Kumar, who has been released on bail, said Delhi police detectives forced him to name people in the biggest scandal in cricket history which cost the former South African skipper his job and opened a Pandora's box.

"Crime branch sleuths threatened me to name some people falsely in the scandal and said or else they would show me as having links with underworld gangs," Kumar, who was released on bail on June 9, said.

The former film actor did not name the people he purportedly implicated in the scandal but said he signed confessions under duress in police custody.

The police arrested Kumar and Indian bookmaker Rajesh Kalra before dropping bombshell charges April 7 that Cronje, Herschelle Gibbs, Nicky Boje and Pieter Strydom were involved in match-fixing during South Africa's Indian tour in March.

Police say the disgraced South African skipper took money from the pair's London-based associate, Sanjay Chawla, to throw matches during the five one-day internationals South Africa played March 9-19 in India.

England won the series 3-2.

"The Delhi police cooked up a false story to create an atmosphere of hatred and prejudice against me," Kumar told reporters, and denied police charges he had invested four million rupees (93,000 US dollars) in match-fixing.

"I am just a cricket lover but that is no crime ... I have never been to any of the venues where the matches were fixed," asserted Kumar, who had initially evaded arrest for about 10 days with faked cardiac ailments.

Police detectives here said Kumar was a "small fry" in the scandal that has rocked the sport and that Rajesh Kalra, who has also been released on bail, was directly involved in offering money to players to fix matches.

Top police officials here also say Kalra is known to many international players and administrators of the now-tainted game by his first name.

Delhi police have also asked Interpol for bank account details of bookie Chawla and sought voice samples of Cronje to match with his alleged taped conversations with the London-based Indian speculator.

Kumar, however, said he was a friend of Kalra and Chawla but added he was not aware of the pair's interests in match-fixing and betting on cricket matches.

"I know Chawla for the last 15 years. But it is a crime to have friendship with him," Kumar said, and admitted visiting Bahrain and Dubai, which the police say are the hub of match-fixing activity.

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Cronje was fired in April after he admitted that he had accepted 10,000 to 15,000 dollars for providing information and forecasts on matches during a triangular series with England and Zimbabwe, reports AFP.

The Star newspaper on Wednesday quoted Mugabe as saying: "I'm heartbroken by what the chap is going through. I never thought he would be lost to cricket so early in his career.

"He used to be very good but, as he said, Satan got the better of him."

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Mugabe is facing the worst moment of his 20-year rule. Zimbabwe is in economic crisis, political violence is rife in the run-up to elections and he has been slated for plans to seize white-owned farms.

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Cronje testifies today

CAPE TOWN, June 14: Sacked South African cricket captain Hansie Cronje is expected to drop a bombshell when he starts testifying before the King Commission into match-fixing here on Thursday, reports AFP.

According to press reports, Cronje has handed his lawyers a new confession which is expected to implicate international cricketers in match-fixing.

Cronje's new statement apparently nullifies the one he made on April 11 and which has been contradicted several times in evidence to the King Commission inquiry into corruption in cricket.

The Cape Argus newspaper reported that Cronje's new confession was likely to contain details of the involvement of international cricketers in match-fixing.

The King Commission, which began public hearings last Wednesday, has already heard retired wicketkeeper Dave Richardson and spin bowler Pat Symcox testify that "a current foreign international cricketer" made a bribery offer to Symcox in India in 1996.

It is likely Cronje's testimony will be shown live on South African television, with Judge Edwin King expected to make a ruling on the admission of television and radio at the start of proceedings on Thursday.

The Cape High Court ruled on Wednesday that Cronje's testimony may be broadcast live on television and radio, after a broadcaster challenged King's ban on the presence of the electronic media at the

King Commission hearing.

The court ruled further, however, that Cronje's cross-examination may not be televised at all and while it may be recorded for radio broadcasting, may only be broadcast after the proceedings for the day have been completed.

The purpose of this particular arrangement is to avoid unnecessary pressure and stress during cross-examination.

Cronje is also expected to give dramatic testimony about his role in offering bribes to teammates on two tours of India in 1996 and 2000.

His appearance follows a deal struck by his lawyers with Bulelani Ngcuka, the national

Cricket Board (UCB).

Cronje will probably tell of death threats he has received since the scandal broke on April 7 when police in New Delhi announced they had laid charges of match fixing against Cronje, Gibbs, Nicky Boje and Strydom.

They released tape recordings of telephone conversations between Cronje and Sanjay Chawla, a bookmaker.