

SA match-fixing interim report due Friday

CAPE TOWN, Aug 9 (AP): The official commission investigating corruption and match-fixing allegations in South African cricket will present its interim report to the government Friday, the South African Press Association reported Tuesday.

Commission chairman Edwin King is expected to present his findings to Sport and Recreation Minister Ngconde Balofour.

It is unclear when the report will be made available to the media, but SAPA reported it would be made public after President Thabo Mbeki has had a chance to study it.

The commission was established following accusations by Indian police, who said they had tapes of a conversation between cricket captain Hansie Cronje and an Indian bookmaker discussing the manipulation of a match.

Cronje initially denied any wrongdoing, but later admitted taking about 100,000 dollars from gamblers in exchange for match information regarding other matches.

Two other cricketers said they had agreed to accept a bribe to play badly in a match against India earlier this year, but claimed they had reneged on the deal.

The King commission finished its first round of public hearings in June and is scheduled to resume hearings Oct. 2. Several witnesses including board CEO Ali Bacher are expected to be recalled.

Japan rules out Confederations Cup hosting

TOKYO, Aug 9: Japan has knocked back an offer from world football governing body FIFA to co-host next year's Confederations Cup with South Korea, officials said here Wednesday, reports AFP.

A Japan Football Association said they had rejected a request from FIFA to host the event because of insufficient preparation time.

"We told FIFA we cannot accept the offer, because we received no information beforehand and it's almost impossible to change the schedule now," the JFA official said.

FIFA had been hoping to use the tournament as a test run for the 2002 World Cup finals, to be co-hosted by Japan and South Korea.

But Japan are reportedly planning to stage a pre-World Cup tournament of their own involving France and Italy.

Rain spoiling

Muralitharan who trapped him low with the total at 107.

Jonty Rhodes and Lance Klusener put on 45 in 95 minutes taking no risks against the spinners who found appreciable turn.

Rhodes completed his half-century in 150 minutes with five fours, and off the next over was missed by wicket-keeper Kumar Sangakkara when he got an edge to delivery from Sanath Jayasuriya.

However at 54, Rhodes pushed forward to Muralitharan and the resulting pad-bat catch was held by Mahela Jayawardene at silly mid-off.

Klusener who made an unbeaten 95 in the first innings was 27 not out with Mark Boucher on two.

Muralitharan had figures of three off 29 overs.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at close of play on the fourth day of the third and final cricket Test between Sri Lanka and South Africa played at the Sinhalese SC ground on Wednesday:

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 279.

SRI LANKA: First innings 258.

SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings (overnight 27 for no loss).

Kirsten lbw by Muralitharan 40

McKenzie run out 17

Kallis b De Silva 0

Cullinan c Arnold 0

Muralitharan 3

Rhodes c Jayawardene b Muralitharan 34

Klusener not out 27

Boucher not out 14

Extras (lb-2, nb-12) 14

Total: (For 5 wks at close in 77 overs) 157

Fall of wickets: 1-50; 2-50;

3-59; 4-107; 5-152.

Bowler (to date): O M R W

Vaas 10 2 22 0

Perera 2 0 13 0

Arnold 2 0 2 0

De Silva 18 5 40 1

Muralitharan 29 11 41 3

Jayasuriya 13 2 24 0

Cleland 3 0 13 0



Bryan Robson (R), the manager of English Premiership club Middlesbrough, standing with his new star signing Croatian international striker Alen Boksic at Boro's training ground in Hurworth yesterday. — AFP photo

ROK's testing road to Sydney

SEOUL, Aug 9: Asian football heavyweights South Korea are desperate to secure their first quarter final berth at the Sydney Olympic Games, but first they must negotiate a tough qualifying group, reports AFP.

South Korea have long been Asia's football standard-bearer, and they are making their fourth consecutive Olympic appearance since Seoul hosted the games in 1988. But so far success at the tournament has eluded them.

With expectations running high for Sydney, coach Hur Jung-Moo knows the heat is on him to improve on the dismal performances of previous Olympics.

Since he took the reins in January 1999, Hur has successfully steered South Korea's Olympic squad to an impressive run of 18 victories, two draws and two losses in warm-up matches at home and abroad.

This year South Korea have remained unbeaten in five matches against China and other national sides.

Elated by the impressive record, football officials are confident the national team

can reach the last eight from their Group B qualifiers against European favourites Spain, Chile and Morocco.

Realistically, South Korea would need a win and at least a draw against Chile and Morocco to claim the runners-up spot behind probable group winners Spain.

"South Korea will be better in Sydney. We have a good chance of reaching the quarter-finals if we can keep up our current form," said Shin Moon-Sun, a football commentator.

But national coach Hur was far more cautious, saying that

both Chile and Morocco appear to be stronger than his team.

"I will do my best to make it but no team will be easy in our group. I know how hard it is to beat any of them. We need better movement and skill," he told AFP.

Hur said his squad would undergo intensive group training from August 7 to improve their physical strength and fitness ahead of the tournament.

"From now on we will pour sweat and blood to fulfill our aim of making it to the quarter-finals," he promised.

Changes must be made to boost our physical ability and skill as South Korea are still inferior in all aspects."

He said the 1-0 victory in last week's warm-up with China in Beijing had helped him to detect shortcomings in the squad which is made up of both the national and Olympic sides.

The coach said he would disclose the final list of 22 South Korean players who would be travelling to Sydney at the end of August after South Korea play depending champions Nigeria in Seoul in a final warm-up.

Olympic teams are made up of players under 23, although each coach is allowed to bring three over-age wild card picks.

Local experts say South Korea must tighten up its frail defence if they are not to be undone by the trickery and flair of Chile, as well as the useful Moroccans.

Most of all, they need to cultivate better passing skills, as they lack speed, said pundit Chung Jong-Duck.

Much will rest on the shoulders of veteran defenders Kang Chul, 28, and Hong Myong-Bo, 31, who are both expected to be among Hur's wild card picks.

Hong, touted as one of Asia's best defenders, currently plies his trade with Kashiwa Reysol in Japan's J-League.

FIFA world rankings Argentina reach best ever position

ZURICH, Switzerland, Aug 9: Argentina have reached their best position in the FIFA World Rankings since they were set up in August 1993, reports AFP.

In the latest rankings released Wednesday, the South Americans are placed third behind only Brazil and World and European champions France.

The Czech Republic are down to fourth followed by Spain and Italy.

Eight European sides are in the top 10, but this does not for the first time include Germany, who flopped badly at the Euro 2000 finals.

The top African side is South Africa at 20th with the top Asian side being South Korea at 37th.

FIFA TOP 20:

1. Brazil	819 pts
2. France	808
3. Argentina	749
4. Czech Republic	745
5. Spain	743
6. Italy	729
7. Portugal	716
8. Netherlands	710
9. Norway	705
10. Yugoslavia	704
11. Germany	700
12. Romania	695
13. England	689
14. Mexico	688
15. Croatia	687
16. Paraguay	655
17. Colombia	648
18. Denmark	639
19. Sweden	638
20. South Africa	629

Oliseh won't go to the Olympics

LAGOS, Aug 9: Nigerian captain Sunday Oliseh who recently signed with Bundesliga club Borussia Dortmund, has pulled out of his country's squad for the Sydney Olympics, the Nigeria Football Association (NFA) told reporters Wednesday, reports AFP.

"Oliseh has told us he should be left out of the team for the Olympics," NFA Secretary-General Tijani Yusuf said.

"He said he wants to concentrate on his new club Borussia Dortmund. He also said he would like to give younger players a chance to represent their country as well," Yusuf told reporters.

West Indies called off the

Champs' League qualifier

Hamburg's impressive away win

PARIS, Aug 9: Hamburg SV, third in the German First Division, beat a valiant Brondby side in Copenhagen 2-0 in a Champions League third round first-leg qualifier on Tuesday night, reports AFP.

In other third round matches Sparta Prague of the Czech Republic got past Moldovan outfit Zimbru Chisinau 1-0 in Speia while Austrian champions Sturm Graz needed an injury-time penalty to beat Dutch outfit Feyenoord 2-1.

In Istanbul, Besiktas took a stranglehold on their tie with a 3-0 beating of Russian outfit Lokomotiv Moscow.

Hamburg left it until seven minutes from time to open the scoring against Brondby when new signing Sergei Barabev of Bosnia found the mark to give the German side a valuable away goal.

With the Danish side pushing forward, Hamburg struck again in the 89th minute when Iranian international Mehdi Mahdavi beat Brondby keeper Mogens Krogh to put the Bundesliga side firmly in the driving seat.

Mahdavi is a national hero back in Iran as a result of his goal against the United States in their 2-1 victory during the group phase of the 1998 World Cup.

In Moldova, the Czech Republic champions escaped with a valuable away goal as they won 1-0 thanks to a 61st minute goal from Josef Obidin to silence the 6000 strong crowd.

In Graz, Markos Graz scored his second goal of the game from the penalty spot deep into injury-time to complete a comeback for Sturm Graz and wipe out Igor Korneev's seventh minute opener for Feyenoord who finished the match with 10 men.

On Monday French outfit Lyon beat Inter Bratislava away from home 2-1.

Grand Prix catch the football fever



LONDON, Aug 9: Europe's top clubs are set to cash in commercially after a unique partnership between football and motor racing was struck, reports AFP.

Premier 1 Grand Prix will involve 24 cars, clad in the colours of Europe's top sides - thought to include Manchester United, Arsenal, Liverpool and Chelsea from the Premiership - racing over the course of a season.

Millions of extra pounds in revenue could be heading the clubs way without them having to invest in the project in return.

It is thought that the clubs - four each from England, Italy,

France, Spain, Germany and Holland - will include continental giants Barcelona, Real Madrid and Juventus.

The 24 clubs have been selected on the basis of their domestic performances of the last six years with the first season, in 2002, containing 12 races, 11 in Europe and one in South America.

Former Football Association chief executive Graham Kelly, a director of Premier 1, said here on Wednesday: "Nobody has turned us down. There is quite a lot of interest and things are looking pretty positive."

"Motor racing can bring to football an extension of the club's brand images and there is also potential for fresh revenue streams, which are important

with the transfer market going up and up."

The new proposed new brand of racing would not cut across Formula One as races will not clash with the grand prix.

The new series would have to be sanctioned by FIA, motor sport's world governing body, if it were to get off the ground.

FIA said today there had been no formal approach from Premier 1 Grand Prix, but that did not rule out any informal discussions with president Max Mosley or Formula One chief Bernie Ecclestone having taken place.

"We have not received any concrete proposals," said a spokesman. "Any proposal would have to go before the World Council before it could be given the green light."

Nasser tries to find form



MANCHESTER, Aug 9: England captain Nasser Hussain will this week begin looking for the missing

answer -- how to revive his low-key batting form, reports AFP.

Hussain seldom looked in touch during his two innings of 10 and six not out in the drawn Old Trafford Test against West Indies and hopes the remedy will come in Essex's next match against Worcestershire.

He has now made only 126 Test runs since his 100 against South Africa in Durban in December, and just 128 have come in first-class cricket in this rain-season.

Next week it will be back to the bigger pressure for the fourth Test at Headingley and, of course, Curtly Ambrose and Courtney Walsh.

Hussain said: "There wasn't much to go on in this match. I was feeling alright but got a decent delivery in the first innings which hit the splice and today wasn't the easiest of conditions. Three lights were on, it was grizzly, the wicket was juicy up -- and there was Ambrose and Walsh."

"But I don't feel at the best of my form, with the stop-start season, and a few first-class innings. I'm going to play at Kidderminster on Thursday and try to find something that mentally, physically or technically is missing at the moment. I will try to find it, but I need time at the crease."

West Indies called off the

Test Monday with England 80 for one on a day of rain interruptions after West Indies had declared 292 ahead after the big fightback which began on Saturday morning.

Hussain added: "West Indies showed lots of fight, but you expect a side with Brian Lara and Jimmy Adams to show some fight with a bat -- they did and we had to prize them. I'm a little

bit disappointed, also pleased with the team by the way we played over the five days."

"I thought the bowlers came in and bowled beautifully, nobody dropped their heads. Just because a side gets 400 it doesn't necessarily mean you've bowled badly."

"They batted well, all got stuck in and Lara played like

Lara can. They've got pride in West Indian cricket, you expect them to fight and we were prepared for it."

"We are playing some good cricket, we've put in some good performances for nine months now. The general public perception and what people are saying to me is that they are enjoying watching England, enjoying a bit of fight, some characters and young players coming in and doing well like Trescolthick and Vaughan."

"A bloke upstairs said to me 'I think we've turned the corner'. That might be going a little too far, but I think we're doing alright and we've got to look forward positively to the next two games."

Adams added: "I'm very happy with the way we fought back after having a disappointing first two days. It was a real team performance, the bowlers clawed us back into the game and restricted England to a lead that was manageable."

"We had partnerships right down the line, a very good innings from Lara, everybody came right on the night. I was pleased with the fight that was shown. After our loss at Lord's that was very important; this has done us a lot of good."

Brian's performance was very reassuring. He's always had a big-game mentality and this was a big game for us, and he came through in a big way."

"England were definitely on top for two days, we had two good days after that, but the weather was the winner today."

Pete, Andre advance



MASON, Aug 9 (AP): In nine matches, Wayne Ferreira has never beaten Andre Agassi.

All the South African could do was express his frustration after Agassi beat him again Tuesday night, 7-5 (4), 6-1, in the first round at Tennis Masters Series-Cincinnati.

"It's kind of a laughable situation," Ferreira said. "I seem to do the same thing every time I play him, no matter how hard I try to make it different. It always ends up being the same, so all I can do is keep laughing."

After pressing the top-seeded Agassi to a tiebreaker, Ferreira missed a shot into an open court in the first game of the second set and never recovered.

"I think after I won the tiebreaker, maybe he just had a little bit of a letdown and I took advantage of it," Agassi said. "Sometimes it doesn't take much."

Second-seeded Pete Sampras won the only first-round match he's had to play here in a decade. When the tournament was called the ATP Championship, the top eight seeds drew byes. With the new Masters Series format and the draw expanded to 64 players, everybody plays in the first round.

Sampras beat Mariano Zabaleta of Argentina 6-4, 6-2 Tuesday.

"I've never been crazy about a bye because you're playing someone (in the second round) who's used to the court and the balls," Sampras said.

"Your first match out playing someone that's played, I never really liked it. You like it if you win the match. Your body's a little bit fresher."

And Sampras is at the point in his career when he wants to limit his tournaments to stay as fresh as possible.

Sampras won a record 13th Grand Slam at Wimbledon despite tendonitis in his left shin, then withdrew from the Davis

Cup. This is his second tournament since then, including a loss in the quarterfinals last week at Toronto.

The tournament lost four more seeds Tuesday -- six of 16 in the first round -- including one who withdrew.

Rain delayed the start of the morning matches for two hours, and there was another five-minute rain interruption in the afternoon.

During the first delay and before his match started, 14th-seeded Yoonis El Aynaoui of Morocco withdrew with inflammation in his left foot. He was replaced by qualifier Andrea Gaudenzi of Italy, who went out and upset Albert Costa of Spain 6-3, 3-6, 6-1.

He was coming off title victories at Gstaad and Kitzbuhel, both on clay, and said he was unable to adjust his rhythm to the faster surface.

"He was moving better, and his ideas were more clarified," Corretja said of Bjorkman. "He had a better idea of what he wanted to do, while I was staying back and waiting for him to make mistakes."

Fabrice Santoro of France upset ninth-seeded Lleyton Hewitt of Australia 4-6, 6-4, 6-4, and Todd Martin beat 11th-seeded Nicolas Pietrangeli of Germany 6-2, 6-2.

Fifth-seeded Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia beat Richard Krajicek of Netherlands 6-3, 1-6, 6-3; No. 7 Thomas Enqvist of Sweden beat Andrei Pavel of Romania 7-5, 2-6, 7-6 (7); No. 8 Marat Safin of Russia, the winner last week at Tennis Masters Series-Cannes, beat Neville Godwin of South Africa 7-5, 6-3; and No. 15 Tim Henman of Britain beat Cecil Mamiit 6-3, 5-7, 6-2.

In other first-round matches, Gianluca Pozzi of Italy -- at 35 the oldest player in the field -- beat Andy Roddick -- the youngest at 17 -- 7-6 (3), 6-1; Martin Damm of the Czech Republic beat Vincent Spadea 7-6 (3), 3-6, 6-2; and Harel Levy of Israel, a finalist last week at Toronto, beat Andrew Ilie of Australia 3-6, 6-3, 6-4; and Taylor Dent beat US Olympian Jeff Tarango 6-4, 3-6, 6-1.

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Man. City rope in Wanchope

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City beat off a late bid by Premiership rivals Bradford to sign Wanchope and manager Joe Royle said: "I am pleased we have got him and in modern terms the fee for a proven 24-year-old striker is not unreasonable."

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