

French cricketers want to pay off century old scores

PARIS, Aug 12: France's cricket team plays an English XI in Hastings next weekend, finally seeking revenge for defeat in the 1900 Olympic final 100 years ago to the day, reports AFP.

France had to settle for silver when they lost to England on August 20, 1900 in Vincennes on the eastern fringes of Paris in the only time the sport has appeared on the Olympic programme.

France, the 1993, 1996 and 1997 European amateur champions, are expected to play with a "conquering spirit", according to a tongue-in-cheek statement Saturday from the French baseball, softball and cricket association.

Of course, Hastings was the scene of France's most famous victory over the English, in the battle of the same name in 1066 won by the Normans to begin a couple of centuries of French rule over the English.

France, which only has 1,200 licensed players as against 600,000 in Great Britain including several hundred professionals, are tuning up for their World Cup qualifying matches in Canada in June next year.

France, who play in blue like their world champion football team instead of the traditional white, have several players hoping to make an impact on the international scene.

Hingis exacts revenge

LOS ANGELES, Aug 12: World number one Martina Hingis avenged an upset loss in the WTA quarterfinals last week, trouncing American Amy Frazier 6-2, 6-1 here Friday to reach the semifinals of the WTA Los Angeles Open, reports AFP.

Hingis booked a date Saturday with reigning US Open champion Serena Williams, the fifth seed who beat Spain's Conchita Martinez on Thursday in the first quarterfinal of the \$35,000-dollar Flushing Meadows hardcourt warm-up.

Frazier ousted Hingis from last week's WTA event at San Diego. But Hingis responded with one of her most dominating performances.

The Swiss teen has won four titles this season and has reached the finals at three other hardcourt events, including the Australian Open.

Hattrick start

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and 38th minutes.

Farasligon will now take on either Dhamondhi Club or Prantik Kira Chakra in the Group B final on August 16.

Earlier, Food Minister Amir Hossain Amu kicked off the tournament as chief guest. Bangladesh Football Federation president and Mayor of the Dhaka City Corporation Mohammad Hanif was also present on the occasion.

TODAY'S MATCHES
BRTC v Victoria SC (4 pm)
Dhamondhi Club v Prantik KC (6 pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

Brothers Union v PWD (4 pm)
Mirpur Chalanika v Agrani Bank (6 pm)
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Mirpur

Ganguly rates

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his international career and fully come to terms with the demands of Test cricket like he has at domestic level, which he demonstrated in spectacular style with an unbeaten 135 off just 110 balls in the quarterfinal victory over Surrey at the Oval.

"He's a rare talent and one international hundred is going to change everything," stressed Ganguly. "The important thing is self belief and if you score a hundred you think I can do it at this level."

That hundred against Surrey was one of the best one-day innings I've ever seen and showed what he can do. I was down the other end, but he kept on hitting fours and it made my job easier.

"I could concentrate on making the other end secure and even if I played out a couple of maidens over it didn't matter because Flintoff was smashing boundaries from the other end."

"He's only had nine days"

Pollock & co down under

'Winning will do a world of good'



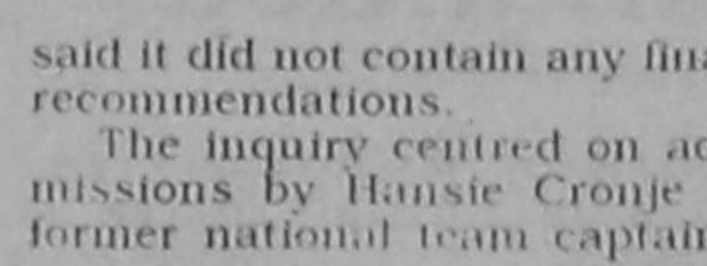
BRISBANE, Aug 12 (AP/AFI): Skipper Shaun Pollock says winning the upcoming limited-overs series against Australia will help South Africa regain public confidence in the wake of the cricket corruption scandal.

The South African cricket team touched down Saturday in Brisbane determined not to let a domestic match-fixing inquiry overshadow the upcoming series at Melbourne's Colonial Stadium from August 16-20.

The Proteas skipper said the morale of the team was high, adding that the findings of an interim report into South Africa's worst sports scandal would not adversely affect the tour.

"There's been a cloud hanging over our head for the last few months ever since the story broke," Pollock told Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio. "I don't think (the report) is going to reveal anything new so the chaps aren't worried about it at all."

Retired judge Edwin King, who headed the inquiry, handed his report to the South African government Friday but



said it did not contain any final recommendations. The inquiry centred on admissions by Hansie Cronje, a former national team captain, being offered money by Cronje to play below their best in matches against India this year.

Sports Minister Nonde Balfour said King's report, which did not contain any recommendations, would be made public once South African President Thabo Mbeki had read it — which was likely to happen within two weeks.

The United Cricket Board of South Africa has scheduled a disciplinary hearing August 19 for the three players in Johannesburg.

"If we can win this it will go a long way to help people who have been feeling miserable about what has happened," Pollock told a press conference in Brisbane.

"I think it's only a matter of time before they can rally behind us 100 per cent again. Maybe once the report is out it can be totally forgotten about."

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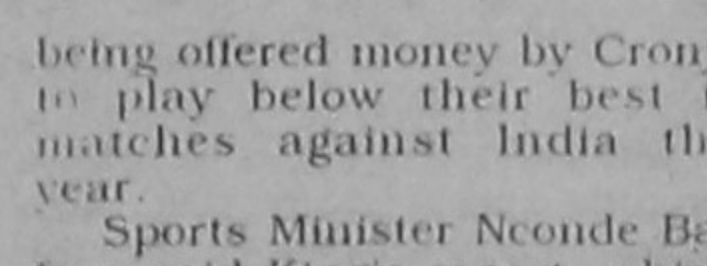
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Good news for Ronaldo

SAO PAULO, Aug 12: The French surgeon who operated on Brazilian football star Ronaldo confirmed Friday that the striker would be able to return to the pitch in January 2001, reports AFP.

Gerard Saillant, who twice operated on the 23-year-old forward for his injured right knee, told a conference on sport rehabilitation here that the recovery of the Inter Milan striker was going according to plan.

Saillant first operated on the Brazilian's knee in the French capital on November 30 and early this year gave him the all-clear to resume his career.

But Ronaldo collapsed in agony during his first appearance as a second half substitute during his club's 2-1 Italian Cup final first-leg defeat over Lazio in April when his knee gave way as he attempted a body feint.

Ronaldo is continuing his recovery in Brazil, but Saillant said that he would not be examining the player during his brief visit here since the striker will be undergoing a complete examination in Europe in two weeks.

In a seminar at the University of Sao Paulo, Saillant blamed excessive training for the joint problems suffered by many athletes.

"Many use physical preparation to compensate for their technical inferiority to their opponent," said the specialist.

But Saillant dismissed over-exercise as the reason for Ronaldo's injuries, saying that diet, positioning and psychological factors could also contribute.

Saillant blamed the early training of young athletes as the reason many were burnt out when they reached maturity.

"An example is French tennis, where players of 12 and 13 years train six hours per day and win most of the competitions in this age group but don't obtain such results when they grow up and many finish seriously injured," he concluded.

Sir Alex reassures Bosnich

MANCHESTER, England, Aug 12: Sir Alex Ferguson has played down talk that Australian Mark Bosnich does not have a future at Manchester United by insisting he is still part of his pool, reports AFP.

Bosnich was excluded from the team's pre-season tour of Germany and Malta and was a notable absentee at Friday's morning's open training session at Old Trafford.

United boss Ferguson has reassured Bosnich, "It's your choice in the goalkeeping pecking order following Fabien Barthez's signing and given him the number 13 shirt."

Ferguson explained Bosnich's absence Friday by claiming he was returning from a reserve game in Ireland.

Henman, Kuerten enter semis

CINCINNATI, Ohio, Aug 12: Britain's Tim Henman followed up his upset of Pete Sampras with a 6-1, 6-4 victory Friday over France's Fabrice Santoro to reach the semifinals of the 2.95-million-dollar Master Series event, reports AFP.

Henman held onto the tidal wave of success after his first-ever win over Sampras, shaking off a first-round loss to Marcelo Rios last week at Toronto.

Henman's foe Saturday for a berth in the final will be fourth seed and two-time French Open champion Gustavo Kuerten, a 6-7 (0/7), 6-3, 7-6 (7/5) victor against American Todd Martin.

"He has greatly improved his game. I just hope he's a bit tired after a long match in the afternoon heat," Henman said of Kuerten. "I go in like I did against Pete, with nothing to lose and everything to gain."

The other semifinal matches France's Arnaud Clement and seventh seed Thomas Enqvist of Sweden, a Los Angeles semifinalist three weeks ago, beat Argentina's Franco Squillari 6-2, 7-5 but needed eight match points to end it.

Enqvist ousted Spain's Fernando Vicente 7-5, 6-1. The triumph boosts Henman to 7-4 here and 35-17 on a year where his best success has been losing finals in Rotterdam and Scottsdale.

"It's a good achievement to beat Sampras, one of the high lights of a career," said Henman. "But I don't want to think about it now, maybe later. After the win, I slept well, I was tired and needed the rest."

Henman's first match was on September 23 1998 in a 1-1 draw against Yugoslavia but he was the following year where he earned his greatest triumph, leading the side to the Copa America, or South American

football championships title. That victory was at the zenith of his popularity though his backers started to dwindle in the months that followed.

By January this year, the media began to complain about his own particular way of dealing with the press and critics were saying his tactics were too cautious.

In a South American Olympic qualifier, disgruntled fans shouted out the equivalent in Portuguese of "Donkey, donkey" at Luxemburgo and in the days that followed he threw the public out from a training session.

Brazil qualified for the Olympics but Luxemburgo's relationship with the fans plummeted, no small matter in a country obsessed about their national team winning with panache.

His popularity also took a battering when Brazil started badly in the 2002 World Cup qualifiers, scoring only eight points in their first five matches.

In his two years, Luxemburgo has called up 107 players — 13 keepers, 19 full backs, 21 central defenders, 29 midfielders and 25 strikers and he still does not have a clear first-choice starting 11.

In 47 games so far, Brazil, including Olympic qualifiers, have won 32 matches, had 11 draws and four defeats with 141 goals scored and 45 goals conceded.

High points came with victories over Russia (5-1), Holland (3-1), Germany (4-0), Colombia (9-0) and Argentina (2-1, 4-2 and 3-1). Defeats came at the hands of Argentina (0-2), Mexico (3-1), Paraguay (1-2), and South Korea (0-1).

AFP FOOTBALL BRIEFS

PARIS, Aug 12: Football briefs on Saturday:

NEW TWIST IN WILTORD SAGA

A new twist in the Sylvain Wiltord transfer saga was reported by L'Equipe here on Saturday with Arsenal vice-president David Dein and manager Arsene Wenger expected in Bordeaux by Monday at the latest.

Dein and Wenger, who are reportedly prepared to up their offer for the French striker from 12 million to 15 million dollars, are hoping to persuade Bordeaux president Jean-Louis Triau to let him go.

Triau, currently at loggerheads with Wiltord for refusing to train with Bordeaux, rates the striker nearer 20 million dollars.

Wiltord scored France's last ditch equalizer in regulation time against Italy in the Euro 2000 final in Rotterdam last month, before David Trezeguet scored the golden goal winner.

Monday is the deadline to qualify players for the European Champions League which has brought about the trip by Arsenal officials, desperate for a top central striker as back-up for Thierry Henry, to the French wine country.

CHELSEA, VALENCIA WANT ZIEGE TOO

LONDON: Liverpool face competition from Chelsea and Spanish club Valencia for the signature of Middlesbrough's German international Christian Ziege, it was reported Saturday.

The Reds offered 5.5 million pounds (8.25 million dollars) for the 28-year-old midfielder two weeks ago, but it has now emerged that the Teesside club

have also given permission for him to open talks with other clubs.

"I'm very happy that I now have this permission thanks to my advisers," said Ziege, who is valued at around 8 million pounds (12 million dollars) by Middlesbrough. "My contract expressly states that I can leave if a club bids a certain amount for the new season."

MARIO SIDELINED

LISBON: Silvio Marie, FC Porto's Croatian midfielder, will be out for six months after undergoing a knee operation on Friday, the club announced.

Marie, 25, signed from English Premiership club Newcastle United over the summer, injured the knee in the 1-0 away defeat to Anderlecht of Belgium in a Champions League preliminary round tie on Wednesday.

CHILAVERT SUSPENDED

BUENOS AIRES: Jose Luis Chilavert, the colourful Paraguayan international goalkeeper who plays for Velez Sarsfield in Argentina, has been suspended for one match for insulting behaviour.

The goalkeeper was involved in a heated verbal exchange with River Plate coach Americo Gallego last Sunday as Velez lost 2-1 and appeared before an Argentinean football federation disciplinary hearing on Friday.

Chilavert got into hot water over his comments after the game, when he laid into Gallego. "He's an alcoholic," Chilavert stormed. He insulted me first, after River Plate scored their second goal, and when I went for him he scooted off like a rat up a drain."

"I don't know why it took so long and I can't say I am happy about the delay."

"I have a good feeling about Liverpool. I have met Gerard Houllier and I have a very good opinion of him."

"We have talked together and my first impression of him is very positive. We share the same philosophy about football and it could be good to work with him."

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