

Gaekwad aims to carry on

NAIROBI, October 13 (Internet report): India coach Anshuman Gaekwad said his side was prepared to play anyone in the ICC Knockout Trophy tournament.

"We are ready to take on anyone. The boys are confident and enjoying themselves, and the way they won against Australia was a tremendous boost. I can understand winning and losing, but what I am trying to stress on is the way we won against Australia," Gaekwad said after the victory on Saturday.

When asked if he would like to throw his hat in the ring for the coach's job after his short tenure comes to an end, Gaekwad replied, "I certainly would not like to do so. I am not the one who will hang on to such things."

"I accepted the offer because of the circumstances prevailing in Indian cricket at that time, but now, if the board wants me to continue, then they will have to make an offer, they will have to make the first move," he said. He would love to be associated with the Indian team in any capacity. "It is great fun to be with the boys who you know so well. Certainly I would love to be with them."

Reacting to comments that he is being dubbed as a 'lucky coach', he said, "There is no such thing as a lucky coach. I guess the harder you work, the luckier you get. It's nothing to do with luck. Probably, the boys are going in the right direction now."

Gaekwad said what was needed was little bit of a follow up on the players' progress and that is what he has been focusing on after he came back. "There are a few things that have to be done at any cost. Little things like training schedules and gym, taking so many catches every session. These are little things, but very important things. They do matter a lot, and the results have started showing again," he said.

Talking about the involvement of youngsters in the side and team meetings, he said, "I make sure that at least one senior player interact with the youngsters. Whether they like it or not, they have to get involved. And I am getting positive vibes from everyone."

Gaekwad said winning was what the Indian cricket team needed the most. "I have always said that we just have to start winning again. Nothing succeeds like success, and the game against Australia proved how hungry we were for a win."

Fletcher England coach until 2003

LONDON, Oct 13: England coach Duncan Fletcher was given a two-year extension to his contract on Friday, tying him to the job until 2003, reports AFP.

The extension will run from the end of his current contract, which expires on September 30, 2001. He will coach England up to and including the next World Cup in South Africa in February/March 2003 and beyond.

Fletcher said: "I am extremely pleased to have the opportunity to further build on the success we enjoyed this summer, winning the Wisden Trophy and the NatWest Series," he said.

"We have a good squad, who are well motivated and committed to continuing to improve their performances. There is a lot of work still to be done, but we are certainly moving in the right direction."

England and Wales Cricket Board chief executive Tim Lamb said: "We are delighted to have reached agreement with Duncan and very pleased that he is staying to continue the good work he has done in the past year."

"I think we can look forward to making further progress under the close working relationship that Duncan and Nasser Hussain have formed."

Three other members of the England management team, Phil Neale (operations manager), Dean Conway (physio-therapist) and Nigel Stockill (physiologist) have also accepted two-year contract extensions.

Lamb added: "It is essential at this level to have continuity and a stable set-up from which the England team can develop. I am delighted the existing management team are all committed to England for an additional two years."

Imran thinks

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players. "I have taken this as negative and it may also be good for them because it is one last chance to clear their names," Alam said.

General Zia however said the new inquiry would not have any adverse effect on players. Pakistani cricket had cleaned up its image to a great extent through the inquiry by Justice Malik Mohammad Qayyum which ended last year, he said.

"Justice Qayyum's probe was extensive and he can be given another mandate," Zia said.

The judge conducted a judicial probe into match-fixing allegations from September 1998 to October 1999, although this did not include the last World Cup.

A spokesman for the President's office said a decision on PCB's request was likely next week.

Wenger not running

Hodgson shows interest

LONDON, Oct 13: Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has ruled himself out as a candidate for coach of the England national team, while Roy Hodgson says he would be interested in the job, reports AP.

Wenger, a Frenchman, had been considered one of the favourites to succeed Kevin Keegan, who resigned following England's 1-0 defeat to Germany in a World Cup qualifier at Wembley last Saturday.

But Wenger said the Football Association shouldn't bother considering him.

"The England job is an attractive one - but someone else will be taking it, not me," he was quoted as saying in English newspapers Friday. "I will be honoring my contract which runs until 2002, whatever proposals I receive from another club or country."

Wenger, who has also been courted to take over Japan's national side, has always said he prefers the daily routine of club management.

FA chief executive Adam Crozier has said he would not rule out choosing a foreigner as England coach. But former England hero Bobby Charlton and other leading figures have said it would be "disgrace" not to pick an Englishman for the job.

"The England team should be managed by an English manager," England midfielder David Beckham said.

While a number of potential candidates have been ruled out

of contention, one Englishman - Hodgson - has now come forward.

"If the day ever comes, I'd have to consider it," said Hodgson, current manager of FC Copenhagen.

British bookmakers have slashed the odds on Hodgson taking over from 33-1 to 7-1.

The former Blackburn manager has two years remaining on his contract with Copenhagen, but he could take advantage of an escape, buyout clause.

Hodgson, 53, guided Switzerland to the World Cup finals in 1994. He has also coached at

club level in Sweden, Switzerland and Italy (with Inter Milan).

Former England manager Terry Venables, who guided the

team to the semifinals of the 1996 European Championship, remains as the clear favorite of the players, media and public.

"There's only one man for the job - Terry Venables," England and Manchester United forward Terry Sheeringham said. "Give him the job, simple as that."

But Venables left the England post under acrimonious circumstances following allegations of misconduct in his business activities. Senior FA officials are believed opposed to him returning.

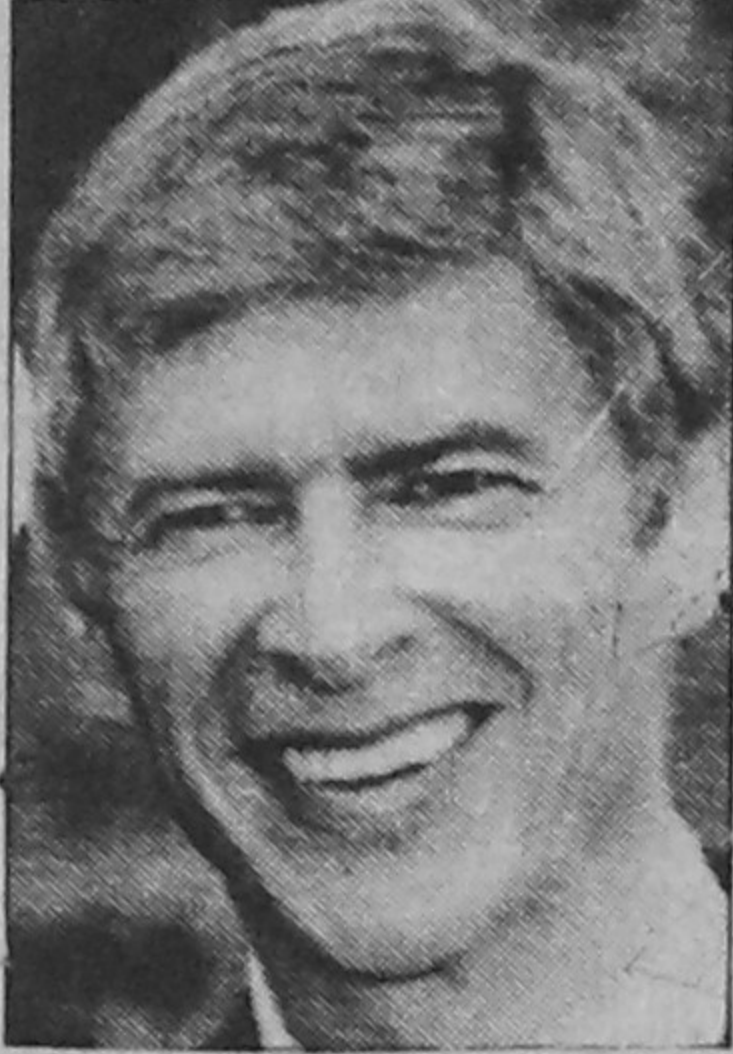
The FA has promised to appoint a new coach by Christmas.

England's hopes of qualifying for the 2002 World Cup are hanging by a thread after the defeat to Germany and 0-0 draw with Finland in Helsinki on Wednesday. England lies at the bottom of Group 9, even behind Albania.

Howard Wilkinson, who filled in as caretaker manager Wednesday, created a storm of controversy by suggesting England should write off the 2002 World Cup and concentrate on preparing for the 2006 tournament.

"It's a possibility which has to be seriously thought about," he said. "Whoever is in charge at the FA is going to have to sit down and ponder that one. It's the decision the next manager has to consider as well."

Wilkinson's comments were treated with derision by the media. Headlines in Friday's tabloids included "Let's Surrender," "You Wimp" and "World Cup 2002? Forget About It."



ARSENE WENGER

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Former England manager Terry Venables, who guided the

Beckham for an Englishman

LONDON, Oct 13: David Beckham believes the next England manager should be English.

The Football Association have hinted they may consider appointing a foreign coach to succeed Kevin Keegan but Beckham feels this would be wrong, reports AFP.

The England midfielder, who was shocked and saddened by Keegan's resignation, also said the players must take responsibility for trying to revive the team's flagging fortunes.

"The England team should be managed by an English manager," Beckham told Manchester United Television (MUTV) on Thursday.

"But at the end of the day it's all the English players who have got to go out and play well and get some points, not just for the fans and the manager, but ourselves."

"I was surprised by what

Kevin did because he's built the team spirit between the players and we all wanted him to stay. But at the end of the day he's made his decision and we all respect that."

Beckham missed the goal-

less draw in Finland because of a knee injury but he claims he has an outside chance of recovering in time for Manchester United's top-of-the-table clash with Leicester on Saturday.

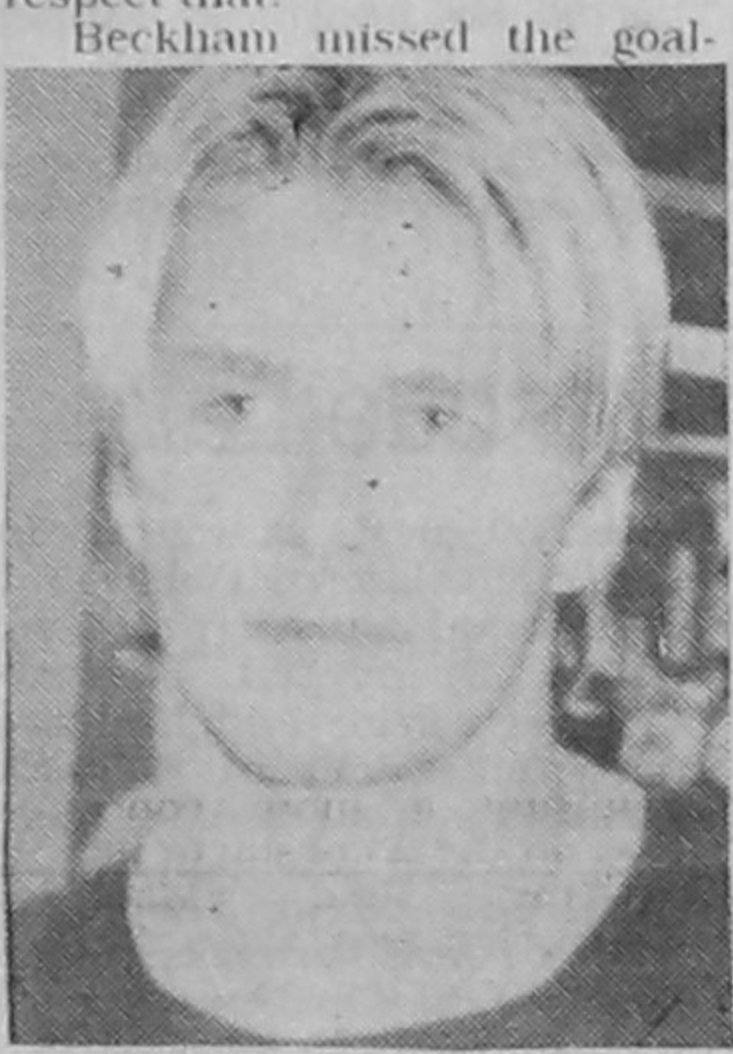
Beckham has seen a specialist, who dismissed fears that he had damaged ligaments and might need an operation.

"I wasn't fit enough to play in that England game, that's why I pulled out last week," he said.

"If I could have played in the game against Finland I would have done because you want to play in all World Cup qualifying matches. But I just wouldn't have been able to play. It was too sore."

"I had to go and just check it out for England and Manchester United. I thought it was best to come back and get some treatment and try and get myself fit for Saturday or Wednesday."

"So it's looking a bit better than what it was."



DAVID BECKHAM

OCA re-endorses Pusan

SEOUL, Oct 13: The Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) officially reinstated Pusan as hosts for the 2002 Asian Games today after securing new money guarantees from the South Korean city, reports AFP.

The OCA had accused Pusan City of spending millions of dollars from three sponsorship contracts without permission. The deals were said to be worth 10 million dollars.

There was also anger from Asian sports officials about allegedly broken promises made during Pusan's 1995 hosting campaign - including paying travel fees.

Muttaleb said the OCA would not divulge the full agreement reached but said it did include a commitment from Pusan to pay for the accommodation and air travel of 1,500 - about 20 per cent - of the expected athletes for the 2002 Games.

Pusan had agreed to pay for all athletes when it made its bid, but has seen its revenues hit by the Asian financial crisis of 1997.

A tentative agreement was reached on the sidelines of the Sydney Olympics which gave Pusan organisers until October

15 to meet new financial conditions, which included offsetting any possible losses in marketing and television revenues following from earlier marketing disputes with local organisers.

"The most important thing is that we have insured the financial returns to the Asian Games family which had previously been in doubt and was the reason we made our protests," said Muttaleb.

The 1998 Asian Games - held in Bangkok in the depth of the Asian economic crisis - reportedly generated more than 100 million dollars in revenues.

Muttaleb said the new agreement included a re-affirmation of the host agreement Pusan signed in 1995 as well as what he described as "a clear financial mechanism" on what Muttaleb called "the generation and disbursement of Asian Games revenues."

Following the face-saving accord, Pusan will host the OCA general assembly from November 10-12. The assembly will choose the host venue for the 2006 Asian Games with Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, New Delhi and Doha, Qatar all bidding.

Sixth seed Henman, who has a great chance of winning his first tournament since 1998, beat Frenchman Fabrice Santoro 6-3, 6-2 and Pioline, seeded eight, defeated Romania's Andrei Pavel 7-6, 7-6.

Rusedski, who has yet to fully recover from foot surgery 11 months ago, was nowhere near the form he displayed when knocking out Olympic champion Yevgeny Kafelnikov in the first round. He lost to Spain's Fernando Vicente 6-2, 6-7, 6-2.

The first round defeats of six seeded players in the 800,000 dollar tournament were the most in an ATP event this year.

Kafelnikov, top-seeded fellow Russian Marat Safin, Swedes Magnus Norman and Thomas Enqvist and Spaniards Alex Corretja and Juan Carlos Ferrero all fell at the first hurdle.

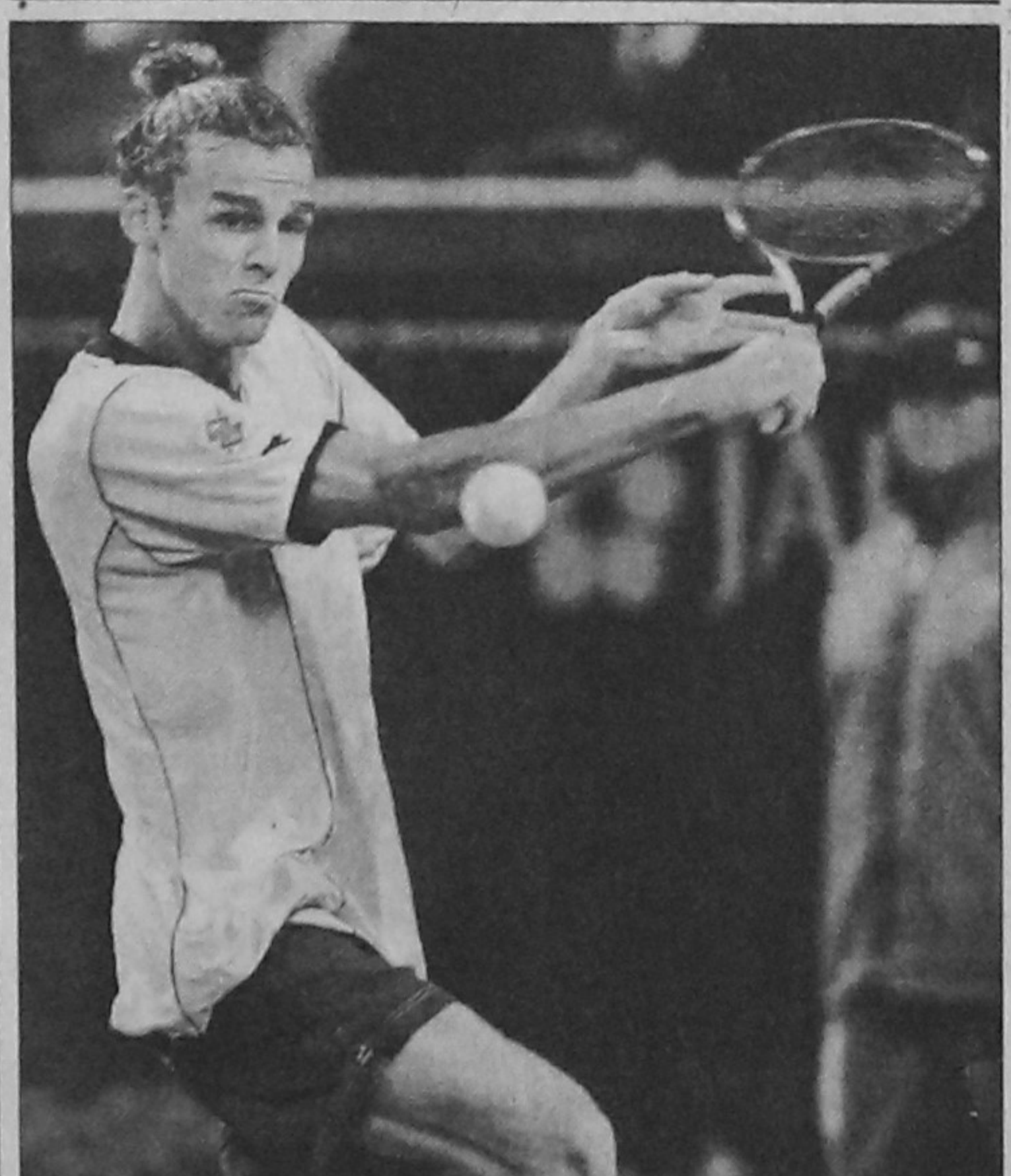
"It is very unusual for so many seeds to fall so quickly," said Henman. "But it goes to show that there are a lot of good players on the circuit."

Henman, who last triumphed in Basle in 1998, delivered one of his best showings of the year.

He claimed the first set after a fourth game service break and then broke twice for a 4-1 lead in the second before he wavered slightly to give Santoro a break.

Henman recovered quickly to break back and seal victory in the following game.

"This was the best tennis I have played in a while now," said Henman. "I desperately want to win another title, preferably this week."



Brazilian star Gustavo Kuerten is about to play a backhand-slice against Dominik Hrbaty of Slovakia during their Japan Open quarterfinal in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP photo

Game Three drawn

LONDON, Oct 13: The third game of the Brain Games World Chess Championship in London between Russia's Garry Kasparov and Vladimir Kramnik ended in a draw on Thursday after 53 moves in three and a half hours, reports AFP.

Kramnik is leading by 2-1 in the 16 game championship.

The first game ended in a draw and Kramnik won the second one, which was Kasparov's first defeat in a classical chess game - excluding rapid or internet games - since January 1999 when he lost to the Bosnian grandmaster in Wijk aan Zee, Holland.

Kramnik will play white for Saturday's fourth game.

Game days are Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. Kasparov, the world's undisputed number-one since 1985, left the International Chess Federation (FIDE), which has its own World Championship, in 1993.

"The Braingames Network" is sponsoring the match and financing the winner's 1.3-million-dollar prize and the loser's 600,000-dollar prize.

Upbeaten in 15 years, Kasparov, 37, who ranks with 2,849 points in Elo classification, is playing the only person deemed capable of taking his crown.

Div I b'ball from Nov 18

Sports Reporter
The Purobi Insurance First Division basketball league will start at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium from November 18.

Eleven teams are taking part in the league. They are Mariner Young's Club, The Greys, Dharmketu Club, Eagles Club, Josephites Club, Rangers Club, Hornets SC, Gregorians Club, Shaons Club, Surid Sangha and Cantonians Club.

The managers of the respective teams have been requested to be present at the Bangladesh Amateur Basketball Federation office at the gymnasium November 16 by 6 pm.

Proteas didn't like the timing

NAIROBI, Oct 13 (Internet report): The South African cricketers playing in the ICC Knockout tournament in Nairobi are angry at the timing of the life ban imposed on Hansie Cronje by the United Cricket Board of South Africa.

They are also put out at the fact that the news reached the team via unofficial channels, when proper communication through the UCBSA through the team's management might have been appropriate.

One player, speaking to The Star, summed it up quite candidly: "It's the very least, it's bloody awful timing, and it wasn't relayed to us in the proper manner."

They also questioned why the announcement needed to be made just prior to South Africa's important semi-final match against India in Nairobi, and why the life ban could not wait until the King commission of inquiry had completed its deliberations.

If it seemed an ill-timed announcement, considering the King commission will soon be sitting again, perhaps one can understand it in the light of the fact that the ICC is meeting in Nairobi on Monday and Tuesday, and Dr Bacher might be keen to be seen to be taking a strong stance against corruption, particularly after his allegations relating to the 1998 South African tour of England, and the 1999 World Cup.

Henman, Pioline the last seeds

VIENNA, Oct 13: Tim Henman and Cedric Pioline, the only seeds to have survived the first round of the CA Trophy, reached the quarterfinals on Thursday but defending champion Greg Rusedski fell by the wayside, reports Reuters.

Sixth seed Henman, who has a great chance of winning his first tournament since 1998, beat Frenchman Fabrice Santoro 6-3, 6-2 and Pioline, seeded eight, defeated Romania's Andrei Pavel 7-6, 7-6.

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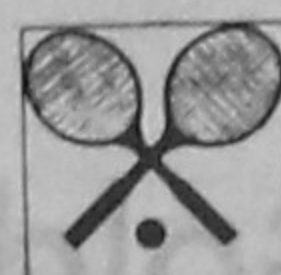
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"This was the best tennis I have played in a while now," said Henman. "I desperately want to win another title, preferably this week."

Hingis storms into semis



ZURICH, Oct 13: Home favourite Martina Hingis was the first player to advance to the semifinals of the Swisscom Challenge as she dismissed Russian qualifier Anastasia Myskina 6-0, 6-4 on Thursday, reports AFP.

In other matches, sixth seed Jennifer Capriati of the United States set herself up for a quarterfinal clash with Russia's Anna Kournikova when she defeated Anne-Gaëlle Sidot of France 6-3, 6-1.

Third seed Nathalie Tauziat of France defeated Bulgaria's Magdalena Maleeva 6-4, 6-0

and will next face Austria's Barbara Schett, who outlasted fifth seeded South African veteran Amanda Coetzer 7-6 (8/6), 3-6, 6-4.

The 20-year-old Hingis swept through the first set in just 17 minutes, dropping only one point on serve.

But after breaking to lead 2-1 in the second when Myskina broke a racquet string, she opened the door for her opponent with several careless errors. Myskina, 19, broke her to love to level at 2-2, and although Hingis broke again in the next game the Russian once more broke her to love for 3-3.

With Myskina now finding

more confidence in her groundstrokes and with a powerful forehand causing some damage, Hingis finally rose to the unexpected challenge, broke to lead 5-4 and served out for a 47 minute victory.

"I played a very good first set and was in control," said Hingis. "And then in the second set she picked it up a little bit more and I made a few more mistakes. I had so many things on my mind. I was looking for my friends and I didn't really focus. To keep that level from the first set is not very easy."

The 24-year-old Schett's victory against 29-year-old Coetzer was so close that Coetzer in fact won 11 more points. After Schett won the first two games, Coetzer levelled at 2-2 and then broke to lead 5-4. As each player sought an advantage in the baseline rallies, the Austrian broke Coetzer for 5-5, but then promptly dropped her own serve to love.

Coetzer again failed to serve out the set, and also let a 4-2 lead in the tiebreak slip away. Schett took the next four points to lead 6-4. Coetzer saved two set points, but then Schett broke to take the last point and the set.

"She's very fit and doesn't make a lot of unforced errors, and I knew I really had to work for every point from the beginning," said Schett.

"I knew that even if you're up 5-1 she can come back, and that's a lot of pressure. So I really had to focus on every point and for me it was a very hard match, mentally and physically."

The 25-year-old Maleeva's only win against 33-year-old Tauziat in their six meetings came in Zurich seven years ago. This time Tauziat set the pattern by breaking Maleeva to love in the opening game, and then allowed her only one game point on her serve in the second set as she wrapped up the match in 58 minutes.



Swiss Martina Hingis plays forehand against Anastasia Myskina of Russia during their Swisscom Challenge engagement in Zurich on October 12. — AFP photo

Sjeng shoots Scud down



TOKYO, Oct 13: Flying Dutchman Sjeng Schalken took sweet revenge for a historic Wimbledon defeat here on Friday when he dumped Australian third seed Mark Philippoussis out of the Japan Open, reports AFP.

Brazilian top seed Gustavo Kuerten also exited the tournament - forced to retire with flu as he trailed 3-0 in the final set against Dominik Hrbaty of Slovakia.

Schalken, the Dutch 12th seed, hit 44 aces against Philippoussis in six sets.

He double-faulted at 30-40 in the seventh game of the first set to go down 3-4 and another double fault gave Schalken a double break chance in the ninth game, which eventually he dropped after a deuce to lose the set.

"I attacked his second serve a lot and I put more pressure on his first serve as well, and then I got more chances," said Schalken, who converted four out of seven break chances in the 66-minute match.

"He tried to hit a little bit harder and made some mistakes. And then, if you are lucky, you can break him."

It was Schalken's second victory over Philippoussis in six encounters.

Philippoussis said: "He played good tennis and deserved to win. I missed my break points today, I volleyed very poorly, and I just put too much pressure on myself by missing those shots."

"In the last two matches, I had hit the ball hard, I had come in, I have a power game. That's what I do ... unfortunately today I didn't do well."

Fourth seed Nicolas Pietrangeli of Ecuador earned a place against Hrbaty when he defeated 1998 finalist Byron Black of Zimbabwe 6-2, 6-2, while

seed, who lost out 20-18 to Philippoussis in the longest fifth set in Wimbledon history, posted a 6-3, 6-2 victory to reach the semi-finals.

"I played the same tennis today as I did at Wimbledon, except that it fell my way this time," Schalken said.

"At Wimbledon, it could have been my way also, because it was 20-18 in the fifth set."

Philippoussis hit 44 aces against Schalken at Wimbledon. But the serve that earned him his Scud nickname betrayed him here.

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eight seed Hicham Arazi of Morocco took the other semi-final spot, beating Black's younger brother Wayne 6-7 (4/7), 6-2, 6-2.

On the women's side, defending champion Amy Frazier became the first player to make a final berth when the American second seed fended off a challenge from Joannette Kruger of South Africa 7-5, 6-2.

In quarterfinal action, fifth seed Tamarine Tanasugarn of Thailand outclassed American Tara Snyder 6-4, 6-1, while French top seed Julie Halard-Decugis defeated Miraslava Vavrinec of Switzerland 3-6, 6-2, 6-0.

Kuerten, 24, said he had decided to stop because he was feeling sick.

"I was feeling a little bit sick, it was flu, and I didn't have energy. The more I play, the less I feel physically, and I couldn't go for the shots anymore," said Kuerten, 24.

"I tried to hang in there. I had some chances to keep myself in the match after he broke me strongly in the second set, but I didn't have any more power to keep competing," he added.

Liverpool get Croatian Biscan

LIVERPOOL, Oct 13: Liverpool has reached a deal with Dynamo Zagreb for Croatian international midfielder Igor Biscan, reports AP.

Biscan, 22, was impressive as a second-half substitute in Croatia's 1-1 draw with Scotland in a World Cup qualifier on Wednesday.

Biscan is expected to join the English club in December during the mid-winter break in the Croatian season.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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Grid for crossword puzzle with numbers 1-37.

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