

Asian b'ball

From A Correspondent
NEW DELHI, Dec 18: China outplayed Sri Lanka 128-29 in a Group A match of the ABC (Asian Basketball Council) championship for junior women today at the Talkatora Indoor Stadium here today.

Later in another Group A game North Korea defeated Malaysia 77-48.

Chinese Taipei overpowered Thailand 71-51 in Group B.

Doig backs

Fleming's

county stint

WELLINGTON, Dec 18: (Internet report) New Zealand Cricket chief Chris Doig supports a stint in English county cricket with Middlesex for Black Caps captain Stephen Fleming, as long as his international commitments take precedence.

The north London side is keen to sign the New Zealand captain for a year as cover for Justin Langer, who will be touring England with Australia next year.

Playing in the English county competition would be good for Fleming, Doig told the Christchurch Press, but added that the national body would not permit the national skipper to sign for any county if it meant he would be unavailable for international duty, as he is contracted to NZC.

"We would be supportive providing he is cleared to play for New Zealand when we need him," Doig told The Press.

Fleming's stint at Lords would likely overlap with the New Zealand tour of Sri Lanka in June-July, although details of that tour are yet to be finalised. The scheduled tour of Pakistan in September also coincides with the end of the English summer, but county sides have a policy of releasing players for international duty.

"I think history would suggest that the New Zealand batsmen who have been involved in country cricket have all benefited from it," Doig said. "I think today there are a huge number of Australian batsmen playing country cricket who benefit from it. It would take his batsmanship another step up."

Another English county, Nottinghamshire, was last year keen to sign Chris Cairns, but NZC was not supportive. Doig said the physical demands on an all-rounder like Cairns were different. In addition, Cairns had a history of injury and New Zealand had a heavy itinerary this summer.

Cairns is reported to have been Middlesex's first option, but the knee injury that saw him return from the recent tour of South Africa ruled him out.

All-rounder Dion Nash played for the Lord's-based team three years ago.

Cairns was the last regular Black Cap on the county scene, although Nathan Aspinall filled in for Nottinghamshire for a year three seasons ago.

Red hot

Corretja

MADRID, Dec 18: Alex Corretja put another trophy in his cabinet on Sunday following last week's Davis Cup success over Australia by beating former world number one Carlos Moya 6-3, 6-2 in the final of the Spanish national championship, reports AFP.

Corretja, world number eight, emerged victorious from an eight man field which saw Davis Cup teammates Juan Carlos Ferrero and Albert Costa both eliminated in the quarter-finals.

Selector

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The squad named Sunday included the 11 who played in Johannesburg last week, as well as fast bowler Allan Donald, who missed the third Test as well as the first two limited overs internationals against Sri Lanka because of a stomach muscle strain. Magret said Donald would definitely play in Durban if he had recovered fully.

If Donald plays, it will be at the expense of fellow fast bowler Mfeneke Ngam, who made an impressive debut in Johannesburg, taking two for 34 and bowling at speeds up to 147 kilometres per hour.

Magret ruled out the possibility of fielding a four-pronged pace attack of Donald, Shaun Pollock, Ngam and Mfeneke Ngam.

SQUAD

Shaun Pollock (captain), Mark Boucher (vice-captain), Gary Kirsten, Bopha Dippenaar, Jacques Kallis, Daryll Cullinan, Neil McKenzie, Lance Klusener, Neelv Boje, Allan Donald, Mfeneke Ngam and Mfeneke Ngam.

Australia

From page 13

McGrath 9.5 1 27 3
Gillespie 13 5 18 0
MacGill 12 2 55 2
Miller 17 6 32 5

AUSTRALIA: Second innings

Hayden c Jacobs b Walsh 14
Slater c Jacobs b Dillon 1
Langer not out 43
M Waugh c Jacobs b Dillon 5
Ponting lbw b Walsh 11
Martyn not out 18
Extras: b-3, lb-3, 6
Total (For four wickets 96 in 35 overs)

Fall of wickets: 1-8, 2-22, 3-27, 4-48.

Bowler (to date) O M R W

Walsh 10 3 28 2
Dillon 8 2 22 2
Samuels 6 1 17 0
McLean 5 1 9 0
Adams 3 0 7 0
Black 3 0 12 0



Players of Ghanaian Club Hearts of Oak kiss the African Champions League trophy after beating Tunisian side Esperance 3-1 in Accra on December 17. - AFP photo

Boca best in Argentina

BUENOS AIRES, Dec 18: Boca Juniors won the Argentine Apertura championship on Sunday, their third major trophy of the year, on a weekend marred by crowd violence, reports Reuters.

Boca finished four points ahead of River Plate and Gimnasia La Plata after a 1-0 win at home to Estudiantes.

But their triumph was overshadowed by events on Saturday, when fighting between hooligans forced the Racing Club-Independiente derby to be abandoned and a 17-year-old youth was killed during clashes at a second division match.

Boca, who have already won the South American Libertadores Cup and Intercontinental Cup this year, began the weekend one point ahead of River Plate and two ahead Talleres.

River went into an early lead away to Lanus through Colombian striker Juan Pablo Angel.

But their hopes of winning the match and the title virtually disappeared shortly afterwards when their opponents equalised and defender Roberto Trotta was sent off for dissent.

River went on to lose 3-2 while Talleres, who had to win

and hope both teams above them slipped up, were beaten 1-0 at Newell's Old Boys.

Angel's goal for River allowed him to finish as top scorer in the championship with 13 goals.

The results meant that Boca were already virtually assured of the title when substitute Matias Arce scored their only goal midway through the second half to the delight of the 60,000 fans packed into La Bombonera stadium.

Boca never looked under threat from an Estudiantes team who have the best defensive record in the competition but whose ambitions never seemed to go beyond grabbing a point on Sunday.

Gimnasia-La Plata finished third, behind River on goal difference, with a 2-0 win over Los Andes.

Sunday's action took place under a black cloud following events on Sunday.

A 17-year-old youth, named by hospital officials as Mariano Guayas, died in hospital of gunshot wounds he received during fighting between fans at the game between Amiran Brown and Deportivo Moron.

The match was suspended in the 55th minute.

There was more trouble outside when Deportivo Moron players said they were attacked by supporters of their opponents as they left the stadium.

"When we were getting into our bus, a gate opened and around 100 Amiran fans jumped on us," said Deportivo goalkeeper Sebastian Pratta. "There was not a single policeman. We had to fight hand to hand with this band of hooligans. It was very difficult."

At least six people were injured by rubber bullets and one stabbed with a knife at the first division Racing-Independiente match, which was abandoned with 10 minutes to go.

The trouble started after a group of Racing club supporters tried to invade a section of the stadium reserved for the visiting Independiente supporters. Police fired tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse the fans.

The two clubs are situated just 200 meters apart in the Buenos Aires industrial suburb of Avellaneda. The day before the match, the words "four dead on Sunday" were painted on the walls of the Racing stadium.

Independiente were 2-0 ahead when play was suspended.

Hearts champs of Africa

ACCRA, Dec 18: Three late goals from Hearts of Oak earned the Ghana club their first African Champions League title as they beat Esperance of Tunisia 3-1 in an extraordinary, incident-packed match on Sunday, reports Reuters.

The second-leg victory gave Hearts a 5-2 aggregate triumph but the game was held up for 20 minutes after rioting broke out and police fired teargas.

Esperance later protested to the Confederation of African Football (CAF), seeking to have the result annulled.

Esperance goalkeeper Chokri El Ouair cut himself above the eye in a bizarre attempt to get the game abandoned but officials saw what he was up to and took no action.

The Tunisian club claimed in their protest that El Ouair had been hit by a flying object thrown from the crowd.

Rioting broke out 15 minutes from time with Esperance leading 1-0 and going all out for the second goal they needed. The crowd pelted the linesman from south Africa with an assortment of objects.

Teargas was then fired into the crowd, one cameraman landing in the VIP box, which forced all the dignitaries, including CAF president Issa Hayatou, onto the athletics track surrounding the field.

A small group of travelling Tunisian fans also scaled the fences to seek refuge. During the melee one supporter ran onto the pitch and handed an object to El Ouair, with which he cut a gash on the side of his face.

The goalkeeper, who played at the World Cup finals in France two years ago, ran to the centre of the field with blood streaming from the wound, collapsing at the halfway line.

But referee Robin Williams and linesman Achmet Sallie, as well as officials and journalists on the side of the pitch, saw the incident and the only result was that he had to leave the pitch injured.

When the game restarted, Esperance inexplicably brought on an outfield player and put midfielder Hassen Gabli in goal, leaving reserve goalkeeper Mohamed Zoubai on the bench.

Hearts then quickly scored three goals to secure the continent's flagship club trophy.

Captain Emmanuel Osei Kuffour equalised with seven minutes remaining and then toyed with the stand-in goalkeeper to score a second minute from time.

The two goals saw Osei Kuffour increase his tally in the Champions League to a record 11 for the year.

Hearts' win means they now play in the World Club Championship in Spain next year.

Rosolino, Klochkova rule

VALENCIA, Spain, Dec 18: Italy's Massimiliano Rosolino and Ukrainian Yana Klochkova were the stars of the European short-course swimming championships, which finished here Sunday, reports AFP.

Olympic 200m individual medley champion Rosolino won his fourth gold of these championships when he added the men's 200m freestyle title to his list after smashing the European record in both the 400m and 1500m freestyle events.

The 22-year-old Rosolino, Olympic 400m freestyle silver and 200m free bronze medalist, also won the 200m individual medley gold at Valencia.

Rosolino's performance matched the number of individual golds achieved at last year's championships by Klochkova, who was also the star of these events, after pocketing the largest sum of money ever won in world swimming.

Klochkova, who already won the 200m medley here, won 91,500 dollars after achieving gold in the 400m medley (4:35.11), giving her four wins over that distance in four events.

She won the 400m medley at the 1999 and 2000 European short-course championships, the 2000 European long-course and won the event with a world record time at the Olympic Games.

"It's great to have won such a sum, but the most important thing is to have achieved new wins here," said the 18-year-old Klochkova. Olympic 200 and 400 metre individual medley champion.

Rosolino timed 1min 44.63sec in the 200m freestyle edging out Czech swimmer Kvetoslav Svodova, who won silver with 1:45.27, and Britain's Paul Palmer followed up his silver in the 400m freestyle with a bronze in the 200m when he clocked 1:46.24.

"This new gold medal (200m) rounds off a good European championships for me. I didn't expect to have such a time over this distance," said Rosolino.

It was a surprise win for defending champion Perrot, who edged out Olympic champion Domenico Fioravanti of Italy, who had to settle for silver in 2:08.76.

B'baria cricket

From Our Correspondent

BRAHMANBARIA, Dec 18: Titas Cricket Club defeated Akota Boys Club by 50 runs in the Freedom Fighter Shaheed Ranga Mia Cup-2000 at the Shaheed Ranga Junior High School playground today.

Winning the toss, Titas batted first and collected 154 runs losing all wickets.

In reply Akota collected 104 runs for all.



Piet Norval of South Africa (R) and Don Johnson of USA pose for photographers with their trophies after winning the World Doubles Championship on Sunday. - AFP photo

Indian bubble burst

BANGALORE, Dec 18: Fifth seeds Don Johnson and Piet Norval won the world doubles tennis title on Sunday with an emphatic cruise past India's Leander Paes and Mahesh Bhupathi in the final here, reports AFP.

The American-South African duo, ranked 11th in the world, silenced some 7,000 partisan fans in this southern Indian city by winning 7-6 (10-8), 6-3, 6-4 in two hours and 18 minutes.

After a titanic first set which lasted an hour, the Indians fizzled out under the hot sun to give Johnson and Norval the title in their maiden appearance together in the 750,000-dollar event.

The win provided a heady climax to a successful year which saw the duo win four of five finals in the last six months.

"We're just on our way and it takes time to build these things up," Johnson said.

Houllier was delighted for Murphy, who has become the first English player to score against United in the Premier League since the back end of the last campaign.

"I apologise to our fans here," a disappointed Paes said. "We could have played better, but I think the superior team won in the end."

"However, our journey back to the top has begun. It should

Johnson and Norval picked up the winner's purse of 134,000 dollars, leaving the Indians to rue another missed opportunity in the championships.

Paes and Bhupathi made it to the finals twice earlier in 1997 and 1999, losing both times. This year they secured wild cards for their country's biggest tennis event.

The Indian Express, the world's top pair in 1999, fell to 55 in the rankings this year after an acrimonious split over Bhupathi's coach Enrico Pierro.

They reunited in August ahead of the Sydney Olympics, where they lost in the second round, but won the Japan Open in October.

"I apologise to our fans here," a disappointed Paes said. "We could have played better, but I think the superior team won in the end."

"However, our journey back to the top has begun. It should

all come together in the year 2001."

Johnson and Norval were delighted at what for them was "the biggest and most pleasing win ever."

"We came into the tournament as the team in form, and it helped over the last five days," Norval said.

"We had the better of exchanges in the final, but this tournament was made by Paes and Bhupathi. They were the real stars."

The only time Johnson and Norval were in trouble was in the first game of the match when Johnson was broken after a double fault.

They fought back to break Paes in the fourth and then won the hard-fought tie-breaker to take the first set.

Bhupathi proved the weak link for the Indians, losing his serve twice in the second set and once in the third to hand Johnson and Norval the match.

Houllier has no illusions

LONDON, Dec 18 (AFP): Liverpool boss Gerard Houllier saw his side end Manchester United's two-year unbeaten home record in the English Premiership and then insisted they are still some way behind the champions.

Danny Murphy brought United's 36-game run to an abrupt halt when he scored the only goal at Old Trafford from a 43rd-minute free-kick.

Houllier was thrilled by Liverpool's first win over their fiercest rivals in five years in what was his 100th sole match in charge, but he feels they are still not as good as United.

"I'm proud and pleased," said the Liverpool manager. "Winning here is always special. Look at their record and it's 36 games they have been in the league without losing a game."

"But don't get me wrong, I don't think we are on a level with them and they're still a great side."

"This is why we're so proud and happy as we've probably beaten one of the best sides in Europe, if not the best."

"I said today we are at the level of Manchester United, you would say 'does he know anything about football?'"

"I know what my team is worth at the moment and I know where they are going."

"It doesn't mean just because we've beaten them that we are now the same as them."

"There's quite a gap between the two sides and this team does not have the maturity and the composure of our opponents."

"The difference is they have got more experience and more

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a disappointing performance from Manchester United.

"It was nothing near the level of quality we normally expect from them."

"We lost the ball far too much and we didn't get the flow of our game right."

"We looked like we were in a hurry to win the match and that's not the best recipe in football."

"Liverpool to their credit defended very well, but certainly from our point of view our passing wasn't accurate and that was disappointing."

"When you don't play to the level you expect you can get disappointing results like this and this was a bad one for us."

To add to United's woes, Teddy Sheringham missed the match and faces three weeks out with a hamstring injury.

That leaves United with just one recognised frontline striker in Ole Gunnar Solskjaer for their next two games.

United's miserable afternoon was rounded off when Luke Chadwick was sent off two minutes from time for a professional foul on Vladimir Smicer and Ferguson could not resist a dig at Leeds referee Mike Riley.

"I thought Roy Keane was back as cover to be honest," he said.

"The boy pulled Smicer 45 or 50 yards out and he might have given a foul then."

"OK you might have said play the advantage, by that time Roy Keane was back I thought."

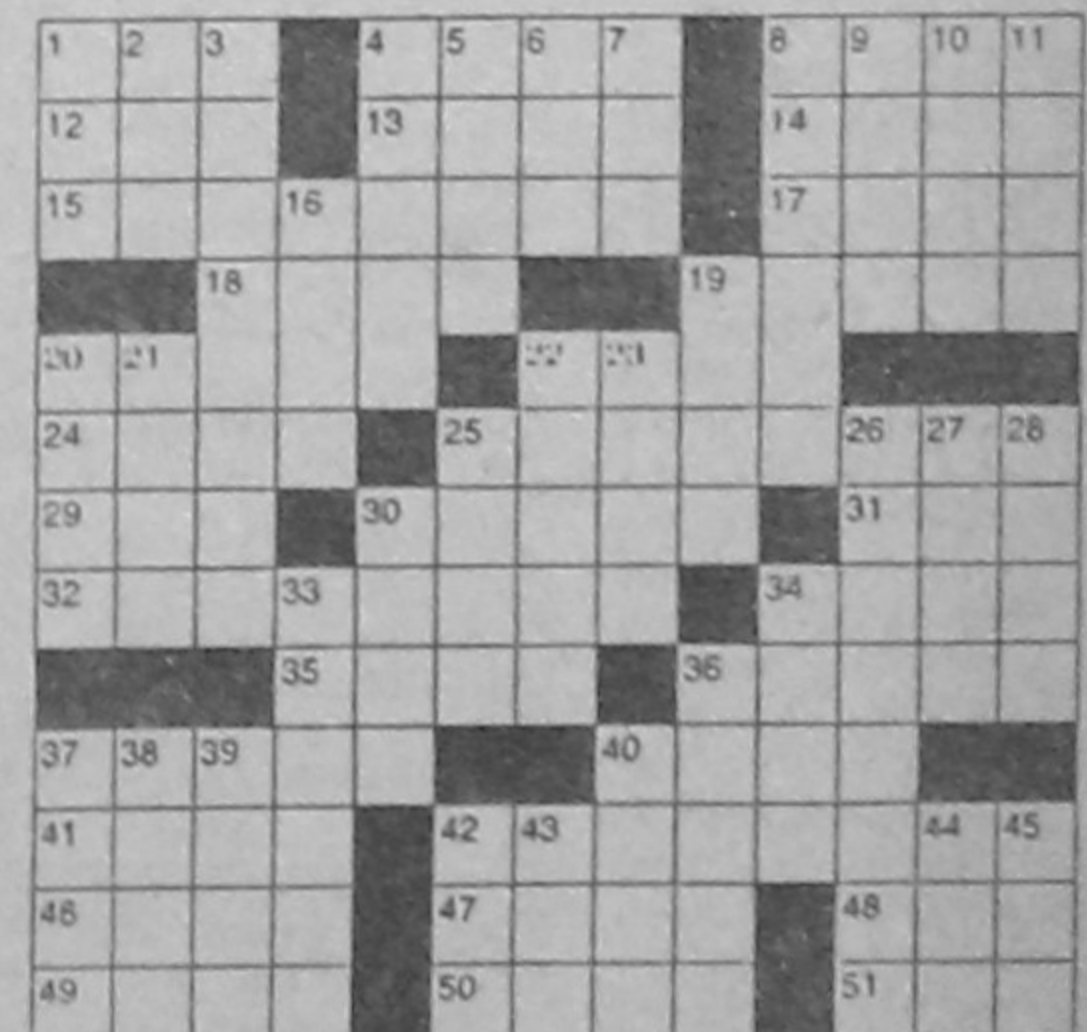
"He couldn't get the boy off quick enough. He'll be the toast of Leeds tonight."

The United boss said: "It was

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Olympic skier
4 Jones or Crockett
8 Snatch
12 Where, to Caesar
13 Anne
14 Clinton
15 IRA branch
17 It takes the cake
18 Cushioned
19 Search
20 Adipose
22 Drag
24 Curved molding
25 Starving
29 Spoon-bender
30 Waller
31 Historic period
32 Cattle
33 man's staff
34 Satiated
35 Tramp's love
36 Simoleons
37 Lost color
40 Try for a 300

DOWN
2 Hirsute
3 Iowa city
5 Encourage
6 Sundial
7 Longing
8 Evil
9 Poregnate
10 Displays a lack of
11 Predilection
16 Marginalia
19 pro quo
20 Tea time
21 Pearl
22 Mosque
23 Vicinity
24 Exposed
26 Stranger
27 Perry's creator
28 Judging
30 African nation
33 Baseball shoes
34 Chicks and ducks
35 Get on board
37 Kasparov's soldier
38 Sylvester's impediment
40 Exposed
42 A mere handful
43 "Go, team, go!"
44 "Gol a Secret"
45 Science Guy's Bill



CRYPTOQUIP
Z D J U G D J R C K M B V
I M J G Z J U G H U G M C
S C F J Q A H I Q J V B K J D J
C V E J N R M Q Q A K J S Q J C N
Yesterday's Cryptquip: THE FARMER EMPHATICALLY ALLEGES THAT HIS GRACEFUL HEN IS POULTRY IN MOTION.
Today's Cryptquip Clue: G equals T
The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals Q, it will equal Q throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.