

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 county cricket have all benefited from it," Doig said. "I think today there are a huge number of Australian batsmen playing county 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 Astle 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. Maguire 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 Mfuneke Ngam, who made an impressive debut in Johannesburg, taking two for 34 and bowling at speeds up to 147 kilometres per hour.

Maguire ruled out the possibility of fielding a four-pronged pace attack of Donald, Shaun Pollock, Ngam and Makhaya Ntini.

SQUAD

Shaun Pollock (captain), Mark Boucher (vice-captain), Gary Kirsten, Boeta Dippenaar, Jacques Kallis, Daryl Cullinan, Neil McKenzie, Lance Klusener, Neby Boje, Allan Donald, Makhaya Ntini and Mfuneke Ngam.

Australia

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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
Maguire not out 18
Extras (6-3, nb-3) 6
Total (four wickets 35 overs) 98

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.

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

But their triumph win 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 Ace 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 Guaras, died in hospital of gunshot wounds he received during fighting between fans at the game between Almirante Brown and Deportivo Moron.

Independiente were 2-0 ahead when play was suspended.

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 Almirante fans jumped on us," said Deportivo Moron's goalkeeping 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" and "four dead" were painted on the walls of the Racing stadium.

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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.

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

Hearts then quickly scored three goals to secure the continental flaghip club trophy.

Captain Emmanuel Osei Kuffour equalised with seven minutes remaining and then toed with the stand-in goalkeeper to score a 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.

Sport**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 Ouamer 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 Ouamer 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 canister 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 Ouamer, 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 Achmat Salle, 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.

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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



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

Johnson and Norval picked up the winner's purse of \$143,000 dollars, leaving the Indians to rue another missed opportunity in the championships.

Paes and Bhupathy 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 Bhupathy's coach Enrico Pipher.

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

"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 Bhupathy. 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.

Bhupathy 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.

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