

Sugar leaves bitter taste

LONDON, Dec 23: Outgoing Tottenham chairman Alan Sugar has taken a parting swipe at the White Hart Lane fans who made his nine years at the club "an absolute waste of time."

Sugar, who last week sold his controlling interest in the club for 22 million pounds (\$32.4 million dollars), claimed he was always forced into quick-fix solutions to satisfy the irreconcilable Spurs supporters.

Tottenham is a club where its fans live on past heritage and its past glory," Sugar said in an interview on BBC's Football Focus to be broadcast Saturday, reports AFP.

For many years the managers have been in an untenable position of needing to provide instant success. If we had our time again we would not have succumbed to quick fixes to try to bring success."

Sugar, who had hired and fired seven managers during his time at the helm, said that he had "had enough of being the fans' whipping boy" and that he knew it was time to quit when his family stopped going to matches because of the abuse he was getting.

"In hindsight, if we had been a little more patient rather than go for quick fixes, put up with aggravation from fans for a little longer, it would have put us in a much better position."

"It's a no-win situation. We were fire-fighting all the time. That's fine if there is some kind of reward at the end of it but if you don't get any recognition, it's an absolute waste of time."

Jan the best Czech too

PRAGUE, Dec 23: Triple Olympic javelin champion Jan Zelezny, who was named IAAF men's Athlete of the Year last month, was honoured at home Thursday when he was voted Czech sportsperson of the year, reports AFP.

Zelezny, a 34-year-old former army colonel, ignored back and elbow pains to become the first javelin thrower to win three Olympic titles with the gold medal at the Sydney Games in September.

He won his golds in consecutive Olympics in 1992, 1996 and 2000. He also won silver in Seoul in 1988 before retiring on his gold spire.

Zelezny came back from a serious shoulder injury in 1998 to compete in Sydney and when his great rival Steve Backley of Britain broke the eight-year-old Olympic record with 89.85 metres in the second round, Zelezny came back in the following round a 90.17 effort.

Zelezny, came in ahead of double Olympic canoe/kayak champion Stepanka Hilgertova in second place, with Olympic decathlon silver-medallist Roman Sebrle in third in the annual Czech awards.

Top ten Czechs:

1. Jan Zelezny (Javelin) 2190pts
2. Stepanka Hilgertova (cano/kayak) 1757
3. Roman Sebrle (Decathlon) 1656
4. Jaromir Jagr (Ice hockey) 1170
5. Rudolf Kraj (Boxing) 1106
6. Jan Rehula (Triathlon) 1085
7. Pavel Nedved (Football) 929
8. Tomas Dvorak (Decathlon) 841
9. Petr Malek (Archery) 737
10. Daniel Malek (Swimming) 610

Robbie Keane reaches Leeds

LONDON, Dec 23: Robbie Keane arrived at Leeds United Thursday afternoon to complete his loan move from Inter Milan - and admitted he had mixed emotions about leaving Italy.

The Republic of Ireland striker has joined the Elland Road club until the end of the season with the deal becoming permanent on July 1 when Leeds will pay Inter 12million pounds (\$17.76million dollars) for his services.

Keane told the Press Association: "I have mixed emotions - when I joined Inter Milan in July I thought I would be spending some years in Italy."

"I have settled well over there and was learning the language and had made a number of friends."

"But the most important thing was that I had only been picked for half of the Serie A games and, as any footballer will tell you, playing is everything."

"Last week Inter officials told me that there had been a lot of interest from Premiership clubs and indicated to me that they would be considering offers."

"They asked me which team I would join if I had a choice and I told them it would be Leeds."

Keane, 20, added: "I have a lot of friends at Elland Road and I have heard from them what a fantastic spirit David O'Leary has created and I am convinced that they will be a major force in the game for the foreseeable future."

"I want to have the best possible football career and I know that moving to Leeds will help achieve this."

If the deal becomes permanent, Inter have taken a 1million pounds (\$1.48million dollars) loss on Keane, who cost them 13million pounds (\$19.24million dollars) when he signed in the summer from English Premiership side Coventry, but who failed to impress new coach Marco Tardelli following the sacking of Marcello Lippi.

Romario staring at Barca



BARCELONA, Dec 23: (Reuters): Romario is ready to return to Barcelona if the club want him, the Brazilian superstar was quoted as saying on Saturday.

"I have incredible offers for transfers but I would only leave Brazil to play in Barcelona," he said in an interview with Sport newspaper.

Romario, who still holds hero status at the Nou Camp, left the club in 1995 after two highly successful seasons to move to Flamengo.

After a brief spell at Valencia back in Spain he returned to Brazil, once again playing for Flamengo before a move to his current club Vasco da Gama.

At the age of 34, he is back in the Brazilian national team and playing some of the best football of his career.

His hat-trick in Wednesday's 4-3 Copa Mercosur final win over Palmeiras took his goal tally this year to a scarcely

credible 71 and Italian giants Inter Milan are rumoured to be one of the top European clubs bidding for his services.

"I'm older and better, like

wine, no?" he said. "I don't smoke, I don't drink and I run as much as I have to on the field of play."

That's why I've scored so many goals this season at the age of 34. I'm playing as well as I did in 1994, my best season, but scoring more goals. Age is not an excuse."

"I know this is the moment to return to Barcelona. If they want me, well then they know."

"Either I go to Barcelona, or I stay in Rio. There is no other option."

Barcelona could be tempted by the proposition after a disappointing start to the current season that saw them crash out of the Champions League at the first stage.

Club officials have said that signing a defender is the priority before the transfer window in Spain closes at the end of January but they could see Romario as a replacement for one of their two under-performing strikers, Alfonso and Dani.

ROMARIO

Anand stays on course



TEHRAN, Dec 23: Indian Grand Master Viswanathan Anand beat Alexei Shirov of Spain in less than three hours Friday, giving him a two-game lead in the FIDE World Chess Championship, reports AFP.

Anand took advantage of Shirov's dubious opening innovation and an exchange sacrifice in the third game of the six-game match. Shirov resigned after move 41.

"I think he's going to fight back, but the win is very welcome," a relaxed Anand said. The Indian could be the next FIDE world chess champion if he wins game four on Sunday.

Playing with black, Anand chose an obscure line in the Taimanov Variation of the Sicilian Defence.

Shirov varied from previous games on move 16 when he won a pawn, but allowed his kingside pawn structure to be shattered. He had taken 45 minutes to reach this move, which was slow going. His 16th move was not pregame preparation, as with so many novelties at this level.

Shirov followed up by sacrificing a rook for black's knight in order to get some attacking chances against black's king side. After the game, Anand criticised the exchange sacrifice and suggested 19.Bd3.

Anand speculated that Shirov had not anticipated his 20th move.

Shirov, as in game two, got

himself into time pressure and, by move 20, he had only 20 minutes to reach move 40. Anand had an hour and 35 minutes. Each player has two hours to make the first forty moves.

Anand said he plans "to get some rest and look at some chess" on Saturday.

Anand and Shirov drew the first game on Wednesday. Shirov must win two of the next three games to tie the match and force a rapid playoff. Anand will have the advantage of the white pieces in two of the remaining games.

Anand, 31, has much more match experience at this level than Shirov. He lost a world-championship match to Garry Kasparov in 1995 and nearly beat Anatoly Karpov in a FIDE world championship match in 1998.

Shirov, 28, an ethnic Russian from Latvia who lives in Spain, is known for his attacking prowess.

This match will decide the world champion according to FIDE, but there is another supreme.

Russian Grand Master Vladimir Kramnik is the world champion according to a match in October-November in which he beat compatriot Garry Kasparov. The match was sponsored by Brain Games Network, a British Internet startup company.

FIDE President Kirsan Illyumzhinov told reporters Wednesday that a "world prestige match" between FIDE champion and Kramnik was quite possible. He suggested July 2001 as a possible date.

Shirov had only six minutes left by move 50, while Anand had nearly an hour and a half.

Shirov, as in game two, got

Some things never change



PARIS, Dec 23: (AFP): Master-blaster Felix Trinidad staked a claim to be regarded as the world's best pound-for-pound fighter in 2000 as Lennox Lewis blitzed all comers to cement his place at the top of the heavyweight heap.

First young American pretender Michael Grant was brutally disposed of at Madison Square Garden in April, willing inside two rounds.

But despite Lewis' exploits and the latest instalments of the Tyson freak-show, it was Puerto Rico's explosive super-welterweight Trinidad who caught the eye in 2000.

The 27-year-old moved up a class and added WBA and IBF

picking off one of Shirov's weak paws and bringing his queen to the kingside. He described his 23 move as "very precise".

By move 30, it was clear that Shirov was fighting to hold the draw. Anand said after the game he thought he was already winning at that point.

Shirov had only six minutes left by move 50, while Anand had nearly an hour and a half.

Shirov, as in game two, got

himself into time pressure and, by move 20, he had only 20 minutes to reach move 40. Anand had an hour and 35 minutes. Each player has two hours to make the first forty moves.

Shirov said he plans "to get some rest and look at some chess" on Saturday.

Anand and Shirov drew the first game on Wednesday. Shirov must win two of the next three games to tie the match and force a rapid playoff. Anand will have the advantage of the white pieces in two of the remaining games.

Anand, 31, has much more match experience at this level than Shirov. He lost a world-championship match to Garry Kasparov in 1995 and nearly beat Anatoly Karpov in a FIDE world championship match in 1998.

Shirov, 28, an ethnic Russian from Latvia who lives in Spain, is known for his attacking prowess.

This match will decide the world champion according to FIDE, but there is another supreme.

Russian Grand Master Vladimir Kramnik is the world champion according to a match in October-November in which he beat compatriot Garry Kasparov. The match was sponsored by Brain Games Network, a British Internet startup company.

FIDE President Kirsan Illyumzhinov told reporters Wednesday that a "world prestige match" between FIDE champion and Kramnik was quite possible. He suggested July 2001 as a possible date.

Shirov had only six minutes left by move 50, while Anand had nearly an hour and a half.

Shirov, as in game two, got

himself into time pressure and, by move 20, he had only 20 minutes to reach move 40. Anand had an hour and 35 minutes. Each player has two hours to make the first forty moves.

Shirov said he plans "to get some rest and look at some chess" on Saturday.

Anand and Shirov drew the first game on Wednesday. Shirov must win two of the next three games to tie the match and force a rapid playoff. Anand will have the advantage of the white pieces in two of the remaining games.

Anand, 31, has much more match experience at this level than Shirov. He lost a world-championship match to Garry Kasparov in 1995 and nearly beat Anatoly Karpov in a FIDE world championship match in 1998.

Shirov, 28, an ethnic Russian from Latvia who lives in Spain, is known for his attacking prowess.

This match will decide the world champion according to FIDE, but there is another supreme.

Russian Grand Master Vladimir Kramnik is the world champion according to a match in October-November in which he beat compatriot Garry Kasparov. The match was sponsored by Brain Games Network, a British Internet startup company.

FIDE President Kirsan Illyumzhinov told reporters Wednesday that a "world prestige match" between FIDE champion and Kramnik was quite possible. He suggested July 2001 as a possible date.

Shirov had only six minutes left by move 50, while Anand had nearly an hour and a half.

Shirov, as in game two, got

himself into time pressure and, by move 20, he had only 20 minutes to reach move 40. Anand had an hour and 35 minutes. Each player has two hours to make the first forty moves.

Shirov said he plans "to get some rest and look at some chess" on Saturday.

Anand and Shirov drew the first game on Wednesday. Shirov must win two of the next three games to tie the match and force a rapid playoff. Anand will have the advantage of the white pieces in two of the remaining games.

Anand, 31, has much more match experience at this level than Shirov. He lost a world-championship match to Garry Kasparov in 1995 and nearly beat Anatoly Karpov in a FIDE world championship match in 1998.

Shirov, 28, an ethnic Russian from Latvia who lives in Spain, is known for his attacking prowess.

This match will decide the world champion according to FIDE, but there is another supreme.

Russian Grand Master Vladimir Kramnik is the world champion according to a match in October-November in which he beat compatriot Garry Kasparov. The match was sponsored by Brain Games Network, a British Internet startup company.

FIDE President Kirsan Illyumzhinov told reporters Wednesday that a "world prestige match" between FIDE champion and Kramnik was quite possible. He suggested July 2001 as a possible date.

Shirov had only six minutes left by move 50, while Anand had nearly an hour and a half.

Shirov, as in game two, got

himself into time pressure and, by move 20, he had only 20 minutes to reach move 40. Anand had an hour and 35 minutes. Each player has two hours to make the first forty moves.

Shirov said he plans "to get some rest and look at some chess" on Saturday.

Anand and Shirov drew the first game on Wednesday. Shirov must win two of the next three games to tie the match and force a rapid playoff. Anand will have the advantage of the white pieces in two of the remaining games.

Anand, 31, has much more match experience at this level than Shirov. He lost a world-championship match to Garry Kasparov in 1995 and nearly beat Anatoly Karpov in a FIDE world championship match in 1998.

Shirov, 28, an ethnic Russian from Latvia who lives in Spain, is known for his attacking prowess.

This match will decide the world champion according to FIDE, but there is another supreme.

Russian Grand Master Vladimir Kramnik is the world champion according to a match in October-November in which he beat compatriot Garry Kasparov. The match was sponsored by Brain Games Network, a British Internet startup company.

FIDE President Kirsan Illyumzhinov told reporters Wednesday that a "world prestige match" between FIDE champion and Kramnik was quite possible. He suggested July 2001 as a possible date.

Shirov had only six minutes left by move 50, while