

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 unreasonably Spurs supporters. Tottenham is a club where its fans live on past history 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 I 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 the time 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 Zeleny, who was named IAAF men's Athlete of the Year last month, was honoured at home Thursday when he was voted Czech sportsman of the year, reports AFP.

Zeleny, 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 embarking on his gold spree.

Zeleny 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, Zeleny came back in the following round a 90.17 effort.

Zeleny 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 Zeleny (Javelin) 2190pts
2. Stepanka Hilgertova (Canoe/kayak) 1757
3. Roman Sebrle (Decathlon) 1656
4. Jaromir Jagr (Ice hockey) 1170
5. Rudolf Kralj (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 12 million pounds (17.76 million 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 were 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 me achieve this."

Romario staring at Barca



ROMARIO

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 now 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.

On move 19, white had two outside passed pawns for the sacrifice exchange and black's king was slightly exposed. But Anand defended skillfully.

On 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's position deteriorated in the last moves before the time control and by move forty his position was clearly hopeless.

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 surprise.

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 Ilyumzhinov told reporters Wednesday that a "world prestige match" between FIDE champion and Kramnik was "quite possible."

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"Paul has built his career on being a warrior, army style, tough guy, tough heart, so his trainers have got used to that," said Sydney super-heavyweight champion Harrison told Press Association on Monday.

"They are used to Paul digging deep, tough, tough, tough, no surrender. That's how he goes in there."

"I'm sure if Paul makes a full recovery he'll say that was his style and he didn't want them to pull him out. That's his spirit. I'm a fighter and that's the way I go out."

"I know Paul trained hard, but he looked drained, there were a lot of things that didn't look right about Paul."

Ingle's plight reopened the debates on the effects of dehydration and the possible introduction of head guards, bigger gloves and shorter rounds.

Dehydration makes boxers more prone to injury, but head guards can reduce vision and result in an accumulation of punishment, while presenting the opponent with an increased target.

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Asia Cup tennis

NEW DELHI, Dec 23 (AFP): Results from the Asia Cup tennis tournament here on Friday:

Men's round-robin
India bt China 2-1
Mahesh Bhupathy (Ind) bt Wang Yu (Chi) 6-3, 6-4.
Zhang Yu (Chi) bt Harsh Mankad (Ind) 6-3, 6-2.

Women's round-robin
China bt Thailand 3-0
Li Ting (Chi) bt Napaporn Tongsaalee (Tha) 7-6 (7/5), 6-3.
Li Na (Chi) bt Suchanai Viratprasert (Tha) 3-6, 6-2, 6-2.

Li Na/Sun Tien (Chi) bt Oranwan Lamangthong/Napaporn Tongsaalee (Tha) 6-1, 6-1.

Bertolotti's Xmas gift
PARMA, Italy, Dec 23: Modena player Francesco Bertolotti will be allowed home to spend Christmas with his family just over a month after the assault in the dressing room area by an opposing player that left him in a coma, Gazzetta dello Sport reported Friday, reports AFP.

Bertolotti, speaking from a Parma hospital, reveals that he has not yet been able to forgive the Como captain Massimiliano Ferrigno who has been charged in relation to the incident after a third division match on November 19.

It is not yet clear whether 33-year-old Bertolotti will recover sufficiently to play again but doctors say he will lead a normal life - his life was in danger when he was first admitted to hospital in a coma and there had been fears he might have suffered permanent brain damage.

Bertolotti made an appeal for peace on the football field - his incident is one of a series in Italy where players have been injured by opponents or fans recently.

This is not football, it has nothing to do with it. We must defend ourselves. And we can not just say 'well it has always happened, but instead learn to control ourselves'."

Bertolotti remembers, nothing of the punch thrown by Ferrigno that landed him in hospital and said he had not yet forgiven his former friend - the two had been team-mates at Brescia.

He said: "He could have helped me or tried to explain. If it had gone on a minute longer perhaps I would not be here today. Forgive him? I don't know now, perhaps it would have been better if he had come straight to Lecce (where Bertolotti first underwent surgery) if he had told my wife something had happened. At that time Elisabetta (Bertolotti's wife) needed to believe him."

Bertolotti also said that he had had to disavow his seven-year-old son Maurizio - he also has a six-year-old daughter Illenia - from giving up football.

"I managed to convince him football is not like this and that he must carry on playing and enjoying himself," said Bertolotti.

Ferrigno, also interviewed by Gazzetta dello Sport Friday, meanwhile said he was still haunted by the incident and said he was not sure if he would ever play again.

"I hope Francesco comes back and lives serenely. I am not worried about my life, with or without football, all I can hope is that he too will not be worried," said the 26-year-old.

Metro win

From page 13
Fall of wickets: 1/8, 2/9, 3/10, 4/10, 5/50, 6/68, 7/110, 8/135, 9/135

Bowler
M Mahmud 10.3 1 31 3
Naveedur 9 1 30 3
Zahoor 6 1 19 0
Sakrat 9 1 30 2
Mukul 6 0 17 0
Ashraf 3 0 11 1

Result: Dhaka Metropolis won by 108 runs.

Lee out for series



LEE

MELBOURNE, Dec 23 (Internet report): Australia speed demon Brett Lee will miss the remainder of the series against the West Indies with a back injury.

Lee withdrew from the fourth Test against the West Indies, which begins on Boxing Day, after undergoing tests on his back in Melbourne.

The Australian management are reluctant to take "any chances with the fast bowling sensation, who has a history of back problems."

Lee has been left to his own devices since Australian medical staff discovered a stress reaction in the L3 vertebra in his lower back after the Second Test in Perth.

The tour of India in February-March has been targeted as his probable return to Test cricket.

Captain Steve Waugh, meanwhile, faces a late fitness test. He missed the Adelaide Test with a buttock muscle injury.

Waugh told Australian radio: "At this stage I'm pretty confident I'll be able to play."

He will replace Damien

Martin if he is passed fit and retains the captaincy duties from deputy Adam Gilchrist.

It will be tough on Martin, who made 46 not out and 34 not out in Adelaide, but he is

to accept that I must wait to get a regular place in the team.

The truth of the matter is that the Adelaide Test was a bonus for me.

"I know I'm the next cab off the rank as a batsman when a chance comes up. That's simply my role at the moment," the 29-year-old said.

Gilchrist, meanwhile, has left no-one in any doubt that he wants the captaincy on a permanent basis when Waugh decides to retire, despite the additional demands of keeping wicket.

"I felt that it didn't affect my game technically or the way I was contributing in regards to my job as a wicket-keeper and batsman," he said.

"It's been a huge honour and a big thrill. I've learned a great deal and I'm ever called upon again, I'll be able to look back on this Test, particularly because it was so tough, and draw from that."

SQUAD
Andy Bichel, Adam Gilchrist, Jason Gillespie, Matthew Hayden, Justin Langer, Stuart MacGill, Damien Martin, Glenn McGrath, Colin Miller, Ricky Ponting, Michael Slater, Mark Waugh and Steve Waugh.

Batting worry for Lanka



PIETERMARITZBURG, South Africa, Dec 23: Sri Lanka batsman Murali Atapattu continued to show good form but his side's Test prospects took a nosedive when other top-order batsmen failed against the KwaZulu-Natal provincial team on Friday, reports AFP.

Jayawardene top-scored with 87 as Sri Lanka made 257 for eight on the second day of a three-day match at the Alexandra Oval.

Rain prevented any play on the first day and 39.4 overs were lost on Friday after a late start because of a wet outfield and an early finish because of bad light.

Jayawardene and Tilakaratne Dilshan (54) put on 134 for the fourth wicket at a run a minute after the tourists had been reduced to 46 for four after winning the toss.

Out-of-form skipper Sanath Jayasuriya made only 14 before being caught in the gully off left-arm opening bowler Gary Gilder, who took three of the

first four wickets.

Murali Atapattu, Kumar Sangakkara and Russell Arnold also fell cheaply in what could be their final innings before they take on South Africa in the first Test starting in Durban Tuesday.

Gilder troubled all the batsmen with his pace and bounce as he gave meaning to KwaZulu-Natal captain Errol Steward's promise that the provincial team would try to "do a job for our country" by denying the Sri Lankans a chance to build up their confidence ahead of the Test match.

The rest of the KwaZulu-Natal bowling was mediocre until the late introduction of left-arm wrist spinner Goodam Bodi, who dropped a sharp return chance from Jayawardene on 84 before bowling him around his legs as he tried to sweep three runs later.

It was Jayawardene's third score in the 80s on tour and the fifth time in seven matches he had top-scored for a team which collectively has yet to notch a century in South Africa. He batted for 155 minutes and

scored 119 balls, hitting 15 fours.

Jayawardene and Dilshan put on 134 in 134 minutes. Dilshan cemented his place in the Test side, making 54 off 116 balls with nine fours before slashing a catch to gully.

Romesh Kaluwitharana also batted promisingly, hitting 40 before he too fell to a loose shot, pulling a short ball to midwicket.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard at the close of play on the second day of the three-day match between KwaZulu-Natal and the touring Sri Lankans at the Alexandra Oval Friday:

SRI LANKA: First innings
Atapattu c Moll b Gilder 8
Jayasuriya c Kent b Gilder 14
Sangakkara c Stewart b Adam 3
Jayawardene b Bodi 87
Arnold c Amla b Gilder 5
Dilshan c Bryuns b Kent 54
Kaluwitharana c Wingfield b Bodi 40
Chandana c Stewart b Wingfield 2
Zoya not out 24
Wickramasinghe not out 4
Extras (w-2, nb-14) 16
Total (for 8 wickets in 64.2 overs) 257

Bowler
Gilder 13.2 1 55 3
Adam 11.1 1 49 1
Dilada 9 1 26 0
Kent 13 3 48 1
Wingfield 7 2 26 1
Bodi 14 1 53 2

KWAZULU-NATAL: E Steward, M Bryuns, D Watson, A Moll, J Kent, A Amla, G Bodi, W Wingfield, G Gilder, S Adam, L Dilada.

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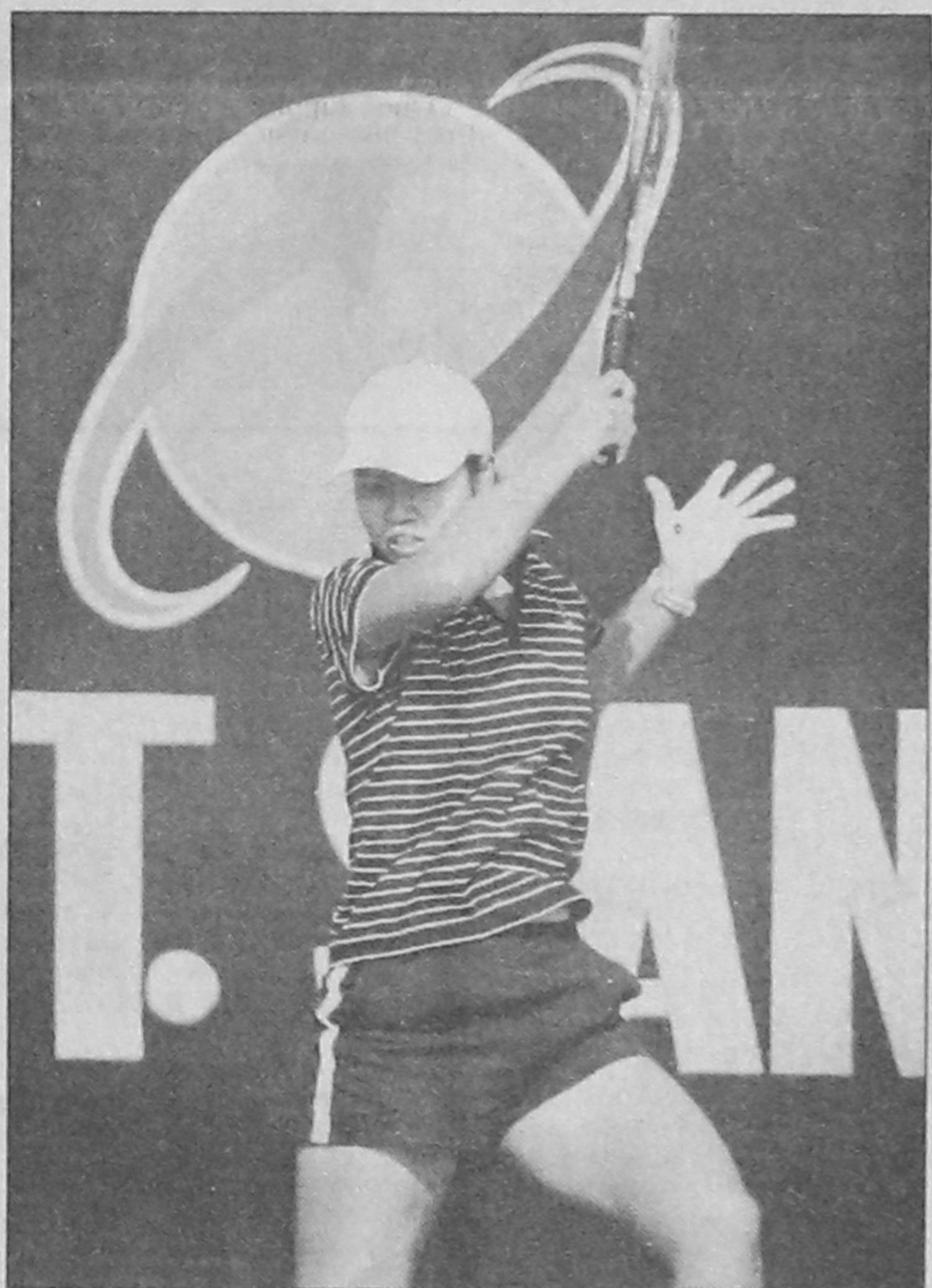
Denilson to play for Div II Betis
SEVILLE, Spain, Dec 23 (Reuters): Brazilian midfielder Denilson, once the world's most expensive player, will return from a loan spell at Flamengo to play out the season with second division Real Betis, the Spanish club said on Saturday.

Denilson, who cost 35 million dollars when he moved to Spain from Sao Paulo in 1998, went back to Brazil on loan to Flamengo before the start of the current season, after a disappointing two-year spell in Spain ended in relegation for Betis.

According to Betis president Manuel Ruiz de Lopera, the Brazilian club have not kept up the payments for the player and he will return to Seville next week.

"They offered us a number of players but the one we wanted was our own," said Lopera, whose side are currently going well in third place in division two.

Denilson is delighted and we are as well. I want all the fans to show their support for him as he's coming to help."



Li Na of China plays forehand against Thailand's Suchanai Viratprasert during their Asia Cup tennis tournament match in New Delhi yesterday. —AFP photo