

LOOK BACK ON 2000

Ups & downs of the world game



LONDON, Dec 31 (Reuters): A dramatic golden goal ensured the new century in soccer began with France again in the ascendant.

France, world champions in 1998, were crowned European champions for the first time in 2000, winning an outstanding competition with a 2-1 win over Italy in Rotterdam.

Real Madrid became the first European club champions of the new century with a 3-0 victory over Valencia in Paris in the first European Cup final to be contested by two teams from the same country.

Their record eighth success in the tournament earned them FIFA's 'Team of the Century' award.

Cameroon underlined their dominant position in Africa, albeit with a controversial penalty shootout victory over Nigeria in the African Nations Cup in March, and followed that up with another penalty shootout victory over Spain to win the gold medal in the Olympics in Sydney in September.

Zinedine Zidane, who inspired France to victory in Euro 2000 in similar fashion to his heroics in the World Cup, was named World Footballer of the Year by FIFA for the second time.

Manchester United, who lost their European crown to Real but won the English premier league for the sixth time in eight seasons, were judged by Deloitte and Touche to be the richest club in the world for the third straight year with an annual turnover of 110.9 million pounds (163.6 million dollars) up from 87.9 million pounds (129.7 million dollars) in 1999.

GERMANY GET WORLD CUP

Germany, whose national team failed abysmally with a first round exit at Euro 2000 after winning the competition four years earlier, emerged as perhaps the biggest winners of all.

In Zurich in July, FIFA awarded them the right to stage the 2006 World Cup finals when its Executive Committee voted 12-11 in their favour over South Africa.

The result of that particular battle caused more fall-out than anything on the field of play in 2000. Charlie Dempsey of New Zealand abstained rather than voted for the South Africans as he had been mandated to do by his Oceania confederation because of what he called 'intolerable pressure' brought to bear on him before the vote.

If he had voted for South Africa, FIFA president Sepp Blatter's casting vote would have taken the World Cup to Africa for the first time. It will now be at least another 10 years before that can happen.

At the start of the new century there is no doubt that soccer's appeal is greater than ever with the money men involved in the sport continually looking for new markets to conquer.

Manchester United this month announced a three-match tour of the Far East next summer but the reasons are place for two years because of current TV contract commitments.

But some big clubs like Lazio, Bayern Munich and Juventus have played matches this season in half-empty stadiums and TV audiences are falling.

The warning signs have been there for some time and although soccer will remain the world's most popular sport, there is no doubt it finds itself on the threshold of major change.



A combo of photos showing FIFA president Sepp Blatter (L) congratulating Germany's bid chief Franz Beckenbauer after the country got the right to host the football World Cup 2006 and (R), Charles Dempsey, whose suspicious act denied South Africa the World Cup.

not only altruistic. Although their many fans in the region will get a rare chance to see the team play, the tour will no doubt generate millions of dollars in extra revenue from the sale of replica shirts and souvenirs.

PLAYER POWER

And as the major clubs get richer so do the players, whose power is likely to be even further enhanced by proposals from the European Commission on a player's right to end his contract.

The impact that the new regulations would have on the global game can not be stressed too highly with FIFA itself admitting if it does not reach agreement with Brussels the sport will be thrown into chaos.

Transfers will still take place and domestic transfers between clubs in the same country are unlikely to be affected.

But the international scene will be radically different with arbitrary transfer fees replaced by compensation fees, shorter contracts, a new arbitration system and transfers only permissible worldwide during certain times of the season.

Rules concerning the movement of players into Europe from South African, Africa, Asia or Australasia may also be tightened, especially with regard to teenagers.

UEFA's Chief Executive Gerhard Aigner, one of the most powerful and influential men in the sport, sounded a warning this week that UEFA must consider reforming the Champions League because with 32 teams it is too big and is saturating the fixture list. However no change can take



Zinedine Zidane and his France team was the toast of the world.

LOOK BACK ON 2000

Aussie-rules cricket

SYDNEY, Dec 31 (Reuters): Australia put in an early bid for the title of 'team of the century' with an amazing sequence of wins in the year 2000 confirming their place as the world's best cricket-playing nation.

Steve Waugh's men won each of their eight Tests in the opening year of the 21st century to set a world record of 14 consecutive victories after winning their last six Tests in 1999.

The Australian limited-overs team, World Cup champions in 1999, also continued on their merry way, setting a world record of 14 matches without defeat in the one-day game to complete a unique double that will surely take some beating.

With none of their opponents able to seriously challenge them, Australia's players had to go back in time to discover new challenges.

By setting new standards in both the Test and one-day arenas, Waugh's men earned the right to be considered among the best teams ever, although no-one, including the captain, is quite prepared to declare them the greatest ever.

"I won't say we're the best cricket side ever and I'd never say that. But we'd compete against any team that's played before us," Waugh said.

The Aussies began the year with an innings victory over Sachin Tendulkar's Indians in Sydney to complete a 3-0 series whitewash after doing the same to Pakistan over the previous two months.

They lost their opening match of the domestic triangular one-day tournament with Pakistan and India but won their next nine in a row to claim the series, then went on to break England's 1991-92 world record of 12 one-day matches without defeat during the tour of New Zealand.

Australia won four of their first five matches in the six-game series, with the other washed out, before their run ended on 14 when the under-rated Kiwis won the final match after a brilliant display by Chris Cairns, now recognised as the best all-rounder in the sport.

Australia's disappointment over the ending of their one-day streak was short-lived as the two teams turned their attention to the three-match Test series.

The tourists triumphed in a see-saw first Test in Auckland by 62 runs, then won the second and third Tests by six wickets to complete their first clean-sweep in New Zealand and move to within one win of West Indies' world record of 11 consecutive Test wins, set during the early 1980s.

With Sydney hosting the Olympics, Australia's players were given the winter off although most went to England to pick up some extra cash playing county cricket.

Their only international commitments were a three-match one-day series in South Africa, which the Proteas won 2-1, a return series played indoors in Australia which ended in a tie, and the ICC knockout in Kenya, where Australia suffered a surprise quarter-final exit.

Australia returned to the Test arena in November, taking on West Indies in Brisbane in the first of five Tests.

The once-mighty West Indians arrived with an appalling record in matches away from home but confidently predicted they would end Australia's winning run and protect the world record set by their predecessors.

But despite boasting a team that included master batsman Brian Lara and world record wicket-taker Courtney Walsh, Australia won the match by an innings inside three days to equal their record.

They claimed it outright with another innings victory in the second Test in Perth, then stretched it to 14 by winning in Adelaide and Melbourne to finish the year with a perfect record of eight wins from eight Test matches.

Australia's players also achieved a host of individual records and milestones during the year 2000.



AWESOME AUSTRALIANS: Jason Gillespie (R) shows a stump in appreciation to the crowd's applause after slaughtering the Windies in the fourth Test.

AUSTRALIA'S TEST RECORD IN 2000

Table with 4 columns: Played (8), Won (8), Draw (0), Lost (0)

MATCH BY MATCH

- 3rd Test v India, Sydney, January 2-4 2000 - won by innings and 141 runs. 1st Test v New Zealand, Auckland, March 11-15 2000 - won by 62 runs. 2nd Test v New Zealand, Wellington, March 24-28 2000 - won by 6 wickets. 3rd Test v New Zealand, Hamilton, March 31-April 4 2000 - won by 6 wickets. 1st Test v West Indies, Brisbane, November 23-25 2000 - won by innings and 126 runs. 2nd Test v West Indies, Perth, December 1-3 2000 - won by innings and 27 runs. 3rd Test v West Indies, Adelaide, December 15-19 2000 - won by five wickets. 4th Test v West Indies, Melbourne, December 26-29 - won by 352 runs.

AUSTRALIA'S ONE-DAY RECORD IN 2000

Table with 5 columns: Played (23), Won (15), Tied (1), Lost (6), No Result (1)

MATCH BY MATCH

- V Pakistan, Brisbane, January 9 - lost by 45 runs. V India, Melbourne, January 12 - won by 28 runs. V India, Sydney, January 14 - won by five wickets. V Pakistan, Melbourne, January 16 - won by six wickets. V Pakistan, Sydney, January 19 - won by 81 runs. V Pakistan, Melbourne, January 23 - won by 15 runs. V India, Adelaide, January 26 - won by 152 runs. V India, Perth, January 31 - won by four wickets. V Pakistan, Melbourne, February 2 - won by six wickets. V Pakistan, Sydney, February 4 - won by 152 runs. V New Zealand, Wellington, February 17 - No result. V New Zealand, Auckland, February 19 - won by five wickets. V New Zealand, Dunedin, February 23 - won by 50 runs. V New Zealand, Christchurch, February 26 - won by 48 runs. V New Zealand, Napier, March 1 - won by five wickets. V South Africa, Durban, April 12 - lost by seven wickets. V South Africa, Cape Town, April 14 - won by five wickets. V South Africa, Johannesburg, April 16 - lost by four wickets. V South Africa, Melbourne, August 16 - won by 94 runs. V South Africa, Melbourne, August 18 - match tied. V South Africa, Melbourne, August 20 - lost by 8 runs. V India, Nairobi, October 7 - lost by 20 runs.

Leg spinner Shane Warne, one of Wisden's five players of the 20th century, passed Dennis Lillee's Australian record of 355 Test wickets during the tour of New Zealand.

Paceman Glenn McGrath finished the year in hot pursuit of Warne, passing the 300-wicket milestone with a hat-trick in the second Test against West Indies.

Wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist also set an Australian record of 10 dismissals in the third Test against New Zealand while Steve Waugh's unbeaten century in the Melbourne Test took him past Vivian Richards and into fifth place on the list of all-time run scorers.

Reluctant to compare his side to great teams from other eras, Waugh said history would be the ultimate judge of just how good the Australians of 2000 were.

"In time it will be recognised for what we've done. In 20 years people will probably say yeah, that was a pretty good side," Waugh said.

"At the moment I think people are taking it a little bit for granted, saying the other sides aren't good and that there is bribery and match-fixing. But the bottom line is we've played great cricket... we play aggressively and we play to win."

The year in stats

SYDNEY, Dec 31 (Reuters): Australia finished 2000 as the most successful team in world Test cricket, winning all their eight matches.

South Africa and England were the next best with six wins apiece although both teams played more games. Zimbabwe and Bangladesh were the only countries not to win a Test in 2000.

Pakistan's Inzamam-ul-Haq finished the year as the leading run scorer with 1,090 while Sri Lankan spin bowler Muttiah Muralitharan was the leading wicket taker with 75.

Andrew Flower registered the highest individual score with an unbeaten 232 against India while his Zimbabwean teammate Paul Strang returned the best individual bowling figures with his 8-109 against New Zealand.

Team performances (collate as matches played, won, draw, lost, winning percentage)

Table with 5 columns: Country, Matches Played, Won, Draw, Lost, Winning Percentage

Highest innings totals

Table with 3 columns: Score, Player, Match

Leading run scorers (collate as player, country, matches played, innings, not outs, runs, highest score, 50s, 100s, average)

Table with 6 columns: Player, Country, Matches, Innings, Not Outs, Runs, Highest Score, 50s, 100s, Average

Highest individual scores (collate as score, player, country, opposition)

Table with 3 columns: Score, Player, Match

Highest partnerships

Table with 6 columns: Partnership, Player 1, Player 2, Country, Matches, Runs

Leading wicket takers (collate as player, country, matches played, overs, maidens, runs, wickets, average, best figures)

Table with 6 columns: Player, Country, Matches, Overs, Maidens, Runs, Wickets, Average, Best Figures

Best bowling in an innings

Table with 3 columns: Wickets, Player, Match

Best bowling in a match

Table with 3 columns: Wickets, Player, Match

LOOK BACK ON 2000

Lions pride of Africa



JOHANNESBURG, Dec 31 (AFP): A roller-coaster year for Africa saw Cameroon claim Nations Cup and Olympic gold medals, 13 Zimbabweans die at a Harare stadium and South Africa pipped for the right to host the 2006 World Cup.

Hearts of Oak of Ghana won the Champions League for the first time with surprising ease and Zamalek of Egypt raised their tally of Pan-African titles to a record seven by hoisting the Cup Winners Cup.

JS Kabylie of Algeria became only the second club after Esperance of Tunisia to win the three major club trophies, adding the CAF Cup after a stormy North African showdown with Ismailia of Egypt.

Raja Casablanca of Morocco had no luck in Brazil at the first world club championship with two of their three defeats due to late goals scored by Africans representing Saudi and Spanish clubs.

The dominance of Cameroon at the highest level was reflected in the African Footballer of the Year poll with Patrick Mboma, Lauren Mayer, Samuel Eto'o and Geremi Njitap filling the top four places.

But an unknown footballer could have a much greater long-term impact on the game as Andre Goetzee became the Bosman of Africa by winning a Cape Town court case that brought freedom to out-of-contract South African players.

The shock result of the year arrived at junior level with Ghana - first twice, second twice and third once in the last five world championships - bundled out in the first qualifying round by little Gambia.

Cheating at under-age level continued with Chad disqualified from the youth championship after an eight-goal mauling of Libya, who were reinstated only to concede 11 goals against Burkina Faso.

Perennial underachievers Zimbabwe ended a 15-year trophy drought by winning the

Castle Cup Southern Africa championship after a couple of emphatic victories over a Lesotho team suffering from severe stage fright.

An all-Uganda final to the East and Central Africa Senior Challenge Cup in Kampala produced a two-goal victory for the senior team in a tournament so hampered by cash problems that the Rwandan team had to pay for an ambulance.

A lack of funds, and the often dubious distribution of meagre resources, continued to bedevil the most popular sport on the continent with West Africa forced to postpone the finals of its club championship.

Women's football was on the verge of celebrating a championship full of goals when crowd trouble over a disputed goal forced the abandonment of the final with holders Nigeria two goals ahead of hosts South Africa.

Cameroon made a quick impression on the biennial Nations Cup, dominating co-hosts Ghana in the opening encounter only to be deprived of victory by a series of extraordinary misses.

The indomitable Lions crushed Ivory Coast 3-0 and shrugged off a shock defeat against Togo to reach the final by eliminating dogged Algeria and disappointing Tunisia in the knockout stages.

Co-hosts Nigeria displayed mixed form en route to the slowpiece, failing to score in 90 minutes against minnows Congo but taking less than 90 seconds to penetrate a much-vaunted South African rear-guard.

Home advantage tilted the pre-match scales in favour of the Super Eagles, not that it had much effect on Cameroon, who were two goals ahead midway through the first half thanks to Eto'o and Mboma.

Goals by Raphael Chukwu and Augustine 'Jay Jay' Okocha just before and after half-time brought the teams level and the increasingly fatigued combatants could not produce a winner, even during 30 min-

utes of extra time. Slow-motion television replays suggested a Victor Ikpeba kick in the penalty shootout crossed the line after striking the underside of the crossbar, but the Tunisian referee thought otherwise.

Fittingly, lion-hearted Cameroon captain and defender Rigobert Song stepped forward to blast the ball past the Shorunmu and give his country a 4-3 victory on penalties and leave Lagos resembling a massive morgue.

Penalties also played a decisive role in the Sydney Olympics as a squad composed of under-23 players plus three over-age stars pipped Spain to emulate Nigeria and become the second successive champions from Africa.

Cameroon had to play catch up this time as they fell behind in 80 seconds and were lucky to be just two goals adrift at half-time as Carlos Kameni, 16, the third choice at French Second Division club Le Havre, saved a penalty.

An own goal brought hope to the Africans, six minutes later Eto'o restored equality and when Spain had two players sent off before extra time, it seemed only a matter of time before Cameroon struck gold.

The golden goal never arrived, however, and once again the Cameroonians had to endure a shootout that ended with Italy-based defender Pierre Wome scoring and giving his country their most significant international success.

Mboma was among the over-age Olympic heroes and cantered to first place in the annual Footballer of the Year poll among media and technical committee members of the African Football Confederation (CAF).

The striker who arrived at Italian Serie A club Parma this year via Paris Saint Germain, Chateauroux, Metz, Gamba Osaka and Cagliari collected 123 votes, 87 more than Arsenal midfielder Lauren.

When South Africa took a two-goal lead over Zimbabwe 83 minutes into a World Cup

qualifier, fans pelted bottles at celebrating players and police responded by firing seemingly endless canisters of teargas.

With almost 60,000 spectators trying to flee the National Stadium, a tragedy was inevitable, and it appeared almost irrelevant when South Africa were officially awarded the points five months later.

Just four days before the Harare disaster, South Africans wept publicly when Germany were chosen as 2006 World Cup hosts by 12 votes to 11 with octogenarian Charles Dempsey from New Zealand abstaining.



Lauren Eteme Mayer of Cameroon leads his team's celebration after victory was secured in the tie-breaker against Spain during the Sydney 2000 football final.