

The nook Condon can't see!

Cricket

REUTERS, London

One of the more chilling lines in the International Cricket Council report into corruption released this year comes about midway through a lengthy document.

"Despite the publicity given to the ban on Hansie Cronje, the sentences handed out to players from Pakistan and India and the formation of the Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU), there are indications that some players are still acting dishonestly to the order of bookmakers," the report said.

If corruption is still present, despite the international furore over the Cronje affair and the subsequent scandals, the future seems bleak. More immediately, events in a Pretoria court this week may not bring any comfort to cricket lovers.

On Wednesday, the former South Africa captain, banned for life along with two other former international captains, Salim Malik of Pakistan and Mohammad Azharuddin of India, appeals against the ban. If Cronje wins, he could even be back playing for the Free State when the South African season starts next week.

Azharuddin, a Muslim, created a furor in India when he abandoned his wife and children for a Bombay actress in the so-called "Bollywood". Much of the corruption report compiled by former London metropolitan police chief Paul Condon would provide fertile material for Bollywood scriptwriters.

Condon painted an almost melodramatic picture of corrupt cricketers, shady bookmakers, clandestine deals and even a possible murder. For fans throughout the world nothing would ever be the same.

Since the report was published there has been some relief for the authorities. Internal inquiries decided there was no substance to allegations from Indian bookmaker Mukesh Gupta that several prominent players, including former national captains Alec Stewart (England) and Martin Crowe (New Zealand) had taken money from him.

West Indies' authorities are still investigating similar allegations against their leading batsman Brian Lara, another former skipper.

The scandal still rumbles on. A Pakistani judicial inquiry has now been instigated to investigate allegations that games involving Pakistan in the 1999 World Cup were fixed.

Under particular suspicion is the group match against Bangladesh at Northampton. Bangladesh, 33-1 outsiders, won by 62 runs and their victory was instrumental in their admission as the 10th Test playing nation.

Nothing about the game mattered in the context of the Cup, with Pakistan already through to the second round. But the manner of



PAUL CONDON

their defeat was almost comically inept. When Bangladesh batted, Pakistan bowled 28 wides among the 40 extras. When Pakistan batted they lost three wickets to runouts.

The Pakistan inquiry will also investigate the performance of Pakistan umpire Javed Akhtar in the 1998 series between England and South Africa, won 2-1 by England. It was England's first victory in a five-match series for 11 years.

In the deciding match at Leeds, Akhtar awarded nine of the 10 lb decisions. Eight were against South Africa. Akhtar has denied he was acting under bookmakers' instructions.

"Whatever mistakes happened were genuine, not for money," he said.

The most corrosive element in the corruption scandal has been not so much the match-fixing allegations as the myriad opportunities cricket offers for bookmakers to corrupt players. Condon detailed some of them, including betting on the result of the pre-match toss, innings' totals and batsmen and bowlers' individual performances.

According to a seasoned international cricket reporter, who has watched Pakistan play all over the world, corruption on an international scale started on Pakistan's tour of India in 1979-80.

He said then Pakistan captain Asif Iqbal told India captain Gundappa Viswanatha that India had won the toss before the coin hit the ground. The allegation surfaced at a Pakistan judicial inquiry under Justice Malik Mohammad Qayyum and has subsequently been denied by Asif.

The reporter said he had also been present on two occasions when Malik had claimed he had won the toss because he had called in Urdu.

The first time, he said, the New Zealand captain Ken Rutherford complained. On the second, in Zimbabwe, the match referee asked Malik to toss the coin again and call in English.

At the centre of the mess is the enigmatic Cronje, the figure of apparent Christian rectitude who says he was fatally tempted by Satan but is now genuinely repentant and deserves to have his life lifted.

At best Cronje's memory seems selective and Judge Edwin King, who headed a South African judicial inquiry, was not sufficiently convinced that he had told everything he knew and so should be given immunity from prosecution.

Whatever the result of the court case, Cronje is irretrievably tarnished. So is the talented Malik and so is Azharuddin, a genuinely great batsman with his magical wrists.

So also is Pakistan's Wasim Akram, possibly the greatest left-arm fast bowler ever, who said he had been "not above board" and should never captain Pakistan again.

Condon's goal is to eliminate corruption by the 2003 World Cup scheduled for South Africa and to this end the Anti-Corruption Unit is examining the plethora of often meaningless one-day tournaments where betting is rife.

"They'll never stop it," said one insider. "The opportunities are too many and the money too tempting for people who would never otherwise see such sums. The authorities have got to cut out all that one-day cricket and they won't because it means too much money for the boards."

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PHOTO: INTERNET
Australia's Ilie Andrew plays a forehand return against Gouichi Motomura of Japan at the Hong Kong Open yesterday.

FIT opens door for rebels

Tennis

AFP, Milan

The Italian Tennis Federation (FIT) Monday offered an olive branch to their senior professionals who boycotted this year's Davis Cup, ANSAnews agency reported.

FIT president Angelo Binaghi said he hoped to persuade the rebels to return as Italy reflected on a 3-2 defeat at home to Croatia which saw them relegated from the David Cup World Group at the weekend.

"We want to give our contribution to getting back into the World Group and the growth of this sport in Italy which, nonetheless, as half-empty seats showed does not have much of a following and for that to happen certain things need to change totally," Pozzi said.

"We expect certain things to change before we can say 'yes' to any call-up," he added.

It is thought the players want representation on the FIT board and more say in federation policy.

The plight in Italy's tennis fortunes comes 25 years after the country's only Davis Cup victory, a 4-1 win in the final in Santiago against Chile.

Barazzutti, who has been a fierce critic of the absenteers, was a key member of that team which pulled off what many in football-crazy Italy consider the greatest non-soccer sporting achievement in the country's history.

Instead it was inexperienced players like Filippo Volandri, Federico Luzzi, Mose Navarra and Giorgio Galimberti who were pressed into action against a Croatian team including Wimbledon champion Goran Ivanisevic.

Volandri pulled off a sensational win over Ivanisevic in the first match while Navarra and Galimberti came within two points of winning the doubles but in the end the gulf in class was too much.

Binaghi said he backed the team of youngsters picked by captain Corrado Barazzutti but a possible

return of the other players could now be on the cards.

Pozzi indicated that the renegade players' stance had softened, but said unspecified changes needed to be made before his colleagues considered making themselves available for selection.

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The captain had hinted he favoured continuing with the youngsters, saying: "These boys have the potential to go a long way at the top level as well."

"But they are young, they must grow and seek consistency. To get to them must give themselves rules and objectives in life," 6

Ilie advances

AFP, Hong Kong

Australian Andrew Ilie recovered from a first-set lapse to beat Japanese wild card entry Gouichi Motomura 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 and advance to the second round of the 400,000 US dollars Hong Kong Open on Monday.

The judge, who called Abrams' arguments "fallacious, specious and maybe an ethical violation," said he planned to rule within two weeks.

Abrams obtained Calkin's home and office phone records to document a series of one-hour phone calls to Hingis starting a week before sentencing.

Calkin repeated his belief that

Rajcevic, a 46-year-old Croatian-born naval architect and Australian citizen, is mentally unstable and lashed out at Abrams from the stand, accusing him of pursuing the case solely to gain fame.

"This is all about you, and that's all it's about," said the prosecutor, who was promoted after winning the misdemeanor conviction. "It's all based on your own personal, disgusting agenda."

Calkin, 31, denied making any misrepresentations in court, breaking office policies or being disciplined over his involvement in the case.

Hingis, 20, the world's top-ranked women's player, invited him to her

Tampa area house the day after sentencing. He flew up that night, and their relationship became physical the next day, Calkin testified.

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Hingis, the star prosecution witness, appeared in person only because Abrams and Rajcevic refused to allow her to testify by videotape.

Legal romance

Tennis

AP, Miami

A prosecutor testified Monday that he saw no ethical problem when his romance with tennis star Martina Hingis blossomed two days after he obtained a two-year jail sentence for her stalk.

Assistant State Attorney Christopher Calkin said he felt no personal interest in Hingis before sentencing on April 12, and "no moral, ethical or legal obligation" to keep his distance afterward.

Frank Abrams, attorney for convicted stalker Dubravko Rajcevic, called Calkin as a witness on a request for a new sentence or trial based on the relationship between Hingis and the prosecutor, which was disclosed in a newspaper column in June.

Rajcevic, who sat through the nearly six-hour hearing in handcuffs, repeatedly interrupted and was ejected by Circuit Judge Kevin Emes because of outbursts shortly before the end.

The judge, who called Abrams' arguments "fallacious, specious and maybe an ethical violation," said he planned to rule within two weeks.

Abrams claims Rajcevic's highly publicized trial was tainted by at least an appearance of conflict -- if not an actual one -- when Calkin tried Rajcevic and asked for the maximum four-year sentence.

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Jordan dilemma

Basketball

AFP, Washington

"I'm doing it for the love of the game -- nothing else, for the love of the game," Jordan said two weeks ago.

"It's definitely the challenge," Jordan said in April. "I'm not coming back for the money. I'm not coming back for the glory. The challenge is what I truly love."

Six months of speculation about a comeback have dogged Jordan through broken ribs and other injuries in his training, much of it against NBA talent.

The Wizards, whom Jordan serves as president of basketball operations, begin their training camp October 2 in Jordan's hometown of Wilmington, North Carolina.

Jordan's first exhibition game could be October 11 at Detroit and his first regular-season game could be October 30 at New York's Madison Square Garden, the site of some of his greatest performances.

"Michael has not finalised his decision," said SFX executive Estee Portnoy.

Jordan's decision, expected to be released in a statement by fax on Monday, will not be sent forth until Tuesday at the earliest.

Officials of the Washington Wizards, the club for which Jordan would play, sat and waited as well for an official word that never came.

The low-key nature of India's reception can be put down to the fact that Monday was a public holiday in South Africa -- Heritage Day -- and South Africa's current tour of Zimbabwe. Shaun Pollock's team also flew into Johannesburg the same day for a three-day break before returning to Harare on Thursday.

Kolkata cub

FROM PAGE 13

Limited-overs match at the Dhanmonji Cricket Stadium on October 9.

They will play their first three-day match at the BKSP ground from October 11-13.

After a day's rest the visitors will play three 50-over matches at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

They will play one more three-day game at the BUET or Jagannath Hall Ground on October 19. The Indian team will leave on October 22.

Jordan, who turns 39 in February, had planned a news conference to announce his return but called off that gathering in the wake of terrorist attacks on New York's World Trade Center and the Pentagon in Washington.

The former Chicago Bulls superstar has not scheduled any public availability to comment upon his possible return until next Monday here at the team's pre-season media day.

Jordan has hinted at reasons for his even making the attempt to



MICHAEL JORDAN

Elena sails

Tennis

REUTERS, Leipzig

Last year's finalist Elena Likhovtseva from Russia advanced to the second round of the Leipzig Grand Prix with a 6-4, 6-4 win over Germany's Jana Kandarr on Monday.

He had to wait three and a half years for his only other cap when he was summoned from South African provincial cricket to play for West Indies in Cape Town.

The Barbadian made his Test debut at Lord's, taking two wickets and scoring 29 and 14 in a match West Indies lost by 72 runs.

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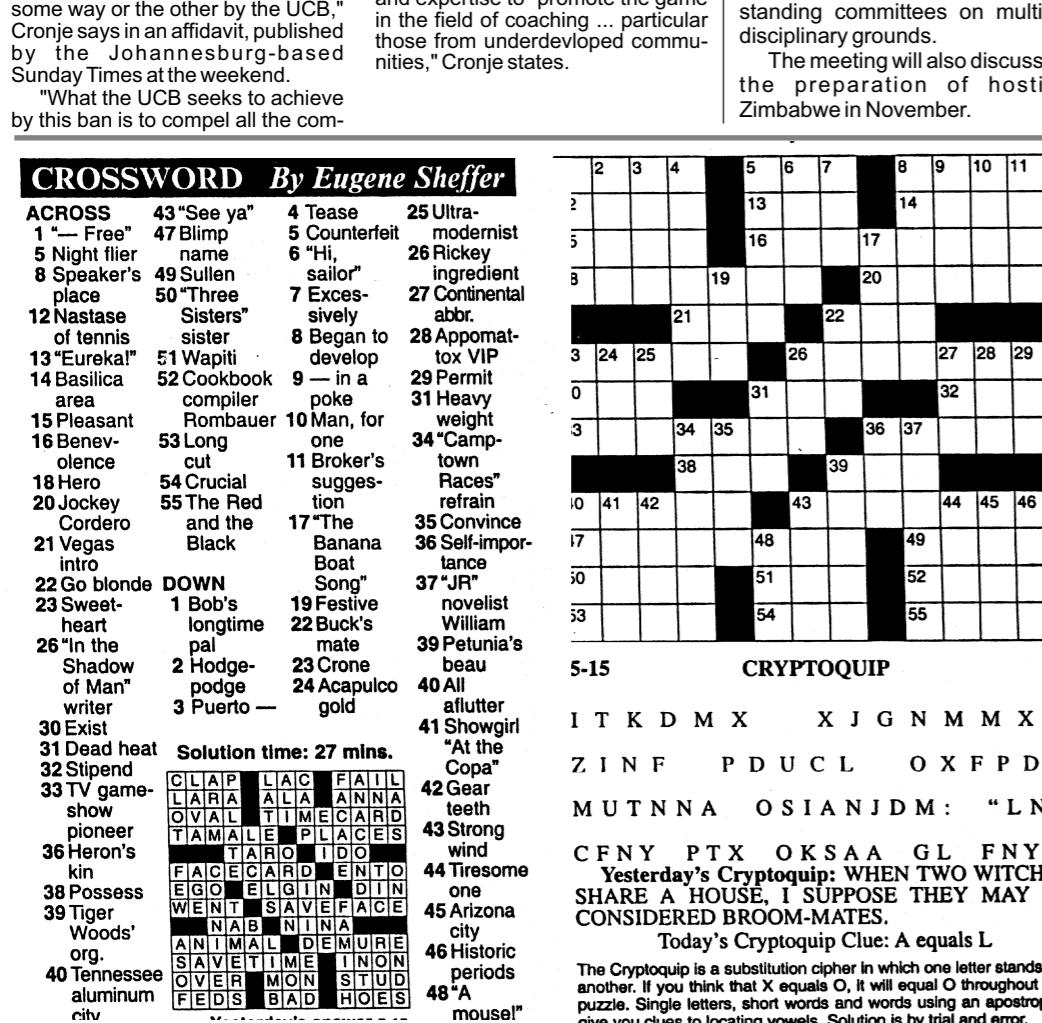
The meeting will also discuss on the preparation of hosting Zimbabwe in November.

"There is no aspect of the game of cricket which is not influenced in some way or the other by the UCB," Cronje says.

Cronje said the UCB's "punish-

PHOTO: AFP
Russian Elena Likhovtseva makes a backhand return against German Jana Kandarr at the Leipzig Open on Monday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer



The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal