

Russian eves secure WC hockey spot

REUTERS, Paris

Russia qualified for next year's women's hockey World Cup when they beat Lithuania 2-1 in Amiens on Thursday to secure the last of the semifinal places at the qualifying tournament.

Needing to win to finish top of Pool B, they eased to their victory over opponents who needed a win by 12 goals to secure a semifinal berth themselves.

Russia failed to qualify for the 1998 World Cup and were 12th and last at the 1994 Cup in Dublin.

Russia will play Ukraine in an all-east European semifinal in Abbeville on Saturday while England, the Pool A winners, will play Japan, Group B runners-up, in Amiens.

Russia never had to exert themselves unduly against Lithuania, leading after six minutes with a penalty stroke conversion by right defender Natalia Kravtchenko.

The stroke was awarded when Galina Bassaitchuk was impeded while shooting. Kravtchenko's penalty conversion was her fourth, and she now has five goals in the tournament.

Time to sort

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Paul Collingwood looked out of his depth with both bat and ball in the triangular series and the faith shown in the Yorkshire left-arm pace bowler Ryan Sidebottom is mysterious.

Paul Grayson is the latest in the undistinguished line of English slow left-arm bowlers who toil but rarely spin. Jeremy Snape is not even the first choice off-spinner for Gloucestershire.

Then there are the perennially under-performing all-rounders Andrew Flintoff and Ben Holloake.

Flintoff finally shed his excess weight. But a County Championship batting average of 31 and a haul of 19 wickets demonstrate a thin Flintoff is not necessarily more successful than a fat one.

Holloake has not matured since his deceptively promising debut against Australia four years ago. His batting is overly dependent on the front foot drive, his fast-medium bowling, delivered from wide of the crease at the leg-stump, is one-dimensional.

Hussain, an uncompromising realist who took the 4-1 Ashes defeat this year particularly badly, knows the magnitude of his task.

"We have lost 11 on the bounce and we have got to put that right," he told a news conference on Wednesday. "Winning is a habit and although we have gone a long way to putting things right in Test cricket we haven't done that yet in one-day international cricket."

"We have got to get some sort of formula and start winning."

"The one area that obviously sticks out is finishing off games. In one-day internationals we have played well for large parts of games. We don't finish it off, whether it be with bat or ball."

"It's something we have to put right. We are in a big World Cup quarterfinal or semifinal and we need 100 off 15 overs with seven wickets left, we have got to win those sort of games and we haven't done that recently."

Qatar going for goals



AFP, Doha

Qatar coach Paolo Campos has a clear message for his players if they are to secure a place in next year's World Cup finals - win all remaining three matches and win big.

That mission starts here on Friday when they are visited by notoriously poor travellers Uzbekistan in the Asian Group B match.

Qatar, with three more matches to play, are second in the group on eight points and are aware they need the full nine points on offer to even entertain hopes of threatening leaders China.

Bora Milutinovic's China are on 10 points from four matches and can be forgiven if they consider themselves through to their first finals in history.

That leaves Qatar, the UAE and Uzbekistan to fight it out for the second spot that entails the complicated process of entering a playoff

with the second placed team in Group A.

The winners of that playoff will then meet either Portugal or the Republic of Ireland on a home and away basis to determine who goes through to the finals.

Campos, however, is leaving no stone unturned in ensuring that Qatar secure at least the second spot in the group even though theoretically his team can still end up as group winners.

But that would require the Chinese to suffer an inexplicable slump in form and lose all their remaining four matches, something which even their most optimistic of rivals would'd dare to fantasise about.

"From now on it's only the victories that will count," Campos told reporters.

"No draws, no losses, only victories."

And Campos is not talking about narrow victories.

"We need to defeat Uzbekistan by at least three goals," said the Brazilian who took over from Dzemal Hadziabdic who quit after the half-way stage of qualifying.

"I have told my players to go all out on the attack from the word go. Now there's no scope for experimentation. It's attack, attack and nothing else," Campos said.

The coach was encouraged by the form of forwards Mohamed al-Enazi, Mubarak Mustafa and youngster Waleed Hamza who all found the target during Qatar's 3-0 rout of Oman last week.

In previous matches, al-Enazi and Mustafa had failed to provide the team with the much needed impetus upfront, something that contributed to Hadziabdic uncharacteristically packing his bags and leaving in frustration.

Qatar will be encouraged that the Uzbeks have a reputation for being terrible away from home.

They were thrashed 4-1 by the UAE in their opening match when the draining heat and humidity of the Gulf got the better of them.

They also crashed to a 2-0 defeat against China in Shenyang and logic dictates they should not be having an easy outing in Doha either even though the heat and humidity levels have come down considerably.

Tauziat mauls Montolio

REUTERS, Leipzig

France's Nathalie Tauziat ground out a 6-7, 6-3, 6-4 victory over Spaniard Angeles Montolio on Wednesday to reach the quarterfinals of the Leipzig Grand Prix.

The former Wimbledon finalist, who is seeded second and had a bye through to the second round, will now meet either local favourite Anke Huber or Luxembourg's Anne Kremer.

The 33-year-old Tauziat is playing only a limited schedule for her last year on the circuit.

Fifth seed Silvia Farina Elia survived a fright on her way to a 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 win over wild card entrant Kveta Hrdlickova.

The Italian saved two match points and squandered four in a thrilling third-set which she took 12-10.

Her quarterfinal opponent will be either top seed Kim Clijsters of Belgium or fellow Italian Francesca Schiavone.

Sixth seed Magdalena Maleeva also advanced with a hard-fought 6-2, 2-6, 6-3 win over Russian qualifier Tatiana Panova.

All the seeds in action were made to work on Wednesday.

Elena Dementieva, the seventh seed, showed more composure when it mattered for a 5-7, 6-4, 7-5 win over fellow Russian Elena Likhovtseva, who was a finalist here last year.

UCB wants

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to uphold the honour of the game want nothing to do with him.

"Cronje is a self-confessed cheat who now seeks a court order compelling cricket authorities to play with him."

Cronje's defence spent the morning arguing that the termination of his contract with the UCB last April was unlawful and unconstitutional, thus invalidating the life ban.

According to senior counsel Malcolm Wallace, his client was not given a fair disciplinary hearing, which is in breach of the Labour Relations Act, the International Cricket Council's (ICC) Code of Conduct and the contract that existed between Cronje and the UCB, and Cronje's constitutional rights.

"Cronje was entitled to a hearing before being banned as a contract existed between him and his employer, namely the UCB," he said.

But Trengove argued that when the UCB imposed the life ban on Cronje, all ties between the two parties had already been severed.

"At the time of the resolution to ban Cronje, the UCB had no disciplinary jurisdiction over Cronje. The contractual agreement was terminated in April last year and the resolution to ban him was passed in November."

"Whether the termination of his contract came about as a result of the UCB not renewing his contract or Cronje announcing he was severing his ties with the game is of no consequence. Either one is sufficient to suggest there was no contract when the resolution was passed."

"So the UCB had no power to submit Cronje to a disciplinary hearing. The ban is also internal, pertaining to the UCB and all its affiliates. As a voluntary organisation, it has a right to decide who it associates with."

Cronje's defence argued that the UCB had no grounds to ban him from the media centre at a cricket match, infringing on his right to freedom of action, personal privacy and to associate with whom he wants.



PHOTO: AFP

International Olympic Committee president Jacques Rogge tries to explain something while addressing journalists as the president of Athens 2004 Games Organising Committee Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki looks on at the Athens resort of Vouliagmeni on Wednesday. The press conference's focus was on security issues.

Salt Lake security IOC chief happy with preps

AFP, Athens

International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Jacques Rogge said Wednesday that he was pleased with the security strategy for the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Games but emphasised that no one can guarantee 100 per cent safety.

"What happened in the United States recently has not just now awakened the IOC over security at Olympic Games. Since the terrorist attack in Munich in 1972 we have made it our number one priority," Rogge told a press conference.

Rogge was in the Greek capital to review preparations being made for the 2004 Athens Olympic Games and security measures to be taken by Greece was on top of the agenda during his meeting with Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis.

"We have been horrified with events in the US and we have reviewed with American officials the security strategy for Salt Lake City. We decided that the strategy should not change and that the budget is sufficient," Rogge said.

Rogge said the only changes he saw in security matters for the 2002 Winter Games were in implementation. "We will obviously need to hire more people at check points and perhaps obtain the latest equipment," he added.

He added that better training would also be necessary with the

more sophisticated equipment that will be used.

Rogge said that Salt Lake City will have "the most maximum security possible" and felt assured that the ongoing terrorist threat will not have an impact on attendance figures for the Games.

"We did not have attendance problems at Games after the Munich attack," he added, noting that Barcelona had four million and Sydney had 9.5 million tickets sold.

Rogge said that he attended last year in Sydney a meeting of secret service and other security officials from 70 countries who provided know-how in security issues which helped lead to the success of the 2000 Olympic Games in terms of safety.

He called the Greek government's pledge of providing 600 million dollars for security with much of it to be used for the 2004 Olympics as sufficient, but that this would be reviewed after the Salt Lake City Games and in collaboration with Greek and American officials.

Rogge said the IOC has hired top security experts from a number of countries who offer advice on providing security for Olympic Games.

He added that 20 percent of the total budget for the Olympic Games is spent on security and that "events this month in the US has proven how important this sector is."

IOC special coordinator to oversee Athens 2004 Olympics preparations Dennis Oswald said security at the Games needs international cooperation and that Athens has already accomplished this.

"The Greek government is in cooperation with other countries on security," said Oswald, who on Friday will give a press conference to report on the progress of construction work.

Rogge said that Greece had made excellent progress in the last two weeks with the Olympic projects, but warned that deadlines "must be respected."

"Despite all the work that has been accomplished, the task ahead for the construction sector is unparalleled in the history of Greece, and time continues to tick away," Rogge said.

He said there is less than two years left before the majority of the "extremely important" test events take place, and only 10 months left before the first one takes place in sailing.

"There should be no comfort in the fact 2004 sounds far off in the distance. There are important dates nearly every month that must be respected," Rogge said.

Rogge said Simitis had renewed his commitment to complete the required works on time.

Kewell available for Soccerroos



AFP, Sydney

Leeds United star Harry Kewell should be available for Australia's friendly with France and World Cup qualifiers in November after patching up a feud Thursday.

Kewell had been boycotting Australia's international against world champions France in Melbourne because of a long-standing feud with Dominic Galati, one of the promoters of the match.

Kewell had accused Galati of claiming he demanded appearance money for Australia's matches against Manchester United two years ago. He has not played for his country since then.

But Galati said Thu s ay his comments had been misinterpreted.

"I would like to apologise to Harry for any inconvenience this misunderstanding may have inadvertently

caused," he said.

Kewell's Australian agent Bernie Mandic said the apology cleared the way for the player to turn out for Australia in their next three crucial matches - against France and then a World Cup play-off against a South American team, on a home and away basis, in November.

"This now closes a chapter of the past t'uhus caused confusion in some Australian soccer circles, and now allows everyone to focus on achieving one thing in November - qualification for the next World Cup," Mandic said.

National coach Frank Farina had said if Kewell didn't play in the France game, he would jeopardise his chances of featuring in the World Cup matches.

Uruguay are Australia's likely opponents for a place at the 2002 World Cup.

Kewell's Leeds teammate Mark Viduka has said he would be available to play the three matches in November.

Vanek sinks Vinciguerra

AFP, Palermo

Jiri Vanek of the Czech Republic pulled off the biggest shock of day three of the 400,000 dollar Sicilian International tennis tournament here Wednesday.

Unseeded Vanek dispatched sixth-seeded Swede Andreas Vinciguerra 7-6, 6-2 and next tackles fourth seeded Tommy Robredo of Spain.

Vinciguerra's defeat was a particular disappointment to the Sicilians in the crowd who have taken the Scandinavian to their hearts because his father - a pizza baker who emigrated to Sweden and later married his son's Swedish mother - is from Taormina not far from Mount Etna.

Robredo was an equally convincing winner, seeing off American Hugo Armando 7-6, 6-2.

Spain's fifth seed Albert Costa was another easy winner on day three, his 6-2, 6-1 triumph ending the hopes of Federico Luzzi, the last remaining Italian in the competition.

Ferrero, Scud stroll



AFP, Hong Kong

Top-seeded Spaniard Juan Carlos Ferrero came through over a tough Thai qualifier to advance at the 400,000 dollars Hong Kong Open Wednesday night while Mark Philippoussis made a welcome return to the game.

Ferrero, fifth in the Champions Cup race, outlasted 22-year-old Thai opponent Paradorn Srichaphan and next faces another qualifier, American Cecil Mamiit.

The 21-year-old Spaniard said that while qualifiers may sound like easy prey, that's certainly not the

case in today's competitive environment.

"People think playing qualifiers is easy, but I don't," he said.

"They are playing well and are hard to beat. I like Hong Kong and was surprised with the fans, I'm a long way from home and got some support, it was nice."

Philippoussis returned to action following six month of left knee rehabilitation agony and showed he hasn't lost his taste for an ace in a 6-3, 7-5 opening round defeat of Israeli Harel Levy.

"The Scud" rained down 20 untouchable serves in his 72-minute victory, his first competitive ATP outing since last March in Miami.

In the interim, the 25-year-old Australian spent time recovering

from knee surgery after an operation last December and another in the spring.

"It feels great to be back," said the winner. "It was six months out but it felt like a few years. But when I got back on court, it felt like I had only played yesterday. I was more nervous before the match than I was once I got out there."

After spending two months at home in Miami in a wheelchair, the former U.S. Open finalist said his recovery was tentative at best after he graduated to crutches.

"Once I was off the crutches I was too scared to walk, it was really weird, it wasn't like I'd forgotten how to walk, it's just I was so scared to put any pressure on my knee."

The grateful player added: "I've always been a confident player and I felt like I played great for my first match for six months. The most important thing for me is my knee - I'm just happy that's fine, it pulled up great and that's the only thing I'm happy about."

Against Levy, Philippoussis looked his old self, opening and closing the first game with an ace and winning three of his four service games with perfect serves.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Spaniard Juan Carlos Ferrero plays a forehand return against Thai Paradorn Srichaphan at the Hong Kong Open on Wednesday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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| 12 Vegas cubes | 13 Narcissist's problem | 14 Competent | 15 Couturier | 16 Charged | 17 Christmas sets | 18 Hams' dog | 22 Confusing language | 26 Winter forecast | 29 — Lobos | 30 Detergent brand | 31 Borders | 32 Sample | 33 Growl | 34 Literary collection | 35 Stolen | | |
| 21 Nightwear | 23 Popeye's fog | 25 Crew props | 26 Persian bigwig | 27 Letterman's competitor | 28 Make abnormally thin | 32 Hollow muffin | 33 Chats about others | 35 White House monogram | 36 Seal baby | 38 Hypnotized | 39 February marksman | 42 Notion | 43 Holiday and Sev-erinsen | 44 The B.P.O.E. | 45 Hiatu | 46 Indivisible | 48 — -de France |
- Solution time: 24 mins.**
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5-17 CRYPTOQUIP

E C C P I V U L V W X , C P I

A L E S I J U Q T C E H I L ' X

X P Q K V Q W J N A I S U I K I N

E X " C P I H E T I I S I T C . "

Yesterday's Cryptquip: THE FARMER IS GIVING ME SOME EXCEPTIONAL ADVICE. HE'S AN EXPERT IN HIS FIELD.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: C equals T

The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.