

Rotterdam to host Champions Trophy

AFP, New Delhi

The Dutch city of Rotterdam will host the elite Champions Trophy field hockey tournament from November 3 to 11, the International Hockey Federation (FIH) announced on Friday.

The six-nation tournament will be held at a brand new 8,000-seat stadium in Rotterdam which opened in August, the FIH said in a media release.

The tournament was originally scheduled to be held in the Pakistani city of Lahore on the same dates, but had to be moved following security concerns over expected US strikes on neighbouring Afghanistan.

The FIH said both Australia and the Netherlands had bid to host the tournament, but gave no reason why the Dutch city was preferred.

Hockey Australia's executive director Linden Adamson admitted on Wednesday the healthy financial situation of the Netherlands and the ease with which it could prepare a world-class tournament under tight deadlines made it the favourite to host the event.

Peter Cohen, FIH secretary-general said: "We're delighted that, despite the short notice given, we were afforded the luxury of choosing between two excellent bids."

"It is a pity that the event has to be moved from Pakistan, but this is obviously beyond the control of both the Pakistan Hockey Federation and the FIH."

"However we are extremely confident that the Dutch Hockey Association will deliver a superb festival of hockey, consistent with the hockey world's expectations of the Champions Trophy," Cohen said.

The Netherlands, the world and Olympic champions, will be joined by Australia, Pakistan, South Korea, Germany and England in the tournament.

Dalmiya v Muthiah

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The federal Central Bureau of Investigation's probe into corruption in cricket last year led to life bans for former Test captain Mohammad Azharuddin and ex-international Ajay Sharma, plus a five-year ban on current star Ajay Jadeja.

The government also repeatedly rejected moves to organise cricket matches against Pakistan, which it accuses of arming and training Islamic guerrillas in the disputed region of Kashmir.

If Dalmiya cannot muster the required numbers on Saturday, observers believe it could signal the end of one of the most colourful and influential careers in Indian cricket administration.

"It's a make or break election for Dalmiya," a BCCI member told AFP, refusing to divulge whose side he was on. "Saturday could see some dramatic developments."

China a step closer



APP, Abu Dhabi

China moved closer to their maiden appearance at a World Cup finals here Thursday when they beat the United Arab Emirates 1-0 in their Group B Asian Zone 2002 World Cup qualifier.

A 43rd minute goal from Qi Hong was enough to push the Chinese further ahead of their rivals in the standings with 13 from their five matches to Qatar's eight from five - the Gulf State can pull to within two points if they beat Uzbekistan at home on Friday.

China's well-travelled coach Bora Milutinovic only worry will be that his charges do not live up to their predecessors tag as being chokers when qualification looked certain - though Milutinovic's well-honed skills with less established international sides should get them over that obstacle.

The Chinese merited their victory by taking the game to their goalshy opponents despite the stifling heat and 85 percent humidity and when rarely asked the question in defence they stood up well to the hosts.

The UAE defence were not so solid and Qi broke their offside trap to head home.

Despite this reverse the hosts failed to raise their game and pour forward into attack leaving it to the Chinese to retain the initiative before UAE's Dutch coach Tini Ruijz decided to send on two fresher forwards in Sidi Al-Kaas and veteran Bekhit Saad.

The substitutions proved a welcome boost to the UAE and Saad almost brought the sides level in the



PHOTO: AFP
Chinese forward Qi Hong celebrates after scoring the first goal against the United Arab Emirates (UAE) during their World Cup qualifying match on Thursday.

61st minute as his fierce shot from 40 metres out came back off the

crossbar.

last eight, ousting Chile's Nicolas Massu 7-6, 3-6, 6-4.

Top seed Juan Carlos Ferrero was set to take on American qualifier Cecil Mamit later Thursday, while seventh seeded crowd-pleaser Michael Chang, a three-time Hong Kong champion, takes on Andrew Ilie of Australia.

"Anyway, it's not my concern, I have my own job to do out there on court, he doesn't matter to me."

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"I have a lot of confidence after Shanghai," said Schuttler. "I've been working hard in training over the past month and now the results are starting to come."

Brazil's Andre Sa found his feet on fast side court and Swiss Michel Kratcovil paid the price going down 7-5, 6-4 in their second-round match. Kratcovil was beaten by Schuttler in the final at Shanghai on Sunday.

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Scud sent packing



APP, Hong Kong

Fifth seed Mark Philippoussis crashed out of the 400,000 dollars Hong Kong Open Thursday succumbing to in-form German Rainer Schuttler in a second round clash.

Philippoussis proved unable to notch up his second win following a comeback this week from six months of rehabilitation after knee surgery in the spring, going down 7-6, 4-6, 6-3 to Schuttler.

Despite the defeat, the big serving Philippoussis said his physical well-being was his most important current consideration.

"I'm taking it one match at a time," he said before preparing to head back to his North American base in Florida.

"I'm just happy to be back playing," he said. "The most important thing for me is trying to get healthy, that's the only thing I'm worried about. I'm just looking at my knee."

Defeat sours Kournikova comeback

APP, Leipzig

Anna Kournikova made her long-awaited return from injury Thursday but it ended in defeat as she lost to fellow Russian Anastasia Myskina at the 565,000-dollars Leipzig Open.

Myskina took advantage of her glamorous rival's bundle of unforced errors to win 6-4, 3-6, 6-3.

Kournikova, ranked 20 in the world, has been out of action for three months with a stress fracture in her left foot, which she originally injured during a practice session in late February.

"Of course I came here to win," said Kournikova, who has still to end her tour title duck.

"But the important thing is that my foot doesn't cause me problems in the coming weeks. Soon I will be able to play better tennis," she insisted.

Leipzig title holder, Belgian Kim Clijsters, moved on with a 6-3, 6-3 success over Italy's Francesca Schiavone.

Clijsters, the world number five, will take on fifth seeded Italian Silvia Farina Elia in Friday's quarterfinal.



PHOTO: AFP
Russian Anna Kournikova reacts after losing a point during her second round match against compatriot Anastasia Myskina at the Leipzig Open on Thursday.

German javelin thrower banned for doping

APP, Berlin

German javelin thrower Carolin Soboll was banned for two years by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) arbitration panel here Thursday for nandrolone use.

The German Athletics Federation (DLV) confirmed in a statement that the suspension will run until November 26, 2002, taking into account when the ban was initially imposed by the IAAF in November 2000.

Soboll, 19, who came second in the European junior championships, submitted a urine sample during competition on June 23, 2000 which showed traces of the banned anabolic steroid.

The 1999 German junior champion blamed the positive test on the nutritional supplement Creatine, which she had obtained from the United States - although the packaging of the product made no mention of nandrolone content.

Creatine, taken in powdered form as a nutritional supplement to build muscle, is not on the list of banned substances.

The DLV accepted the athlete's explication and did not impose a ban and in their statement questioned the arbitration panel's competence.

Takahashi bids for world best in Berlin

APP, Berlin

Olympic champion Naoko Takahashi will be bidding for a marathon world best in her first race since taking gold in the Sydney Games here Sunday.

Japan's first female Olympic marathon champion may become a celebrity in her native country, but she has not let that interfere with her intensive training.

And in preparation to break Kenyan Tegla Loroupe's world best time of 2:02.43 set on this course two years ago she has spent several months at altitude in Colorado, as she did before Sydney.

"The other marathons I've run have either been in hot conditions or on difficult courses," said Takahashi.

France prey

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Conterras penalised the Burkinabe defender Amadou Coulibaly for handball and Opabunmi made no mistake from the spot.

The Eaglets were much the dominant side and could have been 3-0 up after just 12 minutes but Opabunmi and Suleiman Mohammed missed golden opportunities to wrap the match up.

Though the Nigerians continued to miss chances the Burkina Faso attack were rarely threatening and had their keeper Abdoul Kontougomde to thank for a stunning save from Sambo Soga in the 65th minute.

Like Argentina Burkina Faso were also reduced to 10-men in the dying minutes as leftback Lassana Kanoute was sent-off for a second bookable offence.

U-17 WC RESULTS

Results from World Under-17 football championships on Thursday:

Semifinals

Nigeria 1 (Opabunmi 3 pen) Burkina Faso 0

France 2 (Le Tallec 55, Berthod 57)

Argentina 1 (Tevez 48)

(Final and third-place play-off in Port of Spain on Sunday)

Thorpe prefers low profile



REUTERS, Harare

Graham Thorpe, a late addition to the England squad for their short tour of Zimbabwe, has warned against high expectations of his personal contribution to the visitors' performance.

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