

Rangers, Celtic invited to join English league

AFP, London

Scotland's top clubs Celtic and Rangers are set to be invited to play in the English Football League, the official website of the BBC reported on Saturday.

The report alleges the rival clubs from Glasgow will be asked to play south of the border by an English Football League club on Thursday.

The BBC's official website, BBC.co.uk, claimed there had been talks in Scotland last week between Celtic's main shareholder Dermot Desmond, Rangers chairman David Murray and English Football League chief executive Keith Harris.

The website report read: "The invitation will be made on Thursday by a football league club friendly to the deal and put to a vote by all member clubs at a meeting in London on Friday."

There was no comment late on Saturday from either the Scottish Premier League or the English Football League on the BBC report.

Of course the English Football League does not include England's elite professional clubs who play in the Premiership.

India thrive

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West Indian attack as he reached his hundred with a pulled boundary off Dillon. He has so far struck 13 fours.

His stand with wicket-keeper Ratra came at the right time for India, who had lost three wickets in the space of 24 runs in the morning after resuming at 226-3.

Dillon bagged two for 11 runs off nine overs and Cuffy one for nine off seven to reduce the tourists to 257-6.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the second day of the fourth Test between the West Indies and India at the Antigua Recreation Ground here on Saturday:

INDIA: First innings (overnight 226-3)

Das b Collins	3
Jaffer c Jacobs b Collins	86
David b Dillon	91
Tendulkar c Jacobs b Collins	0
Ganguly c Hinds b Cuffy	45
Laxman not out	124
Kumble c Chanderpaul b Dillon	6
Ratra not out	93
Extras: (nb-8, w-1, lb-5)	14
Total: (for 6 wkts)	462

Fall of wickets: 1-13, 2-168, 3-168, 4-233, 5-235, 6-257

BOWLING	O	M	R	W
Dillon	45	13	99	2
Cuffy	32	7	58	1
Collins	42	10	121	3
Sanford	32	6	113	0
Hooper	13	4	29	0
Hinds	2	0	9	0
Sarwan	9	3	23	0
Gayle	5	1	5	0

Umpires: David Shepherd (Eng) and Russell Tiffin (Zim)

Match-referee: Ranjan Madugalle (Sri)

What to watch

FROM PAGE 13

ESPN
English Premier Football League Liverpool vs Ipswich Town Repeat at 9:00 am & Arsenal vs Everton Repeat at 10:30 am
Sportscentre Hindi
Sport News Live at 8:30 pm
Cricket Programming Super Selector Repeat at 9:00 pm
STAR Sports
Sportslive Tonight Sport News Live at 6:30 pm
West Indies vs India Fourth Test, Day Four Live at 8:05 pm

Andre breaks the jinx



AFP, Rome

Andre Agassi of the United States won the 2.8 million-dollar Tennis Masters Series tournament here Sunday, outclassing Tommy Haas of Germany 6-3, 6-3, 6-0 in the final.

It was ninth-seed Agassi's first victory on the red clay at the Foro Italico and comes 13 years after he lost his only previous final in the Eternal City to Alberto Mancini of Argentina.

The American looked in awe-some form, clinching victory in the

five-set final in one hour 56 minutes as his seventh-ranked opponent gave up the ghost in the last set.

It was a superb effort on his least favourite surface as he served notice that he will be in the reckoning to win the French Open title he won back in 1999.

After a tightly-contested start to the match Agassi made the first breakthrough on game five on his third break point of that game.

The first two Haas saved with aces and he looked to have extricated himself with the third when the linesman called his lob in but the umpire overruled the call, giving the game to the Las Vegas.

For good measure Agassi broke

again in the last game of the set after Haas twice double faulted with the American taking the set 6-3 in 43 minutes.

In the second set Agassi broke in the fourth game with Haas again yielding on a double fault, throwing his racket to the ground in disgust but in game seven Haas broke back to take the score back to 4-3.

However, he immediately threw away the next game as Agassi broke again and duly served out to take the set, this time in 42 minutes.

The final set was one-way with traffic with the demoralised Haas needing treatment on his right thigh.

Agassi broke in the first game with a brilliant cross-court shot on the run and repeated the feat in games three and five to take the set to love and clinch that long-awaited first Roman title.

He clinched the title with a fine passing shot and punched the air to herald his first triumph in the Eternal City and the ending of a 13-year itch.

Ramp answers to selectors

AFP, London

Mark Ramprakash struck an unbeaten century to lead Surrey to victory over Lancashire on the final day of their English county championship Division One match at The Oval on Saturday.

On the day he was overlooked for England's Test squad to play Sri Lanka next week, Ramprakash emphatically hit back at the selectors with an innings of 119 not out to help his side to a three-wicket win.

Resuming on 200 for four, Surrey lost Alec Stewart, who had better luck than Ramprakash as he earned an England recall at the age of 39, and then suffered a late scare before edging over the finishing line.

Ramprakash and Stewart posted a century stand for the fifth wicket before the England wicketkeeper departed four runs short of his half-century.

However, Ramprakash remained at the crease and recorded his first century of the season, off 197 balls with 12 fours.

Azhar Mahmood and Alex Tudor then made brief cameos to nudge Surrey closer, but it was Martin Bicknell who stayed with Ramprakash and finished the game with a towering six to inflict Lancashire's first defeat in the championship this season.

Believe in winning

AFP, London

England manager Sven-Goran Eriksson has revealed he will tell his players to believe they can win the World Cup as he looks forward to fulfilling his dream of leading a team into the final.

Eriksson, who has been careful to play down England's chances at the finals, believes that if his team get past the first phase then anything is possible.

Although Eriksson has warned against looking beyond England's opening Group of Death clash with Sweden, he is nevertheless encouraging his players to adopt a positive mindset.

"If you don't believe, then you will never do it," Eriksson said.

"Football is about many things but one thing is not to be afraid, no matter how important your opponent is. Why should we have the idea to lose against any team in the world?"

"I refuse to even think about us losing the first three games. When I was a club manager and we played Real Madrid, I never thought about losing. Take that problem when it comes, not before."

Eriksson acknowledges the size of the task facing England as they prepare to do battle in a different time zone with fierce heat and humidity.

However, he insists that every possible preparation is being taken, with regard to fitness and blood tests, as well as enabling the players to deal with playing in the heat.

His confidence stems from his belief in his players, although he knows the importance of developing the strong squad spirit that is already evident in the camp.

"I think we have extremely good players, such as David Beckham, Michael Owen, Steven Gerrard and Paul Scholes," said Eriksson.

"There are many others but if I said those four players are world-class, then it's not a surprise. Hopefully people around the world will say more names after the World Cup," he added.

Eriksson admitted he was excited at the prospect of leading England into the World Cup as the squad prepared to head to Dubai on Monday for a pre-tournament training camp.

"I'm very happy, very proud," he admitted. "This is a new challenge, a new experience. One thing you always dream about as a manager or player is to take part in a World Cup."

"You think about the final, that it should be very nice to be there on the bench for that match."

England

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"There will be a little bit of social life which I think they need after a very long season. I think it will do good for the muscles and the brain and then we are ready. We have to do a lot of preparation."

Eriksson also welcomed plans by world governing body FIFA to clamp down on diving and tackles from behind in the finals in Japan and Korea.

"The big thing in this World Cup will be cheating, diving," he said. "It's good for me to know it will be punished - that's a big thing from FIFA. I think diving has always been a problem."

"Of course FIFA will also be very hard on tackles from behind and I agree with that 100 per cent, a lot of injuries come from that."

Johansson wants election postponed



AFP, Zurich

European soccer chief Lennart Johansson on Sunday called for the FIFA presidential election later this month to be postponed in light of the crisis concerning FIFA president Joseph Blatter.

Five FIFA vice-presidents, led by UEFA president Johansson, began legal action against Blatter Friday alleging deception, mismanagement, illegal payments and cronyism by the 66-year-old Swiss head of world soccer's governing body.

The action is being spearheaded by Johansson and African Football Confederation (CAF) president Issa Hayatou who is the only challenger to Blatter in elections for the FIFA presidency in Seoul on May 29.

And in an interview with the Sonntagszeitung weekly Johansson said that he believed that it would be better to put off the election until the

matter had been dealt with.

"After all the allegations that have emerged the best thing would be to postpone this election," said Johansson.

"It is not established whether FIFA statutes allow for such a postponement, the question has to be cleared up."

Johansson added that he would consider resigning from his position as FIFA vice-president if Blatter were reelected.

Meanwhile FIFA secretary general Michel Zen-Ruffinen, whose confidential report outlining serious allegations against Blatter sparked off the legal action, has been stripped of all his power within the organisation, Sonntagszeitung reported.

Under a motion, lodged by FIFA vice-president Julio Grondona of Argentina and adopted by a FIFA emergency committee, Zen-Ruffinen no longer has any financial power, the newspaper claimed.

Blatter will speak about the action against him next Tuesday.

FIFA agrees to retire Maradona's No.10 jersey

INTERNET, Buenos Aires

As previously reported, the Argentine Football Association launched a petition to FIFA asking to retire Diego Maradona's No. 10 national team jersey.

The move was originally proposed last year, but FIFA said it would not allow it.

However, now FIFA chairman Zepp Blatter has given his permission to retire the Argentinean legend's jersey, Marca reports.

Thus, midfielder Ariel Ortega, who wore No. 10 jersey, will have to change it to No. 24.

BAF swimming

UNB, Dhaka

The annual inter-base swimming and water polo championship of the Bangladesh Air Force got underway at the Naval Headquarters Swimming Pool at Banani yesterday.

Four swimming events were finalised and two water polo qualifying matches held on the opening day of the meet.

German Open Henin's



AFP, Berlin

Justine Henin of Belgium won the 1.244 million dollar German Open on Sunday, beating Serena Williams of the United States 6-2, 1-6, 7-6 in a momentous 2hr 17 min final.

Henin landed her first claycourt win while Williams missed out on her own as the 19-year-old Belgian pocketed a winners cheque for 182,000 dollars while Williams made do with 92,000.

Henin finally won on her third match point after a knife-edge third set tiebreak, having already squandered a 12th in the 12th game on the Williams serve.

The champion to be gritted her teeth - then flung her racket joyfully in the air as Williams drove long at the last.

"It's a really great feeling," said Henin as she savoured her moment.

She picked off her fifth career singles title and also put one over the Williams family having gone down to Venus in the finals of Gold Coast, Antwerp and Amelia Island this season.

The win, a massive confidence boost for Henin with the French Open just a fortnight away, leaves her eighth on the WTA Tour computer while 20-year-old Serena, who has 13 titles to her name, is stuck in fourth spot.

Had she won the American would have risen to a career high ranking of third when the new standings are published on Monday.

Serena saw her confidence pricked as a superb recent run of form with just two defeats in the past seven months ended.

Since bowing to elder sister Venus in the US Open final last September her only reverse had comprised a Family Circle Cup quarter-final loss to Patty Schnyder, though she did have to retire with an ankle injury at Sydney in January while playing compatriot Meghann Shaughnessy.

That injury forced her out of the Australian Open but on her return to action on the US tour she quickly added the Scottsdale and Miami titles to her growing collection.

Henin, who beat world number



PHOTO: AFP

Belgian Justine Henin holds up the winner's trophy after beating American Serena Williams in the German Open final yesterday.

Sino shuttlers sweep into semis

AFP, Guangzhou

China's women steamrollered South Korea in front of their home fans at Tianhe stadium here Sunday to move into the semifinals of the prestigious Uber Cup.

China's unstoppable shuttlers powered past number three seeds Korea with minimal trouble, despite the courageous Koreans achieving the unimaginable by taking a rubber off the Chinese.

However, they could not quite pull off the impossible and defeat Li Yongbo's team, going down 4-1 to the reigning champions.

World number one Zhou Mi flicked aside the best efforts of Kwon Hee-Sook 7-1, 7-5, 7-1 in just 15 minutes of a one-sided contest.

However, after taking the first game 7-0, Wei Yili and Zhan Jiewen were given a shock as Korean duo Lee Hyo-Jung and Hwang Yu-Mi battled back to dominate the next three games 7-1, 7-5, 7-0.

Normal service was however soon resumed with world champion Gong Ruina's first appearance of the tournament greeted with rapturous applause by the crowd at Tianhe stadium.

Gong did not disappoint, hitting

winners at will to run out a 7-0, 7-3, 7-0 victory over Shin Ja Young.

Coach Li even rested doubles queens Gao Ling and Huang Sui

but replacements Yang Wei and Huang Nanyan, the world number three pairing, cruised to victory in double quick time without losing a point.

China capped a cold blooded display, with Dai Yun conceding only two points in the final match.

The win puts China into the semi-final. Korea will also likely qualify if they beat rank outsiders Germany in their final match. The Germans were tied 1-1 with Japan in the other Group B tie being played Sunday.

The other rubbers will be completed later Sunday. Meanwhile Indonesia were leading fellow Southeast Asian titans Malaysia 2-1 in the men's Thomas Cup badminton team Group B match.

The other Group B tie on Sunday saw Germany and Thailand battling to secure a little pride and avoid finishing bottom.

Thailand took a unbeatable 3-0 lead to almost certainly condemn the European team, making their first appearance at the Cup, to that unfortunate fate.

two Jennifer Capriati to reach the final - thus ensuring Venus Williams retains the world number one spot - took advantage of some sloppy early play from her rival to win the first set in 30min.

But it appeared to be a ploy by Serena to lull her opponent into a false sense of security as the scarlet-clad American found her range in the second set, racing 3-0 clear, then surviving break points against her in the fifth and seventh games.

She then levelled the tie on her fourth set point with an ace.

Henin had spent twice as long on court as Serena to reach the final, needing to go the distance three times whereas her opponent had not dropped a set and benefited from the injury withdrawal of defending champion Amelie Mauresmo in the quarter-final. In the decider Henin's never-say-die qualities quickly came to the fore as she dug in after dropping serve in the third game.

She broke straight back and when she moved out to 4-2 after Williams netted an attempted dropshot it appeared the Belgian had done enough for the title.

Williams was having none of it and forced her way back to 4-4.

She then rescued herself to level for 6-6 and recovered from 0-3 to 3-3 in the tiebreak.

But a Henin stop volley at the net gave her a third match point and Serena fired long to concede defeat.

Batting worry for Lanka

AFP, London

Sri Lanka's first-choice Test batting line-up collapsed against the medium pace of Middlesex's second-wave bowling attack at Shenley on Saturday.

With just five days to go before the opening match of their first official Test series in England, the manner of the surrender had alarm bells ringing as Middlesex trailed them by just 10 runs with four wickets standing.

Sri Lanka looked set for a big score as Marvan Atapattu and captain Sanath Jayasuriya, who had racked up 22 runs off the first three overs, shared an opening stand of 81.

There was no hint what was to follow but seven wickets tumbled for just 42 runs against the swing of Aaron Laraman and all-rounder Ben Hutton, grandson of cricketing legend Len, who finished with a career-best four for 37 from 16 overs.

Jayasuriya, on 52 - including two sixes in three balls from Tom Hunt and seven fours off 62 balls - failed to offer a stroke as he was bowled by Hutton, who also trapped Russel Arnold and Upul Chandana lbw and had Eric Uasthantha caught by Ed Joyce.

Laraman had struck the first blow by dismissing Atapattu - the first of three batsmen caught by wicketkeeper David Alleyne off his bowling - for a quick-fire 46, 19 of them coming in the whirlwind first three overs.

The same combination accounted for Kumar Sangakkara for one and the Mahela Jayawardene, for 12.

Pabna cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Ranasa Cricket Club and Ekok Sangha won their respective matches in the Pepsi First Division Cricket League yesterday

In the first match, Ranasa defeated Ovjiatree Club by 49 runs at the Pabna Stadium.

Batting first, Ranasa scored 190 runs all out in 49 overs.

In reply, Ovjiatree were all out for 141 runs in 38.1 overs.

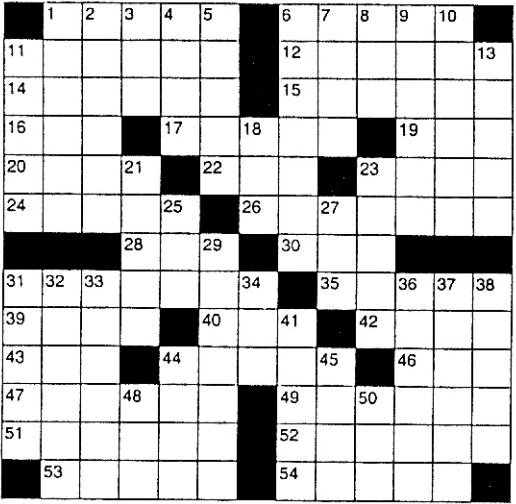
At the Pabna Edward College ground, Ekok outplayed PYC (Green) by nine wickets.

PYC batted first and managed 184 runs for nine in 50 overs.

In reply, Ekok made 186 runs for the loss of one wicket in 29 overs.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	40 Homer Simpson's expletive	3 Rotation duration	23 Cheese choice
1 "Dilbert" cartoonist	42 Unforeseen woe	4 Okla-homa city	25 Natalie's dad
11 Bicycle seat	43 Edge	5 More rational	27 Blood-type group
12 More glutinous	44 Robber	6 Judge	29 Lucille Ball, notably
14 "a Manger"	46 -- pro nobis	7 Toy-shop buy	31 "Theme," from "Doctor Zhivago"
15 Hair color	47 Street peak	8 GI's address abbr.	32 Pizza topping
16 Rule, in British India	49 Turkish peak	9 Driver on a movie set?	33 Using one can be a nnap
17 Satan	51 Venus' sister	10 Tranquilize	34 "How -- Love Thee?"
19 "Nopel!"	52 Money-back offer	11 Medieval poets	36 Parka
20 Use a rotniy phone	53 Cut lumber	12 Said "I do"	37 Gold units
21 Snitch	54 Quests	13 Again	38 Fire pir type
23 Builder's choice	1 Mag-num's bailiwick	18 Anatomical duct	41 Finds
24 One of Jesus' apostles	2 Up the creek	21 Boston airport	42 Melody
25 Algae	Solution time: 23 mins.		43 Grails
26 Long-jawed fish			44 Start of four state names
27 Fenway stat			45 Rushmore figure
31 Found			
35 Japanese city			
39 -- Green-span			



1-12 CRYPTOQUIP

C T M I P S T P X E E G

C E Z L H P H G Q U U M S ' R I P K R

C P G P T P Q I M L K M S

C Q R G P Q I I V " Z L T E X X V "

Yesterday's Cryptquip: THAT BIG TRAFFIC COP IS SO STRONG, I SAW HIM HOLD UP AN AUTOMOBILE WITH ONE HAND.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: X equals P

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.