

Tiger to tie the knot



AFP, Stockholm

Tiger Woods is to marry his Swedish girlfriend Elin Nordegren, the 23-year-old former model's father has confirmed.

Woods proposed at a South African game reserve where they had been sleeping under the stars in sleeping bags after playing in the Presidents Cup in the Western Cape last week.

"She called (Wednesday) morning and was incredibly happy. It's great," Thomas Nordegren told the Expressen daily.

"I spoke only briefly with them on the phone but they were happy and I congratulated them," said Nordegren, who is the Washington correspondent for public radio broadcaster Swedish Radio.

Lynn Giles, a warden on the Shamwari Game Reserve, told the Aftonbladet: "She knew nothing about it, even though Tiger had planned everything very carefully."

"When they returned the diamond was sparking on her finger. She was so moved that she could hardly speak, she was just glowing and was very very happy."

The couple have a home in Orlando, Florida, but the wedding is to take place in Sweden although the couple are in no rush, Expressen said, quoting unnamed friends of the pair.

Tiger met Elin when she was working as a nanny to the children of Swedish professional golfer Jesper Parnevik.

The engagement comes after a season in which the 27-year-old Woods failed to win a major for the first time in five years - his target is to shatter Jack Nicklaus' record of 21 major wins.

Two years ago Woods' father, Earl, said there was just one threat to Tiger becoming recognised as the greatest golfer who ever lived -- a Mrs. Tiger Woods.

"Let's face it, a wife can sometimes

be a deterrent to a good game of golf," Earl Woods said.

Marriage, Earl Woods said, would simply distract Tiger from his quest to achieve golf immortality.

"The level he's at, the finite little problems like that would destroy him," he said.

And he did not expect Tiger to marry before he was 30.

In 2001 he set the golf world alight when holding all four grand slams at once.

But Woods is still hungry to slap down

the pundits who suggest he has fallen into a slump.

And his lack of success on the greens does not appear to have affected his earning potential. Forbes magazine says he made 70 million dollars last year in appearance fees and endorsements alone.

His tournament earnings surpass 40 million dollars worldwide.

Since becoming a professional golfer in 1996, he has won 52 tournaments, 39 of those on the US PGA TOUR, including the 1997, 2001, and 2002 Masters

Tournaments, 1999 and 2000 PGA Championships, 2000 and 2002 US Open Championship, and 2000 British Open Championship.

In 2000, Woods matched the record of Ben Hogan in 1953 in winning three professional major championships in the same year. Hogan won the Masters, U.S. Open and British Open.

And with his second Masters victory in 2001, Tiger became the first ever to hold all four professional major championships at the same time.



PHOTO: AFP

Tiger Woods (L) with Swedish model girlfriend Elin Nordegren.

SL boss battles arrest order

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lankan cricket chief Thilanga Sumathipala Saturday denied he was in hiding following an order from the state attorney general for his arrest ahead of a home Test series against England.

Press reports here Saturday said the attorney general had told police there was sufficient evidence to arrest Sumathipala over his alleged links to a convicted criminal.

"I categorically deny any involvement with the said underworld character," Sumathipala said in a statement here. "I had already gone to the CID (Criminal Investigations Department) and made statements."

"I am not avoiding this issue and will face it in court. Some media... have been speculating that I have gone into hiding. I have not, but will go before the court next week seeking justice."

He questioned the motives of the state law officers in issuing an order for his arrest when England was touring the country.

England will play three Test matches in Sri Lanka, the first starting at Galle on Tuesday.

Thorpe looking back



REUTERS, Colombo

England batsman Graham Thorpe aims to relive one of his greatest achievements when the first Test against Sri Lanka starts on Tuesday.

Thorpe's nerveless batting was crucial to England's success on their last tour of Sri Lanka in 2001. The 34-year-old left-hander played match-winning innings in the final two Tests, finishing the series with 269 runs at an average of 67.25.

Sri Lanka off spinner Muttiah Muralitharan believes Thorpe's wicket may be the key to next month's three-Test series.

"Thorpe was superb during that series and he is the key man this time too," Muralitharan told this news agency.

"He's patient, picks up the length quickly and works the ball around cleverly," added Muralitharan.

Thorpe looked unlikely to play a role as he struggled to regain his place in the side after a string of personal

problems.

But he was recalled for the final Test against South Africa at the Oval, a must-win game for England who needed victory to avoid a series defeat.



GRAHAM THORPE

Thorpe scored an emotional 124 in front of his home crowd to book a place on tours to Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and West Indies.

"It was massive game and probably the best innings of my life," Thorpe told reporters.

"It's been a long road coming back, but I am really enjoying my cricket at the moment and I feel that every day I play for England is a bonus."

He hopes to reproduce the purple patch he enjoyed on the last Sri Lanka tour.

"It was incredible to come back to win the series last time and was certainly one of the greatest achievements I have had playing for England," he said.

"I have very good memories of playing here, and am very proud of my role in that series, but we all start again on tonight unfortunately."

Norpe's main task will be to nullify Muralitharan.

"Obviously Murali is a big player for Sri Lanka and we have to have ideas as to how we are going to play against him," he said.

"He can quite easily get you out early, but if you can get used to him you can survive, so the important thing to do is to try and hang in there at the start."

"Fortunately, we have a few decent left-handers in the top six and, hopefully, one of us will be able to score big runs against him."

Always Best!

AFP, London

A couple of opportunistic prostitutes stole thousands of pounds in cash from a jacket belonging to former Manchester United and Northern Ireland star George Best after he took them back to a plush London hotel, a British newspaper said Saturday.

Best, 57, was stung on Wednesday, just 24 hours after he allegedly smashed up his 31-year-old wife's Mercedes car after accusing her of having an affair, The Sun tabloid said.

"A man alleged that 2,000 pounds (3,500 dollars, 2,900 euros) had been stolen from his jacket pocket," the paper quoted a police spokesman as saying.

The Sun was in no doubt who the man was. "Best robbed by hookers," screamed its front page headline. Police were still looking for the alleged culprits, the paper said.

The former European Player of the Year has been blighted by personal problems over the past year.

He has failed to give up drinking despite undergoing a liver transplant and prior to Wednesday's alleged incident, has been accused of cheating on his wife on a number of occasions, causing her to throw him out their house.

Best was one of the stars of the Manchester United team that won the European Cup in 1968 and a combination of talent and good looks made him Britain's first 'superstar' player.

Gazza's dream over

REUTERS, London

Former England midfielder Paul Gascoigne has given up on his dream of a Premier League comeback with Wolverhampton Wanderers, the Midlands club says.

"Gazza has decided that he can't cut it at premier league level and he has gone away to think about what he wants to do," Wolves manager Dave Jones told the club's official website on Friday.

The 36-year-old former Newcastle United, Tottenham Hotspur, Lazio, Rangers, Middlesbrough and Everton player helped England reach the World Cup semifinals in 1990 in Italy and the same stage of Euro 96 at Wembley. He won 57 caps.

Gascoigne, who played in five reserve games for Wolves, has tried his hand with a number of clubs in England and abroad, including Chinese B-league side Gansu Tianma, since quitting first division Burnley 16 months ago.

Saviola robbed

REUTERS, Madrid

Barcelona striker Javier Saviola was the victim of a motorway robbery while he was making his way to training, Spanish sports daily Marca reported on Friday.

The report said that the Argentine international had to hand over his possessions after being forced to pull over on to the hard-shoulder by two cars while he was driving on a motorway near Barcelona.

The player, who reported the incident to the police, was unhurt and went on to train normally with his teammates.

It's one off WC final

REUTERS, Melbourne

A proposal to stage a best-of-three final series at the 2007 World Cup in the West Indies has been rejected, the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced on Friday.

ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed told a news conference that the idea had been discussed but it was decided to stick with a single winner-takes-all match.

"There were some who supported (a best-of-three final), including me, but the sense in the end was that the cricket World Cup is about one match, sudden-death, best team on the day wins the World Cup," Speed said.

Speed confirmed that organisers had agreed to use a new, expanded format in 2007 with the 16 teams split into four equal pools.

The top two from each pool would proceed to a Super Eight phase from which the top four would advance to the sudden-death semi-finals. This is a departure from the format used at this year's World Cup in South Africa when 14 teams were divided into two pools of seven with the top three from each pool going to the next stage.

"It gives us the best opportunity for the best four teams to come through to the semi-final stage. That's a major feature of this format that didn't exist in South Africa," said Speed. He added that each of the four pools would be staged in different islands of the West Indies to reduce the amount of travelling in the region.

Speed said the United States was also being considered to host a pool but the ICC would make an announcement on our players that we can improve."

Euro lines drawn today



AFP, Lisbon

Portugal's World Cup-winning Brazilian coach Luis Felipe Scolari has singled out the Netherlands as the team to avoid during the European Championship finals next summer.

Scolari, speaking ahead of Sunday's draw, said that he was hoping to bring Portugal, who qualify automatically as hosts, to at least the semifinals in the 16-team tournament from June 12 to July 4, but believed 1988 titleholders the Netherlands are hot stuff.

"In my opinion Holland today are one of the five top teams in the world," said Scolari.

"It won't be easy but Portugal have on the whole had good results against the Dutch in the past."

Hopes are high in football-mad Portugal that Scolari will revive the nation's fortunes after their surprise elimination in the first round of the 2002 World Cup.

He will have a talented group of players at his disposal, led by 2001 FIFA World Player of the Year and Real Madrid midfielder Luis Figo, AC Milan playmaker Rui Costa and Newcastle's Hugo Viana.

But the 55-year-old is taking the pressure off himself by stating that their aim is to be among the semi-finalists.

"If we can all pull together, if we form the team that I want, we should be among the four finalists," said Scolari.

Seedings are based on the performance of teams in the 2002 World Cup qualifying competition and the Euro 2004 qualifying phase.

Teams will be split into four pots for the draw, with hosts Portugal and reigning European champions France alongside Sweden and the Czech Republic in the first pot.

But Real Madrid playmaker Zinedine Zidane believes that two-time winners France will have a tough time defending their title.

"It will be very difficult to win again," said Zidane.

"The European championships are becoming more and more difficult and the quality of teams and players is improving all the time."

"We might be favourites along with four or five other nations, with perhaps Portugal leading that group because they will be playing at home," added Zidane.

England, meanwhile, have been named in the second group of seeds along with European heavyweights Spain,

Italy and three-time winners Germany.

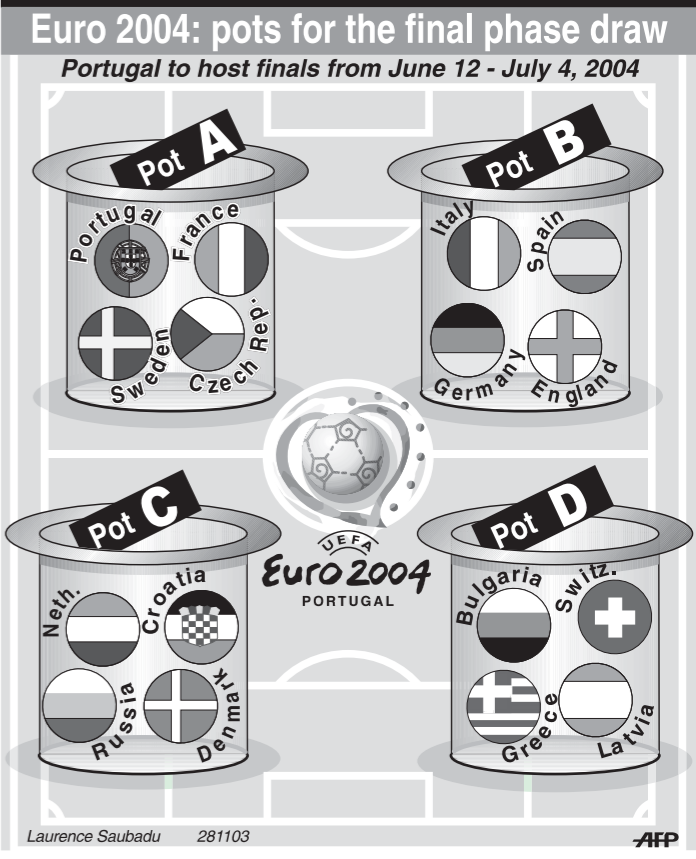
Holland, emphatic winners against Scotland in the play-offs, are in pot three as they line up alongside Croatia, Denmark and Russia. The final qualifiers, and tournament underdogs, complete the list - Bulgaria, Switzerland, Latvia and Greece.

**Pot A** -- Portugal, France, Sweden and Czech Republic

**Pot B** -- Spain, Italy, England and Germany

**Pot C** -- Holland, Croatia, Denmark and Russia

**Pot D** -- Bulgaria, Latvia, Greece and Switzerland



Waiting to excel



REUTERS, London

Chelsea's top-of-the-table premier league match with champions Manchester United on Sunday could go down as the real start to Hernan Crespo's Stamford Bridge career.

The Argentine striker has impressed in bursts in the few matches he has played since joining the expensively assembled London side from Inter Milan for 16.8 million pounds (26.28 million dollars) in August.

In an interview with Reuters on Friday, Crespo said that after a fitful three months trying to settle in London, twice interrupted with trips back home to South America for World Cup qualifiers, he could at last dedicate himself fully to Chelsea.

"Now I am relax because until March (Argentina's next qualifier) I can think only of Chelsea," he said.

He has struggled to show his best form, having missed the first three months of the year with a knee ligament injury, followed by holidays, the

pre-season with Inter and then the change of club.

But he added: "In six matches (with Chelsea), and not all from the start, I've scored five goals. I can't complain and I'm still not at 100 per cent."



HERNAN CRESPO

Suddenly finding his top form for Sunday may be a tall order, but Crespo said he would be helped by the relaxed atmosphere in the English game compared to Serie A.

"People (here) live it the way it should be experienced, as a spectacle, two teams giving their all, without

things like: 'No, they're holding back, a draw suits them, they've come to an agreement.'

"It's seen as a sport, something nice to watch, a pastime, and that's brilliant."

"In Italy, if you're not 100 per cent, you won't make a difference," he said.

"Now I'll get into proper physical shape... on a par with the rest (of the players)."

Chelsea's attitude had helped enormously, he added, because manager Claudio Ranieri had not demanded that he and Argentina team mate Juan Sebastian Veron return immediately from international duty.

Veron will not be with Crespo against his former club. He has a nagging back problem that flared up again while with Argentina last week.

Crespo, who like Veron missed last weekend's 1-0 win at Southampton that kept Chelsea one point behind leaders Arsenal and one above third-placed United, said Sunday's match was a player's dream.

"I think it's one of those matches that you've got to play, that you love playing for what they mean," he said.

Ramnarine

FROM PAGE 13

In that series, he and Carl Hooper, captain at the time, had an on-field disagreement, and their relationship became worse last year when Ramnarine, in his role as president of the WIPA, changed the system of sharing sponsorship prize money among players from seniority to equality.

Pakistan ride on Razzaq

FROM PAGE 13

"He showed why he is so dangerous and a world class All-rounder, he helped us win the match from a position where we thought it had slipped away," said Inzamam.

Full scoreboard of the first day-night one-day international between Pakistan and New Zealand played at Gaddafi Stadium on Saturday: NEW ZEALAND

Cumming c Farhat b 84

Sami					25
Jones					b
R	a	z	z	a	q
					16
Sinclair		s t		M o i n	b
Malik					55
Marshall			l b w		55
Shabbir					b
Cairns					n o t
o		u			t
R4					

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

37 Drink

30 Trinity

20 Sine-non

1 Simple

40 Miss

member

5 Afternoon

4 Piggy

21 Desire

social

self-refer-

5 Norse

22 Part of

8 Reddish

entially

war god

the loop

horse

41 Cheer

6 Seagoing

23 Barber-

(for)

silthier

shop

12 Less

42 Flippers

7 Three

request

bumpy

47 Revealing

digits

14 Advan-

length

25 Join

tage

48 Rose-

after 1

forces

15 Drainage

area

8 Go back

26 Old Italian

(to)

bread

16 Pano-

flower

9 5-Down's

27 Send out

rama

49 A Baldwin

father

29 Smooth-

brother

10 On in

years

31 "Ulalume"

17 Listening

device

50 Spotter

writer

18 Repara-

tion

Center"

33 Reviewer

51 "Sports-

milieu

34 Some-

venue

13 Just one

thing

of those

things

impor-

tant

19 "War

of the

Worlds"

invader

36 Accept an

invitation

37 Cookbook

compiler

Rombauer

38 Drudge

39 Dog

treat

40 It goes

without

saying

43 Method

44 They

(Fr.)

45 Pinch-

46 Diego

DOWN

1 Double

curve

2 Parisian

pal

28 Past

29 Incites

30 Mischief-

maker

32 Sur-

rounded

territory

34 Kingston

group

35 Anger

36 Island

aka

Candia

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

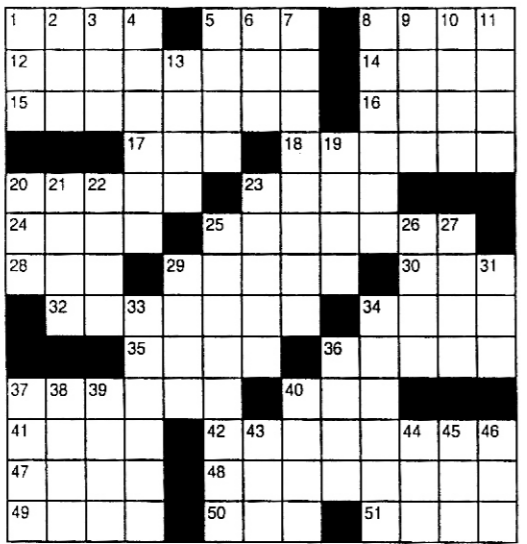
42

43

44

45

46



CRYPTOQUIP

X J Z B G D J L C T K F P E  
B C L N K E V X B O X J N B O K  
V B L K K B V R X I O B P K R Z F K  
D X B O I G P P T K V B G J K L  
Saturday's Cryptquip: I BELIEVE GHOSTS  
AND GHOULS NEVER MAKE MISTAKES, BUT  
THEY DO MAKE SOME BOO-BOOS.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: B 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.