

India going F1 crazy

REUTERS, New Delhi

Narain Karthikeyan's face smiles down from giant hoardings in Indian cities, car stickers in his hometown proclaim "Narain, we are proud of you" and fans scribble good-luck messages on a special graffiti wall erected by sponsors in Bombay.

during the season would be a bonus. That does not stop millions of Indians debating the prospects of their latest sporting icon while eagerly awaiting the season-opening grand prix.



NARAIN KARTHIKEYAN

Russian-born Canadian business-man Alex Shnaider from flamboyant Irishman Eddie Jordan.

Indian fans believe Karthikeyan's natural talent will help him to make an impact in F1, inspiring youngsters such as Karun Chandok, who is in the Nissan World Series, and Arman Ebrahim, who races in the Formula BMW-Asia.

Indian motor racing has come a long way since its origins on disused World War Two airstrips in the 1950s.

It was not until 1989 that India got a fully-fledged racing track near Madras, a 3.75-km course certified to stage F3 races.

An industrialist and driver, the late S Karivardhan, designed local engines to help cut costs and draw more people into the sport.

With a seven-year-old national

circuit expanding, Indian officials feel Karthikeyan's presence could help to bring an F1 race to Asia's fourth largest economy.

Plans for India's own F1 race in the southern city of Hyderabad fell through after the chief backer of the project was voted out in last year's regional elections.

Chandok believes a Monaco-style street race would be better suited for India due to its lower costs.

"Delhi would be a good choice. We're planning to make a proposal to the government," he said.

Family friends recall how Karthikeyan, elder son of an industrialist and ex-rally driver, used to hare around his big, oval-shaped driveway in a go-kart as a young boy.

"He was one of those wild boys," said R Gopalakrishnan, also a former rally driver and one of hundreds of Indian fans who plan to travel to Grand Prix in Asia to watch Karthikeyan in action.

"He used to zip through empty special stages before local rallies, going full tilt into sharp bends with great technique to make 180-degree turns without braking."

Karthikeyan has test driven for Jordan, Jaguar and Minardi in the last three years. Minardi offered him a drive in 2003 but he was unable to secure the huge sums in sponsorship required to clinch the deal.

India's second-largest business conglomerate the Tata Group and state-run refiner Bharat Petroleum Corp are now his sponsors.

Karthikeyan's hometown, the southern industrial city of Coimbatore which has strong roots in rallying and racing, is preparing a grand party to mark his race debut.

Mahendran said he felt sure India's Formula One fans, who grew weary of German champion Michael Schumacher's winning streak last year, would be watching every race this season.

A'bagh, Wanderers enter group finals

SPORTS REPORTER

Arambagh Kriya Sangha and Dhaka Wanderers Club moved into the group finals of the Tibet 20th Federation Cup Football Tournament at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

The Premier Division side Arambagh managed a solitary goal victory over Bangladesh Rifles to book their place in the Group C final. Akbar Hossain Liton scored the game's only goal in the 33rd minute.

Arambagh will meet the winners of today's encounter between Rahmatganj and Bangladesh Army.

Dhaka Wanderers blanked Bangladesh Navy 2-0 to reach the Group B final. Nurul Islam and Murad Ahmed Milon netted for the winners.

Wanderers will face Victoria Sporting Club in the group final tomorrow.

Div I hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Krishna Kumar struck twice as Mukta Bihanga Tarun Sangha beat Shishu Kishore Sangha 2-1 in the Green Delta First Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhashani National Stadium yesterday.

All three goals came into first half. Krishna put the winners ahead in the very first minute and doubled the margin after three minutes. Maksudur Rahman pulled back one in the 24th minute.

The day's other match between Victoria Sporting Club and Combined Sporting Club ended in a draw at the same venue.

Manik scored for Victoria while Mamun equalised for Combined.

Ashes winner Luckhurst no more

AFP, London

Former England batsman Brian Luckhurst whose two centuries helped his country win the Ashes in 1970-71 has died aged 66 from cancer.

His death was the third among the international cricket fraternity in the space of 24 hours following those of former West Indies batsman Allan Rae and ex-New Zealand wicketkeeper Ian Colquhoun.

Luckhurst played 21 Tests with his finest moments coming on his maiden tour, the 1970-71 trip to Australia, hitting his two hundreds as England ran out 2-0 winners.

Luckhurst was a legend at Kent, for whom he played from 1958 to 1976 and he assumed the presidency of the county last year around the same time he was diagnosed with cancer.

"Brian was loved, admired and respected by everyone at the club," said Kent chairman Carl Openshaw.

"Brian Luckhurst has been at the heart of Kent Cricket for the past 50 years, firstly as an outstanding player, then in a variety of administrative capacities and finally as an immensely popular president."

"Throughout that time, he was always caring, loyal and totally committed to Kent," added Openshaw.

Luckhurst joined Kent aged 15 and during his first-class career made more than 22,000 first-class runs at an average of 38, including 48 centuries.

He was a member of the Kent team which dominated county cricket in the 1970s when they won nine trophies outright and also shared the County Championship in 1977.

Luckhurst was reasonably old, 31, when his chance to play for England came along in a home series against a Rest of the World XI in 1970.

He was named in the Ashes squad the following winter and marked his official Test debut, as Geoff Boycott's opening partner, by scoring 74 in the first innings of a draw against Australia in Brisbane.

PRIMERA LIGA

Kameni stands in Barca's way

Football

AFP, Madrid

There may not have been any goals but that was the only thing that was lacking as Spanish league leaders Barcelona were held to a 0-0 draw by their local rivals Espanyol.

The star of the match was not Barca's World Player of the Year Ronaldinho nor African Player of the Year and the Spanish first division's leading scorer Samuel Eto'o but Espanyol's young Cameroon goalkeeper Carlos Kameni.

Kameni kept a clean sheet in spectacular fashion with a series of outstanding saves from point-blank range.

He thwarted an excellent early effort from Ronaldinho less than a minute into the match and carried on

with his heroics for the remainder of the match.

Arguably his best save came just a few minutes after the break, with him producing a stunning left-handed reaction save from Andres Iniesta.

His next impressive feat was to deny his close friend Eto'o when his fellow Cameroon international had a powerful header bang on target just after the hour.

Kameni's exploits were even more admirable considering Espanyol were reduced to 10 men after 65 minutes when Daniel Jarque was given a red card for a high challenge and catching Rafa Marquez in the face with his boot.

Espanyol did not spend the game on the back foot until the dismissal of Jarque and had their own chances during the first hour, with both Maxi Rodriguez and Dani

Garcia going close in an exciting match.

Barcelona extend their lead over bitter rivals Real Madrid to nine points, and Espanyol move up to third, although the rest of the Spanish first division teams have a game in hand and play on Wednesday.

Second-placed Real Madrid entertain fellow Champions League challengers Real Betis on Wednesday, with Ronaldo returning to the Spanish giants starting lineup after he missed Madrid's 2-0 loss at Deportivo La Coruna on Saturday.

"This is a key week for us. It's a week that could set us up for both the league and the Champions League," said Real coach Wanderley Luxemburgo on Tuesday.

"We've suffered two defeats in the league but in the middle we had

a good outing against Juventus, so everybody is doing fine.

"We are not concentrating on the Champions League to the detriment of the Spanish title. We are chasing everything still," added the Brazilian boss.

Another crucial match sees Sevilla, who were pushed back to fourth by Espanyol, play host to the reigning Spanish champions Valencia, who are currently one

Table with 6 columns: Team, P, W, D, L, GF, GA. Includes Barcelona, Real, Espanyol, Sevilla, Valencia, Betis.

Zia wrests lead from Rakib

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman displaced International Master Abdullah Al Rakib from top slot when he won their sixth round board in the Mercantile Bank 31st National Chess Championship at the federation hall-room yesterday.

Another Grand Master Niaz Murshed also won defeating Syed Mahfuzur Rahman to share the lead with reigning champion Zia securing 5.5 points each.

Rakib slipped to second position on 4.5 points.

Sania scalps Svetlana

WTA Tour title in her home city of Hyderabad.

Another seed was beaten when Alica Molik, the world number eight from Australia, was unable to convert three set points against Daniela Hantuchova, the former top ten player from Slovakia, and was beaten 7-6, 6-2.

It should recover a place in the top 20 after an interval of 14 months for Hantuchova, who was more consistent off the ground than the error-prone Molik and showed plenty of tenacity in coming back from a deficit of 2-5 in the first set.

make her play like that," said a puzzled Kuznetsova afterwards.

Mirza has already modified her original 2005 goal of achieving a place in the top 100 because she had already achieved it by the end of the Melbourne Grand Slam. Her current target is a place in the top 50 this year which, on this evidence, she may achieve early as well.

She next plays either Silvia Farina Elia of Italy or Jelena Jankovic of Serbia, both unseeded players. If Mirza wins again she will be in the semifinals—little more than two weeks after winning her first



PHOTO: STAR

Action from the Tibet 20th Federation Cup football tournament match between Bangladesh Navy and Dhaka Wanderers at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Rajshahi out

FROM PAGE 13

four points with two victories. Bashrah has been nursing an old toe injury and is expected to be out for a further two weeks.

Pace spearhead Mashrafe-Bin-Mortuza will be a part of the one-day game but he will not play in the four-day.

In the other match, bottom-table Barisal—without a single point—play Sylhet at the Barisal Stadium. Sylhet, who have two points, will have to play without pace bowler Tapash Baisya.

India's top

FROM PAGE 13

"I feel Pakistan has a young and fit team, which is hungry for success. In my view they have done the right thing by bringing a fit team, rather than bringing injured players," he said.

"It is better to have a fully fit team than having an injured Shoaib Akhtar or even Don Bradman for that matter."

"I do not agree with those who say Pakistan's team is weak and has given India a walkover. "It will be a tough series and the next 50 days will be a treat for fans of both sides."

FA Cup Premiership teams in qtrs

REUTERS, London

Premier League sides Arsenal, Southampton and Blackburn Rovers reached the FA Cup quarter-finals with victories over lower division opponents in fifth-round replays on Tuesday.

Arsenal needed extra time and penalties to beat second division Sheffield United, England defender Ashley Cole converting the decisive spot-kick to win the shootout 4-2 following a goalless draw.

Striker Peter Crouch scored twice to help Southampton beat third division Brentford 3-1, and Blackburn's Morten Gamst Pedersen lashed in an 86th-minute winner to seal a 2-1 victory over local rivals Burnley.

Southampton will entertain holders Manchester United in the last eight, Arsenal travel to Bolton Wanderers and Blackburn host second division Leicester City. Second division Nottingham Forest play Tottenham Hotspur in the last fifth-round replay on Wednesday with the winners travelling to Newcastle United in the quarter-finals on March 12 or 13.

Streak makes

FROM PAGE 13

Zimbabwe's top four, all of whom fell to catches.

Streak, who refused to play after being sacked as captain last April, only signed a new contract on Friday and was immediately flown to South Africa, with the tourists already 2-0 down in the series.

Nicky Boje took over the South Africa captaincy after Graeme Smith pulled out with an ankle injury and was replaced with AB de Villiers.

Travel method

FROM PAGE 13

Team manager Salim Altaf said the arrangements could affect their build-up for the first Test starting in Mohali on March 8.

Altaf said the Pakistan management would ask the Board of Control for Cricket in India to arrange to take the team to Mohali earlier than scheduled to allow some extra practice.

Having arrived in Dharamsala, the players were then frustrated by an afternoon drizzle which ruled out any nets ahead of the game against the Board President's XI starting on Thursday.

Cricketers

FROM PAGE 13

country but also is a world famous one.

All the eight pitches have already been removed from the BNS, which has been handed over to the Bangladesh Football Federation.

Football will return to this ground with an AFC Cup match between Brothers Union and Nisa FC of Turkmenistan on March 9.

Same old

FROM PAGE 13

Table with 4 columns: Bowlers, O, M, R, W. Lists Anwar, Jubair, Razzak, Manjarul, Kapali, Aftab.

BCB XI: First innings Afi-Shahriar c Pagnis b Harvinder 0 Nafees lbw b Srivastava 0 Aftab c Abbas b Yadav 18 Ashrafu l Abbas b Yadav 30 Kapali lbw b Yadav 12 Manjarul not out 32 Sagir st Ojha b Kartik 16 Razzak not out 4 Extras: (b-4, nb-1) 5 Total: (For 6 wickets in 48 overs) 117 To bat: Talha Jubair, Nazmul Hossain, Anwar Hossain, Monir. Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-0, 3-52, 4-61, 5-66, 6-108.

Table with 4 columns: Bowlers, O, M, R, W. Lists Harvinder, Srivastava, Yadav, Bangar, Kartik, Parida.

Toss: Central Zone Umpires: AV Jayaprakash and SK Sharma

TSUNAMI MATCH

Oldies turn it on

Football

AFP, Jakarta

A team of international veterans including 64-year-old former Chelsea keeper Peter Bonetti beat a largely youthful Indonesian side 4-3 in a friendly match to raise funds for tsunami victims.

Former Liverpool midfielder Mark Walters led the international team's victory by scoring a hat-trick in the match held at Jakarta's 110,000-seat Bung Karno stadium.

The star however was former Bolivian striker Marco "El Diablo" Etcheverry, who despite extra weight displayed his trademark skills and scored the opener in the 16th minute.

The Indonesian side, consisting mainly of national players and a few veterans, wasted several chances, to the disappointment of the 20,000 home crowd.

Three former Southeast Asian stars -- Singapore's ex-skipper Fandi Ahmad, Thai striker Piyapong Pue-On and Zainal Abidin Hassan of Malaysia -- played briefly alongside the Indonesians.

Piyapong got one back for the local team when he volleyed the ball past keeper Bonetti in the 60th minute.

The match descended into comedy when former Liverpool captain Phil Neal, 54, fell unchallenged while pursuing the ball.

"I'm a granddaddy. I shouldn't be running around at my age. My kids should be looking after me," he joked afterwards.

Brazil former stars Carlos Dunga and Careca were among the 24 veterans who took part.

Proceeds from the event, dubbed Football Legends for Education, will go to educational



PHOTO: AFP

THE MAGIC IS STILL THERE! 'Legends' team's former Brazilian star Careca (L) takes on an Indonesian player during the match held to raise money for Indonesian tsunami victims at Bung Karno Stadium in Jakarta on March 1.

funds for children orphaned by the tsunami in the hardest-hit Indonesian province of Aceh.

Walters likened devastation in Aceh to a scene from a war movie. "It's difficult to comprehend the damage when you see it on TV. It looks bad, but when you are here, it's much much worse."

"It reminds me of a few World

War II films when they show you what it looks like after they had dropped the atomic bomb," an awed Walters said.

Organizers were expecting to raise about two billion rupiah (222,000 dollars) from the event.

The tsunami disaster left more than 290,000 people dead and missing, most of them in Aceh.

Perez defends policy

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid president Florentino Perez has once again publicly defended his recruitment policy at the Bernabeu.

Perez has been criticised in the past for buying big-name attacking players with marketing appeal while neglecting the team's obvious deficiencies at the back.

Indeed the strategy, dubbed "Zidanes y Pavones" after the two players that represented both the best and worst aspects of the Real Madrid side, was widely accepted to have cost the club in both the Primera Liga and the Champions League last season.

However, there was no let up in the recruitment drive in the summer and Michael Owen was added to established stars Ronaldo, Zinedine Zidane, Luis Figo, David Beckham and Roberto Carlos.

Then-manager Jose Antonio Camacho also brought in Argentinian defender Walter Samuel and Jonathan Woodgate from Newcastle for a combined 44million euros (£30million) although the latter is yet to feature for his new club because of injury.

But Perez believes he has taken the club forward in the right way. "I defend to the death my policy of the Galacticos," Perez told Spanish radio station Cadena Ser.

"It's the only possible economic and sporting model for this club. "Our main achievement is that we have a higher revenue than expenses and it's an achievement...now all our players are paid for at the right time."

"Very rich Russian and Arab people have come here wanting to buy clubs. "This model allows us to be independent, our revenue is higher than our expenses."

"We have the best players and we have an important image in the world."

However, Perez refutes the accusation that Owen's arrival was

nothing more than a marketing tool. "It's far from the truth. He (Owen) is a European footballer of the year, one of the great players that we wanted. He had one year left on his contract and he could come at a reasonable price," he said.

"Owen was in our plans, he is one of those great players that we were interested in. "When I arrived I knew that two players were going to come to Madrid, Figo and Zidane, because then they were the best players."

"I didn't think of Ronaldo because he was injured and then he recovered and he became the next one. "Our strategy is for the best players to come and everyone knows who the best players are."

Perez accepts though that the 'galacticos' policy is becoming increasingly hard to maintain, even though Real have been linked with moves for Brazilian wonderkid Robinho and compatriot Adriano in the summer.

"Like in any company you have to modernise," he said. "It's not easy to continue to include more talents in the team because unlike four or five years ago they are more difficult to find."

"What I am convinced is that the players that come, will stay here, age and then they have to leave, it's the law of life and it's happened in the past. "All I can say is that all of those players that have lost their will to play should leave and it's not a question of age."

That remark could well be directed at Figo who is not the force he once was at the Bernabeu. The Portuguese winger was named FIFA World player of the year in 2001, but there has been speculation that he could move on in the summer for a knock-down price, as he has less than 18 months remaining on his contract at the club.

Perez also paid tribute to the impact new boss Wanderley Luxemburgo has had on Madrid's season.

The former Brazilian national coach took over after Mariano Garcia Remon was sacked at the end of 2004, and he promptly led the

club to seven straight victories in his first seven games in charge.

"He has done a great job," Perez said. "He has a lot of experience. He has won many titles and we hope he can put that experience into practice at Real Madrid."

"It's not easy to coach the Real Madrid team. It's a team has many accumulated talents and it's not easy. "Players have some vices and some virtues but I like to think of the virtues."

"For example Ronaldo has some vices but he is such a good player and that is what history will remember him for."

Perez also promised that Real will not give up hope of securing the Primera Liga title this season.

"We are going to fight to win the league," he added.

"Being second is not what we like as Real Madrid want to be champions."

Keane cleared

AP, Manchester

Manchester United captain Roy Keane was cleared Tuesday of assault and criminal damage charges after an alleged confrontation with a 16-year-old boy.

Keane, 33, remained seated and showed no reaction as Judge Paul Richardson read the verdict at Trafford Magistrates Court.

Keane allegedly got into a dispute on Sept. 4 while walking his dog near his home in the Manchester suburb of Hale. He said he was taunted by the teenager, and was accused of damaging the boy's neck chain.

The member of the Irish national team acknowledged in testimony that he was angry with the teenager, but denied grabbing him by the neck and shouting in his face. Keane is known for his temper. He missed the 2002 World Cup finals in South Korea and Japan after an argument with Ireland coach Mick McCarthy over the team's preparations and training facilities.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across, Down, and Cryptic words.

Cryptic crossword puzzle grid with clues for QO WEDKIA, ELJZ CLFE, FLLUA ICWJVA WMLTJE, DAJEKJV QWICKJAU, ZCAO, WMA ILKJKDLMLTU, and RESTAURANTS, THE BATHROOM DOORS MIGHT SAY "BUOYS" AND "GULLS".