

Born again Maradona

Football

AFP, Buenos Aires

A year ago, Diego Maradona was said to be near to a drug-induced death as a tarnished football legend.

Argentines may suspect the "Hand of God" helped, but Maradona is back to his old larger-than-life self, meeting Fidel Castro as the star of his own television show and as an unlikely opponent of globalization, haranguing US President George W. Bush.

Confirmation of Maradona's return to near respectability was sealed this week when Argentine Football Association president Julio Grondona asked him to help run the national team as they prepared to play arch-rivals England on Saturday.

"I don't think it's the best moment to join the team," was Maradona's reply, carefully avoiding reported rivalry with the national coach Jose Pekerman.

Maradona still has plenty to do however after his remarkable turnaround.

Twelve months ago, the man who led Argentina to World Cup glory was in drug rehabilitation, his weight having ballooned after years of cocaine and alcohol abuse. Newspapers were preparing Maradona obituaries.

But Maradona completed his clinic treatment in Cuba, had his stomach stapled to slim down and has just completed the first season of his new

television series "La Noche del 10" (The Night of 10) named after the number on his Argentine football shirt.

It started with Brazilian football icon Pele as a guest and ended this week with fallen US boxing idol Mike Tyson as well as the second part of an interview with Cuba's communist leader.

At last week's Summit of the Americas in the Argentine city of Mar del Plata, Maradona drew almost as many headlines as the leaders when he led protests against the summit and appeared with Venezuela's firebrand leader, Hugo Chavez, at a mass rally to denounce the US president.

Maradona called Bush "human rubbish".

His tactics exasperated the summit presidents, particularly Mexico's President Vicente Fox -- "he has a good foot for kicking, but he doesn't have a good brain for talking," Fox said -- but opponents gleefully observed the chaos from afar.

"Diego, you deserve a statue," Castro, the only leader from the continent not invited to the summit, said in his interview with Maradona.

Just as with the illicit 1986 goal against England, that he said was the "Hand of God", Maradona perfectly played the devil's advocate at the summit. He got on a train to Mar del Plata wearing a Che Guevara T-shirt and arrived wearing another declaring: "Stop Bush".

"I am proud to be an Argentine who can travel in this train to oppose the

human rubbish that Bush is," said Maradona.

Maradona's return has already sparked new interest in his life.

Bosnian director Emir Kusturica is making a fly-on-the-wall documentary about Maradona due out next year.

A host of other tributes have come

including a song by top French rock singer Manu Chao.

Maradona acknowledges that his rags-to-riches life has not been a model for younger fans but insists "the ball is not all dirty" and he has few regrets, especially that goal against England.



DIEGO MARADONA

Last four

FROM PAGE 12
with 63 off 78 balls and Manzarul Islam adding 42 from 59 balls.

Paceman Rezaul Haque Nayeem claimed four wickets conceding 40 runs while Bishwajit Halder took three for 37 runs.

In reply, Security Air almost toppled the Gazi total before finishing four runs shy of the target. Nayeem was also successful with the bat making 91-ball 49.

Left-arm spinner Monirul grabbed four wickets for 36 in 10 overs.

ARAF-BANGLA CAT

Ehsanul Haque and Golam Mahbub contributed 147 for the opening stand as Araf scored 247 for 5 in 50 overs after put into bat.

Ehsanul slammed 108 off 129 balls with 13 hits to the fence while his partner added 54 off 94 balls that produced 8 fours.

In reply, Bangla Cat were bundled out for 92 in 37.4 overs. Off-spinner Jamal Babu led the carnage claiming four wickets for 21 in 10 overs while Shafaq Al Jabir and Wasquerini Ahmed took two wickets each.

Local Pathan

FROM PAGE 12
Extras: (lb-4, w-23, nb-2) 29
Total: (For 9 wickets in 50 overs) 244
Fall of wickets: 1-11, 2-20, 3-77, 4-80, 5-85, 6-218, 7-218, 8-227, 9-244
Did not bat: Fernando
Super-sub: Raina for Rudra

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Pathan	10	1	38	3
Agarkar	10	1	47	2
Rudra	10	2	33	3
Harbhajan	10	1	45	0
Kartik	7	0	53	1
Shewag	3	0	24	0

SEHWAG c Sangakkara b Fernando 35
Tendulkar c and b Zoysa 39
Pathan c Jayawardene b Zoysa 35
Dhoni c Samaraweera b Chandana 80
Kaif b Lokuhettige 13
Dravid not out 31
Yuvraj not out 0
Extras: (lb-3, w-1, nb-8) 12
Total: (For 5 wickets in 39.3 overs) 245
Fall of wickets: 1-53, 2-109, 3-115, 4-157, 5-240
Did not bat: Agarkar, Harbhajan, Rudra, Kartik

Super-sub: Zoysa for Samaraweera

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Vaas	9.3	1	51	0
Fernando	10	1	72	1
Zoysa	7	0	47	2
Lokuhettige	5	0	29	1
Chandana	6	0	32	1
Dilshan	2	0	11	0

Result: India won by five wickets clinch the 7-ODI series 6-1.

Man-of-the-match: Irfan Pathan.
Man-of-the-series: Mahendra Dhoni.
Toss: Sri Lanka
Umpires: Krishna Hariharan (India) and Mark Benson (England)

West Indies

FROM PAGE 12
lunch after the Windies claimed the last six wickets from an overnight 441 for four.

All-rounders Dwayne Smith (3-50) and Dwayne Bravo (2-86) accounted for five of the Victorian wickets Saturday, but in a concern for the tourists, none of their front-line pacemen claimed a wicket in the innings.

Australia Test squad member Brad Hodge's sparkling 177 from Friday was the top score for the Victorians, who also had David Hussey (104), Cameron White (63) and Nick Jewell (59).
The West Indies also conceded 56 extras, 29 of them no-balls.

Football ownership goes global

REUTERS, Milan

Within the next few days an established Serie A club will for the first time be owned by a non-Italian when Spaniard Lorenzo Sanz finally takes control of Parma.

There has been little concern about the former Real Madrid owner becoming the first foreigner to gain a foothold in Italian soccer -- Parma are in such desperate financial straits since the downfall of the Tanzi family and their Parmalat business that they would have probably accepted a takeover bid from a Mongolian milkman.

Until now Italian football has remained the exclusive preserve of Italian businessmen while elsewhere, especially in Britain, the game has become increasingly globalised.

It is remarkable how easily British football has accepted foreign ownership -- English champions Chelsea are run by a Russian while Scottish title challengers Hearts are effectively in the hands of a Lithuanian.

Manchester United fans objected to American Malcolm Glazer buying their club, but there was nothing they could do to stop the public company being subject to the very rules of the market that made it such a financial force in the first place.

Liverpool are reported to be in talks with Americans and there are foreigners in place at Queens Park Rangers and Portsmouth. In the current climate would anyone raise an objection if Arsenal's next chairman turned out to be Chinese?

The foreign domination of British football extends from the boardroom to the bench -- Arsenal are coached by a Frenchman, Arsene Wenger, Portuguese coach Jose Mourinho is in

charge of Chelsea and Spaniard Rafael Benitez guides Liverpool.

Compare that situation with Serie A where, at the moment, every club is Italian-owned and every coach is an Italian.

Juventus, Inter and AC Milan are world-famous clubs with as much, if not more, potential to become global brands as Manchester United or Chelsea, yet there has never been even a report of interest in those clubs from foreign businessmen.

Apart from desperate Parma the only other club to have been linked with a foreign takeover was AS Roma whose debts attracted the attention of a Russian consortium.

However, talks broke down and the Russians left without a word of explanation, leaving only rumours behind.

It is much harder to buy an Italian football club. Roma, Lazio and Juventus are traded on the Milan stock exchange but the rest are essentially limited companies wholly owned by one man.

If you want to buy AC Milan the only way to do it is to approach owner Silvio Berlusconi and make him an offer. The Glazer method of buying up shares and building up control isn't an option.

Clubs are still clubs and not fully fledged businesses and investing in Italian football holds out little hope of profit.

There is also the disincentive of the Italian 'sistema' -- the network of contacts and influence which a club president needs to have if he is to operate successfully in the transfer market and the Machiavellian world of Italian sport politics.

Those links take years to develop and rely on other economic and

political relationships -- a foreign investor would risk being closed out.

In a curious way, so much of what is criticised about Italian football indirectly serves to protect it from outsiders whereas in England capitalism reigns -- show us the money is enough to get you a club in the oldest professional league in the world.

And so what? Few in Britain appear to care about the foreigners who are buying up their football clubs and the attitude seems to be the same one shown to overseas players and coaches: if they bring results, who cares?

The problem is that no one knows yet how men with no links at all to the communities in which their clubs are based will react if times get hard.

In the unlikely event that Berlusconi fell short of cash you could be fairly certain he would sell AC Milan to another Italian businessman.

The damage to his reputation and the threat of reprisals would be too great to risk any other route out.

Are British fans sure that their foreign owners will leave their club in safe hands if something should ever afflict their businesses?

Of course there are plenty of examples of home-grown businessmen who should never have been entrusted with the treasure of a town which is its football club. But there is surely a greater risk with foreign owners.

Only time will tell whether the Italian attitude of 'better the devil you know' proved to be a wiser approach than Britain's open door.

Harmison, Flintoff give

FROM PAGE 12
Michael Vaughan, who was ruled out of the opening match of the three-Test series due to a knee injury.

Pakistan suffered another blow when Ashes hero Flintoff yanked Mohammad Yousuf for his second victim. Yousuf, who played 59 Tests under the name of Yousuf Youhana before converting to Islam, contributed just five.

Harmison kept pressure on Pakistan, trapping Younis leg-before with the first ball after the tea-break before accounting for Hasan Raza -- playing his first Test in three years -- four balls later for a duck.

Harmison was also the most economical bowler in the first two sessions, conceding just 14 runs from his 11 overs. After his double-strike, Pakistan had all but squandered their early advantage slipping from 161-1 to 183-5.

Matthew Hoggard then capped his fellow pacemen's good work with the wicket of Kamran Akmal (28) in his first over with the second new ball.
A few overs later, the umpires offered the light to the Pakistani batsmen, which was immediately taken by captain Inzamam.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard at stumps on the opening day of the first Test between Pakistan and England at the Multan Cricket Stadium on Saturday:
PAKISTAN: First innings
Malik lbw b Flintoff 39
Butt c Jones b Udal 74
Younis lbw b Harmison 39
Yousuf b Flintoff 5

Inzamam not out 41
Razab c Harmison 0
Akmal c Trescottick b Hoggard 28
Samin not out 1
Extras: (lb-7, nb-10) 17
Total: (For 6 wickets in 87.4 overs) 244
Fall of wickets: 1-80, 2-161, 3-166, 4-181, 5-183, 6-238
To bat: Akhtar, Shabbir, Kaneria

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Hoggard	17	3	45	1
Harmison	16	5	37	2
Flintoff	17.4	5	49	2
Collingwood	4	1	15	0
Giles	16	3	44	0
Udal	17	3	47	1

ENGLAND: Trescottick, Strauss, Bell, Pietersen, Collingwood, Flintoff, Jones, Giles, Udal, Harmison, Hoggard
Toss: Pakistan
Umpires: Simon Taufel (Australia) and Billy Bowden (New Zealand)

Vaughan eyes

FROM PAGE 12
week," said Vaughan.

The England captain said it was frustrating to watch the Test from the sidelines.

"It's not nice watching them practice, let alone watching a Test match," he said.

"It is very frustrating for me as well as for the team, because we have a bit of momentum going."

Vaughan's injury came just a day before his team's six-wicket defeat against Pakistan 'A' on Tuesday.

Now smell like Beckham

AP, London

England and Real Madrid soccer star David Beckham hopes to increase his appeal off the pitch by releasing a men's fragrance.

Called "David Beckham Instinct," the scent, made by cosmetics giant Coty, features grapefruit, mandarin leaf, cardamom seeds and patchouli.

Coty said the scent created "a personality both unconventional and uncompromising" that also "reinvents the codes of elegant masculinity."

Respecting the cop the German way

AFP, Paris

The French policeman violently assaulted by German fans at the 1998 World Cup has received an invitation from the German football federation (DFB) to attend next year's finals.

Daniel Nivel was left in a coma for six months after being attacked by six hooligans outside the Bollaert stadium in Lens where Germany were playing the former Yugoslavia on June 21, 1998.

DFB general secretary Horst Schmidt met Nivel on Saturday in Paris ahead of the France v Germany friendly at the Stade de France.

"We met in a friendly and warm atmosphere," said Schmidt.

Father of two Nivel's aggressors received prison sentences in France and Germany.

New Wembley faces freeze threat

AFP, London

A spell of freezing weather this winter could wreck plans for the rebuilt Wembley stadium to host the 2006 FA Cup final in May, the head of the company that will run the venue has admitted.

"If there is this deep freeze people are talking about then (builders) Multiplex are going to have a hard time digging the pitch and then putting the foundations in," said Michael Cunna, chief executive of Wembley National Stadium Ltd.

"Things like that could possibly put you off track," Cunna told BBC Radio on Friday.

"Therefore we've all got to be prudent. We're absolutely going 100 per cent to make sure the Cup Final happens here next year, but absolutely nobody, not even Multiplex, can give us guarantees."

Diego wears Boca shirt again!

BUENOS AIRES

Diego Maradona made a shock return to action for his beloved Boca Juniors in a match played before their Copa Sudamericana clash with Internacional.

Without prior notice, the 45-year-old took to the pitch in a friendly match between former players of Boca and Racing, much to the astonishment of a 42,000 crowd inside Boca's La Bombonera home.

After more than seven years of official retirement from football, the Argentinean legend played 50 minutes, helping his team to a 6-0 win with two goals and three assists which had the Boca crowd in raptures.

"I entered late, in the 30th minute of the first half, and it felt hard to be in form," said Maradona.

"It was a nice opportunity to meet friends and enjoy a little moment of football."

His appearance obviously inspired Boca, who went on to overturn a 1-0 deficit from the first leg of their Copa Sudamericana quarter-final tie, defeating Internacional 4-1 to seal qualification to the next round.

-- Internet source

Smith sounds

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doing well," said Smith, who took over from experienced all-rounder Shaun Pollock after the 2003 World Cup in South Africa.

Tendulkar smashed half-centuries in the opening two matches of the series against Sri Lanka on his return from a six-month forced lay-off because of an elbow injury.

He contributed in India's domination of the seven-match series as the home side took a huge 5-1 lead going into the last match in the western city of Vadodara on Saturday.

But South Africa have an enviable unbeaten streak of 19 matches after beating New Zealand 4-0 in a recent home series.

South Africa play a practice game in Hyderabad on Monday to be followed by the opening one-day international on Wednesday.

United dressing room bugged?

Football

AFP, London

Manchester United's dressing room was bugged during their 1-0 win over English Premiership leaders Chelsea, a British newspaper reports.

A transmitter was placed in the home side's changing area during the crunch clash at Old Trafford on November 6, recording secret conversations between manager Alex Ferguson and his team, said The Sun, Britain's biggest-selling daily.

The tabloid said it had been offered the tapes by a middle man and had turned them over to United.

Phil Townsend, United's director of communications, said the Premiership giants had started a probe to track down the gang behind the plot.

"We have launched our own investigation and if necessary will involve the police," he told The Sun.

The culprit smuggled a bug into Old Trafford and tuned in the radio transmitter's frequency from a nearby position, eavesdropping on two hours of conversation, recorded on two cassettes.

The tapes began with Ferguson rallying his troops, The Sun said.

At half-time, with Scotland midfielder Darren Fletcher having scored, Ferguson could clearly be heard encouraging the players, stressing the need to clamp down on Chelsea midfielder Claude Makelele.

He gave strikers Ruud van Nistelrooy and Wayne Rooney advice on improving their game, and told his team to keep the ball away from Chelsea's England centre-half John Terry in the air.

With victory sealed, England defender Rio Ferdinand commented that the win would have silenced the team's critics, and questioned a teammate about what

he was up to later that evening.

Former Everton forward Rooney asked if anyone knew the score from the Toffees' game at home to Middlesbrough.

The players burst into laughter when they heard Ferguson swearing in a post-match television interview and hurled abuse when Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho offered his analysis to the cameras.

The Sun said the middle man offered the tapes alongside further recordings.

The man revealed the group had begun work on plans to bug Mourinho and the Chelsea team during their next match, at home to Newcastle on November 19.

The gang had demanded tens of thousands of pounds (euros, dollars) for the United tapes and more money if they contained "juicy" information.

Spain easy on stars

Football

AFP, Madrid

In contrast to other, less glamorous applicants, top footballers such as Real Madrid's Brazilian star Ronaldo have been motoring down the express lane to obtain Spanish citizenship.

The 2002 World Cup winner, who obtained his Spanish papers Thursday, was depicted as a "typical" Spaniard in the country's media on Friday, replete with bullfighting suit of lights under his trademark toothy smile.

After three years with Real -- he also played for Barcelona for a year in the late 1990s -- Ronaldo has now sworn to uphold the values of the Spanish constitution, though he can continue to play in Brazilian yellow at next year's World Cup.

The advantage to Real -- and the reason behind the quickfire process -- is that the 29-year-old frees up a place for one of a maximum of three non-EU players in the club's star-studded team with his move to dual nationality.

Ronaldo, a 35 million-euro (42

million dollars) buy from Inter Milan in 2002, follows after just ten months of administrative shenanigans in the footsteps of team mate and compatriot Roberto Carlos, who picked up his Spanish nationality in August, eight years after joining from the same Serie A outfit.

Fellow Brazilians Robinho and Julio Baptista are next in the queue to undertake the same move.

Barcelona's 18-year-old Argentine Lionel Messi, naturalised as a Spaniard on September 26, has also gone down the same road in double-quick time. Normally, one would have to wait for two years for the actual processing to be effected.

Under Spanish law, natives of some Latin American countries, Portugal, Equatorial Guinea and Andorra can all ask for Spanish papers after two years of residence.

But for nationals of other countries it can be slow going.

"Unfortunately, there are citizens from a first zone and then a second zone," Karla Casillas, a Mexican who told AFP she has been waiting for her papers for four years.

The ruling on three players per top

flight football team has shed light on the problems experienced by the likes of Messi, who had previously found that as a non-EU player his chances of first team action were limited.

Rival teams Alaves and Deportivo La Coruna tried last month to persuade the Spanish authorities to prevent Messi receiving an EU slot on the grounds he had been offered it during the season.

"Technically, it's called naturalisation but we'd call it a requalification. Ronaldo has been requalified," editorialist Carlos Toro wrote in Friday's El Mundo.

According to Friday's sports daily AS, Real has already "put into action" the naturalisation process for Baptista and could also "take on a non-EU player in January" in the transfer window to take the foreigner's place now left vacant by Ronaldo.

Those who are left in the slow lane find it difficult to remain sanguine about the two-speed process.

Her husband, Rolando, "has the same skin colour" as Ronaldo, but had to wait four years for his Spanish identity card.

Yousuf's Muslim innings

Cricket

AFP, Multan

When Pakistan's Mohammad Yousuf returns to international cricket in the first Test against England this weekend, it will be with a new name and a new religion.

The cricketer formerly known as Yousuf Youhana converted from Christianity to Islam in August, joining prayers with teammates including his captain Inzamamul Haq.

"For me it's a new start to life. Embracing Islam has changed my whole life," Yousuf, 31, told AFP ahead of Pakistan's first Test against England starting in Multan on Saturday.

Yousuf, previously the only Christian in the team, surprised many observers by his conversion. It leaves spinner Danish Kaneria, a Hindu, as the only non-Muslim in the team.

The switch also caused problems with his family, including his mother, who threatened to set herself on fire.

"Naturally it was big news for them and they were hurt. I hope things will improve," said Yousuf, who now lives separately from his family in the

eastern city of Lahore.

But Yousuf said he had never faced any problems in the team or with the fans -- either as a Christian in 97 per cent Muslim Pakistan -- or now as a Muslim.

"I never faced any problems before and hope things will continue to remain good for me. On the field I look for more runs and off it I want to be a good Muslim," he said.

The only issue now is how he will be listed in the international cricketing annals, where changes of name are all but unheard of.

"Our policy at Wisden is that the player's wishes should be paramount, but that we cannot go back and change a player's name in retrospect," said a spokesman for the Wisden Almanack, regarded as the Bible of cricket.

"So for the upcoming Pakistan v England Tests, he'll be Mohammad Yousuf. But for all games played before his conversion, he'll remain Yousuf Youhana," said the spokesman.

Yousuf's change in name caps a dramatic rags to riches tale.

Brought up in a poor family which lived in a one-room house in Lahore's teeming old city, Yousuf almost

started a career with a local tailor before destiny pointed him towards cricket.

He started playing in Bail Hatha, a Christian-dominated area and low-income settlement close to Lahore railway station, and was first spotted by former Test cricketer Azhar Khan.

"I first saw Yousuf play in a local match and realised that this was a boy who could go places. He has travelled a good distance in his career since then," said Khan.

Before making his presence felt at domestic level, Yousuf was picked to play a warm-up match against England in Sharjah, the United Arab Emirates, in 1997.

His half-century did not make any headlines but his technique and approach to batting caught the eyes of the selectors, who picked him for Pakistan's tour to South Africa and Zimbabwe a year later.

Ever since Yousuf has played 59 Tests for Pakistan scoring 4,272, besides accumulating 6761 runs in 202 one-day internationals and has become one of his team's most reliable batsmen.