

Parreira's fear



AP, Rio de Janeiro

Brazil coach Carlos Alberto Parreira says his team wants to avoid teams such as the Czech Republic and the Netherlands in next month's World Cup draw.

The five-time Cup champions are favourites to win a sixth title in Germany next year, but Brazil's chances could depend on the draw in Leipzig on December 9 that determines the eight first-round groups, Parreira was quoted as saying in daily newspaper O Globo on Friday.

"We'd better be lucky," Parreira said. "The so-called intermediate teams aren't afraid of the big powers. They play equals."

He cited former champions Argentina, England, Italy and hosts Germany among the favourites -- but said the tournament promised surprises.

"All the great European teams, except Denmark, will be there," Parreira said.

"I consider the Czech Republic a super team. The Netherlands are back and always has great teams. England have their strongest side in years."

Brazil thrashed the United Arab Emirates 8-0 last week in their final friendly of the year. Parreira, however,

wanted to face a stronger team but the Brazilian Soccer Confederation (CBF) couldn't find one.

"I always ask the CBF to arrange the most complicated games possible," he said. "But ... there's always a big problem with dates for other teams."

Parreira said England and the Czech Republic had turned down proposals for a friendly on March 1, and that Brazil were still looking for a team to play.

Parreira also said he would attend Saturday's Spanish league match between Real Madrid and Barcelona, when many top Brazilian stars will be playing. Among them are Ronaldo, Roberto Carlos, Ronaldinho, Julio Baptista, Robinho and Edmilson -- all likely members of the World Cup squad.

"It's always good to watch them play. Robinho, for instance, will have his most important game since he went to Spain," Parreira said.

Rising star Robinho is competing for a starting slot on Brazil's impressive strike force. His rivals are Ronaldo and Inter Milan's Adriano, with Ronaldinho and AC Milan's Kaka completing an attack that Brazilians call the "magic square."

Parreira also endorsed the choice of Ronaldinho, the 2004 FIFA Player of the Year, for the coveted Golden Ball award.

"He represents the best of Brazilian soccer: quality and skill," Parreira said.

"Speed, strength and defence are accessories in soccer. Talent is what makes the difference."



PHOTO: AFP

SHEIKH MARADONA! Argentine football legend Diego Maradona poses wearing a traditional Arab headdress on a visit to al-Sadd Club in Doha on November 18.

Bangabandhu cricket begins today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

After a break of one year, the 8th inter district Bangabandhu Cup Cricket Tournament-2005 begins here at Dinajpur Gora-e-Shaheed Moydan today.

Local lawmaker Mostafizur Rahman Fizar will inaugurate the tournament at 9am.

At least ten districts are taking part in this year's event.

SUSPECT BOWLING ACTION

Woolmer isn't pleased with ICC process

AFP, Faisalabad

Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer on Saturday called for a review of the International Cricket Council's (ICC) process for dealing with illegal bowling actions, saying it was not satisfactory.

"I have my views, but it is not a satisfactory process at the moment," Woolmer told reporters on the eve of the second Test against England.

His comments came two days after Pakistani bowlers Shabbir Ahmed and Shoaib Malik were reported for suspect bowling actions.

The duo was reported by on-field umpires Billy Bowden and Simon Taufel, and TV umpire Asad Rauf after the first Test against England at Multan, which the hosts won by 22 runs on Wednesday.

Vaughan back

FROM PAGE 12

Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer said his team were keen to wrap up the series with a victory here.

"We are intend on finishing the series here. We realise we have a momentum and if we play well we can beat England," said Woolmer.

"They have batted in bits and pieces, so we need to take this opportunity. If it is there for us, that will be an icing on the cake. But saying that, both teams have a 50-50 chance and it will be a tough Test match."

Pakistan are likely to include all-rounder Shahid Afridi and seamer Navedul Hasan in place of out-of-form batsman Hasan Raza and Shabbir Ahmed.

Fast bowler Shabbir was reported for a suspect bowling action after the first Test.

TEAMS

England (from): Michael Vaughan (captain), Marcus Trescothick, Andrew Strauss, Ian Bell, Paul Collingwood, Kevin Pietersen, Andrew Flintoff, Geraint Jones, Ashley Giles, Matthew Hoggard, Shaun Udal, Steve Harmison, James Anderson, Matt Prior, Liam Plunkett, Alistair Cook, Alex Loudon.

PAKISTAN (from): Inzamamul Haq (captain), Salman Butt, Shoaib Malik, Younis Khan, Mohammad Yousuf, Shahid Afridi, Kamran Akmal, Shoaib Akhtar, Danish Kaneria, Navedul Hasan, Mohammad Sami, Shabbir Ahmed, Mushtaq Ahmed, Asim Kamal, Arshad Khan, Hasan Raza.

Umpires: Simon Taufel and Darrell Hair.

PREMIERSHIP

Henry clips Wigan's wings



AFP, Wigan

A Thierry Henry double helped lift Arsenal into the top four of the Premiership for the first time since the opening weeks of the season with an entertaining 3-2 win over Wigan here on Saturday.

The Gunners' first away win of the campaign ended a six-match winning run for the high-flying Premiership newcomers.

But this was far from being a case of Premiership pedigree asserting itself.

Wigan kept their visitors sweating right to the end, thanks as much to the quality of their passing as to the passion Paul Jewell has instilled in them.

Arsenal, who had gone into the match without an away win this season, were two goals up inside 22 minutes.

The first was a gift from Wigan's Australian goalkeeper John Filan, who somehow allowed Robin van Persie's unchallenging shot from just outside the area to wriggle through his fingers.

It was the first goal Wigan had conceded in the Premiership for 393

minutes and Van Persie nearly added a second minutes later as Arsenal began to knock the ball about with growing confidence.

Van Persie's shot shaved the outside of the post but the small contingent of visiting fans did not have much longer to wait for a second goal.

A typically intricate move involving Freddie Ljungberg, Gilberto Silva and Robert Pires ended with Henry being left with only Filan to beat, which he did with a cool finish.

Just as it seemed Wigan could be about to receive their first really painful lesson about life in the top flight, Henri Camara got them back into the game, bravely diving between Sol Campbell and Kolo Toure to connect with a ball bouncing in the six-yard box after a knockdown by Arjan de Zeeuw.

The goal sparked a melee in which Jason Roberts barged into Cesc Fabregas, earning himself a yellow card.

Roberts offered a more positive contribution four minutes later, when he raced away from Toure and beat Jens Lehmann with a well-judged chip that, fortunately for Arsenal, struck the

back of Campbell's boot as he tried to recover his ground.

Arsenal restored their two-goal lead in the 41st minute, Henry curling a 30-yard free-kick over the wall and in off Filan's right-hand post.

But Wigan again refused to lie down. In injury time at the end of the first half, Arsenal's stand-in left-back Pascal Cygan lost possession in his own half and was left hopelessly out of position as the ball was quickly worked towards Jimmy Bullard in the space he had vacated.

The midfielder advanced into the area and turned inside Campbell before planting a left-foot shot beyond Lehmann's right-hand.

The second half fail to reproduce the fireworks of the opening period, with Arsenal largely content to sit back and soak up the home team's pressure.

For all their territorial advantage, Wigan failed to generate any clear cut chances until five minutes from time, when Jason Roberts muscled his way past Campbell and flashed a cross across the goalmouth that was only fractionally behind Lee McCulloch.

'Keane was sacked'

REUTERS, London

Manchester United captain Roy Keane was sacked by Alex Ferguson after a series of rows convinced the club's manager that the Irish midfielder was a liability to England's most famous club, the media reported on Saturday.

United shocked English football by announcing on Friday that the volatile Keane, who had been at United since 1993, was leaving the former champions in mid-season. The club said his departure at the age of 34 was by mutual consent.

Newspapers reported, however, that Ferguson had decided Keane must leave after the player's behaviour had repeatedly threatened to undermine the manager's authority.

Keane, who has been injured since mid-September, tore into several teammates in a television interview on the club's MUTV station, accusing them of lack of effort after a 4-1 defeat by Middlesbrough at the end of October.

The programme was pulled by club officials shortly before it went on air but its contents leaked into the media.

The Guardian said Keane had repeated this venomous attack in person to the players before Ferguson invited the United squad into his office to watch the programme. Ferguson then verbally attacked Keane for bringing the club into disrepute, the Guardian said, and the two men had a stand-up row.

Keane turned his invective on assistant manager Carlos Queiroz, questioning his competence in strong terms in front of the squad.

Newspapers reported that the end of Keane's career at Old Trafford came when he turned up for a reserves match on Thursday to test his fitness. He was told he was not playing and that he should contact Ferguson.

The two met at the United training ground on Friday morning and Ferguson told Keane his services were no longer required, according to the press reports.

Prince Charles visits Anfield

AFP, London

The future king of Britain met face to face with the football kings of Europe when he paid a visit to Champions League winners Liverpool on Friday.

Heir-to-the-throne Prince Charles and his wife Camilla, the Duchess of Cornwall, were taken on a tour of the English Premiership giants' Anfield stadium.

They met Reds boss Rafael Benitez and were shown the European Cup by Liverpool captain and England midfielder Steven Gerrard.

Charles swigged a cup of Earl Grey tea from a "This is Anfield" mug in the dressing room while Camilla sat on the physio's table and chatted with youngsters from the Prince's Trust football initiative.

The duchess then joined in a Liverpool tradition by touching the famous "This is Anfield" club sign in the tunnel leading to the pitch.

TFF boss to meet Blatter

AFP, Istanbul

The president of the Turkish football federation (TFF) Levent Bicakci said here Friday he would soon travel to Switzerland to meet FIFA boss Sepp Blatter and his Swiss opposite number Ralph Zoccolow following the recent controversy.

Scuffles between players broke out after a play-off match that saw Switzerland qualify for the 2006 World Cup on Wednesday night. The television images of the incidents were compelling viewing.

Bicakci, quoted by the Anatolia news agency, said he wrote a letter to Blatter to put across his federation's side of the story. Blatter had been reported as saying sanctions against Turkey could range from a warning to being banned from international competitions.

The Swiss Football Association's complaint to FIFA will be heard before the 2006 World Cup draw on December 9.

Switzerland, who won the first leg of the playoff 2-0, lost a dramatic second leg 4-2 in Istanbul but advanced to the 2006 finals thanks to the away goals rule.

Later on Friday, the TFF said FIFA had opened an inquiry into the incidents.

Football's world ruling body has asked for detailed reports from the match referee, Belgian Belge Frank De Bleeckere, from FIFA's head of security Alan Hutchings and from several Swiss players and staff members.

Best back on life-support



AFP, London

Former soccer star George Best was fighting for survival on a life support machine, the hospital where he is being treated said Saturday.

Best, 59, was placed on the machine last night after his condition deteriorated in Cromwell Hospital, London.

It was revealed that Best is suffering from a lung infection.

The news came after Best's doctor, Professor Roger Williams, said Friday that the ex-Manchester United and Northern Ireland footballer had suffered a "big setback" in his battle to recover from illness brought on by years of alcohol abuse.

Best was admitted to the hospital with an infection last month but, until recently, his condition had been improving.

Jeffrey Brandon, press officer for Cromwell Hospital, said Saturday: "Mr Best remains seriously ill in intensive care on a life support machine."

"As of yesterday morning he wasn't on a life support machine. He was put on it some time last night or yesterday evening after his condition worsened during the day from the morning to the evening."

"The reason he was brought back into intensive care was with a lung infection. He is serious."

Asked about press reports that Best's weight has fallen to just six

stones, Brandon said: "You will appreciate that someone who has been seriously ill their weight will certainly have dropped."

Asked whether Best was able to eat normally, Mr Brandon said: "I would imagine he is on a drip."

Best's former Manchester United teammate Denis Law, who visited him Friday, said he was not looking good.

"I wasn't able to talk to him. He was more or less unconscious."

"You have just got to look at him and see all the tubes helping his breathing and you just feel it is not good."

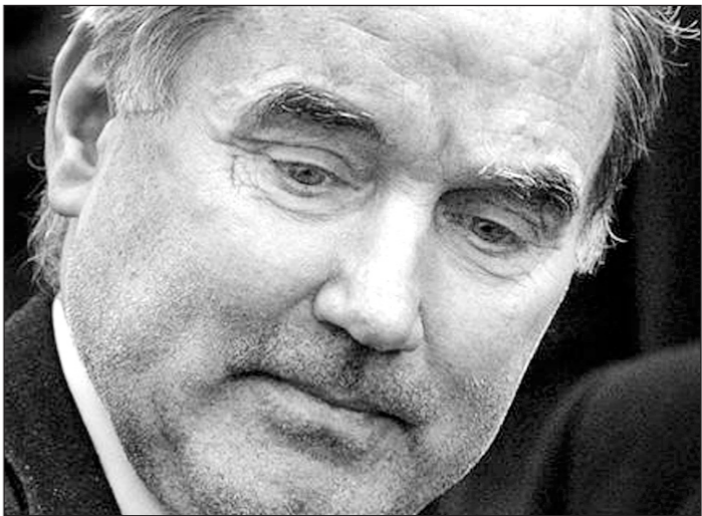
Asked whether Best knew he was there, Law said: "I would like to think so

but I don't think he did."

The football star earned his status when he helped Manchester United win the English league championship in 1965 and 1967 and the European Cup in 1968.

Best's ability and good looks made him into a sixties celebrity. He was known as the fifth Beatle but his partying took its toll.

He often turned out to play for United after spending the night out and when he quit United for good aged 28 it was regarded as a tragic waste of his unique talent.



GEORGE BEST

Federer in final



AFP, Shanghai

World number one Roger Federer registered the first victory to the love ever seen in a year-ending tournament on Saturday when he blanked Argentina's Gaston Gaudio 6-0, 6-0 in the Masters Cup semifinal.

The first 'double bagel' of Federer's career, completed in just 50 minutes, extended his winning streak to 35 and put him one match away from equalling John McEnroe's 21-year-old record for the best winning percentage in a season.

The two-time defending champion, 24, is also in line to become the first man to win three year-ending titles in a row since Ivan Lendl in 1985-1987.

Federer broke three times in the first set as a nervy Gaudio served up seven double-faults, hitting a forehand long to hand over the set after 27 minutes.

And little changed in the second set for the former French Open champion,

who dished up 22 unforced errors as Federer looked back to his best after an injury lay-off.

A long forehand from the Argentine handed a place in the final to Federer, who converted his first match point at 30-40.

"There's not much to say. Once in a lifetime it happens, and it happens to me today," said Gaudio, who has never been blanked before.

"I'm sad about it and I'm disappointed, but what can I do? I happens in life, and there are worse things."

Gaudio, who called his girlfriend from Qi Zhong Stadium's centre-court after the match, said he was going out with friends to drown his sorrows.

"I think I'm going out with my friends tonight to celebrate the end of the year," he said. "This is the end of the year, finally, after a long year."

"Today I was serving bad, hitting forehands bad, backhands bad, everything was bad. I've never made so many double-faults in a match," he added.

It'll be Lara or else

FROM PAGE 12

27.4 overs while Collumore claimed 2-54 off 28 overs.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard after the third day of the second Test between Australia and the West Indies at Bellville Oval on Saturday:
WEST INDIES: First innings 149 (Gayle 56, Chandepaul 39; McGrath 4-31, MacGill 3-18, Lee 3-32)
AUSTRALIA: First innings (overnight 256-1)
Hayden c Bravo b Collumore 110
Hussey c Sarwan b Bravo 137
Ponting b Edwards 17
Clarke c Dwayne Smith (sub) b Edwards 5
Hodge lbw b Collumore 60
Symonds run out (Dwayne Smith - sub) 1
Gilchrist c Dwayne Smith (sub) b Bravo 2
Warne c Sarwan b Powell 1
Lee c Ramdin b Edwards 18
MacGill not out 20

McGrath run out (Collumore) 14
Extras: (lb-6, w-3, nb-12) 21
Total: (All out in 109.4 overs) 406
Fall of wickets: 1-231, 2-257, 3-271, 4-306, 5-315, 6-317, 7-324, 8-362, 9-377
Bowler **O** **M** **R** **W**
Edwards 27.4 2 116 3
Powell 24 2 117 1
Collumore 28 11 54 2
Bravo 23 2 96 2
Gayle 7 0 17 0
WEST INDIES: Second innings
Gayle b McGrath 4
D Smith c Ponting b McGrath 8
Sarwan c Gilchrist b Lee 32
Lara not out 18
Chandepaul c Gilchrist b Lee 10
Samuels not out 2
Extras: (lb-6, nb-2) 8
Total: (For 4 wickets in 24 overs) 82
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-27, 3-62, 4-76
Bowler **O** **M** **R** **W**
McGrath 7 3 14 2
Lee 11 1 49 2
Symonds 1 0 2 0
Warne 5 0 11 0

UNO sweeps Shachin Smrity TT

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

The Shachin Chandra Chaki Smrity Table Tennis Tournament organised by Abahoni concluded here at the Sat Bhai Champa premises on Friday night.

Rimon of UNO won the men's singles, defeating Piyas Smrity Sangsad's Rahat 3-0. Rimon also won the men's doubles with Khalil. The UNO pair defeated Rahat and Jobber of Piyas Sangsad 3-1.

In the boys' singles, Babu beat his Sunrise teammate Piplu 3-1. In the boys' doubles, the Sunrise duo of Piplu and Babu scored a 3-0 success against Raktim and Rabbi of GTTSP.

Dristi of UNO lifted the girls' singles title with a 3-1 victory over Abahani's Misti. She also won the girls' doubles crown pairing with Nazma.

Pathan keeps

FROM PAGE 12

one-day international in Bangalore on Saturday:

SOUTH AFRICA

De Villiers c Harbhajan b Pathan 4
Smith lbw b Pathan 3
Hall c Kaif b Harbhajan 32
Kallis c Dhoni b Pathan 2
Prince c Harbhajan b Sehwaag 30
Boucher lbw b Sehwaag 14
Kemp c Rudra b Harbhajan 28
Pollock b Yuvraj 29
Botha not out 15
Ntini b Agarkar 1
Extras: (b-1, lb-3, nb-3, w-4) 11
Total: (For 9 wickets in 50 overs) 169
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-14, 3-20, 4-57, 5-85, 6-96, 7-143, 8-158, 9-169
Did not bat: Nel

Bowler **O** **M** **R** **W**
Pathan 6 1 23 3
Agarkar 7 0 25 1
Rudra 5 0 22 0
Harbhajan 10 2 33 2
Kartik 10 4 16 0
Sehwaag 8 0 29 2
Yuvraj 4 0 17 1

Toss: India.
Umpires: Daryl Harper and Arani Jayaprakash.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Squirrels' hangouts
5 Aplece
8 Lather
12 Dud
13 Pub
14 Arm bone
15 Abusive sort
17 Ponc de
18 Very long time
19 Hosiery
21 Task
24 Hydrox
25 Com-stock deposit
26 Hootie's backup
30 Conclusion
31 Hawks
32 El
33 prece
34 Slide on an icy road
35 Salon
36 Green
37 Retinue
38 "— not to reason why"

DOWN
1 Vacation-ing
2 Sports legend
3 Victories for
4 Orb
5 Anal-gesic's target
6 Will Ferrell movie
7 Sign on for
8 Jam-packed with
9 Bread spread
10 Nameless writer
11 "A— home is ..."
16 Heart-break
20 English evergreens

Solution time: 21 mins.
AYE SPARS SEW
SOL CITLAC VRT
SUMMARI ZE WIL
OVA ENAMEL
KISMET DIDO
OSU REV CENTS
LIMP DIE ESAU
ANTIS AGT EKE
BATTER ISO
ORA SUMPTUOUS
OIL TEASE BRA
MAIS ALDER TND

1	2	3	4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13			14			
15					16			17			
			18				19	20			
21	22	23				24					
25					26				27	28	29
30					31				32		
33			34					35			
						36					
38	39	40					41				
42					43	44			45	46	47
48						49			50		
51						52			53		

CRYPTOQUIP

P J B B H B T C Q D C L M B Y Q K H

K Z M J S D M L T K Q K D W K B D

V N M V T K I B M D N M T D :

" Z K I T P M M S C B S N T Y K I W K "

Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF A STRAY CAT FINDS AN ACTIVITY HE LOVES DOING, I SUPPOSE IT'S RIGHT UP HIS ALLEY.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: B equals N

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.