

No malice intended

REUTERS, London

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has decided not to pursue a threat of legal action against his Chelsea counterpart Jose Mourinho.

The pair became embroiled in a war of words ahead of November's international break and Wenger used the gap in domestic action to seek legal advice over the remarks.

Mourinho had upset Wenger by calling him a "voyeur" obsessed with Chelsea, but after considering his options the Frenchman has decided not to take matters further as he does not feel there was enough malice behind Mourinho's statement.

"I took legal advice," Wenger told reporters at the club's training ground on Friday. "I wanted to analyse what was behind it, I tried to think about it during the break and I cannot see that statement to be malicious or vicious enough."

"For me the intention behind the statement is important...I hope I am right that nothing malicious was planned behind it. I cannot let people say anything without a reaction. I let him get away with it."

Mourinho responded by saying Wenger had made the right decision to drop any case against him over his remarks.

"I think it is a sensible and intelligent decision."

"He knows my feelings about the situation...I don't want to do anything personal," Mourinho told reporters. "I want to finish with it and I hope he does the same way in relation to us. So I think it is the best thing."

Arsenal host Blackburn Rovers on Saturday and Wenger welcomes goalkeeper Jens Lehmann and midfielder Gilberto Silva back into the side after back and ankle injuries respectively.

With England defender Ashley Cole and French under-21 international Gael Clichy still sidelined with similar foot injuries, Pascal Cygan will again deputise at left back.

Wenger remains cautious ahead of the match against a side who have clawed their way up to 12th in the Premier League, five points behind fourth-placed Arsenal having played a game more.

"I feel we are approaching our best football again," said the Arsenal manager. "In training the belief is back and the ambition is there. What we need now is consistency."

Midfielder Alexander Hleb, out with a knee injury since playing for Belarus against Scotland in a World Cup qualifier on October 8, has been pencilled in to return for Arsenal's Champions League match at home to Ajax Amsterdam on Dec. 7.

Border's praise

FROM PAGE 12
"I played against Brian when he made his century (277) in Sydney in the 1992-93 season and I would rank him as one of the best three batsmen in the world."

"I have had the pleasure of seeing him play a lot of cricket and there is no doubt he is a genuine genius."

"I am sure I am not the only Australian who is pleased to see him hold this record."



Did U Know?

The Olympic medals are designed especially for each individual Olympic Games by the host city's organizing committee. Each medal must be at least three millimetres thick and 60 millimetres in diameter. Also, the gold and silver medals must be made out of 92.5 per cent silver, with the gold medal covered in six grams of gold.



Bertie Ahern
(Irish Prime Minister)
"George (Best) was one of my great sporting heroes. Not only is he one of the finest footballers this island has ever produced but he is also one of the best players the world has ever seen."



Iranian under-20 football coach Ademar Fonseca Nogueira (5th from L) talks to his players during a practice session at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Saturday.

Ballack sour for Fergie?

Football

THE GUARDIAN, London

Sir Alex Ferguson declared Manchester United's interest in Michael Ballack to be over despite confirming that they had been in talks with Germany's captain for the past five months.

United have been informed Ballack has changed his mind about moving to Manchester in the face of interest from Real Madrid and, anxious not to lose face, Ferguson was keen to make it look as though it was his decision rather than the player's.

Privately despondent yet refusing to show even the faintest flicker of regret, the official line from Ferguson is that he has decided Ballack to be an unnecessary luxury. "He's a terrific player, a fabulous player, but he plays in the same area where we already have Wayne Rooney and Paul Scholes, so we've decided to rule it out."

It is a flawed argument given that Ferguson must have been aware of Ballack's exact role when he instructed United's chief executive David Gill to open talks with the player's agent Michael Becker last June.

United were so convinced that the midfielder wanted to join them one official described it as "almost a done deal", revealing a gentleman's agreement was already in place. United also privately let it be known that a financial package had been put together

which would have made Ballack the best paid player in the Premiership, with an annual salary of £6m.

Since then, however, Real Madrid have moved into the equation and Ferguson has been faced by the possibility of Ballack joining Ronaldinho and Arjen Robben as high-profile targets who have been snatched from his grasp. Italian clubs are also interested, but Ballack is swayed by the prospect of a move to the Bernabeu.

"We've given Michael Ballack a lot of consideration for the last few months," Ferguson added. "We knew his contract was up at Bayern Munich next summer so we spoke to his people and we've had a lot of discussions since. But the priority has always been to find someone who could replace Roy Keane and Ballack plays a different role. We need to look at other players now; players we actually need."

Inadvertently Ferguson was revealing that United had made illegal approaches to Ballack, who is barred from speaking to prospective new employers until January 1. Bayern are understood to be distinctly unimpressed.

Despite trying to create the impression that United are happy to look elsewhere, Ferguson will know the extent to which a player of Ballack's calibre could have enhanced his team. The argument that he should be discounted because they already have Scholes is seriously undermined, too, as the former England player has been

consistently off-form for much of the past two seasons. Scholes has yet to score this season and his malaise has been so protracted that there can be no guarantee he will ever rediscover his best form.

Ferguson also admitted he is not assured of bringing in players during the January transfer window. "We're fairly lightweight in terms of numbers and physically, too, when it comes to midfield, certainly when compared to Chelsea. Unfortunately it's not an easy task. We've been talking about replacing Keane for two or three years but the difficulty is finding someone."

"You certainly can't guarantee that January will be a buying time for us. The players we would all like are cup-tied in Europe and any club doing well will not want to sell anyone, let alone to Manchester United. So you're immediately eliminating a large percentage of clubs."

One player who reportedly fits the criterion is Aldo Duscher of Deportivo La Coruna, who is being touted around Europe and has been repeatedly linked with Old Trafford. The Manchester-based agent Francis Martin, who has close ties with Ferguson, has also been given the mandate of helping the Argentinian's Spanish agent find an English club but there has been no interest registered by United yet, officially or unofficially.

Chappell denies gestures

FROM PAGE 12

him, rather than the overtly sentimental crowd."

But the scrutiny has only been getting more intense. The Hindustan Times showed a picture of a finger thrust out of the window of the team bus, which it claimed was Chappell's.

Rahul Dravid's team was jeered off the field by supporters of Ganguly after South Africa outplayed the hosts by ten wickets in the fourth one-day.

To add fuel to the fire, the request by Chappell to have the grass shorn off the pitch before the match, had apparently led to an argument with the curator. And while skipper Rahul Dravid played this down after the game, the curator of Eden Gardens was indignant.

Probir Mukherjee said "It is not possible for Greg Chappell to come and ask us to change in a day, a pitch we've been preparing for months. And why should he ask? Good wickets make for good cricket."

Former South African player Gary Kirsten has also commented on the pitch, saying it was "...right up South Africa's alley."

Chappell has been subjected to intense media scrutiny since his appointment earlier this year as the successor to New Zealand John Wright. The 56-year-old has a contract that lasts until June 2007, but since he took over results have been mixed.

India were beaten in the finals of two triangular one-day series, but then thrashed Sri Lanka 6-1 on home soil. They are currently involved in the series against South Africa and trail 2-1. Following Monday's final game, they will then begin preparations for three Test matches against Sri Lanka, with Ganguly back in the squad for the opening game, which starts on 2 December.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard of the fourth one-day

international between India and South Africa at the Eden Gardens on Friday:

INDIA: 188 all out in 45.5 overs (Sehwag 30, Yuvraj 53, Kaif 46; Pollock 3-25, Hall 3-36).

SOUTH AFRICA
Smith not out 134
Hall not out 48
Extras: (w-4, nb-3) 7
Total: (For no loss in 35.5 overs) 189

Bowler O M R W
Agarkar 5 0 41 0
Pathan 6 0 28 0
Rudra 4 0 18 0
Harbhajan 10 0 37 0
Kartik 8 1 52 0
Sehwag 2.5 0 13 0
Super-sub: Murali Kartik (IND) replaced Gautam Gambhir in 11th over of South Africa's innings; Robin Peterson (RSA) replaced Andre Nel at start of South Africa's innings.

Result: South Africa won by 10 wickets, lead series 2-1.
Man-of-the-match: Graeme Smith.
Final in Mumbai on Monday.

Sylhet puts cog in hosts' wheels

FROM PAGE 12

visitors to a challenging 249-6 in 50 overs.

Man of the match Rajin was not out, with 100 off 158 balls with six fours in his credit, while Moniruzzaman contributed 70 off 101 balls with four hits to the fence.

In reply, the formidable Chittagong batting line-up fell into big trouble to suffer a massive defeat when they lost seven wickets for 85 runs, but Rezaul Karim (85 off 94 balls) and Sabbir Khan (38 off 53 balls) spared the blushes, associating a 99-run partnership in the eighth wicket.

National paceman Nazmul Hossain (3-35) and Hasibul Hossain (3-43) caused the Chittagong damage, sharing eight wickets as Chittagong were restricted to 201-9 in their share of 50 overs.

RAJSHAHI-KHULNA
Fresh from an eight-wicket victory against Barisal in the first round, Rajshahi won a curtailed-over match against Khulna to continue their winning run.
Moniruzzaman (29) and Forhad

Hossain (19) made a solid start for Rajshahi after being sent into bat first but after the break of the 45-run partnership, they lost wickets like ninnypins only to be bundled out for a fragile 129 in 34 overs.

Left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak Raj was the most successful Khulna bowler, picking up three wickets for 13 in 7 overs.

The total seemed enough in the end for the home team, as Khulna were dismissed for 109 in 32.2 overs. New ball bowler Shafiq Al Jabir picked up three for 22 in 7 overs.
Jamaluddin top scored with 19 for Khulna while captain Bashar, who had missed the first one-day game due to injury, added 17.

SCORES IN BRIEF
DHAKA-BARISAL
BARISAL: 152 all out in 39.2 overs (Imran 29, Nafees 6, Faruque 6, Shahin 0, Hannan 19, Towhid 10, Nadif 15, Salahuddin 16, Arman 17, Anis 1, extras 33; Mahmud 4-42, Talha 1-21, Sharif 1-31, Rafique 3-5, Sunny 1-17).

DHAKA: 155-4 in 30.4 overs (Javed 53 not out, Rashedul 11, Al-Shahriar 8, Ashraf 0, Mehrah 5, Rafique 53 not out, extras 25; Salahuddin 1-27, Sajid 2-37).

Result: Dhaka won by six wickets.
SYLHET-CHITTAGONG
SYLHET: 249-6 in 50 overs (Rajin 100 not out, Moniruzzaman 70, extras 43; Palash 2-64, Rezaul 1-22, Sabbir 1-40).

CHITTAGONG: 201-9 in 50 overs (Salahuddin 13, Nafees 0, Aftab 17, Ehsanul 3, Faisal 9, Wasel 15, Rezaul 85, Sabbir 38, Palash 10 not out, extras 7; Nazmul 3-35, Hasibul 3-43, Enamul 1-23).

Result: Sylhet won by 48 runs.
RAJSHAHI-KHULNA
RAJSHAHI: 129 all out in 34 overs (Moniruzzaman 29, Forhad 19, Naeem 15, Rafiqul 18 not out, extras 18; Rasel 1-33, Razzak 3-13, Zia 2-9, Manzarul 2-30).

KHULNA: 109 all out in 32.2 overs (Jamal 19, Bashar 17, Sagor 18 not out, extras 14; Shafiq 3-22, Mushfiqur 2-25, Reza 2-15, Shahjada 1-24, Kamrul 2-18).

Tragic!

REUTERS, Beijing

Eight amateur Chinese soccer players have been charged after an on-pitch fight which led to the death of a player from neck injuries. Xinhua news agency said on Thursday.

The eight, from Zibo in the eastern province of Shandong, were charged with causing an intentional injury after they beat up the player during a local tournament match in July.

The fight started when the home team Zibo Sunday Saints met the Weifang Devils from the neighboring city of Weifang.

In the second half, a midfielder with the Saints was attacked by several Weifang Devils players after a squabble turned ugly and triggered a group fight, Xinhua said, quoting a prosecution source.

The player died in hospital five days later of severe neck injuries.

"It's an appalling incident," Li Min, secretary of Zibo Football Association, was quoted as saying.

Violence is not uncommon in China's scandal-plagued soccer leagues, especially the amateur ones that have little supervision.

On September 25, players in an amateur match in the central province of Sichuan crushed the referee's hand and leg bones and left him mildly concussed, Xinhua said.

On June 25, in a match in the eastern city of Qingdao, a spectator was hit on the face by a player who stormed up into the stands after being targeted with bottles and watermelon rinds.

"A source with the Jinan Football League (in Shandong) said last year they even found substitute players carrying knives on to the field and fortunately they called the police and stopped what they called a potential bloody nightmare," Xinhua said.

Tendulkar back

FROM PAGE 12

at career-best 853 points.
The Faisalabad Tests' other hundred-makers, England's Kevin Pietersen and Ian Bell, have also made upward movements in the ranking order.

Biggies draw

FROM PAGE 12

Nigerian midfielder Odafa of Muktijoddha was adjudged the best player in the match.

Yellow cards: Hasan and Peter (Mohammedan), Deen Moha-mmad and Jeremiah (Mukti-joddha)

TEAMS
MUKTIJODDHA: Titoo, Enamul, Deen Mohammad, Ghansha, Arman Aziz, Jeremiah, Odafa, Rachid, Tanveer (Saiful), Amin Rana and Moni.

MOHAMMEDAN: Shakil, Ronny, Hasan, Peter, Biplob, Mintoo (Kamal), Emeke, Nayan (Khokon), Nakib and Monju (Sentu).
Referee: Mansoor Azad.

Abahani will meet Soccer Club of Feni in today's match at the same venue.

Langer's narrow

FROM PAGE 12

average of 54.04 in his 121st Test match. Lara went into cricket folklore when he flicked a McGrath delivery off his hip to fineleg.

He was finally out playing well away from his stumps to execute a cut shot and lost his off-stump some 42 minutes into play.

Lara boosted the straggling West Indians to a powerful first innings total of 405 in his 298-ball knock with 22 boundaries. The rest of his team contributed just 162 or 40 percent towards the total.

But the Australian bowlers had to work hard to remove the normally-brittle lone order.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard after the second day of the third and final cricket Test between Australia and the West Indies at Adelaide Oval on Saturday:
WEST INDIES: First innings (overnight 352-7)

Hinds c Hayden b Lee	10
Devon Smith c Hayden b Lee	7
Sarwan c Symonds b Lee	16
Lara b McGrath	226
Chanderpaul c Gilchrist b Symonds	25
D Bravo c Ponting b MacGill	34
D Smith c Symonds b MacGill	14
Ramdin lbw b McGrath	27
Powell lbw b McGrath	14
Edwards c Hayden b Warner	10
Collimore not out	5
Extras: (b-2, lb-5, w-1, nb-9)	17
Total: (All out in 111.2 overs)	405
Fall of wickets: 1-16, 2-19, 3-53, 4-121, 5-237, 6-263, 7-333, 8-381, 9-388	

Bowler O M R W	Bowler O M R W
MacGill 30 3 106 3	Edwards 10 1 63 1
Lee 28 3 111 3	Powell 11 0 46 0
Symonds 16 5 44 1	Collimore 16 1 43 0
Warne 19 2 77 1	Bravo 13 3 42 2
MacGill 18 3 60 2	Dwayne Smith 7 1 25 0
AUSTRALIA: First innings	Hinds 4 1 8 0
Langer c Ramdin b Edwards	
Hayden c Chanderpaul b Bravo	
Ponting lbw b Bravo	
Hodgson not out	
Hussey not out	
Extras: (lb-2, w-1, nb-11)	
Total: (For 3 wkts in 61 overs)	
Fall of wickets: 1-97, 2-211, 3-228	
To bat: Symonds, Gilchrist, Warner, Lee, MacGill, McGrath	

Prey of dangerous cocktail

Football

AFP, Paris

George Best, who died on Friday after a long battle against alcoholism, was the latest British footballer to pay the ultimate price for a love affair with the bottle.

Jim Baxter and Albert Johannesson also went to an early grave with their minds befuddled by booze.

Others saved themselves just in time.

Men like Jimmy Greaves, Tony Adams, Paul Merson and Paul Gascoigne.

Greaves, the former England player, who has beaten his addiction, recalled a story of how Best tried to comfort former Leeds star Johannesson who died in poverty.

"George did not know him that well - but he knew he was an alcoholic and lonely," Greaves told the Observer newspaper.

"Best called him in, they got 'on the sauce' and Johannesson tottered home about midnight. 'I know I shouldn't have done it,' Best recalled years later, 'but I thought Albert needed a night out. No regrets.'"

Greaves believes some footballers take comfort in alcohol once the adrenaline of playing has stopped.

"I look back at George, I look back

at myself, same problem as George, as Albert, same as Gazza. I think it was a lack of pressure they succumbed. I think we missed football. I missed it."

"It wasn't the pressure of playing that made me start drinking heavily, it was the emptiness of not playing. And I think that's probably true of George and Paul. I don't think they felt that much pressure playing. They loved it too much."

Baxter, like Best, needed medical help but such was his drinking capacity he required not one but two liver transplants.

"Slim Jim", who died from cancer aged 61 in 2001, won 34 caps for Scotland and was a star of the 1960s with Rangers, Sunderland and Nottingham Forest but couldn't resist the urge to keep drinking.

At one stage, he was reported to be consuming three bottles of Bacardi a day.

Dennis Law, who played alongside Baxter in Scotland's famous 3-2 win over then world champions England at Wembley in 1967, believes memories of the player will live forever.

"He was world-class. He turned on the class against England and was the best player on the park. To beat the world champions on their own ground was mainly down to Jim Baxter," said Law who found himself

mourning Best on Friday.

South African-born Johannesson was only 55 when he died in 1995.

He was the first black footballer to feature in the FA Cup final in 1965 but when he left Leeds in 1970, his life spiralled out of control.

Alcoholism took his finances and ended his marriage and he died as a recluse in squalid conditions.

Other players have saved themselves from similar tragedies.

Former England midfielder Paul Merson was treated for drink, drug and gambling addictions which got so bad that he admitted he couldn't remember some of his greatest achievements.

Gascoigne's drinking led to claims of domestic abuse and a career, which once burned so bright, crashed spectacularly into complete underachievement.

"Children should not take me as an example," said Gazza in 2000.

"They should not make the same mistakes as me and should remember that for all the glory I have had in my life, there has been a lot of crap as well."

Former England skipper Tony Adams knows all about the down side of the bottle.

He was once jailed for drink-driving but bounced back to become tee-total and captain his country.



WE LOVE YOU: A fan of George Best lays flowers at a mural of the legendary footballer, who died on November 25, at Belfast on Friday.

King Lara conquers

FROM PAGE 12

despite his poor form in the two previous Tests.

"I've been saying all tour, he's a sleeping giant. He's just wiping sleep from his eyes," Langer said.

"Never write off champions and he just showed that he's a legend of the game."

Langer, who missed the first two Tests after breaking a rib, said he was frustrated at missing out on a cen-

tury when he gloved a catch behind.

"If I was Lara I would have danced down the pitch and whacked it over the top but that's why he's Lara and I'm Langer," the Australian said.

"It's disappointing, it would have been nice to get another run but if I turned up at the start of the day and was told I could get 99 or a duck, I'd take 99 every time."

TOP TEN TEST BATS							
Batsman	Test	Inn	NO	Runs	HS	100s	50s
B Lara (WIS)	121	213	7	11187	400no	31	46
A Border (AUS)	156	265	44	11174	205	27	63
S Waugh (AUS)	168	260	46	10927	200	32	50
S Tendulkar (IND)	123	198	21	10134	248no	34	41
S Gavaskar (IND)	125	214	16	10122	236no	34	45
G Gooch (ENG)	118	215	6	8900	333	20	46
J Miandad (PAK)	124	189	21	8832	280no	23	43
V Richards (WIS)	121	182	12	8540	291	24	45
A Stewart (ENG)	133	235	21	8463	190	15	45
D Gower (ENG)	117	204	18	8231	215	18	39