

Malik cleared of suspect action

AFP, Rawalpindi

Pakistan all-rounder Shoaib Malik has been cleared of a suspect bowling action reported against him last month, a senior cricket official said Monday.

"The report after tests on Malik's action cleared him and it is a reprieve for him," Pakistan Cricket Board director of operations Salim Altaf told AFP.

Malik's bowling action was reported as "illegal" for a third time during the first Test against England at Multan last month. He was sent to Australia for tests on his bowling action early this month.

Fazle Sobhan Nat'l Pairs Bridge Dec 23

SPORTS REPORTER

The Fazle Sobhan National Pairs Bridge Championship will commence at the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) in Gulshan on December 23.

The two-day meet will mark the 25th anniversary of the Fazle Sobhan Trophy, which is an annual event on Bangladesh Bridge Federation calendar.



KHONDKAR FAZLE SOBHAN

Registration for the tournament will be held on December 23 from 9:00 to 9:30 am. There will be two qualification rounds on the opening day while the semifinals and the final will be played on December 25. BEI is sponsoring the event this year.

The prestigious trophy is dedicated in memory of late Khondkar Fazle Sobhan, father of Professor Rehman Sobhan, chairman of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), ambassador (ret'd) Farooq Sobhan, president of Bangladesh Enterprise Institute and Naveed Sobhan, who lives in the United States.

The 25th anniversary of the trophy also coincides with the 100th birth anniversary of late Fazle Sobhan, who was born on November 5, 1905 and died on August 26, 1962.

A devoted bridge player, Fazle Sobhan joined the Indian Police Service in 1928 and took voluntary retirement in 1947. He was the political secretary to Pakistani prime minister in 1951-53, chairman of Karachi Improvement Trust in 1956-1958 and Commissioner East Africa, with concurrent accreditation to several countries in Africa from 1958-1961.

Hosts look

FROM PAGE 12 participants might be increased if the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) allow a combined selection of Kenya and Uganda.

"We have already prepared the MA Aziz Stadium and the Chittagong Divisional Stadium for holding the tournament as instructed by the ACC CEO Syed Ashraf Hque," said BCB joint-secretary Rafiqul Islam Babu.

He said that so far four teams have confirmed their participation but there is a chance to increase the number.

"We will get the final picture within the next couple of days," he added.



Michael Schumacher

(Seven-time world Formula 1 champion) "I have been champion for a long time and I am more surprised by how long it has been. I always knew it would end one day." After he lost the bid to win his eighth title.

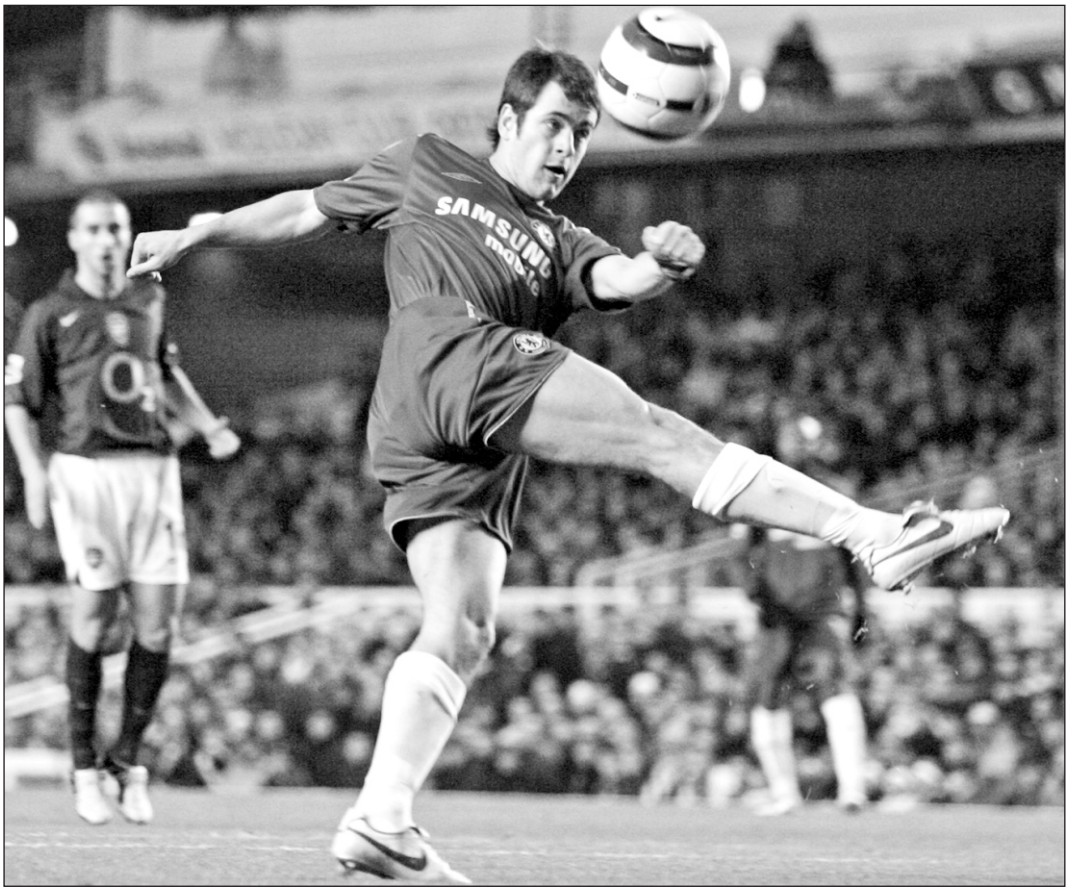


PHOTO: AFP

Joe Cole of Chelsea attempts a crack at the Arsenal goal during their Premiership clash at Highbury on Sunday.

PREMIERSHIP

Jose-Arsene feud on

Chelsea close door on gunners

Football

AFP, London

Jose Mourinho reignited his feud with Arsene Wenger on Sunday by claiming Arsenal's players had deliberately attempted to get Chelsea's Michael Essien sent off at Highbury.

Essien appeared fortunate not to receive a straight red card after catching Arsenal full-back Lauren with an elbow in the first half of the match that Chelsea won 2-0 to retain a nine-point lead over Manchester United at the top of the Premiership table.

But Mourinho insisted that Arsenal's players had over-reacted to the incident in an attempt to capitalise on the notoriety Essien earned with a horrific lunge at Liverpool's Dietmar Hamann during a Champions League clash earlier this month.

Asked what he had seen from the dugout as Lauren went to ground, Mourinho replied: "I saw ten players jumping on one. It looked like a strategy, like they were going to use the image Essien has at this moment

and in the first body-to-body situation we have to jump on him.

"It is very, very sad, ten players jumping on one."

Wenger, who threatened to sue Mourinho earlier this year after being branded a "voyeur" by his Chelsea counterpart, scoffed at the claim.

"Essien was a straight red in my opinion -- it was just in front of the dugout. The ref was not brave enough to make the decision but it was a straight red. He did not play the ball he played the player.

"We did not even speak about this before the game. If it was a deliberate strategy, we hid it very well."

The Arsenal manager had said before the game that he would be prepared to shake Mourinho's hand. He did not get the chance however as the Chelsea manager raced straight down the tunnel on the final whistle, although the missed opportunity for a reconciliation did not trouble Wenger.

"I must say that frankly that does not stop me from sleeping," he said.

Wenger was more aggrieved over a disallowed goal from Robin van Persie that would have given his

side the lead mid-way through the first half. Television replays showed that van Persie was onside when Freddie Ljungberg's pass found him.

"Eighty-five percent of these type of games are decided on the first goal, so we feel that the referee made a very bad decision," Wenger said.

Wenger conceded that his side, now languishing in eighth place and 20 points behind the leaders, had left themselves with too much to do.

The match itself was marked with drama and controversy. Dutchman Robben broke a bad-tempered deadlock in the 39th minute when striker Didier Drogba put him through just over the halfway line.

The speedy winger kept his head to angle a left-footed shot past Jens Lehmann from 10 metres, the ball hitting the far post before bouncing in.

Cole made it two in the 73rd minute with another fine individual effort to win the ball from Lauren on the right, cut inside and outflank England teammate Sol Campbell before poking the ball home.

Brazil, Ghana take FIFA awards

AFP, Zurich

Brazil won the top team title and Ghana the award for the most improved team in the 2005 FIFA world rankings published Monday. World champions Brazil finished top for the fourth year in a row while unbeaten Ghana's five wins and three draws, which saw them reach their first World Cup finals, improved 27 places to finish 50th.

TOP 10

Pos	Country	Pts
1	Brazil	840
2	Czech Rep	796
3	Holland	791
4	Argentina	772
5	Mexico	768
	Spain	768
	France	768
8	USA	767
9	England	757
10	Portugal	754

Blame it on fans

REUTERS, Madrid

Brazilian trio Ronaldo, Julio Baptista and Roberto Carlos have blamed Real Madrid fans for creating a tense atmosphere that has made it difficult for the team to play well in home matches.

Real have been jeered and whistled by their own fans in recent games at the Bernabeu and their reaction to the side's narrow 1-0 victory over neighbours Getafe two weeks ago was instrumental in the dismissal of coach Vanderlei Luxemburgo.

"We won't win anything if the team and the fans go out there in an atmosphere of tension," Baptista told reporters after his side's 1-1 draw with Osasuna on Sunday.

"The whistling has to end because if not we won't get anywhere."

Fellow striker Ronaldo complained after the draw against Getafe that playing at the Bernabeu was "like playing away from home."

Defender Roberto Carlos said the impatience of the fans was making the players nervous when they stepped on to the pitch.

"We were never able to relax when we had the ball at our feet because the fans wanted us to play so quickly, but we have got to be more patient," he told the club's website.

Real's caretaker coach Juan Ramon Lopez Caro, in charge for the first time in a league match at the Bernabeu, said he thought the fans were within their rights to complain about the team.

"The fans can do what they want and their views always have to be respected," he told a news conference after the game. "We have to be professional and understand that we all have a major responsibility in working for Real Madrid."

Hodge double

FROM PAGE 12

But injured South African all-rounder Jacques Kallis said he believed the team had the ability to stave off defeat.

"I thoroughly believe we have got the resources to stand up tomorrow and get through the day," Kallis said.

"It's not just the senior players -- everyone has to do it together."

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the fourth day of the first Test between Australia and South Africa at the Western Australian Cricket Association ground on Monday:

AUSTRALIA: First innings 258 (Ponting 71, Hodge 41, Langer 37; Ntini 5-64, Nel 3-29)

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 296 (De Villiers 68, Boucher 62, Smith 34, Pollock 34; Lee 5-93, Warne 3-92)

AUSTRALIA: Second innings (overnight 310-4)

Langer b Pollock 47
Hayden c Boucher b Langeveldt 20
Lew b lbw b Langeveldt 32
Ponting c Boucher b Ntini 53
Hodge not out 203
Hussey c Boucher b Pollock 58
Symonds c Gibbs b Langeveldt 25
Gilchrist c Rudolph b Nel 44
Warne lbw b Kemp 5
Bracken not out 14
Extras: (b-4, lb-4, w-1, nb-17) 27
Total: (For 8 wkts decl in 146.4 overs) 528
Did not bat: McGrath
Fall of wickets: 1-37, 2-86, 3-129, 4-184, 5-316, 6-377, 7-444, 8-451

Bowler O M R W
Pollock 36 6 98 2
Ntini 34 8 113 1
Langeveldt 31 2 117 3
Nel 28 2 104 1
Rudolph 6 1 29 0
Kemp 11 0 58 1

SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings
Smith lbw b Bracken 30
De Villiers c Hodge b Warne 12
Gibbs not out 17
Rudolph not out 18
Extras: (b-4, lb-3, nb-1) 8
Total: (For 2 wkts in 36 overs) 85
Fall of wickets: 1-35, 2-55
To bat: Prince, Kemp, Boucher, Pollock, Langeveldt, Nel, Ntini

Bowler O M R W
McGrath 8 4 11 0
Lee 9 3 26 0
Warne 12 2 27 1
Bracken 7 2 14 1

PRIMERA LIGA

Real held at home

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

Ten-man Osasuna spoiled Juan Ramon Lopez Caro's first home game in charge of Real Madrid, as they held Real to a 1-1 draw in the *Primera Liga* on Sunday.

Osasuna had midfielder Francisco Punal sent off after only 15 minutes, but Real struggled to make the extra man count in a bruising encounter of little quality.

It could have been even worse for Real when Serbia & Montenegro striker Savo Milosevic headed the Navarrans in front in the 76th minute, but second-half substitute Roberto Soldado rescued a point for the home side six minutes from time.

Real were jeered off the pitch once again at the final whistle.

Osasuna stay second on 35 points, two behind leaders and champions Barcelona, who beat Cadiz 3-1 on Saturday -- a club record 12th consecutive victory in all competitions.

Real go third on 29 points the

same as Villarreal who came from behind to beat Getafe 2-1 at home thanks to a sublime free kick from Argentine playmaker Juan Roman Riquelme, and a well-worked winner from Uruguayan striker Diego Forlan.

Deportivo Coruna, in fifth, and Valencia, in sixth, also have 29 points. Deportivo beat Celta Vigo 3-0 on Saturday while Valencia edged a 1-0 win away at Alaves courtesy of Raul Albio's early strike.

Sevilla fought back from two goals down to beat nine-man Real Sociedad 3-2, with all their goals coming in the last 14 minutes. Sociedad had taken the lead through Mikel Labaka and Gaizka Garitano, but a double from striker Kepa and one from Frederic Kanoute completed a dramatic fightback in Seville.

They are seventh on 26 points.

Five players were sent off in Racing Santander's 1-1 draw at home with Malaga. Referee Carlos Megia Davila sent off one player in each half for Malaga, and three for Racing after the break.

SERIE A

Milans put four apiece

Football

AFP, Rome

Inter Milan and AC Milan revived their Serie A title hopes with emphatic 4-0 victories on Sunday.

Inter thrashed Reggina in Calabria while Andriy Shevchenko scored twice as AC Milan trounced Messina at the San Siro.

Juventus, held to a 1-1 draw at Lazio on Saturday, have 43 points from their 16 matches played, followed by Inter on 35 and AC Milan on 34.

Inter coach Roberto Mancini took encouragement from the weekend's results which enabled his side to trim Juve's lead from 10 to eight points.

"There are 22 matches remaining until the end of the season and many things can happen," he said. "We are going well at the moment, but we have to hope that Juve slip up."

Carlo Ancelotti was a little less optimistic about his team's chances

of winning the championship.

"It was a win that gives us confidence. We made two points on Juventus and that's something positive," he said.

Fiorentina dropped one place to fourth after they drew 1-1 at local rivals Empoli and surprise-package Livorno won 2-0 at Palermo to maintain their push for a place in Europe next season.

Chievo climbed to sixth after defeating Udinese 2-0, while Cagliari boosted their chances of surviving the relegation dogfight with a 2-1 win against fellow strugglers Ascoli.

Parma gained a valuable point in their battle to stay up in a 2-2 draw at Siena.

Inter enjoyed the perfect start at Reggina, taking the lead with less than two minutes on the clock.

Juan Sebastian Veron's drilled free-kick was pushed away by Nicola Pavarini and Ivan Cordoba lashed home the rebound.

Inter tightened their grip on the match when Luis Figo crossed from

Brazil base in a castle

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Holders Brazil have booked a converted castle as a base for their World Cup second round match.

Brazil, who will play their second-round tie in Dortmund if they finish top of Group F, will stay at the Schlosshotel Lerbach located in Bergisch Gladbach between Cologne and Leverkusen, said the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) on Sunday.

"It is in the middle of an immense park with its own lake," said the CBF on their Web site.

Brazil have already announced that they will stay on the outskirts of Frankfurt for the first round and before that will spend two weeks at a lakeside hotel in Switzerland.

The CBF added that they had set up an alternative near Kaiserslautern, where they would play if they finished second in a group which also includes Croatia, Japan and Australia.

Brazil's second round match will be against a team from Group E which includes Italy, Czech Republic, Ghana and United States.

the right for Obafemi Martins whose close range header beat Pavarini at the near post.

Adriano scored with a left-footed shot in the 40th minute after good work from Figo and Claudio Pizarro's stoppage-time solo effort completed the rout.

At the San Siro, AC Milan took the lead in the 22nd minute thanks to a highly-dubious penalty.

Nigerian defender Matthew Olorunleke was judged to have pulled down Alberto Gilardino and Shevchenko tucked home the spot-kick.

Shevchenko doubled his tally two minutes into the second half with a cool finish after Kaka's cheeky backheel had unlocked the Messina defence and a sublime Andrea Pirlo free-kick made it 3-0.

Gilardino completed the scoring with a right-footed shot five minutes from time.

Deco going nowhere

AFP, Lisbon

Portugal midfielder Deco on Monday rejected suggestions in the Spanish press he was set to leave Barcelona.

"I have a contract for five more years here and I don't see any reason to leave," he told Portuguese state-owned radio RDP.

Last week Spanish sports newspaper AS, citing unnamed club sources, said the Barca management were preparing to sell one of their bigger names at the end of this season and Deco was a likely target.

But the 28-year-old said both Barcelona president Joan Laporta and coach Frank Rijkaard had assured him they counted on him.

"The press in Madrid were the first to speak about this issue, they want to destabilise Barcelona and this is the only way they can do it," he said.

Barcelona signed the Brazilian-born playmaker in June 2004 from Portuguese side Porto for four years.

Deco extended his contract with the Spanish giants for one year in June.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

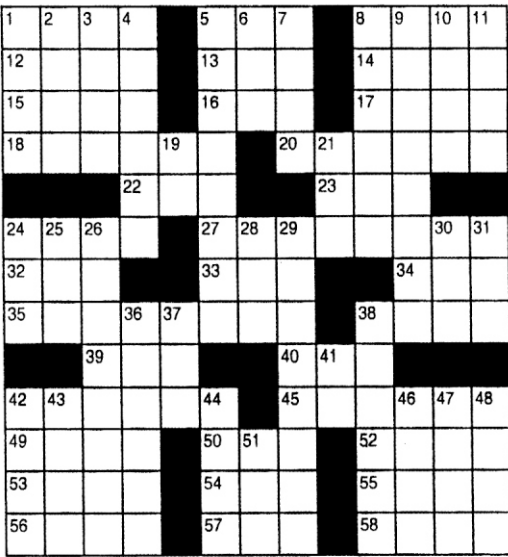
- 1 Clear the decks?
- 5 Newton filler
- 8 Courted a ticket
- 12 Metropolis
- 13 LAX info
- 14 Nastase of tennis
- 15 Each
- 16 1 billion years
- 17 Show chutzpah
- 18 Send back to custody
- 20 More hoary
- 22 Weep
- 23 Stocky
- 24 Probabil-ity
- 27 Annual publica-tions
- 32 In favor of
- 33 One of the brass (Abbr.)
- 34 Prompt
- 35 Treats at an afternoon affair

DOWN

- 1 "Lion King" villain
- 2 Expunge
- 3 Teensy bit
- 4 Circum-vent
- 5 Evaluative response
- 6 Judge Lance
- 7 Jets or Sharks
- 8 Laterally, as in a collision
- 9 Audio, on first hearing
- 10 Green land
- 11 Ante-lope's partner
- 19 "Fuhged-daboudit!"
- 21 Nipper's old co.
- 24 Fre-quently
- 25 Anony-mous
- 26 Flaw
- 28 Shelter
- 29 Old fogey
- 30 Mongrel
- 31 Vast expanse
- 36 Matters
- 37 Piercing tool
- 38 Beat on eBay
- 41 Yours truly
- 42 Location
- 43 Evange-list
- 44 Logan or Raines
- 46 Carnival attraction
- 47 Lotion additive
- 48 Kennel cry
- 51 Listening device

Solution time: 25 mins.

M	A	L	T	P	S	I	A	B	E	D
A	G	E	E	R	A	N	A	R	A	
S	H	A	M	A	R	O	C	K		
H	A	P	I	E	L	E	O	R	E	
A	C	R	E	L	E	W	O	R	E	
G	O	O	G	R	A	L	O	L	D	
L	E	V	I	T	R	O	C	K		
O	W	L	H	E	L	M	S	L	A	G
L	E	E	L	E	A	K				
B	R	O	W	N	E	R	E	S		
L	E	V	I	T	R	O	C	K		
A	D	E	N	O	U	R	E	T		
B	O	R	G	S	T	I	R	E	A	P



CRYPTOQUIP

Y I A E G P G B S K K E V W S

C V L A W G P I G B G P S A B Y G F

S K K Z G E F J A S G V N W, K E A

Z V C I S P G N N V S K L A B J B G Y E.
Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF YOU WORK AS A WINDOW WASHER, I GUESS YOU'D FIND YOURSELF ON THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: K equals O

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.