

## Maradona on the playing field again?

TICKER, Buenos Aires

An Argentine soccer club may give Diego Maradona a chance to play again.

Maradona expressed interest in playing in the Argentine lower league in a recent television interview and Excursionistas, a team that plays in the fourth division, is set to discuss a deal with the 45-year-old legend.

"I'd like to play in a club of Primera C or D, because there's not too much pressure, as they are semi-professional divisions," Maradona said in the interview.

The Primera C club wants Maradona to play in the final stages of the Apertura tournament and club president Armando Mainoli admitted he would relish signing Maradona.

"When we watched the repetition of that interview some days ago, we had the idea immediately. We want to include Maradona in the official squad," Mainoli said. "We know there is some time yet left to do it and we'd be totally proud of seeing Diego wearing our shirt."

Excursionistas will make its debut in the Apertura tournament in the final stage against Lamadrid on February 4 and will have nine games left until the end of the championships.

Maradona last played a match for Boca Juniors on October 25, 1997, when he beat rivals River Plate, 2-1.



PHOTO: AFP

Argentine soccer legend Diego Maradona (L) and his compatriot Carlos Tevez of Brazilian club Corinthians are in pursuit of the ball during a friendly match called 'To the Playing Field for a Smile' at the Boca Juniors' Stadium in Buenos Aires on Tuesday. The game was arranged by Javier Zanetti-led PUPU Foundation which has the purpose of helping poor children.

## Div II soccer

SPORTS REPORTER

The Second Division Football League began yesterday with Prantik Krira Chakra and Karwan Bazar Pragati Sangha settling for a 1-1 draw at the Birsreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Harun put Pragati Sangha ahead in the eighth minute while Anwar restored parity for Prantik seven minutes later.

Earlier, LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan inaugurated the 16-team league as chief guest.

## 3 share lead

SPORTS REPORTER

The seventh round of the Metropolis Chess Tournament ended yesterday with three players sharing the lead securing six points each.

Mazharul Islam beat Amir, Abdul Majed drew with Alam and Abdur Rahim beat Shahjahan to lead the table.

Amir, Taherul Islam, Alimul Haque, Obaidul Islam, Noor Alam, Nasiruddin, Nahid, Saiful and Channu followed the leaders with 5.5 points each.

Meanwhile, Abdullah Saif bagged 6.5 points after the tenth round of the Telegraph School Chess Championship in Kolkata. Sharif Hossain earned six points.

## Honours for BN Flotilla

SPORTS REPORTER

Mesbahuddin of BN Flotilla Team clinched the tennis singles title of the annual tennis and squash championship of Bangladesh Navy yesterday.

Mesbahuddin, a losing doubles finalist, defeated KMA Zaman of Khulna Team 6-2, 6-2 in the singles final on the concluding day of the five-day meet at the Area Sports Complex in Chittagong.

The squash singles title also went to BN Flotilla with MNI Mina beating his teammate Obaidul Haque 3-1 in the final.

Sohel Rafiq and Lokman of Chittagong won the tennis doubles honours defeating Qamrul-Mesbahuddin pair 6-3, 5-6 and 6-2.

About 50 players from eight teams took part in the competition.

Chief of the Naval Staff Rear Admiral M Hasan Ali Khan distributed prizes as chief guest.

## Abahani

FROM PAGE 12 bounced back to him off national striker Tipu.

Abahani take on bottom-table Samabesh Club of Munshiganj tomorrow while Army are pitted against Mohammedan Sporting Club on the next day.

**Red card:** Ibrahim (Abahani)

**Yellow card:** Anwar, Monirul (Army)

## TEAMS

**ABAHANI:** Nizam, Obaidur, Pradeep, Marshall, Wali, Zahed (Farhad), Ndem, Egir, Parvez (Ujjal), Ibrahim and Tipu.  
**ARMY:** Monirul, Anwar, Masum, Mizan, Monwar, Rakib, Atiq (Bashir), Didar, Sonny, Shahin and Tutul.  
**Rudolph b Lee** 13  
**Boucher lbw** b

# It's BBC's blunder

OLYMPICS

REUTERS, Athens

The Greek International Olympic Committee (IOC) member accused of accidentally helping London's winning 2012 Olympics bid through a voting blunder said on Wednesday he never even voted during the election.

A BBC report last week said a member, thought to be Greece's Lambis Nikolaou, mistakenly voted for Paris in the third round in Singapore on July 6. That gave the French capital 33 votes to 31 for Madrid instead of 32 each, which would have prompted a vote-off before the final round.

Madrid had been ahead after the second round. "All speculations regarding my role in the third round of candidate cities for 2012 are completely unfounded," Nikolaou said in a statement. "I declare that I did not vote during the third round as I had announced during the election in question."

The accusation of the voting mix-up was made by Alex Gilady, an Israeli IOC member and part of the London 2012 Co-ordination Commission. He told the programme that an IOC member thought to be Nikolaou made the mistake.

London then beat Paris 54-50 in the final round of voting, although it is widely believed that Madrid would have been a bigger threat to London had it got through to the final round.

## PSG fire Fournier

Football

AFP, Paris

Paris Saint Germain on Tuesday sacked their coach Laurent Fournier and replaced him with former Sochaux boss Guy Lacombe.

The change at the top was announced by club president Pierre Blayau at a press conference at PSG's Parc des Princes stadium.

Former France international Fournier, 41, leaves after ten months in the job. The former PSG reserve team coach was appointed back in February to replace Vahid Halilhodzic.

But his tenure had looked shaky for several weeks ever since Blayau, who has targeted a second place finish to ensure automatic qualification for Europe next season, voiced his concerns over the French capital side's performance.

PSG last week were knocked out of the French Cup and are only placed sixth in the league, 13 points behind leaders Lyon but just two points off Blayau's coveted second spot.

In a quirk of the calendar Lacombe's first match in charge of PSG will be against his former club Sochaux on January 4.

Lacombe, 50, has been out of a job since leaving Sochaux last July. As a player his main claim to fame was as a member of France's 1984 Olympic winning side.

PSG president Blayau said: "Fournier has faith in football and in footballers. Perhaps he has too much faith in footballers from time to time."

"Guy Lacombe is not a saviour and is not arriving at a dramatic time for the club. He is arriving at a time when PSG needs to reassert their ambition to qualify for the Champions League."

"We have been putting in mediocre performances for the last 10 matches with a number of away defeats. We now have to get ourselves going again."

After a great start to the season, PSG then stumbled and have only taken 21 points out of a possible 45 in their last 15 league matches.

"Certain players who were given responsibility by Laurent Fournier perhaps did not deserve it," Blayau added. "Perhaps a different attitude is needed and that will be for Guy Lacombe to judge."

PCB officials are meeting on Wednesday with members of an Indian inspection team which is in Pakistan to review security arrangements.

The 30-year-old Adams suffered the injury while practising with the New Zealand side ahead of the first one-day match in Queenstown on December 31.

He had been recalled to the squad after missing the Chappell-Hadlee Trophy series against Australia earlier this month with a broken finger on his left hand.

The second match is in Christchurch on January 3, with the third match in Wellington on January 6 and the final game two days later in Napier.

## Aussies take control

FROM PAGE 12

Ricky Ponting finished as Test cricket's top-scorer of the 2005 calendar year with 1,544 runs at 67.13 after he was lbw to Pollock for 11.

Nel dropped a difficult caught and bowled chance off Hayden when he was on 27, the Proteas' 11th missed catch in the series.

The South Africans' last victory in Australia was by five runs 11 years ago in Sydney.

## SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the third day of the second Test between Australia and South Africa at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Wednesday:

**AUSTRALIA:** First innings 355 (Hussey 122, Ponting 117, Nel 4-84, Pollock 3-67, Ntini 3-70)

**SOUTH AFRICA:** First innings (overnight 169-2) Smith lbw b Lee 22  
De Villiers lbw b McGraw 61  
Gibbs b 94  
Symonds lbw b Lee 28  
Kallis b Lee 23  
Prince c Ponting b Warner 6  
Rudolph b Lee 13  
Boucher lbw b Hodge not

Fall of wickets: 1-36, 2-122, 3-185, 4-192, 5-214, 6-260, 7-265, 8-281, 9-291

**Bowler** **O** **M**  
McGrath 27 1 3  
Lee 28 5  
92 3  
Symonds 20 6  
50 3  
Warne 21 7  
62 2  
MacGill 15 3  
41 1

**AUSTRALIA:** Second innings Hayden not 45  
Jacques lbw b Nel 28  
Ponting lbw b Pollock 25  
Pollock lbw c Nel 11  
Hodge not

Speaking to Greek sports website sportime.gr, Nikolaou said: "It would be impossible to make a mistake because very simply I was the only one of the 104 members who did not vote."

"I don't understand how I found myself being accused and maybe it all started with a mistake by Mr Gilady."

Nikolaou said Gilady had sent him a letter apologising for the furore he had caused.

Gilady also told the website he had never named Nikolaou.

"Never, never did I say that Mr Nikolaou had made the mistake. I am absolutely certain of that," Gilady was quoted as saying. "I never said it was Nikolaou and I strongly deny ever saying it."

## SERIES AGAINST INDIA PCB considers venue switch

REUTERS, Karachi

The venues for Pakistan's first two one-day internationals against India in February may be switched due to a shortage of security personnel.

India are due to tour Pakistan next month and play Tests at Lahore, Faisalabad and Karachi before one-day internationals in Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Multan and Karachi.

A senior Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) official said the changes were necessary because security officials do not have enough manpower to police the second match.

There is normally a high security alert in those parts of Pakistan which have been hit by sectarian violence.

Nineteen people were killed May in an apparent suicide bomb attack on a Shi'ite shrine in Islamabad.

The official said the board now wanted to hold the first match in Rawalpindi and the second in Peshawar to avoid complications.

PCB officials are meeting on Wednesday with members of an Indian inspection team which is in Pakistan to review security arrangements.

## Langer in line for final Test

AFP, Melbourne

Seasoned Australian opener Justin Langer is on course to play in next week's third cricket Test against South Africa in Sydney, Cricket Australia said Wednesday.

Langer was forced out of the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne with a hamstring injury, but returned to batting practice here Wednesday after physio treatment.

It was the first time the 35-year-old left-hander had batted since he strained his left hamstring in the first Perth Test 10 days ago.

Langer has been in Melbourne since Christmas, undergoing treatment with Australian team physiotherapist Errol Alcott to be fit for the last domestic Test of the southern summer.

"He's been progressing well and has been doing a bit of running and a lot of strength work and he'll continue to work over the next couple of days," a Cricket Australia spokesman said.

## Vidic costs MU 10.5m euros!

AFP, London

Mystery surrounds the high fee of new Manchester United recruit Nemanja Vidic who could complete his move from Spartak Moscow once the winter transfer window opens on January 1.

Wednesday's Times newspaper reported United paid 10.5 million euros for the centre back though that is more than the seven million euros they would have had to play had the Serbia-Montenegro player invoked a get-out clause in his contract.

Old Trafford boss Alex Ferguson said: "Nemanja is a quick, aggressive centre-half and at 24 will be a terrific addition to the squad."

United were looking to strengthen the centre of a defence which has become the target for fans' criticism.

Vidic could now be signed in time to play in the FA Cup tie at non-league Burton on 8 January. His first Premiership outing could come in the following weekend's Manchester derby.

## Focus on your

FROM PAGE 12

in Sri Lanka's side as they had "turned things round" in New Zealand in 2002 after coming out of a 1-4 series loss to South Africa.

"So hopefully, it'll be the same thing this time around."

Among four changes from the one-day side that played India has been the recall of fast bowler Lasith Malinga, who used his unusual technique to good effect in two Tests against New Zealand here in April.

Also selected was leg-spinner Malinga Bandara, 25, who has never played a one-day international but whose Test experience includes a match against New Zealand as a teenager in 1998.

New Zealand lost bowler Andre Adams Wednesday after he broke a bone in his right hand during fielding practice. He has been replaced by James Franklin.

The 30-year-old Adams suffered the injury while practising with the New Zealand side ahead of the first one-day match in Queenstown on December 31.

He had been recalled to the squad after missing the Chappell-Hadlee Trophy series against Australia earlier this month with a broken finger on his left hand.

The second match is in Christchurch on January 3, with the third match in Wellington on January 6 and the final game two days later in Napier.

## India split

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"The matter is now closed," he said. "There is no question of taking any action against Ganguly."

Ganguly will play for Bengal against Tamil Nadu, Sehwag will lead Delhi against Kumble's Karnataka and Patel will represent Gujarat against Mumbai in the Ranji Trophy.

## FIRST BATCH

Rahul Dravid, Gautam Gambhir, Wasim Jaffer, Venkatsai Laxman, Sachin Tendulkar, Yuvraj Singh, Mahendra Dhoni, Irfan Khan, Ajit Agarkar, Zaheer Pathan, Rudra Pratap Singh and Harbhajan Singh.

# Media make him arrogant

Football

AFP, London

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho has apologised for being arrogant in his approach to managing Chelsea in an FHM magazine interview reproduced in Wednesday's Sun newspaper.

The 'Special One' enjoys an ongoing battle with the media in this country but has tried to explain why he tries to live up to his nickname at the Premiership's richest club.

Mourinho also admitted he was shocked at the reaction he got from the media after he quit Champions League winners Porto for Stamford Bridge.

He had not expected the media to react to him as a relative beginner upon his arrival in England after back-to-back European trophies.

Mourinho, who followed the UEFA Cup with the Champions League title, said: "I was not prepared for that. For me it was an incredible surprise. I was the European champion on May 24. I came here on the 26th or the 27th and the media were doubting me!

"I couldn't believe it! In Portugal every foreign manager or player, if he is just a little good, we make him God! I was stunned so I'm sorry if I seemed arrogant but I don't think I was arrogant."

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Mourinho decided he would have to stand his ground against the media.

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JOSE MOURINHO

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# Ronaldo targets Muller's record

Football

AFP, Rio DE Janeiro

Football superstar Ronaldo said on Tuesday he wanted to break Gerd Muller's World Cup goal scoring record at next year's football extravaganza in Germany.

Brazilian Ronaldo top scored in the 2002 Far East finals with eight goals but has 12 in all counting the 1998 finals in France.

Germany's Muller has 14 goals from World Cup finals in 1970 and 1974.

"By the end of the first phase, I hope to be on course to break this record," the Real Madrid striker told a press conference. "It's a real incentive for me and (coach Carlos Alberto) Parreira trusts in my ability which will help me to play well at the World Cup."



PHOTO: AFP

Brazilian superstar Ronaldo speaks to the press at his home in Rio de Janeiro on Tuesday in front of a child holding a Barcelona shirt of Ronaldinho.

# Two more booters nabbed in Vietnam

Football

AFP, Hanoi

Two more Vietnamese footballers were arrested Wednesday, bringing to four the number detained over allegations of match-fixing in the recent Southeast Asian games, an official said.

"Midfielders Huynh Quoc Anh and Le Bat Hieu of the Under 23 team were arrested this morning," Vu Hang, a security official of the Vietnam Football Federation, told AFP.

The arrest followed interrogation by police over attempts to arrange the result of a match against Myanmar, which Vietnam won 1-0.

Leading striker Pham Van Quyen and midfielder Le Quoc Vuong were arrested last week. Three other players are being investigated.

Some Vietnamese players had appeared to slow down their play in the Myanmar match. Police are also investigating allegations of an attempt to fix another match with Malaysia that Vietnam won 2-1.

On Monday, Vietnam Football Federation vice chairman Le The Tho resigned, saying he had been unfairly linked to the case in the state-run media.

Tho, who was in charge of the U-23 team during the Games in the Philippines, was earlier reported to have told VFF officials that he only learned of match-fixing attempts two minutes before the Myanmar match.

Vietnamese football has been under intense scrutiny with police already investigating fraud allegations implicating some 90 referees, coaches and players in the professional V-League.

## Di Stefano in the OT

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid great Alfredo Di Stefano went into the operating theatre to undergo heart bypass surgery on Wednesday.

"He has entered the operating room," a spokeswoman for La Fe hospital in Valencia said.

She said the hospital would release no further information until about 5 pm local time (1600 GMT). The website of Real Madrid, Di Stefano's former club, said "Alfredo Di Stefano is being operated on right now."

Sports daily As said the operation was expected to take more than seven hours.

The hospital's chief heart surgeon, Anastasio Montero, will be in charge.

Argentine Di Stefano, 79, was admitted to hospital after a heart attack on Saturday.

Doctors postponed planned heart bypass surgery on Monday because he had a fever.

On Tuesday, the hospital said his condition had improved and the operation would be carried out on Wednesday if he remained stable.

## CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

**ACROSS**  
1 Rascal  
6 —  
12 Apprehend  
13 Yell  
14 Mathematician  
15 Turkey's capital  
16 Bean source  
17 Humorous sort  
19 Sloppy steed  
20 Common  
22 'I — lineman ...'  
24 Drink's need  
27 Move along slowly  
29 Met melody  
32 1967 Bee  
35 Fizz precoder?  
36 Instance

**DOWN**  
1 Lacking  
56-Across  
2 Modeling stuff  
3 Jennifer Gamer series  
4 More, to Manuel  
5 Police milieu  
6 Blacken  
7 Civic maker  
8 Sort  
9 One way to order  
10 Infamous fiddler  
11 Snatch  
12 "Survivor" network  
18 House of records  
21 Actress Carrere  
23 West of Hollywood  
24 Dennis the Menace, e.g.  
25 — Tech  
26 Arcane  
28 Believer in the individual  
30 "Monty Python" opener  
31 Fool  
33 Hot tub  
34 Sound-stage  
39 Engine  
41 Petro-chio's problem  
42 Contemptible  
43 Favorable votes  
45 Let those emotions out  
47 Deserve  
48 Seas, s'il vous plait  
49 Fold  
51 Way back when  
53 "— nuff!"

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## CRYPTOQUIP

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