

Arsene admits Real affection

INTERNET, undated

Arsene Wenger admits Real Madrid are a club close to his heart, but the Frenchman has no plans to walk out on Arsenal for the Bernabeu.

Real are on the lookout for a new coach and Wenger's name has cropped up in a number of reports.

Wenger's profile would certainly tick a number of boxes on Real president Fernando Martin's checklist, but the Frenchman is looking to continue his work in North London with Arsenal.

"I love Real Madrid," admitted Wenger. "It is certainly, after Arsenal, a club I love because of my childhood.

"It was the team I admired when I was a kid and I have a lot of good memories for Real Madrid.

"But my priority is to do well for Arsenal because I am here and I feel we are in the rebuilding process of a big team again and I want to do that."

Wenger is flattered to be linked with Real, but has moved to assuage Arsenal fans' fears by insisting he will not turn his back on The Gunners.

"That is a good compliment that I take with a lot of pride - but I said many times I have a contract with Arsenal until 2008 and normally, I try always to respect my contracts," he said.

"I can say publicly that I will be at Arsenal."

Rahul, Sachin honoured

PTI, Mumbai

Indian captain Rahul Dravid and master batsman Sachin Tendulkar crossed significant milestones of their careers when they took the field in the third and final cricket Test against England at the Wankhede Stadium here today.

While Dravid earned his 100th Test cap, Tendulkar became the most capped Test player in Indian cricket history with this match being his 132nd outing in whites for the country.

Tendulkar surpassed the record of legendary allrounder Kapil Dev who represented India in 131 Tests.

Dravid joined an elite list of five Indian players to have played 100 or more Tests.

The Cricket Board was prompt in felicitating the celebrated players with its President Sharad Pawar presenting them mementos at a brief function before the start of the match.

Ace leg-spinner Anil Kumble, who bagged his 500th wicket in the preceding match at Mohali, was also presented the memento.

Rakib keeps lead

SPORTS REPORTER

International Master Abdullah Al-Rakib maintained his solo lead beating SM Rahman Emon in the final phase of the Mercantile Bank 32nd National Chess Championship.

Rakib led the table with 7.5 points after the eighth round games. In the other matches of the day IM Enamul Hossain, GM Ziaur Rahman, FM Rezaul Haque and Md. Hassan Emam won their respective matches.

Dhaka Bank tennis begins

SPORTS REPORTER

The Dhaka Bank Independence Day inter-club tennis and squash tournament, organized by Dhaka Club, began on Friday at the Dhaka Club tennis complex. Engineers' Club and Cadet College Club took part in the opening match.

The nine-team tournament was opened by Salim Bhuiyan, president of Dhaka Club Limited. The final will be held on March 26.

Advantage

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257-6) (Nafees 26, Nazim 104, Ehsanul 18, Faisal 66, Dhiman 141, Elias 51, Mushfiq 3-94, Shuvo 2-63, Farhad 4-50).

RAJSHAHI: First innings- 169-7 in 65 overs (Zahirul 18, Rafiqul 3, Farhad 57, Nayeem 58 not out, Shamimul 14 not out, extras 4; Ehsanul 3-14, Sunny 3-44).

DHAKA: First innings- 464 all out in 134.2 overs (overnight 316-6) (Uttam 71, Anwar 15, Kamrul 159, Mehra 12, Riyad 37, Mosharraf 21, Sajjad 18, Sharif 75 not out, Talha 25, extras 15; Zia 5-82, Sadik 3-99).

KHULNA: First innings- 157-6 in 42.4 overs (Sadat 17, Tushar 50 not out, Sahagir 50, Monirul 20, extras 5; Sharif 4-27, Mosharraf 2-37).

SYLHET: First Innings- 194 all out and 73 no loss in 12 overs (Imtiaz 45 not out, Golam Rahman 27 not out).

BARISAL: First Innings- 354 all out in 109.2 overs (overnight 94-1) (Imran 47, Hannan 59, Shahin 11, Nadif 28, Marhai 107, Arafat 66 not out, extras 15; Hasibul 3-86, Tapash 3-101, Enamul 2-89, Nabil 1-59).



PHOTO: AFP

I CAN FLY: Everton's James McFadden (C) is ecstatic after scoring against Aston Villa at Goodison Park on Saturday.

Taking globalisation too far?

Football

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

It's funny how, in an era of globalisation, the game remains steadfastly traditional on certain issues. West Ham manager Alan Pardew recently criticised Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger because his team did not feature a single Englishman. Similar fingers have been pointed at clubs such as Inter and Villarreal, teams largely made up of overseas players.

Wenger rebuffed Pardew's accusation, suggesting it bordered on racism, and while that may be going a bit far, he had every right to be annoyed. And that's not just because, when everybody is fit, the Frenchman's team features two full-fledged England internationals - two more than Pardew's West Ham.

Pardew obviously struck a chord, but it's a puerile one. Stocking your team with players

from your own country is somehow seen as "noble" and "good for the game," but, in fact, it isn't. Indeed, beyond the fact that domestic players usually have an easier time settling in (for obvious reasons) and are sometimes more appealing to sponsors, there really is no added benefit to having them on board, beyond protecting yourself from the xenophobes.

Traditionalists hark back to the magic of legendary teams like Celtic, the 1966-67 European champion, whose entire starting XI was born within 25 miles of Glasgow. That's great and wonderful. They were all from Glasgow, which made it relevant to Celtic, a Glaswegian team. Had they all been, say, Scottish, but not necessarily from the Glasgow area, would it still have been relevant? What if they had all been British? Or all European?

Where does it end? When does our need to differentiate based on passports and birth certificates

finally give way to common sense?

This nonsense has gone on long enough. It's nothing but thinly veiled xenophobia. But it's an especially pernicious xenophobia, because it's not a fear of the outsider, it's a fear of the outsider with the wrong kind of passport. Thus, a Sicilian playing for Inter would be OK, but not a Swiss. Equally, it would be acceptable for a Geordie to turn out for West Ham, but not someone from Calais. Never mind that Switzerland and Calais are closer to the San Siro and Upton Park, respectively, than Sicily and Newcastle.

The Bosman ruling brought a lot of honesty to the game when it abolished limits on foreign players. It wiped away hypocrisy and arbitrary distinctions.

Nobody is suggesting that clubs should not reflect the local character or that they should not invest in their youth systems. Indeed, it's absolutely crucial that they do so. And it often makes economic sense, too -- a bit of investment in kids goes a very long way.

But the point is that if you can't have home-grown players, it makes no difference whether the ones you have are from another part of the same country or another part of the world. You're still buying an outsider from somewhere else, something any moron with a cheque-book can do.

AUB cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Business Studies clinched the Asian University of Bangladesh (AUB) inter-department cricket tournament title beating English by 24 runs at the Uttara Friends Club ground on Friday.

Humayun Kabir of Business Studies was man of the match while Arif was declared the best player of the tournament.

VC of AUB Professor Dr. Abul Hassan M. Sadeq was present on the occasion and distributed prizes.

Gaibandha cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Munshipara Krira Sangshta defeated Abahani Krira Chakra by five wickets in the Naheed Cotton First Division Cricket League at the Gaibandha Stadium yesterday.

Battin first, Abahani were all out for just 80 runs in 29.1 overs.. Munshipara chased down the target in only 11.1 overs.

Tutul of Munshipara was adjudged man of the match for picking up five wickets.

PREMIERSHIP

Everton thump Villa

AFP, Liverpool

Everton racked up their sixth consecutive home win in the Premiership with a 4-1 defeat of Aston Villa.

There was a distinctly unmotivated air about David O'Leary's side as Everton cruised to a three-goal lead before half-time with goals from James McFadden, Tim Cahill and Leon Osman.

The solitary bright spot for the visitors was the lively performance of 19-year-old striker, Gabriel Agbonlahor, who marked his senior debut with a 64th-minute goal.

Everton had gone ahead after quarter of an hour. A free-kick from Alan Stubbs was knocked down by James Beattie and McFadden unleashed a sweet first-time shot from the edge of the area.

Villa came close to equalising twice in quick succession, Stubbs and Cahill clearing off the line from Agbonlahor and Steven Davis but they found themselves a further goal behind midway through the opening period.

Beattie was central to the action once more, flicking on a Phil Neville throw for McFadden, whose shot came back off the post and was bundled in by Cahill.

Beattie went close with an attempt to chip Thomas Sorensen before Everton claimed a third, shortly before half-time.

Cahill released Mikael Arteta down the left and the Spanish midfielder delivered a precise cutback cross which Osman dispatched into the bottom corner.

Agbonlahor opened his Premiership account by beating Richard Wright from a tight angle after going round experienced Scotland defender David Weir.

But Cahill completed Everton's best win of the season a minute from time, beating Sorensen from close range after a neat one-two from McFadden, Everton's outstanding player of the day.

Strauss puts

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Harbhajan, the ball racing to the boundary.

Strauss completed his century off the next delivery when he firmly swept for his 12th four. He was eventually caught behind off Harbhajan after adding 72 with Pietersen. He hit one six and 17 fours in his 240-ball knock.

Pietersen also fell in the last session, making a brisk 39 with one six and five fours before being caught behind off Sreesanth.

India's successes came late in the day as Strauss and Shah defied the attack for more than a session with their contrasting knocks. The opener was all patience and timing, while Shah went for shots from the beginning.

Shah punished Pathan, once flicking and twice driving him straight for three fours in an over. He reached his half-century in style, driving Harbhajan through the covers for his eighth four.

Sachin Tendulkar made his 132nd Test appearance, an Indian record.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the opening day of the third and final Test between India and England at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Saturday:

ENGLAND: First innings
Strauss c Dhoni b Harbhajan 128
Bell c Harbhajan b Sreesanth 18
Shah ret'd hurt 50
Pietersen c Dhoni b Sreesanth 39
Collingwood not out 11
Flintoff not out 17
Extras: (b-3, lb-3, nb-2, w-1) 9
Total: (For 3 wickets in 89 overs) 272
Fall of wickets: 1-52, 2-230, 3-242.

Bowler **O** **M** **R** **W**
Pathan 11 1 53 0
Sreesanth 17 4 51 2
Patel 18 3 45 0
Kumble 23 5 49 0
Harbhajan 20 3 68 1

Toss: India

Umpires: Darrell Hair (AUS) and Simon Taufel (AUS)

Sven rejects Juve talk

Football

INTERNET, undated

Sven Goran Eriksson has brushed off reports linking him with a move to Juventus.

The Swede's future has been the subject of intense speculation ever since it was revealed he would be stepping down as England manager after this summer's World Cup finals.

Reports emanating from Italy claim Eriksson could take charge at Juve if Fabio Capello leaves Turin to return to Real Madrid.

Eriksson is highly-regarded in Italy after his success at Lazio and there are a number of clubs thought to be keen on securing his services when he leaves England.

The England chief insists he has not spoken to any interested clubs and that he will not let the speculation distract him as he prepares for the World Cup finals in Germany.

"I know nothing about my future and anyway now it's not important,"

Eriksson told Corriere dello Sport.

"We are in March, I'm working for England and I want to give everything to do good things in Germany. Now this counts only.

"Juve? These are things I've read in the papers, but I know absolutely nothing.

"Now I'm the England coach and I've not spoken with anyone."

Turning his attentions to the World Cup, Eriksson believes England stand a good chance of doing well in Germany.

"We've played well in friendlies and we have not had many injuries," added Eriksson.

"In June, we believe to be at the top you have to hit the ground running. We have really good players and I'm absolutely satisfied by my midfield - there we have class and technical players.

"My dream is winning World Cup with England."

Eriksson knows his side face competition for the World Cup with Brazil, the biggest obstacle in England's way

"Brazil are the favourite number

one, but also Italy, Argentina, Germany, France and England have possibilities," concluded Eriksson.

Deisler to miss World Cup

AFP, Munich

German international midfielder Sebastian Deisler will miss this summer's World Cup after scans in the United States revealed his knee injury would sideline him for six months.

Deisler sustained the injury to his right knee in a training ground collision with Bayern Munich teammate Owen Hargreaves on Tuesday.

A specialist in the United States confirmed the seriousness of the injury meaning more World Cup heartache for the 26-year-old who also missed the 2002 World Cup finals with a knee problem.

Klinsmann backs Schweinsteiger

AFP, Munich

Germany manager Jurgen Klinsmann has told Bayern Munich midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger that he has his full backing after a Munich newspaper accused the player of being involved in a match-fixing scandal.

"We all know that the story has no substance," Klinsmann said. "At the moment rumours are just being belloyed out in Germany."

"It is not just damaging for football but for the whole of society."

Klinsmann has also assured the 21-year-old Schweinsteiger that he would still be considered for Germany's friendly match against the United States in Dortmund on Wednesday.

Schweinsteiger has won 24 caps for his country and is one of Klinsmann's top players heading into this summer's World Cup finals on home soil.

The Munich-based TZ newspaper reported in its Friday edition that Schweinsteiger was one high-profile footballer placing suspiciously high bets on rigged matches.

The TZ also named two players from the second division 1860 Munich club, Australian international Paul Agostino and Dutchman Quido Lanzaat, in connection with the scandal.

Matthaus quits Paranaense post

AFP, Berlin

West Germany's 1990 World Cup hero Lothar Matthaus has quit as coach of Brazilian first division side Atletico Paranaense citing personal reasons for his decision.

The 44-year-old Matthaus took over at Paranaense in late January but said he was missing his Hungary-based family and had subsequently tendered his resignation.

"On Friday I informed the club of my decision to step down," Matthaus told Bild daily.

"My coaching spell in Brazil is now over. It is not a sporting decision as my relationship with the fans and the team was good.

"However the language barrier and a different mentality caused problems. My wife Marijana and the children are also in Budapest and I miss them. It is 12 hours away from Brazil and that is too far for regular trips home."

After his brief stint at Paranaense Matthaus has resigned on the market and looking for a new challenge.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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29 Leave in the lurch			Rombauer
31 Cold-storage train car			48 Small barrel
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			51 Rotation duration

Solution time: 25 mins.
ABEL LET BLOB
IOWA OVA LOGO
DUET CAP UOLA
STREAK SPIKES
PELT ALLTIERES
AGO REO EON
SOCRATIC TILES
KEIG KIO
GADGET STIFFS
ALICE OPT ORO
SEWN ORE CALM
PENT LOP YULE

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12						13			14	
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CRYPTOQUIP
S O A G C O A F V G ' R P X B
C X X W V E H C A X Z C X K V
E X X W . H C X X W C O A S X J P R
J H B O C X Z C X K H C R F X Z C O .
Yesterday's Cryptquip: A BRAND-NEW CALLIGRAPHY SHOP IS OPENING SOON. IT WILL REPORTEDLY BE CALLED PEN STATION.
Today's Cryptquip Clue: X 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.