

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.

As 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 Emom 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.

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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, Rafiq 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, Kamru 159, Mehrab 12, Riyad 37, Mosharraf 21, Sajid 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 2-33).

SYLHET: First Innings- 194 all out and 73 no loss in 12 overs (Imliaz 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, Nadir 28, Marshal 107, Arafat 66 not out, extras 15; Hasibul 3-86, Tapash 3-101, Enamul 2-89, Nabil 1-59).



PHOTO: AFP
ICAN 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-blooded 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 Utara 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 Sangshto 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.

Clark leads Aus

FROM PAGE 12

Boucher made only two before he clipped Kasprowicz to midwicket, where Justin Langer took a smart low catch.

Rudolph's dismissal half an hour after lunch signalled a rapid end to South Africa's resistance. Nicky Boje batted aggressively to make 14 off 15 balls with three fours but he was out to the first ball of Clark's second spell of the day, pushing back a return catch.

Clark's final wicket came off the final ball of the same over when he bowled Andre Nel.

Langer and Hayden took their side to within 24 runs of victory before Hayden was caught off a mistimed pull against Ntini. Three balls later Ntini bowled Langer off an inside edge and with the first ball of his next over he trapped Ponting leg before wicket.

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