

# Aussies shift favourites tag to Japan

## Football

AFP, Singapore

Lucas Neill and Harry Kewell have pinpointed Japan as favourites to win the Asian Cup, not Australia, but said the Socceroos have the desire and hunger to win.

Australia have been installed as odds on favourites to win the 16-team tournament starting on July 7 at their first attempt after a strong showing at the World Cup last year in Germany.

But West Ham United defender Neill insists defending champions Japan, who Australia beat at the World Cup, are favourites.

"I wouldn't say we were the favourites, I'd say we were one of the stronger teams," he said here where Australia are training ahead of a warm-up game against Singapore on Saturday.

"Japan, obviously, are, I would

say, the favourites because they are more experienced at this level, in this environment, and we are coming here to try and challenge teams such as them."

"We have to approach it with a different mentality. We have a lot to prove because we are the new kids on the block."

Liverpool star Kewell, on the way back from injury, said it would be huge for Australia to win, but cautioned that it was one game at a time, starting with Oman on July 8 in Bangkok.

"It would be massive to win, it is a massive tournament," he said.

"It'll be hard, there are some great teams out here and we know what we are going to be up against. To win it would be something phenomenal for Australian football, but it's still a long way off."

"We have some hard games coming up and we just have to concentrate on the first game. Obviously, you have to set out to win a competition but we just have to

take one game at a time."

Australia are grouped in the July 7-29 tournament with Oman, Iraq and Thailand.

They have been acclimatising and training in Singapore for nearly a week, getting used to the hot and humid conditions they will encounter in Thailand.

Neill said it would be impossible to play the type of up-tempo football they did at the World Cup in the tropics.

"It'll be impossible to do 90 minutes of closing down and high intensity. We could probably only do that for 20-30 minutes in a game," he said.

"Keeping possession will be a big thing because if you have it the other team is chasing."

"So I think patience will be a key, to make sure that for long periods we can keep the ball and conserve the energy for when we want to explode and surprise people."

# FIFA gets Visa

## Football

AFP, Zurich

Football's world governing body FIFA on Thursday announced a new 170 million dollar sponsorship deal with credit card group Visa International.

The deal effectively ends a long-running commercial and legal battle involving the other US credit giant MasterCard, which will cost FIFA up to 90 million dollars.

Visa becomes FIFA's sixth major commercial sponsor to sign a long-term deal, replacing its arch-rival MasterCard with worldwide rights to all FIFA competitions from 2007 to 2014.

"I am pleased to have all six FIFA Partners on board so that we can now focus our attention and energy towards ensuring the staging of world-class football competitions as well as using the power of the sport

to tackle some major social issues," FIFA President Sepp Blatter said in a statement.

The companies are guaranteed exposure to a mass worldwide audience over the next seven years.

FIFA estimated that the 2006 World Cup in Germany alone generated 73,000 hours of television coverage in 214 countries and in South America in 2014.

The US giant had been seeking 275 million dollars compensation in Zurich's arbitration court for breach of contract, according to Blatter.

"South Africa is a key location for Visa and there is great potential for us to work together with FIFA to leave behind a positive legacy following the 2010 event," he said.

Blatter said Wednesday that the Visa sponsorship was worth 170 million dollars, ten million dollars less than envisaged for the original deal that was meant to run from last year.

MasterCard had locked world football's governing body in a legal battle after it emerged that Visa and FIFA were negotiating a new deal.

MasterCard sponsored the 2006 World Cup in Germany and the credit card giant argued in US courts that it had a contractual right of first refusal to continue the sponsorship in 2010 in South Africa and in South America in 2014.

The US giant had been seeking 275 million dollars compensation in Zurich's arbitration court for breach of contract, according to Blatter.

The two sides finally reached a 90 million dollar out-of-court settlement earlier this month.

FIFA fired four people in connection with the contract mess after a US court ruling said governing body negotiators had lied repeatedly to MasterCard officials and gave Visa updates on the talks with its rival.

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10X3



# Qureshi dreams of a nation transfixed

AFP, London



Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi said on Thursday he hoped his performances at Wimbledon would inspire his fellow Pakistanis to put down their cricket bats and try out a tennis racket.

But Qureshi said aspiring young players in his homeland faced a struggle to make it in tennis, with the set-up virtually non-existent.

Qureshi, who grew up playing on the grass courts of Lahore, was knocked out of the second round of Wimbledon in straight sets on Thursday by former world number one Marat Safin.

But nonetheless, he was the first Pakistani to play in the Wimbledon men's singles since Haroon Rahim in 1976 and matched his compatriot's best-ever performance by reaching the second round.

"Being Pakistani and playing a world class player, US Open champion, Australian Open champion, is a big deal," Qureshi said.

"I've just heard everybody is going crazy."

"As a player I'm pretty satisfied because in Pakistan people don't know that much about tennis but everybody knows about Wimbledon. As a player I think I do have to start winning bigger tournaments for people to recognise the sport and me."

"So far I've heard nobody is thinking cricket or talking cricket, so it's a good feeling. I hope I made them proud."

"It's a big step in my career, also. It has opened a lot of doors. I have a lot of self-belief that I can do well and be with the big boys in the top 100."

Qureshi, 27, said that young tennis players in cricket-crazy Pakistan faced a fight to make it as a professional, with facilities and financial backing scarce.

"There is no set-up," the world number 279 said.

"They say they're working on it. They're trying to build a new tennis centre -- the only one we have in Pakistan, which is a shame. By the time it's going to be complete, probably I'm going to retire."

"But they're saying they're going to start working on it. So I hope after this... they're going to get serious about it."

He added: "I've been really lucky and fortunate that my parents could support me. Back home there are a lot of players that want to play but they're just waiting for the sponsors because they can't afford it. So it's a pity."

"I have to do my job on the tennis court so maybe the government think there's another sport besides cricket. Hopefully this week I've done good for some other people, also."

Qureshi said his mother Nosheen Ihtisham was the Pakistani national champion for 10 years, while her father was the Indian number one before partition.

"Out of all my brothers and sisters I was the most sporty one. When I was younger I always used to play all the sports, so I was master of none. But when I was 14 years old she just took me to the tennis club."

"I used to play cricket in my school and soccer and stuff like that, and in a way she just wanted me to give it a shot. I never thought I would be a professional tennis player when I started. It was just a hobby in a way."

"Then when I was 16 I got into the International Tennis Federation team that sponsored me for two years, and that changed all my life."

"Tennis has given me a way to make my parents proud of me, and that's a really big thing for me. It's really good and nice when your parents are proud of you. That's why it feels good."

Tatiana Golovin of France returns the ball against Tamira Paszek of Austria during their second round match of the Wimbledon on Thursday. The French 17th seed was beaten 6-2, 3-6, 6-1.

## Makaay moves to Feyenoord

INTERNET, undated

Bayern Munich striker Roy Makaay has completed a move to Dutch side Feyenoord, the Bundesliga club has announced. The 32-year-old reached an agreement with the Rotterdam outfit on Wednesday, before the deal was made official on Thursday morning after he passed his medical.

The Dutchman, who was keen to return to his homeland, had also been a target for PSV Eindhoven.

"I and Bayern Munich would like to thank Roy Makaay for four successful years," chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge told the club's website.

"He was a very important player for Bayern, who wanted to go back to his homeland, and we wish him and his family all the best for the future."

Feyenoord are also expected to complete the signing of Wolfsburg defender Kevin Hofland on Thursday.

The two clubs have already reached an agreement for the 28-year-old, with Hofland now needing to discuss personal terms and undergo a medical.

## Au revoir red knickers

AFP, London

Tatiana Golovin is determined to keep her underwear firmly in the public spotlight -- despite being forced to pack her bright red knickers away after only two matches at Wimbledon.

The French 17th seed was beaten 6-2, 3-6, 6-1 by unheralded Austrian Tamira Paszek, much to the disappointment of the gang of photographers who had crowded around court number 15 in the hope of catching a flash of the scarlet hotpants Golovin was sporting under her white dress.

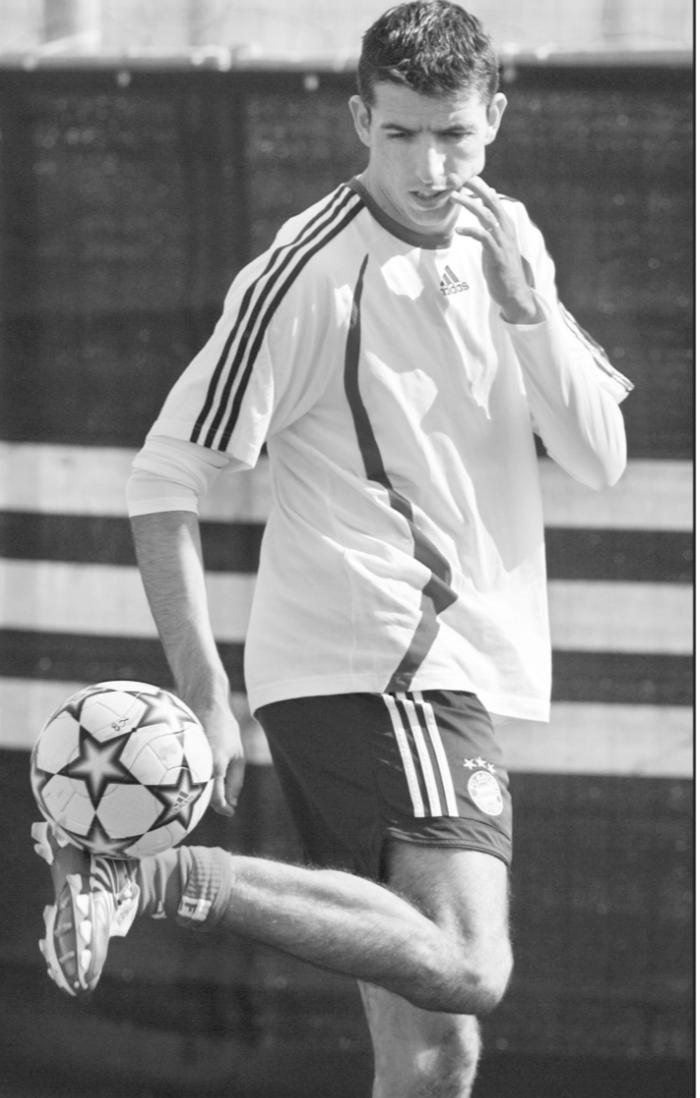
But she offered her growing army of fans a tantalising promise that she would be back with some more eye-catching underwear.

"We're going to play in the United States so the knickers might be another colour," the 19-year-old said. "You'll see. Of course I've got something crazy planned."

Golovin's outfit certainly raised plenty of eyebrows around the All England Club and she revealed that she had not checked whether her attire breached the strict all-white clothing code.

"I might be pushing it but I'm still within the rules," she said. "I like to do that with everything in life."

"I've not thought about what I'll do next year, but definitely I always have a little surprise."



ROY MAKAY

# Gamblers on the prowl

## Football

AFP, Singapore

Betting on major sporting events is illegal in much of Asia but it remains rampant, and police across the region are on full alert ahead of the Asian Cup finals.

Asians like a flutter with money changing hands at market stalls or in underground gambling dens, often run by organised crime syndicates. More still is wagered on burgeoning online gambling websites.

Some of Asia's biggest betters are in China where underground rings are rife. In 2005, a man was jailed for 30 months in a football gambling case involving more than 75 million dollars.

Police said heavy betting was expected on the July 7-29 Asian Cup, much of it via the Internet, but refused to disclose details of their anti-gambling plans.

Chinese police set up a special squad last year to combat illegal gambling on football with the national Super League unable to shake allegations of corruption in the shape of "black whistles," or bribed referees.

Like China, football-mad Thailand is a nation of keen gamblers, even though betting is illegal.

So much money changes hands that one economic research centre estimated that Thais bet nearly one billion dollars on the 2006 World Cup.

Police take it seriously, arresting more than 750 people for illegal

gambling during the four-week tournament last year.

The Asian Cup, co-hosted by Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam, is expected to attract such business but nowhere near the scale of the World Cup, said Thai police chiefs.

"We don't think there will be any big illegal betting on the Asian Cup," said Lieutenant General Phanu Kerdilarpbhol, deputy head of Bangkok's metropolitan police.

"Thais are fond of the English Premier League, Italy's Serie A or even the Spanish La Liga rather than Asian football. They know players and figures of those teams, rather than teams of this tournament."

Betting, in whatever form, including on football, is also outlawed in Indonesia, although betting is common.

National police spokesman Bambang Kuncoko said there had been no specific moves to prevent bets placed on the Asian Cup.

"We are cracking down on gambling on a regular basis, by conducting raids on suspected gambling dens and operations, but there is nothing specific related to the Asian Cup matches," he said.

Even though communist Vietnam outlaws gambling, which is considered a "social evil," betting on football remains popular and widespread.

In April the Ho Chi Minh City People's Court jailed 12 members of an illegal online football betting ring and handed suspended terms to 10 more defendants.

The network had taken online bets worth up to 50,000 dollars per day on matches in the Vietnamese domestic league and on games played in Germany, Italy, Spain, Britain and in the European Championships.

Illegal bets are expected to be placed on the Asian Cup.

It is a similar story in Malaysia, where Football Association of Malaysia secretary-general Ibrahim Saad said they were being vigilant.

"We do not know how much will be bet but we need to be vigilant. We cannot take any chances," Ibrahim said.

But unlike the World Cup when police forces around the region liaised, each country appears to be taking its own initiatives for the Asian Cup.

"We take care of our own turf," said Ibrahim.

Asian Football Confederation president Mohammed bin Hammam has called for betting to be made legal so it can be managed, and countries that have followed this path claim success.

South Korea has also managed to control illicit sports betting by legalising it, as Australia, where Centrebet's Neil Evans said interest in the Asian Cup was building.

"They are not really backing anyone but Australia," he added.

## CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	38	Stick in	2	Nashville	22	Dull	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
5	On	40	Little —	ment	23	Initial	12	13	14				
9	Omega	41	-Peep	ment	24	U.K.	15	16	17				
13	precede	41	Huge	fliers	25	Be unwilling	18						