

FORMULA 1 Alonso on way out

AFP, Madrid

Mercedes has given the green light to McLaren to drop Spain's two-time Formula One world champion Fernando Alonso from the team for next season, a Spanish sporting daily said Thursday.

Mercedes bosses met in Germany "and reached the conclusion it is in the best interests of the company and the (McLaren-Mercedes) team to let go of the Spaniard at the end of the year," the Marca daily said.

The decision was motivated by the poor personal relations between Alonso and both his British teammate Lewis Hamilton and McLaren boss Ron Dennis, Marca said, quoting sources close to McLaren-Mercedes.

It was "backed yesterday (Wednesday) by all the partners and the team," including Dennis.

"This situation means that all roads for Alonso lead to Renault," the team with which the Spaniard won world titles in 2005 and 2006, the newspaper said.

Renault "promised him a place with the possibility of winning the title and is currently taking steps to find the funds necessary to sign him on a contract equivalent" to the one he has with McLaren, Marca said.

It noted that Alonso could not join Ferrari, which has Brazilian driver Felipe Massa under contract through 2010 and Finland's Kimi Raikkonen to 2009.

As world champion he expected to be treated as number one and became increasingly irritated at what he perceived to be McLaren's favouritism towards Hamilton.

Rookie Hamilton tops the Formula One drivers' standings, four points ahead of Alonso with the last race of the season scheduled for Sunday in Brazil. Raikkonen, in third place, also has a chance to take his first world title.

ANC seeds named

AFP, Accra

Hosts Ghana and title holders Egypt are among the top seeds for the 2008 African Nations Cup draw here Friday.

Another couple of former champions, Nigeria and Tunisia, complete the first tier for the two-hour ceremony at the International Conference Centre in this coastal city.

Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Morocco and Senegal are seeded second, Guinea, Mali, South Africa and Zambia third and Angola, Benin, Namibia and Sudan fourth for the biennial tournament.

The possibility exists of Nigeria, Ivory Coast, South Africa and Angola being brought together during the two-hour event scheduled to start at 1500GMT, or Ghana, Cameroon, Mali and Sudan.

Egypt (five titles), Cameroon and Ghana (four each), Nigeria (two) and Ivory Coast, Morocco, Sudan, South Africa and Tunisia are the nine former champions in contention.

And Zambia (twice), Guinea, Mali and Senegal have finished runners-up in a competition that has grown from a three-team tournament staged in Khartoum in 1957 to a 16-nation spectacle broadcast worldwide.

Namibia and Benin timed their runs perfectly to snatch places in the last round of qualifying while potential surprise packets Sudan topped Group 4 ahead of 2004 champions Tunisia, one of three runners-up to make it.

Ghana are used to hosting the cream of African football, most recently in 2000 as co-hosts with Nigeria, and fixtures will be staged in Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi and Tamale.

Quarterfinals, semifinals, third-place playoff and the final go to 30 minutes of extra time if necessary followed by a penalty shootout should the teams remain deadlocked.

Accra will host the opening match on January 20 and the final on February 10 with particularly brave punters predicting a show-down between hosts Ghana and Didier Drogba-inspired Ivory Coast for the title.

Rejoinder

In your widely circulated newspaper published on October 10, 2007, regarding the collapse of the press box at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, you have noted Shaheedullah and Associates Ltd was contractor of the work. But this is not the fact.

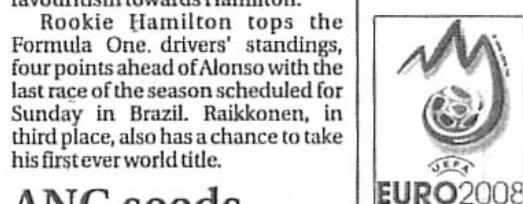
We were not involved in any way for preparation of design and drawing, including construction work of the said press box. Our consultancy service is only related with preparation of architectural and engineering design and drawing and supervision of construction work. We have never been involved in any construction work.

OUR REPLY
We regret the error, a case of mistaken identity. In fact, Shaheedullah and New Associates was involved in design and construction of the press box at BNS. SM Shaheedullah, managing director of Shaheedullah and Associates, was also the proprietor of Shaheedullah and Associates in the past but his associates had decided to work separately under the firm's old name.

England star Wayne Rooney (L) holds off a challenge from Russia's Sergei Ignashevich during their Euro 2008 qualifying match in Moscow on Wednesday. Russia won 2-1.

Gerrard hoping for a favour

THE GUARDIAN



Steven Gerrard left the scene of an ignominious night in English football, describing it as "unthinkable" that the national team were on the verge of failing to qualify for a major tournament for the first time since the World Cup in 1994.

The acting England captain spoke about a devastating and "mad" spell in the second half when he and his teammates contributed heavily to their own downfall.

Gerrard said the goalkeeper, Paul Robinson, "will feel disappointed with the second goal" and accepted his culpability after squandering a splendid chance to make it 2-0.

"Wayne is adamant that it was outside the box but the referee seemed to overrule the linesman and give a penalty that wasn't."

sibility. We were in control, 1-0 up, and the game-plan was working perfectly. I had a great chance to make it 2-0 and then we had a mad five or 10 minutes when the game changed in their favour.

"We've worked so hard over the last five or six months to put ourselves in the driving seat and make our favourites to go through our qualifying group. When we were 1-0 ahead, we started to believe we were nearly there and had one foot in the tournament. But football's a cruel game and changes, decisions and mistakes change football matches."

Gerrard dwelt on the penalty that was awarded against Wayne Rooney, claiming that the point of contact with Russia's Konstantin Zyryanov had been outside the penalty area. "We were hard done by," he said.

"Wayne is adamant that it was outside the box but the referee seemed to overrule the linesman and give a penalty that wasn't."

That turned the whole game in their favour. It gave them a lot of confidence. They were on the front foot after that and they put us under a lot of pressure. But we should really have been stronger and seen the game out."

Of his own chance Gerrard added: "I didn't expect to have so much time and I seemed to be waiting for an eternity for the ball to come down so I could hit it. But I'm disappointed because I should have done better."

The defeat means England are relying on Russia not winning their next two games before England finish against the current leaders, Croatia. "It's unthinkable that we could have a European Championships without England being there but it's very important that we don't give up," Gerrard added. "We are waiting and hoping for other people to do us a favour but we have to stick together, focus and continue believing right until the end."

The Czechs created a bombshell result in Munich, commented the daily Sport, which devoted its first four pages to Wednesday's humiliation of Germany, previously undefeated in qualifying.

"Bruckner's boys put in an excellent performance which will be remembered for a long time," it added, referring to veteran manager Bruckner.

The Czech team blew away the already-qualified Germans in Munich despite the absence of a number of key players including the injured Tomas Rosicky, it underlined.

The result has revived optimism about the national team, tarnished by tabloid reports of hotel orgies off the pitch and unconvincing performances on it earlier this year, papers said.

Bruckner, whose future was even the subject of speculation in the German press, can now boast three successful qualification campaigns in a row, the daily Dnes pointed out, after leading the Czechs into the Euro 2004 and 2006 World Cup finals.

The German press, which heaped praise on its team after they secured their Euro 2008 ticket with a goalless draw against Ireland on Saturday, put the defeat down to a terrible off-night.

"Stumbling Setback" said the back page headline in the Bild tabloid.

"Our national team had just won us all over -- and then this," it added, recalling how German fans had greeted the result with loud whistles.

'I want to quit Chelsea'

AFP, London

is said to be rested," he says.

Former India coach Aunshuman Gaekwad agrees with this decision to rest David.

"He hasn't looked confident of late. His body language hasn't been great.

So it isn't wrong to see him sit out of this game," he says.

The debate about the final eleven was kicked up on the eve of the game when India seemed to be having a team meeting on field.

Chairman of national selectors Dilip Vengsarkar, skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni, deputy Yuvraj Singh and senior pro Sachin Tendulkar were seen one-by-one popping up fingers from closed fists: the usual gesture of someone making a headcount.

David is it is known, the decision on David was taken at that time and the reason: his non-utility to the team when he isn't scoring runs. The feeling among the decision-makers is while Tendulkar and Sourav Ganguly can bowl, David, while fielding, is merely a making a headcount.

As it is learnt now, the decision on David was taken at that time and the reason: his non-utility to the team when he isn't scoring runs. The feeling among the decision-makers is while Tendulkar and Sourav Ganguly can bowl, David, while fielding, is merely a making a headcount.

Interestingly, David had three slumps of ODI forms in his career.

He was dropped in 1997-98 but very recently he had survived the axe even when the runs had dried out. In the period overlapping the World Cup in 2003 and the New Zealand ODI series before that, David went without scoring a 50

plus some runs in the last round of the World Cup in 2003.

That means 'yes' to be rested for a game, but 'no' to miss out from the ODI squad for Pakistan series.

for 12 innnings.

If fact, even before this World Cup, things weren't smooth for David. In the tri-series in Malaysia and the subsequent games against West Indies and Sri Lanka, David featured in 10 games without reaching the half-century mark.

So how is it that David missed the cut since this time around the non-50 games count has just reached 10? The reason: Like in 2007, David isn't the skipper and as in 2003, he isn't a wicket-keeper now. When the runs dry, David doesn't have a plank to hold on to.

David for now is banking on the bat to row out of troubled waters.

During the mid-innings break, he had a long session with bowling coach Venkatesh Prasad on field.

This was followed by a long discussion.

And when the Indian innings began, it was clear David's absence in the XI was temporary, considering his replacement Dinesh Kaarthik was out for a duck.

Gaekwad gives his take on this.

"One thing is clear: The people who have replaced David are nowhere close to him. He is a guy who will consolidate when there is a fall of an early wicket. He should be your No 3 and he has lots of cricket left in him," he says.

That means 'yes' to be rested for a game, but 'no' to miss out from the ODI squad for Pakistan series.

for 12 innnings.

If fact, even before this World Cup, things weren't smooth for David. In the tri-series in Malaysia and the subsequent games against West Indies and Sri Lanka, David featured in 10 games without reaching the half-century mark.

So how is it that David missed the cut since this time around the non-50 games count has just reached 10? The reason: Like in 2007, David isn't the skipper and as in 2003, he isn't a wicket-keeper now. When the runs dry, David doesn't have a plank to hold on to.

David for now is banking on the bat to row out of troubled waters.

During the mid-innings break, he had a long session with bowling coach Venkatesh Prasad on field.

This was followed by a long discussion.

And when the Indian innings began, it was clear David's absence in the XI was temporary, considering his replacement Dinesh Kaarthik was out for a duck.

Gaekwad gives his take on this.

"One thing is clear: The people who have replaced David are nowhere close to him. He is a guy who will consolidate when there is a fall of an early wicket. He should be your No 3 and he has lots of cricket left in him," he says.

That means 'yes' to be rested for a game, but 'no' to miss out from the ODI squad for Pakistan series.

for 12 innnings.

If fact, even before this World Cup, things weren't smooth for David. In the tri-series in Malaysia and the subsequent games against West Indies and Sri Lanka, David featured in 10 games without reaching the half-century mark.

So how is it that David missed the cut since this time around the non-50 games count has just reached 10? The reason: Like in 2007, David isn't the skipper and as in 2003, he isn't a wicket-keeper now. When the runs dry, David doesn't have a plank to hold on to.

David for now is banking on the bat to row out of troubled waters.

During the mid-innings break, he had a long session with bowling coach Venkatesh Prasad on field.

This was followed by a long discussion.

And when the Indian innings began, it was clear David's absence in the XI was temporary, considering his replacement Dinesh Kaarthik was out for a duck.

Gaekwad gives his take on this.

"One thing is clear: The people who have replaced David are nowhere close to him. He is a guy who will consolidate when there is a fall of an early wicket. He should be your No 3 and he has lots of cricket left in him," he says.

That means 'yes' to be rested for a game, but 'no' to miss out from the ODI squad for Pakistan series.

for 12 innnings.

If fact, even before this World Cup, things weren't smooth for David. In the tri-series in Malaysia and the subsequent games against West Indies and Sri Lanka, David featured in 10 games without reaching the half-century mark.

So how is it that David missed the cut since this time around the non-50 games count has just reached 10? The reason: Like in 2007, David isn't the skipper and as in 2003, he isn't a wicket-keeper now. When the runs dry, David doesn't have a plank to hold on to.

David for now is banking on the bat to row out of troubled waters.

During the mid-innings break, he had a long session with bowling coach Venkatesh Prasad on field.

This was followed by a long discussion.

And when the Indian innings began, it was clear David's absence in the XI was temporary, considering his replacement Dinesh Kaarthik was out for a duck.

Gaekwad gives his take on this.

"One thing is clear: The people who have replaced David are nowhere close to him. He is a guy who will consolidate when there is a fall of an early wicket. He should be your No 3 and he has lots of cricket left in him," he says.

That means 'yes' to be rested for a game, but 'no' to miss out from the ODI squad for Pakistan series.

for 12 innnings.

If fact, even before this World Cup, things weren't smooth for David. In the tri-series in Malaysia and the subsequent games against West Indies and Sri Lanka, David featured in 10 games without reaching the half-century mark.

So how is it that David missed the cut since this time around the non-50 games count has just reached 10? The reason: Like in 2007, David isn't the skipper and as in 2003, he isn't a wicket-keeper now. When the runs dry, David doesn't have a plank to hold on to.

David for now is banking on the bat to row out of troubled waters.

During the mid-innings break, he had a long session with bowling coach Venkatesh Prasad on field.

This was followed by a long discussion.

And when the Indian innings began, it was clear David's absence in the XI was temporary, considering his replacement Dinesh Kaarthik was out for a duck.

Gaekwad gives his take on this.

"One thing is clear: The people who have replaced David are nowhere close to him. He is a guy who will consolidate when there is a fall of an early wicket. He should be your No 3 and he has lots of cricket left in him," he says.