

BANNED

Butt for 10 yrs, Asif 7 & Aamer 5

Cricket

AFP, Doha

An anti-corruption tribunal of the International Cricket Council Saturday banned former Pakistan captain Salman Butt for ten years, Mohammad Asif for seven years and Mohammad Aamer for five years for their role in a spot-fixing betting scam.

A statement read out at the tribunal said: "The tribunal heard the charges as Aamer agreed to bowl no-balls, and did bowl no-balls and Butt was party to the bowling of those deliberate balls, and the tribunal imposed the following sanctions.

"On Butt ten years ineligibility, five years of which are suspended on the condition that he doesn't commit further breaches of the code, and that he participates under the auspices of the Pakistan Cricket Board in a

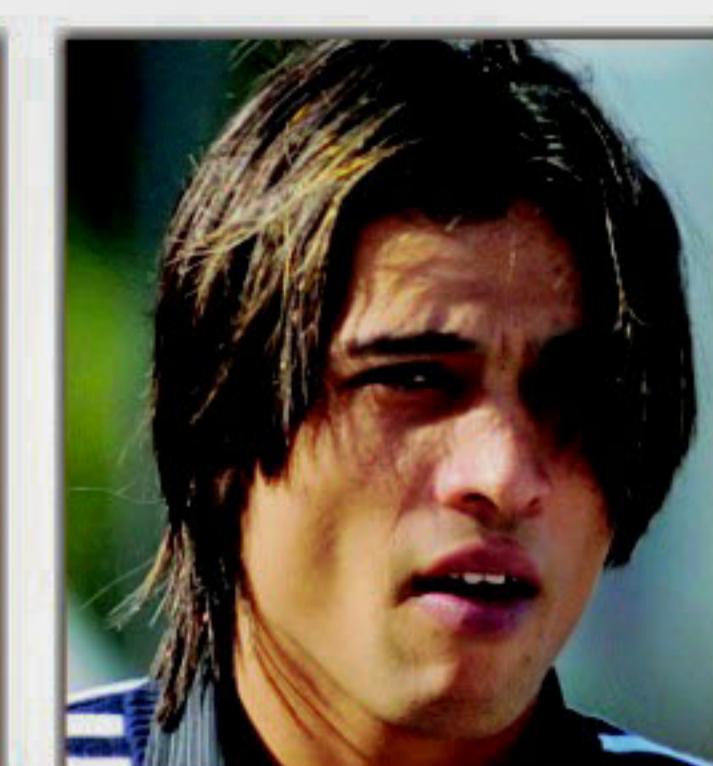
programme of anti-corruption education.

"On Asif, a sanction of seven years of ineligibility, two years of which are suspended on the condition that he commits no further breach of the code and also participates in an anti-corruption programme.

"On Aamer a sanction of five years ineligibility. No further sanctions are imposed on any player."

The decisions came after a lengthy nine-hour hearing at the Qatar Financial Center, and following much argument after the players' lawyers requested the verdict be adjourned as it could affect the criminal case against the players in London.

The charges relate to alleged incidents during a Test match against England at Lord's last year, when Britain's News of the World newspaper claimed the players were willing to deliberately bowl no-balls.



SALMAN BUTT

TESTS
Matches 33
Runs 1889
Average 30.46
High Score 122
ODIs
Matches 78
Runs 2725
Average 36.82

MOHAMMAD ASIF

TESTS
Matches 23
Wkts 106
Average 24.36
Best Bowling 6-41
ODIs
Matches 38
Wkts 46
Average 33.13

MOHAMMAD AAMER

TESTS
Matches 14
Wkts 51
Average 29.09
Best Bowling 6-84
ODIs
Matches 15
Wkts 25
Average 24

ately bowl no-balls.

The newspaper alleged the players, who are currently provisionally suspended from international cricket, had colluded in a spot-fixing betting scam organised by British-based agent Mazhar Majeed.

The members of the tribunal, headed by Michael Beloff, heard the case for six days last month before deferring the announcement on the request of players' lawyers.

Last month Beloff revealed that while Asif and Aamer were absolved of the charges relating to another match, the third Test at The Oval (played before the Lord's match) one charge against Butt remained under investigation.

In a separate development on Friday, British prosecutors charged the three players as well as their agent with corruption offences and summoned them in court on March 17.

The Pakistan trio have repeatedly denied wrongdoing and had shown confidence of resuming their careers.

The bans on Pakistan players have come just a fortnight before the tenth World Cup starts in the sub-continent, highlighting the difficult times the game of cricket is facing against corruption.

Cricket was badly hit by the menace of match-fixing in 2000, resulting in life bans on Pakistan's Salim Malik and Ata-ur Rehman, India's Mohammad Azharuddin and Ajay Sharma and South Africa's Hansie Cronje.

Butt, Aamer and Asif became the first players banned in spot-fixing, the latest innovation in which players obey specific orders during the game pre-arranged with bookmakers.

The players have 21 days to appeal against the sanctions in the Court of Arbitration for Sport, based in Switzerland.

Henry had no qualms

AFP, London

Liverpool owner John W. Henry insisted Friday he had no qualms about splashing out a big fee for Newcastle striker Andy Carroll so long as the club emerged 15 million pounds (20 million dollars) up on the sale of Fernando Torres to champions Chelsea.

The Reds' decision to splash out £35 million on Carroll, still in only his first Premier League season, raised eyebrows but Henry said the fee was always contingent upon the money they received for Torres.

"The fee for Torres was dependent on what Newcastle asked for Carroll," Henry told The Guardian ahead of a weekend clash with Chelsea that could see the forward make a debut for his new club against the one he's just left.

"The negotiation for us was simply the difference in prices paid by Chelsea and to Newcastle."

"Those prices could have been £35 million (from Chelsea for Torres) and £20 million (to Newcastle for Carroll), 40 and 25 or

50 and 35.

"It was ultimately up to Newcastle how much this was all going to cost. They (Newcastle) made a hell of a deal. We felt the same way."

With Ryan Babel moving to Hoffenheim for £6 million, the difference on the Carroll deal allowed Liverpool to pay for the £22.8 million arrival of Uruguay forward Luiz Suarez from Ajax.

Henry though said he was surprised by Chelsea's decision to pay £50 million for Torres and added this raised question whether the London side, bankrolled by Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich, were truly committed to meeting UEFA's impending financial fair play rules.

"I was surprised Monday morning to receive an offer (from Chelsea for Fernando Torres) in that amount (£50 million) at the same time they were announcing such large losses (£71 million for 2009-10)," Henry said.

Henry, whose Fenway Sports Group also owns the Boston Red Sox baseball team, added: "We've always spent money we've generated rather than deficit-spending and that will be the case in Liverpool."

Neuer Schalke's hero

AFP, Dortmund

Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer produced an outstanding performance on Friday to earn his side Schalke 04 a point after a goalless draw at Bundesliga leaders Borussia Dortmund.

With Germany set to face Italy in a friendly here at Dortmund's Signal Iduna Park on Wednesday, Neuer boosted his chances of facing the Italians in the battle with Leverkusen's goalkeeper Rene Adler for Germany's Number One shirt.

"Manuel Neuer single-handedly earned the draw for Schalke," said Dortmund midfielder Nuri Sahin after Neuer made ten clear saves, touching the ball 66 times on a

busy evening.

While the result extends Dortmund's lead at the top of the table to 12 points before the rest of the weekend's matches, Dortmund were only denied a potential-winning goal by Neuer's performance between the posts.

Dortmund began the game with a hiss and a roar as they laid siege to the Schalke goal, but the Royal Blues weather the storm.

Paraguay striker Lucas Barrios went close several times in the first half alone to keep Schalke in their own half, while Germany squad member Mario Goetze also went close in the early stages.

Barrios hit the post in the 55th minute, but Neuer could not be beaten.

With five minutes remaining, Goetze broke through and beat Neuer, but with the goal at his mercy he hit the post and Schalke scrambled the danger away.

SPORTS POLL

Do you think Mashrafe Bin Mortaza will play the World Cup?

Yes 52.2%
No 47.8%

TOTAL VOTES: 406

WEEKLY QUESTION

Have the organisers done a good job with the World Cup preparations?

Visit the sports page of www.thecricketstar.net to cast vote

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what to WATCH

STAR Cricket

Australia v England

Fifth ODI

Live from 9:20am

STAR Sports

Australian Open

Men's Singles Final

Live from 2:30pm

TEN Action

La Liga

Osasuna v Real Madrid

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh League

Sk Jamal v Feni Soccer

Venue: Kamalapur Stadium

Torres defends himself

APP, London



Fernando Torres insists he is not a traitor after Chelsea's £50 million striker was accused of betraying Liverpool.

Torres is set to make an emotionally-charged Chelsea debut against his former club on Sunday just a week after completing his controversial British record transfer from Liverpool.

Reds boss Kenny Dalglish admitted he was disappointed by the timing of Torres's move, which was finalised just hours before the close of the transfer window.

Torres was well below his best for much of this season and handed in a transfer request in an attempt to force through the move once he became aware of Chelsea's interest, prompting some fans and former players to claim the Spain forward had been sulking for months.

But Torres is adamant he was always completely dedicated to the Liverpool cause and he slammed those who criticised the way he left Anfield.

"I think it is not fair. It makes no sense. I played three very good seasons there and scored lots of goals," Torres said.

"I understand it was a difficult situation, especially in the transfer window, but I have to think about my career."

"Everyone will see it is a step forward. I know the plans Chelsea have for the future, the ambition they have and what they want to achieve."

"They want to build a great team and keep competing with Man Utd and Man City to be the best club in England and to fight for the Champions League."

"When I will be 45 I would like to look back and say I am really lucky to have this picture of me as a champion."

"I explained my feelings and was honest with everyone. Everything was straight, the main thing was to be honest and fair."

"Obviously they didn't want me to leave, they tried to persuade me to stay but I told them I had made my decision."

"I don't know how the fans will be but it would be a surprise for me if I get a really bad reception."

During his three-and-a-half years at Liverpool, Torres had appeared totally devoted to the Reds and he even claimed he would never play for another English club.

That pledge was swiftly consigned to history once Liverpool began to struggle and Chelsea came calling, but Torres insists he has never been the badge-kissing type who takes the plaudits then walks out when the going gets tough.

However, he felt Liverpool's decline had been too steep over the last 18 months, with the departures of Xabi Alonso and Javier Mascherano convincing Torres the club lacked ambition.

IN brief

Real to build academy for Saudis

APP, Madrid

Real Madrid, one of the world's richest football clubs, have announced they have reached an agreement with Saudi Arabia's Prince Salman Foundation to build a sports academy in the Middle Eastern country.

The deal will officially be signed in Madrid on Monday, the Spanish club said in a statement published on their website late on Friday.

"The Real Madrid Foundation and the Prince Salman Foundation will join forces on Monday 7 February in order to build a new socio-academic sports academy in Saudi Arabia," said the statement.

The Real Madrid Foundation "is the means by which Real Madrid reaches out to society and develops its social and cultural awareness programmes," the club said.

Bielsa quits Chile

APP, Santiago

Marcelo Bielsa quit as Chile coach on Friday as the political turmoil inside the South American country's football federation intensified.

"I have decided to resign from my post with the Chilean national team," said the 55-year-old Bielsa, who had been in charge for three years.

His future had been in doubt since the turn of the year when Sergio Jadue was elected president of the Chilean federation (ANFP), defeating Ernesto Corona, an ally of Harold Mayne-Nicholls, who had hired the Argentine in 2007.

Bielsa hit out at Jadue, blaming the new ANFP boss for forcing him out.

"It's because of the way he has behaved since he took over. He has done everything he could to get rid of me."

Bielsa guided Chile to the second round of last year's World Cup finals in South Africa, where they were defeated by Brazil.

Chivu gets 4-match ban

APP, Rome

Inter Milan full-back Cristian Chivu has been banned for four matches after TV evidence was used to show he punched an opponent in the face.

Chivu felled Bari's Alessandro Rossi with a blindsight punch during the champions' 3-0 win on Thursday, an incident missed by the referee but shown repeatedly on TV replays.

Although he stayed on the pitch for the full 90 minutes, he has now been hit with a four-match suspension by Italian footballing disciplinary authorities.

Qatar sack Mitsu

REUTERS, Doha

Qatar have sacked coach Bruno Mitsu after he failed to guide the hosts past the quarter-finals of last month's Asian Cup.

Qatar, who have never made it to the semifinals of the tournament, were beaten 3-2 in the last eight by eventual winners Japan after a last minute winner from Masahiko Inoha.

"I would like to thank Bruno for the work he has done since taking on the position last summer. His commitment to the job could not be questioned and I wish him the best for the future," Qatar Football Association president Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani told the team's website (www.qfa.com).

"The recruitment process for the new coach



Schalke striker Klaas-Jan Huntelaar (C) tries to outwit Dortmund midfielders Sven Bender (R) and Nuri Sahin (L) during their Bundesliga encounter in Dortmund on Friday.

PHOTO:
AFP