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The Island Sports

Friday 13th November, 2009

Enke's death mourned by Germany as soul-searching begins

by Ian Chadband

The suicide of Robert Enke, Germany's best goalkeeper, has profoundly shocked the sport and a nation.

Although there are many tales of footballers who have taken their lives through depression after their brilliant careers were over, there have been very few as desperately sad as this in which an active international athlete still at the peak of his powers can see only one way out of his torment.

What could sports fans see from the outside? Or, indeed, his team-mates from the inside? Nothing but a model, quiet professional, captain of Bundesliga side Hannover 96, admired and respected by colleagues, living an idyllic life on a farm with a beautiful wife and adopted baby. At 32, he was bound for the World Cup as the climax of his career.

Yet at 6.25pm on Tuesday, Enke drove his Mercedes 4X4 to a railway crossing in Neustadt am Rubenberge, a couple of miles from his home outside Hanover, left his wallet and keys on the passenger seat of his unlocked car and waited to throw himself into the path of a regional express train travelling at 100mph.

Why? As Germany mourned, with the national team's friendly against Chile on Saturday called off as a mark of respect, the extent of the despair which hid behind Enke's garlanded public life was laid bare by the courageous Teresa, who had to identify his body, and by the doctor who had treated him for depression. They were the only ones who truly knew of his anguish.

The picture was painted of a superb sportsman who, while becoming haunted by anxiety in his professional career, had also never been able to come to terms in his private life with the death in 2006 of the couple's two-year-old daughter Lara from a rare heart malformation.

Putting their lives back together, Enke and his wife adopted a three-month

old baby girl, Leila, in May but Teresa revealed at a news conference in Hanover on Wednesday that Enke, still dogged by depression, had been afraid that the baby would be taken away from the family if his illness became known publicly.

"When he was acutely depressive, it was a difficult time. We thought we'd manage everything. We thought with love, we could do it. But you can't," Teresa said. "We had Lara, we have Leila. I always wanted to help him to get through it. Robert didn't want it to come out because of fear. He was scared of losing Leila."

The Lara tragedy dwarfed all else and yet anxiety in the public spotlight of his career just exacerbated Enke's depression. "Football was everything; it was his elixir," Teresa said.

The peculiar individual responsibilities goalkeepers face bore down on him, forcing him to first seek psychiatric treatment when, at Barcelona in 2003, he was dropped after being blamed for their loss to a second division team on his debut.

At Fenerbahce, another brief stop on an unsettled career which took him to Spain, Portugal and Turkey, Enke left after one poor game which ended with him being pelted with missiles by fans. A fear of failure ate away at him, explained his doctor, Valentin Markser.

Six weeks ago, after a bacterial intestinal infection kept him sidelined, Enke again sought treatment. After years of being the solid 'third man' waiting to take over from the brilliant, noisy double act of Oliver Kahn and Jens Lehmann in the Mannschaft, he was expected to be Germany's No 1 World Cup goalkeeper, although nothing was certain. He had been rested from this weekend's squad.

"I tried to tell him that there's always a solution," Teresa said. "I drove to training with him but he didn't want to accept help any more."



A framed picture of Robert Enke is seen in a mourning area at the station Eilvese in Neustadt am Rubenberge, northern Germany, Thursday, Nov. 12, 2009. Robert Enke, the Hannover 96 and Germany's national team goalkeeper, killed himself by intentionally getting hit by a train on Tuesday. Picture reads "nicht!" Enke, who was struck and killed by a train Tuesday Nov. 10, 2009, left a suicide note and his widow says he had been suffering from depression. (AP)

Enke left a suicide note, apologising to his family and to the medics for misleading them into believing that he was well again.

The striking thing about the tributes to Enke was just how obviously genuine the admiration was; here was a man everyone thought, as German coach Joachim Loew did, to be "honourable, a lovely guy, an exceptional person."

Yet who really knew him? Germany team manager Oliver Bierhoff broke down in tears after admitting that Enke's

plight had gone unnoticed by team-mates and officials alike.

So the soul-searching starts now.

"Why? The question is with us all. Why can professional athletes, celebrated as idols, come to such a decision?" asked German Football Federation president Theo Zwanziger.

"We will not be able to answer this question quickly but we owe it to Robert Enke to work towards an answer."

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Sri Lankans not keen to play an ODI before Tests



Sri Lanka have turned down the chances of the third day's play of their only warm up game against Indian Board President's XI turning into a One-Day International after the first two days of their three day warm up game was washed off in Mumbai.

The Sri Lankans were robbed two days of match practice due to inclement weather and will go into the first Test Match at Ahmedabad with little practice.

"We are going into a Test series. The frame of mind is different for the two forms. One-dayers are not ideal preparation before Tests," Sri Lanka team manager Brendon Kuruppu was quoted by Press Trust of India after the second day's play was called off due to unfit ground conditions following the torrential rain the day before.

The Sri Lankans were looking to move to Ahmedabad a day prior to the first Test. However, the Indian cricket board sources said that the third day's play will take place.

Sri Lanka will play three Test Matches, five One-Day Internationals and two T-20 Internationals in India.

SL wheelchair tennis team for Malaysia and Thailand

by Revata S. Silva

The Sri Lanka wheelchair tennis team, comprising Upali Rajakaruna, D. M. Gamini and A.B. Alagoda, will take part in the forthcoming Malaysian and Thailand Open wheelchair tennis tournaments early next year, the Sri Lanka Tennis Association (SLTA) said on November 11 (Wednesday).

The Malaysian Open will be held from November 20-22 and the tournament in Thailand is to be staged from 25-27 of this instance.

Both Rajakaruna and Gamini represent Sri Lanka Army while Alagoda is from the Navy. He is representing Sri Lanka for the first time in an international open tournament.

'Raja' and Gamini are expected to be included in the Main Draw of each tournament, which will enable them to increase their International Tennis Federation (ITF) wheelchair tennis ranking points. Higher ITF ranks will put them in a more advantageous position in the all-important World Team Cup, to be held in Turkey next May. Rajakaruna holds an ITF world rank of 206. Alagoda meanwhile will feature in the Second Draw in both Malaysia and Thailand.

Sri Lanka's wheelchair tennis coach is Jagath Welikala and the Manager for the two forthcoming tournaments will be Vipul Perera, the Secretary of the SLTA's Wheelchair Tennis Committee which is headed by Lt. Col. Shiran Abeysekera.

The Sri Lanka team is scheduled to leave for Malaysia on 19 November and they will return to Sri Lanka on 29 November.

The SLTA also said the Ministry of Sports and Public Recreation had endorsed Sri Lanka's participation in the above tournaments and in the mean time it was expected that the Ministry will also provide sponsorship for the above tour.

Soccer final today



by Manjula D. Phillips

The much awaited final of the CEAT Premier League Soccer Tournament, between Kalutara Park SC and Java Lane SC will be played today, commencing 3.30 pm, at the City Football Complex, Colombo.

The match was to be played last Saturday at the same venue, but heavy rains and slippery ground conditions compelled officials to postpone the game.

Kalutara Park SC beat fancied Kandy York SC in a close encounter by 1 goal to nil last week, to qualify for the final, while Java Lane SC edged out Pelicans SC 1-0 in the other semi final, which was played at Kurunegala.

Colombo South A savour Prima Champions Trophy

by Reemus Fernando

Leg spinner Julian de Silva picked up a five wicket haul after putting on a valuable ninth wicket partnership of 58 runs with Dushan Hemantha for Colombo South A to beat defending champions Kandy by 49 runs in the Prima Champions Trophy Under-15 Inter District tournament final, at Colts Ground yesterday.

St. Peter's College all rounder Zilva batting at number 10 contributed with an unbeaten 30 runs and figured in a 58 run partnership that saw the home team recover from 159 for eight at one stage to post 230 in their allotted 48 overs.

Chasing the target Kandy looked set to cruise to their second consecutive title with skipper Rajitha Jayatunga anchoring the top order with a solid half century. But fine bowling by leg spin duo Zilva and Hemantha made Colombo make a strong come back. With the duo going great guns the middle and late order batting line up rattled like a pack of cards.

From being 160 for five wickets at one



stage, they crumbled for 181 runs. Their last five wickets fell within the space of three runs. While Hemantha picked up the prize wickets of top scorer Jayatunga (58) and the next highest scorer Ron Chandraguptha (32) Zilva snared the late order. Kandy's last four batsmen were out for ducks against Zilva.

Earlier, put to bat, Colombo were off to a disastrous start as they lost their first wicket for just four runs. After skipper

Ronaka Ahangamage and Lahiru Milantha made a second wicket stand of 39 runs, wickets started to fall at regular intervals. At one stage Colombo were 110 for six wickets but Isuru Gunathilaka and Gaurav Deva chipped in with valuable knocks for them to make a recovery. While Gunathilaka hit 35, Deva scored 40 runs inclusive of one six and two fours.

Deva was adjudged the Best Batsman in the final for his knock. Dushan Hemantha received the Best Bowler's award while Julian de Silva won the Man of the Match award.

Scores:
Colombo South A 230 for 9 in 48 overs (Ronaka Ahangamage 30, Lahiru Milantha 21, Isuru Gunathilaka 35, Gaurav Deva 40, Dushan Hemantha 21, Julian de Silva 30n.o; Rochana Hettiarachchi 2/35, Dilshan Malalaseena 2/41)

Kandy 181 all out in 38.5 overs (Pavithra Nanayakkara 22, Rajitha Jayatunga 58, Ron Chandraguptha 32; Julian de Silva 5/33, Dushan Hemantha 3/16)

Rugby players to undergo ten day residential training stint

Ravi Nagahawatte

Sri Lanka's rugby players will be put through a vigorous ten day training schedule to make amends for the lost training due to the ongoing Defense Services Rugby Tournament.

The 21 member Sri Lanka squad, named for the upcoming Carlton Sevens, has players from the Navy and Army who are unable to attend national pool practices. These players can't attend national

pool training due to the ongoing Defense Services Tournament.

Sri Lanka Rugby Football Union (SLRFU) CEO Lasitha Guneratne told The Island that the players would undergo residential training when everybody is available. National pool training for the upcoming Carlton Sevens tournament will commence proper on 17 November.

The final leg of the Asian Rugby Sevens series (Carlton Sevens) will be worked off on November 28 and 29 at the

Sugathadasa Stadium.

Organisers of the Carlton Sevens have also made plans to conduct an international sevens tournament which has attracted teams from New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Western Samoa, Fiji, Papua New Guinea.

Former All Blacks player Geoff Matherson, who has made several rugby related visits to Sri Lanka, is already in Sri Lanka and will be an official of the New Zealand team.

