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WIS:SOCCER-MARADONA

SOCCER'S "GOLDEN BOY", MARADONA ARRIVES IN CUBA  
BY LIONEL MARTIN

HAVANA, JULY 23. REUTER - THE "GOLDEN BOY" (PISE DE ORO) OF WORLD SOCCER, THE ARGENTINIAN, DIEGO ARMANDO MARADONA, SAID ON HIS ARRIVAL TODAY HERE THAT "AFTER MY NAPLES CONTRACT ENDS I WANT TO PLAY IN ENGLAND, THEN IN SPAIN AGAIN, THEN IN BRAZIL AND END MY CAREER BY PLAYING IN ARGENTINA ON THE SAME TEAM AS MY TWO BROTHERS."

THE ARGENTINIAN SUPERSTAR WHO LED HIS TEAM TO VICTORY IN THE WORLD SOCCER CHAMPIONSHIP IN MEXICO CITY LAST YEAR ARRIVED IN HAVANA TO RECEIVE THE AGENCIA LATINA NEWS AGENCY'S AWARD AS LAST YEAR'S BEST LATIN AMERICAN ATHLETE.

MARADONA IS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS WIFE AND SMALL CHILD. HE SAID HE WAS TIRED AND WOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HIS TRIP TO CUBA TO RELAX AT THE BEACH. CUBAN OFFICIALS SAID THAT THE WORLD RENOWNED SOCCER PLAYER IS SCHEDULED TO SPEND THREE FULL DAYS AT VARADERO BEACH TO THE EAST OF HAVANA.

ASKED ABOUT HIS FUTURE MARADONA SAID THAT "I WILL RESPECT MY CONTRACT WITH NAPLES AND AFTERWARDS WE WILL SEE." HE ADDED: "SOMETHING NEW IS PROPOSED EVERY WEEK, FROM ENGLAND, FROM SPAIN AND FROM ELSEWHERE."

LAST WEEK THE BUSINESS MANAGER OF ENGLAND'S LEEDS UNITED, BILL FOTHERBY, WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT HIS TEAM WAS TALKING TO MARADONA ABOUT JOINING THE TEAM. HE SAID THAT IN VIEW OF THE LARGE SUM OF MONEY MARADONA DEMANDS, A CONSORTIUM OF ENTERPRISES MIGHT HAVE TO BE FORMED TO UNDERWRITE THE CONTRACT.

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CUBAN SPORTS' OFFICIALS HOPE THAT MARADONA'S VISIT TO THE CARIBBEAN ISLAND WILL HELP TO ENCOURAGE INTEREST IN SOCCER. LIKE THE UNITED STATES, CUBAN YOUTH HAVE PREFERRED BASEBALL AND BASKETBALL AND IT IS ONLY IN RECENT YEARS THAT THE CUBAN NATIONAL SPORTS' INSTITUTE HAS UNDERTAKEN A CAMPAIGN TO MAKE SOCCER A MAJOR SPORT.

SHORTLY BEFORE LEAVING THE ISLAND NEXT WEDNESDAY, MARADONA IS SCHEDULED TO MEET WITH A LARGE GROUP OF CUBAN YOUNG PEOPLE. MARADONA'S NAME BECAME KNOWN TO MILLIONS OF CUBANS WHEN THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SOCCER MATCHES WERE TELEVISIED IN CUBA LAST YEAR.

THE OFFICIALS SAID THAT THERE IS A STRONG POSSIBILITY THAT MARADONA WILL BE INVITED TO MEET AND CONVERSE WITH CUBAN PRESIDENT FIDEL CASTRO DURING HIS STAY.

CASTRO, WHO IN HIS YOUTH WAS AN OUTSTANDING ATHLETE, TAKES A PERSONAL INTEREST IN ENCOURAGING SPORTS IN CUBA.

THE OFFICIALS SAID THAT MARADONA WILL BE INVITED TO ATTEND FIDEL CASTRO'S SPEECH ON JULY 26, A MAJOR CUBAN REVOLUTIONARY HOLIDAY. WHEN ASKED BY JOURNALISTS IF HE WOULD LIKE TO ATTEND HE HE ANSWERED: "IF I AM INVITED, WITH GREAT PLEASURE."

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