

R'mati cricket

BSS, Rangamati

Shahid Abdul Ali Academy became champions defeating Rangamati Govt High by two wickets in the final of the 21st National School Cricket Competition here on Friday.

A total of six school teams of the district took part in the competition, organised by Bangladesh Cricket Board, was held at the local stadium.

Annual sports

UNB, Dhaka

The annual sports competition of Siddheswari Girls' College will be held at the college premises today.

More than 150 students of the college are to take part in various events of the day-long meet.

Blame it on poor bowling, fielding

REUTERS, Hobart

England captain Nasser Hussain blamed poor bowling and fielding for England's last over loss to Australia in the triangular one-day series on Saturday.

Although England's batting collapsed spectacularly after an opening partnership of 165 between Nick Knight and Marcus Trescothick, Hussain preferred to concentrate on England's performance in the field.

Paul Collingwood dropped two catches and the England bowlers conceded 22 wides, including 11 by fast bowler Steve Harmison.

"Everyone will talk about a mini-collapse but sloppy fielding and bowling early on cost us," Hussain told BBC radio.

"At two o'clock, it might seem like just another wide but, at 10 past six, they are desperate runs you need."

Hussain refused to criticise Harmison, whose eight overs cost 58 runs.

"Steve's huge asset is his pace and bounce but the negative is that he has off-days," he said.

"He has some very good days too so I certainly won't be getting on his case."

Zimbabwe beef up security

AFP, Harare

The Zimbabwe government has stepped up security in its top tourist resorts ahead of the World Cup cricket matches due to be played here next month, state radio said Friday.

Six out of 54 World Cup matches are scheduled to be played in the Zimbabwe capital, Harare and the country's second largest city of Bulawayo in February and March.

Measures have been put in place to make the country "a safe tourist destination", the radio said.

It reported Home Affairs Minister Kembo Mohadi as saying those who planned to visit the country should "ignore the falsehoods being peddled by the country's detractors" on the security situation.

The England cricket team is set to play a match here on February 13 despite pressure from Prime Minister Tony Blair's government to boycott the fixture.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said on Thursday they would only revise their decision to send the team if the security situation deteriorated.

There have been growing concerns over security here following food riots last week in Harare and Bulawayo and the murder of an Australian tourist at Victoria Falls.

Aussie Open still in Jan

AFP, Melbourne

Despite rumbles it should be slipped two months to a March slot on the crowded international calendar, the Australian Open will not be changing dates for the foreseeable future, tournament director Paul McNamee said Friday.

Speaking after the draw for Monday's start of the 10.9-million-dollar Grand Slam, the former Wimbledon doubles champion said that any move to reform and rationalise the almost non-stop tennis season is many meetings and some years away.

"We're talking many years ahead," he said of calls this week from players that the off-season is too short, the January summer weather is too hot and injuries are too frequent.

"But the circuit is a block and we (the four Grand Slams) are a family. We would do anything all together."

McNamee tried to calm the waters as he recalled a few facts of life in the sport. "There are massive commercial implications. Any change would be a structural one. Nothing can happen over the next few years, all speculation is well into the future."

Australian official have been taken somewhat by surprise this week as their event, the season-opening major, sets up for a Monday start.



PHOTO: AFP

MAN-OF-THE-MATCH: Australia's Damien Martyn sweeps one on way to scoring a century against England a Hobart yesterday.

Indians have dope-tests

AFP, Auckland

Indian cricketers currently touring New Zealand were on Friday dope-tested as a precautionary measure ahead of next month's World Cup in South Africa.

A local drug-testing agency had taken the players' urine samples, which would be sent to Sydney where an International Olympic Committee-approved laboratory would examine them before giving the results.

"The results of the test will be conveyed only to team physio Andrew Leibus," team sources said.

The tests were ordered by the Indian board to ensure that no untoward incident takes place in South Africa.

The International Cricket Council has said that dope-testing is mandatory for all the participating teams in the World Cup because of South African government regulations.

Only four nations -- Australia, South Africa, New Zealand and England -- have a regular doping policy in place for cricketers.

Streak claims unity

ECB decides on Zimbabwe Tuesday



REUTERS/AFP, undated

Zimbabwe cricket captain Heath Streak said Friday his team fully supported the country's hosting of World Cup Cricket matches next month, dismissing reports his players were divided over the issue.

"We're just focussing on the World Cup and making the Zimbabwean people proud," Streak said, speaking on state television late Friday.

His comments came as the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) indicated it was likely to fulfil its match obligations in Harare in February, despite the British government's push for a boycott in order to show its opposition to Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe.

"We want to go out there and really fly the flag for Zimbabwe," Streak said, arguing that sport and politics did not mix.

Streak's farming family have been affected by Zimbabwe's political turmoil -- his father was arrested in 2001 when his game ranch was occupied under the government's controversial land reform programme.

News reports have suggested that several Zimbabwean cricket players do not want matches to be played in the southern African

country, but Streak dismissed these reports.

"Obviously I'm not aware of who those individuals are, if there are any, I'm wary of the fact that they haven't named anyone," he told the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC).

Meanwhile, the decision-making body of English cricket will decide on Tuesday whether England should go ahead with their contro-



HEATH STREAK

versial match against Zimbabwe, it was announced on Friday.

A meeting of the ECB's Management Board has been called at Lord's on Tuesday and it now appears highly likely they will decide that England will take part in the match in Harare on February 13.

The chairman of the ECB, David Morgan, said he expected the 15-

member Board to back England's trip to the southern African nation despite opposition from the British government.

"I would be surprised if the Management Board determine anything other than to fulfil the commitment to the World Cup by playing in Zimbabwe," Morgan told BBC radio.

"I want cricket to stay united and I think it has to go ahead for this to happen."

The British government has urged English cricket chiefs to boycott the match because they fear it will represent a propaganda coup for Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe.

But the ECB have argued that if England pull out of the match they will be docked two points which could endanger their progress in the tournament and they could face a compensation bill of up to one million pounds (1.6 million dollars).

The losses could mount to ten million pounds if, in a tit-for-tat move, Zimbabwe pull out of a tour of England later this year.

The British government on Thursday ruled out meeting the ECB's compensation claims.

An ECB spokesman said "We may reserve the right to have future discussions with the government."

"But we are close to exhausting the process. Certainly, once the ECB Management Board have reached their decision, it will be the definitive decision."

Thrilling Aussie win

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out of time to score a century, but accomplished the milestone from the very last ball of the innings as he turned a ball from veteran pacesman Andy Caddick to the fine leg fence.

Blackwell and fast bowler Jimmy Anderson, who took 2-40 from 10 overs, were the best in the England attack.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the tri-nation series one-day cricket clash between Australia and England at Bellerive Oval in Hobart on Saturday:

AUSTRALIA

Gilchrist lbw Anderson	2
Hayden c and b Harmison	21
Ponting c Stewart b Anderson	15
Martyn not out	101
Bevan b Blackwell	52
Maher not out	49
Extras: (lb-9, w-22)	31
Total: (For 4 wickets in 50 overs)	271
Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-25, 3-53, 4-171	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Caddick	10	0	54	0
Anderson	10	1	40	2
Harmison	8	0	58	1
Irani	9	0	55	0
Collingwood	3	0	14	0
Blackwell	10	1	41	1

ENGLAND

Trescothick c sub (Symonds) b Martyn	82
Knight b Bichel	85
Blackwell c Gilchrist b Hogg	12
Hussain b Watson	43

Shah c Ponting b Hogg	8
Collingwood c Maher b Hogg	1
Stewart c Martyn b Watson	16
Irani not out	3
Caddick not out	2
Extras: (b-2, lb-2, w-2, nb-6)	12
Total: (For 7 wickets in 50 overs)	264
Fall of wickets: 1-165, 2-189, 3-193, 4-209, 5-211, 6-252, 7-262	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
McGrath	7	1	31	0
Lee	10	0	65	0
Watson	8	0	36	2
Bichel	10	0	39	1
Hogg	9	0	55	3
Martyn	6	0	34	1

Result: Australia won by seven runs.

Man-of-the-match: Damien Martyn.

Next match: Jan 13, Sydney.

TRIANGULAR TABLE

REUTERS, Hobart

Standings in the triangular one-day series involving Australia, England and Sri Lanka after Australia beat England by seven runs on Saturday:

Team	P	W	L	BP	Pts
Australia	5	4	1	2	22
England	5	2	3	1	13
Sri Lanka	4	1	3	1	7

(Note: Win with bonus point 6; win without bonus point 5; tie or no result 3; loss but not conceding bonus point 1; loss conceding bonus point 0; the team that achieves a run rate of 1.25 times that of the opposition shall be awarded a bonus point)

Where'll it land up?



REUTERS, Calcutta

Top Indian players have signed a disputed participation contract before Tuesday's International Cricket Council deadline, but doubts remain about whether they will play in next month's World Cup.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced on Saturday that all 15 squad members had signed up for the February 9 to March 23 tournament, but were still unhappy about some terms in the contract.

"The players have signed the agreement but with qualification on two clauses," BCCI president Jagmohan Dalmiya told reporters on Saturday.

India's endorsement-rich players are opposing the ambush marketing and player images clauses in the participation terms, which arise from a 550-million-dollar rights deal signed by the International Cricket Council (ICC) for its events up to 2007.

Dalmiya is unsure whether the ICC will accept the conditional signing.

"I am not sure whether the qualified signatures on the players terms will be acceptable to IDI (the ICC's commercial arm)," he said.

"We are extremely keen to

participate. There is no clause to stop the players if they have signed conditionally," he said.

The BCCI, which is party to the ICC rights deal, has backed the rebellion, saying that leading players such as Sachin Tendulkar and Virender Sehwag could be affected.

The ruling body has said the BCCI will have to pay hefty compensation if it fails to send its best side to



JAGMOHAN DALMIYA

the tournament in southern Africa.

The controversy could end up in the Lausanne-based Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), an independent body set up to rule on sporting disputes.

The ICC has said it is willing to marginally reduce the ambush marketing period and reduce the period for imaging to three months from six.

Warne still a worry



AFP, Hobart

Star Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne, desperate to be in peak form for the World Cup one-day contest starting in South Africa and Zimbabwe next month, may still not be "out of the woods" after returning from a serious shoulder injury.

Australian team physiotherapist Errol Alcott said here Saturday that, while Warne had made an apparently successful comeback for Victoria in an inter-state match Friday, it was too early to be sure how his right bowling shoulder would respond.

Alcott said he doubted Warne was "out of the woods" yet because, although the shoulder was obviously stable, it could become inflamed from a lot of use.

Warne's shoulder, which was operated on a month ago after he dislocated it in a one-day international, will be assessed in Brisbane Monday, Alcott said.

He said Warne's appearance in

the Friday match against Western Australia was to see how he responded to batsmen having a go at his bowling.

"He needed the game situation, though diving to the right probably wasn't in the script," he said.

"That made us a bit edgy."



SHANE WARNE

Only a short time after going on the field, Warne dived to pick up a spectacular catch, falling on his right shoulder. There was no apparent damage.

Alcott said that although it was

prudent not to make hasty judgments, it appeared Warne had made a good recovery.

"So now it's just a matter of how much we want him to do," Alcott said. "If there were no further problems, there was no reason why he could not return to the Australian team."

Warne said Saturday he was confident his shoulder would only improve.

It was the mental side of his game which now needed attention, he said. "There's no problem with my shoulder, it's just my head now, getting that right," he said.

"I suppose it will just take a few outings to get that right."

But Warne said it was too soon to say when he might return to the national side.

"As far as all that goes, I've just got to wait and see how it pulls up tomorrow and the next day, and weigh it up from there," he said.

In his comeback game, Warne finished with 1-53 off eight overs after being clobbered for 26 runs off his second over.

"After the first couple of overs, I think I had 35 runs off me, and I

thought 'What am I going to do now?'"

"I just had to dig deep and come back -- my last six overs, I think I got 1-18."

"So it was pretty good, the last six. Once I got that and got a bit fired up I was alright."

Alcott said he was confident a new injury suffered by key fast bowler Glenn McGrath during Australia's seven-run win over England in Hobart Saturday would not be long-term.

McGrath left the field with a back strain after bowling seven overs in his first game after being out with a side strain.

McGrath's new injury was different from, though close to, the back problem that forced him to miss the fifth Test and Thursday's one-day international against Sri Lanka, he said.

Alcott said McGrath was not in great pain and came off the field as a precaution.

His problem was not usually long-term and would be treated with anti-inflammatory drugs.

"We'll reassess him Monday, but we're optimistic," Alcott said.

Andre's Kooyong hattrick



AFP, Melbourne

Andre Agassi hit near-perfect form less than 48 hours before the start of the Australian Open, earning his third title at the Kooyong international Saturday with a comprehensive 6-2, 6-3 win over Frenchman Sebastien Grosjean.

Grosjean got a taste of Agassi's eagerness to kick-start his 19th season in the professional game with another Grand Slam trophy at the Australian Open which starts here on Monday.

Agassi, who already owns a hattrick of titles in Melbourne at the Open, could not find a complaint

with his game as he ended his first week of match play with another title.

"I felt good, I'm playing as well as I could expect," said the 32-year-old perfectionist. "I was hitting the ball very sharply, I felt great about that."

Agassi grabbed a break in the third game of the opening set to put world number 16 Grosjean into an immediate hole from which the Florida-based Frenchman never recovered.

The American collected the set on his second opportunity after a rare double-fault on the first.

In the second, Agassi screamed back after trailing a break down and 0-40. He won the last five games in a row, getting the break back and adding two more of his own to finish

the final on a high note.

"To win in this field means you are playing well," said the Open's second seed behind Lleyton Hewitt. "This is as tough a test as you can have anywhere. In the past, it's proven to be great preparation for the Open."

Agassi owns a personal statistic at the tournament which should bring him comfort. After lifting title here in 2000 in walkover against Mark Philippoussis and in 2001 (defeating Yevgeny Kafelnikov), he went onto win a fortnight later at Melbourne Park on each occasion.

A year ago he lost the Kooyong final to Pete Sampras, then had to pull out before the start of the Grand Slam a day later with a wrist injury which compromised the first half of his year.

The winner of five 2002 titles added: "I felt good this week. I got a lot better a lot sooner than I was hoping for. This will hopefully translate into playing some good tennis from next week."

Grosjean said that despite the loss, his preparation in the wind and sun of Kooyong would serve him well. "I played in the wind against Xavier Malisse and it was hot out here against Agassi."

"Andre always plays well, it was tough to play my game. But I'm hoping to do well next week."

With no international dignitaries presumably present in the crowd, there was no danger of the mysterious slump Agassi experienced when he and Grosjean met at the French Open in 2001. A first-set entrance by Bill Clinton set Agassi afurther and he lost a lead to go out to the Frenchman in four sets.

While Grosjean was going down to defeat, his up-and-coming countryman Richard Gasquet earned a hard-fought 7-5, 6-2 win over Australian Mark Philippoussis (Aus) in the third-place playoff match.

"I enjoyed this week a lot," said the French teenager. "It was good for me to play against (Philippoussis)."

"He serves very well and I had to practise my returns for this match after watching him on television. I was very happy to have the chance to play against him."

"I'm still 166th in the world, they are top players. But I feel I'm ready for the Open, I didn't miss a lot and it was a good match for me. It's wonderful to beat Philippoussis," Gasquet said.



PHOTO: AFP

American Andre Agassi blows kiss to the fans after beating Frenchman Sebastien Grosjean in the final of the Kooyong Classic yesterday.

India clinch a cliff-hanger

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Zealand post a decent total on a drop-in pitch.

The hosts were struggling at 147-9 before Vincent and Bond flayed the Indian attack in an awesome display of clean and hard hitting.

Bond smashed three sixes and two fours in his 15-ball 31 not out, while Vincent scored an unbeaten 53 for his fourth half-century as New Zealand plundered 37 in the last two overs.

Vincent steadied the innings with an 80-run stand for the sixth wicket with Scott Styris (42) after the hosts had been reduced to 50-4.

Indian pacesman Javagal Srinath did the maximum damage early in the innings as he grabbed three wickets, including those of Mathew Sinclair (18) and Chris Cairns (13).

India clinched a narrow victory, beating left-arm spinner Ravi Shastri's 10-2-17-0 at Perth in 1985-86.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the sixth one-day international between India and New Zealand at Auckland on Saturday:

NEW ZEALAND	O	M	R	W
Fleming c Dravid b Nehra	14			
Sinclair b Srinath	18			