

Flemo asks for pitch inquiry

REUTERS, Hamilton
Another one-dayer, another dog of a pitch.
That has been the case for most of the one-day series between New Zealand and India which ended on Tuesday with the home side winning the seventh and final match by six wickets and taking the series 5-2.

In a typical low-scoring game, India were skittled out for 122 and New Zealand replied with 125 for four, Stephen Fleming leading the way with 60 not out.

He was only the fourth New Zealander to top 50 in the series while on the Indian side, bowled out four times for scores in the low hundred, five batsmen averaged single figures, including Sachin Tendulkar and Saurav Ganguly.

Skipper Fleming said: "It's been a very difficult summer for our batting unit, full stop. We have our techniques scrutinised on wickets that have been very, very bowler-friendly and that's often been overlooked, which peeves us a bit."

"The surfaces need to be looked at a lot more closely. You start questioning your belief on the sort of poor surfaces we have experienced.
"I think it's fair to say the wickets throughout the summer have been below par, it's as simple as that."

He added: "I'm going to keep talking about belief. We've got a good side and I'm going to keep hammering it. I believe in these guys."

"We've beaten a very good side in tough conditions and there's no reason in better conditions we can't play even better."

"I'll probably be criticised somewhere tomorrow for saying it, but I believe in these guys and that's what's going to win us the World Cup and I'd be glad if other people came along for the ride."

Indian captain Ganguly felt it was time Indian cricket recovered from this loss, starting with their trip home for a 10 day rest before leaving for South Africa and the World Cup.

"We've been to South Africa before where we've got runs," he said. "So it's not like it can't happen, but it's got to happen again."

"We've got to forget the bad times which we've had in this series and look forward. I'm convinced we'll have a good World Cup despite what's happened here. You have bad times, which means you look forward even more to the good times."

India also lost the Test series to New Zealand 2-0.

Dhaka seize
FROM PAGE 13
Munir 4 1 7 0
Neeyamur 3 2 2 1
Sylhet vs Khulna
Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.
SYLHET: First innings (overnight 251 for 4 in 69 overs)
Parvez run out 23
Imtiaz lbw b Rana 31
Nasirul c & b Al-Amin 22
Rajin Saleh c Masum b Al-Amin 127
Mowla c Salauddin b Razzak 41
Taqirul c Salauddin b Masum 21
Hasibul b Al-Amin 11
Emon c Selim b Hasanuzzaman 0
Imran lbw b Hasanuzzaman 0
Enamul run out 2
Nasir not out 16
Extras: (b-6, lb-5, nb-5, w-1) 16
Total: (All out in 88.4 overs) 311
Fall of wickets: 1-33, 2-73, 3-108, 4-210, 5-264, 6-279, 7-286, 8-288, 9-292.

Bowler O M R W
Al-Amin 26 4 99 3
Russell 10 1 43 0
Razzak 17 4 46 1
Rana 15 3 75 1
Jamaluddin 12 3 23 0
Hasanuzzaman 8.4 2 14 3
KHULNA: First innings
Sajjadul c Emon b Hasibul 14
Salauddin c Rajin b Nasir 2
Parvez b Hasibul 0
Jamaluddin c Emon b Nasir 17
Hasanuzzaman c Imtiaz b Nasir 11
Razzak b Hasibul 7
Selim c Rajin b Parvez 8
Manjarul b Enamul 78
Russel c Imran b Enamul 4
Al-Amin not out 29
Monirul c Imran b Nasirul 7
Extras: (b-6, lb-7, nb-4, w-3) 20
Total: (All out in 72.4 overs) 197
Fall of wickets: 1-12, 2-18, 3-29, 4-46, 5-61, 6-67, 7-101, 8-108, 9-184
Bowler O M R W
Nasir 24 2 38 3
Hasibul 12 0 37 3
Enamul 19 2 52 2
Parvez 8 0 17 1
Imran 4 0 19 0
Imtiaz 3 0 11 0
Nasirul 2.4 0 10 1

Good to be back

Australian Open

INTERNET, Melbourne

Most people spoil themselves with a small present on their birthday. Mary Pierce decided to give herself an early present of a different kind. Pierce, who turns 28 on Wednesday, opened her Australian Open campaign with a convincing 6-1, 6-4 victory over Patricia Wartusch on Show Court Two.

Pierce, who won the 1995 Australian Open title, is on the comeback trail after a series of injuries and appears capable of recapturing the form that took her to both the Australian and French Open during the 1990s.

"I feel like I am playing pretty well, and at the same time I feel like I'm far from where I want to be," Pierce said of her form and her goals.

"I think what's missing, well what I need, is just to play a lot of matches. I haven't played a lot so I feel like I need matches."

Pierce has seen her ranking drop to No.50 as she battles back from abdominal and back ailments that have hampered her during the past two years. Still among the most talented players on tour, Pierce's hunger and determination to succeed have increased in proportion to her time away from the game.

"On definitely," she said when asked if she has more desire for the game.

"I think a lot more now than I had before my injuries. I think definitely not having played a lot in the last couple of years has just made me really want to play, you know, excited just to be out here competing."

When at her peak, Pierce rose as high as No.3 in the rankings, and was a regular contender for Grand Slam titles. Her combination of power and grace made her a fan favourite throughout the world, but her strongest support seemed to come in Melbourne.

Pierce and the Melbourne Park crowd share a mutual love affair,

with Pierce often producing her best at the Grand Slam of Asia/Pacific. Now competing at her 10th Australian Open, Pierce has reached the quarter-finals or better five times, and boasts an impressive 35-9 record at Melbourne Park,

that I've played. This morning I saw some highlights - they were showing the year I won in '95. Just a lot of great memories (here), a lot of great feelings here. I love being here and playing here."
Pierce will face Chanda Rubin in the second-round on Thursday, and

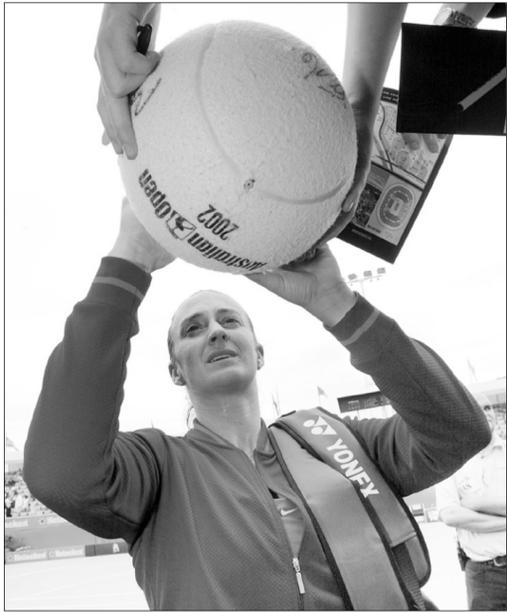


PHOTO: AFP

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU: Mary Pierce of France signs a giant tennis ball following her 6-1, 6-4 victory over Patricia Wartusch of Austria yesterday. She turns 28 today.

providing a range of memorable moments that come flooding back "I love playing here," Pierce enthused. "Just on so many courts, I have so many memories of matches

no doubt she will be looking to extend her birthday celebrations by adding new successes to her fond memories of the Australian Open.

Mugabe calls Aussies names

REUTERS, Lusaka

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe lashed out at Australia on Tuesday over threats to boycott cricket World Cup matches in his country, branding the people of the fellow former British colony as ex-criminals.

Britain and Australia have urged their cricket teams to boycott next month's World Cup matches in Zimbabwe in protest at Mugabe's policies and human rights record.

"Australia has criminal blood. There are criminals who were shipped to that place and settled there. It is not surprising they are speaking like that, that no one should step into Zimbabwe to play cricket," Mugabe told reporters during a visit to neighbouring Zambia.

Britain once used parts of Australia as a dumping ground for convicted criminals rather than keeping them in prison at home.

Australia's team are favourites to win the World Cup, but they have come under pressure from their government to boycott their match in Zimbabwe.

England's cricket chiefs were due to announce later on Tuesday whether they would play their match in Zimbabwe or comply with Prime Minister Tony Blair's call for a boycott.

ECB standing

FROM PAGE 13
Only a rapid deterioration in the security situation in Zimbabwe in the next few weeks is now likely to stop six World Cup games going ahead there.

There have been fresh incidents of rioting and the International Cricket Council has set up a committee to monitor the situation.

But they would have to decide that the country was not safe for officials and players before the games could be moved to South Africa, where most of the 54-game tournament is being played.

It would be a huge surprise if the ECB's management board decided to go against the advice of chief executive Tim Lamb, who is worried that English cricket could face legal action from the ICC and their sponsors if they boycott the game.

Lamb said last week legal action could have a huge impact on the finances of the domestic game and was not prepared to see cricket being used as a "token gesture" when hundreds of British companies are allowed to trade with Zimbabwe.

The ECB have made it clear, however, that the players will not be allowed to take part in a ceremony before the game where they could end up shaking hands with Mugabe.

"We are not going to put our players, Nasser Hussain -- or indeed myself -- in a situation where we have to shake hands with the president of Zimbabwe," Lamb said.

"If there is any suggestion such a ceremony will be arranged then we will decline to participate."

ICC crosses

FROM PAGE 13
BCCI secretary Karunakaran Nair, however, told Reuters by phone from the southern city of Trivandrum on Tuesday: "The players' objections... have been recorded while signing."

Should the ICC be unhappy with the contracts, the issue could end up in the Lausanne-based Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), an independent body set up to rule on sporting issues, for a binding ruling.

The ICC has made some concessions to India's players over their image rights in an attempt to end the long-running dispute which also threatened India's participation in the Champions Trophy in September. India's players eventually played in that event, sharing the title with Sri Lanka.

India end

FROM PAGE 13
Kaif c McCullum b Adams 0
Kumble c Fleming b Adams 21
Zaheer c McCullum b Styris 5
Srinath lbw b Adams 15
Nehra not out 2
Extras: (lb-5, w-6, nb-3) 14
Total: (All out in 44.5 overs) 122
Fall of wickets: 1-14, 2-17, 3-17, 4-44, 5-44, 6-44, 7-93, 8-99, 9-117
Bowler O M R W
Tuffey 10 1 26 2
Mills 10 1 29 2
Adams 8.5 3 21 4
Styris 10 4 23 2
Vettori 6 0 18 0

NEW ZEALAND
Fleming not out 60
Sinclair b Srinath 3
McCullum lbw b Zaheer 4
Cairns b Srinath 11
Styris b Kumble 29
Vincen not out 5
Extras: (lb-6, w-6, nb-1) 13
Total: (For 4 wks in 28.4 overs) 125
Fall of wickets: 1-5, 2-12, 3-32, 4-116
Did not bat: C Harris, K Mills, A Adams, D Vettori, D Tuffey

Bowler O M R W
Srinath 8.4 2 28 1
Zaheer 9 2 38 2
Nehra 5 0 28 0
Kumble 4 0 16 1
Ganguly 2 0 9 0

Result: New Zealand won by six wickets and take the series 5-2.
Man-of-the-match: Stephen Fleming.

Rush back at Liverpool!

Football

AFP, Liverpool

Liverpool, without a Premiership win in 11 games, said Tuesday former great Ian Rush would be joining the Anfield coaching staff to work with the club's strikers.

Talks between Rush - who has recently obtained his UEFA 'A' coaching license - and Gerard Houllier have been ongoing for some months, the club said on its website.

Rush's first task will be to get Michael Owen and Emile Heskey scoring again.

The goals have dried up for injury-plagued Owen, although the England striker did score his first Premiership goal since November in last week-end's 1-1 draw with Aston Villa.

Heskey, who turned 25 last week, has managed only one

Premiership goal all season.
That 1-1 home draw with Villa meant Liverpool had taken just five points from 33 and Houllier's side have slipped 14 points behind leaders Arsenal and four points off fourth place and a Champions League qualification berth.

Rush will be at the training ground on a part time basis to assist with specific training once or twice a week.

The Welshman was one of the deadliest strikers in football history and his partnership with Kenny Dalglish is widely rated the best ever in British football.

Rush became Britain's most expensive teenager when Bob Paisley paid 300,000 pounds to sign him from Chester in 1980.

During his two-part Anfield career, split by a season with Juventus in 1987-88 when he left and returned for a combined six million pounds, Rush scored 346

goals in 660 senior outings, although in the League he was 16 goals short of Roger Hunt's club record of 245.

It was about the only record to elude him though. Rush's haul of 44 FA Cup goals (39 of them for Liverpool) is a 20th century record while his five-goal total in FA Cup Finals (two in 1986 and 1989 and one in 1992) is an all-time best by an individual.

He also collected five Championship medals and one European Cup.

Rush scored an all-time Mersey derby record of 25 goals against Everton, won Europe's Golden Boot with 32 League goals in 1984 when he also captained Wales, for whom he scored a record 28 goals in 73 games.

He joined Leeds in 1996 and later played for Newcastle and Wrexham.

Daddy of hooliganism!

Football

AFP, London

A man believed to be Britain's oldest football hooligan was jailed for five years here Monday for attacking a police horse.

Raymond Everest, 56, a lorry driver and former Millwall match steward, became the first person in British legal history to be convicted by a jury of riot.

Passing sentence on Monday, Judge Philip Statman told Everest: "Riot is the gravest of all public order offences."

Everest's actions were caught on closed circuit television following a match at London club Millwall on May 2 last year.

"This was a large-scale riot in the streets surrounding Millwall football ground ... No doubt residents in the streets were terrified," justice

Statman added.
"You are the oldest of all those arrested. You have shown from start to finish no remorse. You have bought shame on your family and on the club you purport to support."

"You have in the past been a steward at Millwall FC. It is difficult to imagine a worse example of behaviour by a man in his mid-50s than that you displayed on that particular evening."

The judge also banned Everest from all football grounds in England and Wales for the next eight years.

Prosecutors told the jury that Everest had also joined in when others charged police lines and had "aided and abetted" violence.

Everest's own lawyer, Simon Stirling, said: "This defendant is perhaps the oldest to be arrested and convicted in relation to these offences. A man of his age ought to know better."

After Everest was sentenced,

Detective Inspector Bob Campney, of the Metropolitan Police's serious crime croup, said outside court: "Football violence isn't exclusive to young men."

He added there had been more than 50 convictions for violence following the riot.

In all 157 police officers and 26 police horses were injured in the two-hour incident after Millwall lost 1-0 at their New Den ground in south-east London to Birmingham City in the English First Division play-off semi-final.

Birmingham fans were also targeted and there was extensive damage to local properties and vehicles.

The Metropolitan Police threatened to sue Millwall, who have a long history of fan violence stretching back to the 1970s, for compensation but eventually decided not to press ahead with legal action.

Serena, Lleyton hang on

FROM PAGE 13
vocal support of the Australian fans to cruise into the second round.

Clijsters, who was later among the spectators as boyfriend Hewitt battled against Larsson, breezed past the United States' Samantha Reeves 6-2, 6-1.

She left the court to a rapturous applause from Australian fans, who have clearly adopted her as one of their own.

Clijsters, is regarded as the biggest threat to the dominance of the Williams sisters in the women's event.

But she declined to assess her chances of prevailing over the American duo after her win, which set up a meeting with Hungary's Petra Mandula.

"I don't know, I don't really think in that way," Clijsters said, when asked if she felt she could beat the Williams sisters. "I'll just try to get the best out of my game and we'll see."

"I've beaten Serena and Venus once before. But everytime you play them it's a different match," said Clijsters, who bombarded Reeves with 22 winners during the routine workout.

Former champion Monica Seles swept into the second round with a 6-0, 6-1 victory over Lubomira Kurhajcova of Slovakia, needing just 45 minutes to dispose of her overwhelmed opponent.

Seles, who is attempting to win her 10th Grand Slam title here, will play unseeded Czech Klara Koukalova in the next round.

But two seeds bit the dust. Austria's Barbara Schwartz accounted for Russian 17th seed Elena Dementieva while Spain's Christina Torrens Valero beat 29th seed Iva Majoli of Croatia 6-3, 4-6, 6-4.

Elsewhere sixth seed Roger Federer was made to work hard as he came through a three-hour tie with Brazil's Flavio Saretta, winning 7-6, 7-5, 6-3.

Another Brazilian, Gustavo Kuerten, won a testing encounter with Morocco's Hicham Arazi, winning 6-4, 7-6, 6-3.

The three-time French Open champion, who won the New Zealand Open last week, said he was pleased to have picked up the winning habit early in the year.

"For me it's always difficult to find my rhythm in the beginning of the year," the 26-year-old said.

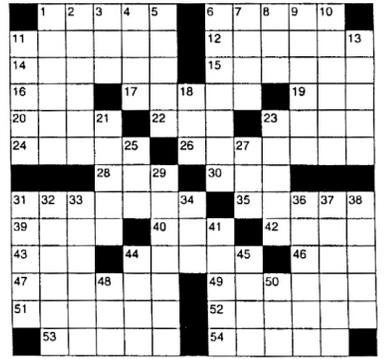


PHOTO: COURTESY

State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman inaugurates the GrameenPhone International Junior Tennis Championships at the Ramna Tennis Complex on January 13.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Bold
6 Saunter
11 Beethoven's specialty
12 Expresses oneself
14 Cause distress
15 Inmost part
16 Pub
17 "Buffy" spinoff
19 Start of a Latin trio
20 Oman money
22 Semon subject
23 Culture medium
24 Holdup
26 Pay
28 Cyndi Lauper's "She..."
30 Drunkard
31 Reveal
35 Wine-and-hot-water recipe
39 Learn of
40 Ball in a gym?
42 Dennis Miller
43 Branch
44 Hysteria
46 Plutonic
47 "Rosemary's Baby" star
49 Thin
51 Star over the Seine
52 Anglers' carriers
53 Barely defeated
54 Substantial
DOWN
1 Man in a cage?
2 Filicitious
3 Pitch
4 Old portico
5 Valerio's ennuui
6 They're gone in an instant
7 October stone
8 Round Table
9 Really
10 Navy clerk
11 Pottery fragment
13 Zorro's weapon
18 USO
19 Impious
21 Toil
25 Whom Uncle Sam wanted
27 "And... the opposite shore..."
29 Express-disbelief
31 Abrade
32 Treat with carbon dioxide
33 Strict boss
34 A billion years
36 Artist's attic
37 Impious
38 Works in the warehouse
41 Teensy quantity
44 Amundsen's goal
45 Grief
48 Fix a fight
50 NBA official



CRYPTOQUIP

F J A S K P O F R X A M - S A X U V
Y Z C P O G X O Z K P R F S P
Y O P Z K O P U F M P G A S Z
C S P Z K - X A - C S A J Y Z G F G .
Yesterday's Cryptquip: THE YOUNG BOA CONSTRUCTORS GOT MARRIED. SEEMS THEY HAD A BIG CRUSH ON EACH OTHER.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: Y equals B
The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

Flintoff proves fitness

ICC Cricket World Cup SOUTH AFRICA 2003

AFP, London

All-rounder Andrew Flintoff remained on course to be a member of England's squad at next month's World Cup when he passed a fitness test Monday on his injured groin.

Flintoff, 25, was sent home early from the Ashes tour in December having failed to recover from the injury.
But the Lancashire cricketer will return to Australia on Tuesday where he will hope to prove his match-fitness during the remaining games of a triangular one-day series also featuring Sri Lanka.

Flintoff, a hard-hitting batsman and medium-fast bowler, was given the all clear after what the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said was an "intensive bowling workout" in Manchester under the supervision of its chief medical officer Dr

Peter Gregory.
England's chairman of selectors, David Graveney, said: "Andrew has worked extremely hard at his rehabilitation over the past six weeks



ANDREW FLINTOFF

and has undergone a rigorous fitness test designed to simulate the type of pressures he would face in a real match.
"He will need time to acclimatise

and get used to bowling outdoors again when he arrives in Australia, but once that process is complete, we anticipate that he will be available for selection immediately."

England captain Nasser Hussain saw his Ashes plans wrecked when Flintoff and fast bowler Darren Gough were forced home without featuring in the Tests despite assurances the pair would recover from their pre-existing injury problems.

And he has made it clear that Flintoff has yet to secure a World Cup berth.

"Andrew Flintoff needs to prove his fitness out here," Hussain said.
"If after four or five months of being injured you are still not fit two weeks before a tournament, then there's very little chance."

Flintoff has rarely reproduced his county form at international level and has been beset by injury and weight problems.

Nevertheless, when available, his all-round abilities have seen him become a regular member of both England's Test and one-day sides.

Harmison Nasser's man

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

England must persist with big fast bowler Steve Harmison despite his often wild deliveries and poor fielding, England captain Nasser Hussain said here Tuesday.

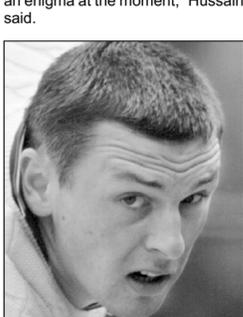
Hussain said the 24-year-old from Durham, whose shortcomings have played a major role in the side's most recent two defeats, has the potential to be "very good" and take English cricket to a new level.

Hussain's enthusiastic assessment came after Harmison had a woeful day in the field as England lost a tri-nation series limited-overs match to Sri Lanka by 31 runs here Monday night.

Nine wides in his nine-over spell of 0-59 and two simple dropped catches came hot on the heels of 11 wides as England lost by seven runs to Australia two days earlier.

So far in the tri-nation series, he

has hurled down 24 wides in four matches.
But Hussain remains excited about the possibilities.
"He's a difficult one -- he's a bit of an enigma at the moment," Hussain said.



STEVE HARMISON

"But we've got to keep working with him. One thing we must not do is work against him, we must work

with him because he has the potential -- in both forms of cricket -- of providing your team with something English cricket hasn't had for a while.

"I know he also has the potential of looking very average.
"We have to work with him to make sure we're constantly backing him up, constantly supporting him, giving him everything he needs off the field, and he must make sure he tries to take all of those opportunities."

"We could take the easy option and leave him out, but we might go back to a level we were before.
"By getting him right, that's the only way we'll go up to a different level."

Hussain predicted Harmison would be a genuine threat to World Cup opponents on the hard batting wickets in South Africa if he could get his line right.

"We have to make sure he doesn't bowl balls down the legside," Hussain said. "We've got to work with him in the nets, look at his action, use video."

One thing Hussain won't do is give up on his man.
"If things go wrong, you don't throw your arms up in the air just because he dropped a catch ... don't blame him for everything. Instead, work with him all the time."

"He's an asset to English cricket. He has the potential of being very good and he needs his captain's and his coach's support when he has difficult days."

SL impresses

FROM PAGE 13
fastest pitch in Australia when they come up against the home country in a tri-nation clash at the 'Gabba ground in Brisbane Wednesday.
Perth's WACA Ground is recognised as having Australia's fastest pitches.

Sri Lanka were all out for 163 when they were beaten by England at the WACA last month.

Azimuddin Ahmed, president of Bangladesh Billiard and Snooker Federation, speaks at a prize-giving ceremony of the national under-21 snooker championship at a city hotel recently.