

Butcher butchers Zim



AFP, London

Mark Butcher's 137 left England well-placed in the first Test against Zimbabwe at Lord's here on Friday.

At tea, on the second day, England were 392 for six with debutant Anthony McGrath 58 not out and Ashley Giles 15 not out.

Zimbabwe's quicks did not help their cause by bowling a succession of half-volleys. Meanwhile, behind the stumps, the byes conceded by wicketkeeper Tatenda Taibu reached 14 in a huge extras total of 52.

And Vermeulen, who took a brilliant catch to get rid of Butcher, dropped a routine slip chance offered by Giles (then three) off Zimbabwe captain Heath Streak.

McGrath, 27, in for injured all-rounder Andrew Flintoff, brought up his fifty in just 69 balls including nine fours.

The Yorkshire captain was the first England batsman since Marcus Trescothick three years ago against the West Indies at Old Trafford to make a half-century on his Test debut.

Earlier, Butcher cashed in before a firm clip off his legs against left-arm spinner Raymond Price was caught by a diving Vermeulen at short mid-on.

The Surrey left-hander showed good shot selection throughout an innings lasting over six hours, facing 256 balls including one six and 21 fours.

At 342 for six, England were still on top with Zimbabwe surely regretting they'd only taken three wickets on the first day after winning the toss in overcast, seam-bowler friendly conditions.

England started the second session on 270 for four, with Butcher exactly 100 not out and his Surrey team Alec Stewart - extending his England appearance record to 127 Tests - 26 not out.

But wicketkeeper Stewart had failed to add to his score when 12 balls after the break South African

umpire Dave Orchard eventually gave him out caught behind by Taibu off fast bowler Streak. McGrath narrowly avoided And when Price was brought on



England's Mark Butcher raises his bat after scoring a century against Zimbabwe on the second day of the first Test match at Lord's yesterday.

for a second spell Butcher hoisted him for the first six of the innings.

Butcher, who started Friday on 52, brought up his seventh Test century with a single off Streak, the workhorse of an otherwise inexperienced attack.

It was Butcher's second hundred in as many Tests after his 124 against Australia in the fifth match of the 2002-03 Ashes series at Sydney.

SCOREBOARD Table with columns for batsmen (Butcher, Hussain, Key, Stewart, McGrath, Giles, Extras, Total) and bowlers (Trescothick, Vaughan, Butcher, Hussain, Key, Stewart, McGrath, Giles, Extras).

Zimbabwe bowler statistics table with columns for bowler (Streak, Bignaut, Hondo, Ervine, Friend, Price, Flower) and stats (O, M, R, W).

Zimbabwe: Mark Vermeulen, Dion Ebrahim, Stuart Carlisle, Grant Flower, Tatenda Taibu (wkt), Sean Ervine, Heath Streak (capt), Andy Bignaut, Travis Friend, Raymond Price, Douglas Hondo

Toss: Zimbabwe Umpires: Steve Bucknor (WIS), David Orchard (RSA) Third umpire: Neil Mallender (ENG) Match referee: Clive Lloyd (WIS)



National paceman Manjural Islam delivers under the watchful eyes of TA Shekar, head coach of the MRF Pace Foundation in India, at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Shekar is conducting a four-day camp for twenty pacers.

Where baseliners rule



AFP, Paris

It's been 20 years since an out-and-out attacking player won the men's singles French Open title on the claycourts of Roland Garros and that sequence looks unlikely to be ended this year.

Dreadlocked and dashing Yannick Noah was the last man to batter the baseliners defeating Mats Wilander in straight sets in 1983 and providing the only home win since 1946.

In the two decades since that heartwarming day on a sun-splashed central court, many attacking greats have tried and failed here.

John McEnroe, Boris Becker, Stefan Edberg, Pat Rafter and more recently Pete Sampras all came to grief on the dusty, red stuff and Sampras has just announced that he has all but given up hope of ever finding his feet in France.

A scan of the 32 men's seeds makes depressing reading for fans of serve-and-volley tennis with only Andy Roddick of the United States and Britain's Tim Henman fitting the bill and even they will be forced to mainly slug it out from the baseline.

The problem is that developments in recent years in terms of equipment and player fitness mean that groundstrokes have become more and more powerful and accurate and charging the net is no longer a realistic tactic.

That leaves the more attack-minded players such as Andre Agassi, Roger Federer and Sebastien Grosjean to provide the entertainment against the crusty Spanish and South American clay-court specialists.

Tournament organisers must have been squirming at the recent Hamburg Masters when for the first time ever four Argentine players filled the four semi-finals.

It might have given cause for celebration in the streets of Buenos Aires and Cordoba, but it led to a

half-empty stadium in Germany.

A similar mix in Paris with South American and Spanish clay-courtiers monopolising the latter stages of what has become one of the highlights of the French sports calendar would not be welcome.

Top seed Lleyton Hewitt is aware of how deflating an experience Roland Garros can be for a non-clay-courtier having failed to get past the quarter-finals here in four attempts.

Playing in Dusseldorf this week, the Australian sounded less than confident of a better outcome this time.

"Whether I will ever win the French and master playing on clay, who knows," he said.

Speed blames

FROM PAGE 13 umpires, including the third umpire's responsibility to bring charges before the match referee. Under the previous system the match referee acted as both prosecutor and judge.

Speed himself intervened before the World Cup to ensure charges were brought against Australia batsman Darren Lehmann following racial remarks he had made about the Sri Lankans after he returned to the dressing room at Perth.

However, Speed said: "I only have the power to lay a charge within 24 hours" (of an incident happening).

He did this in the Lehmann incident but as he did not see the McGrath/Sarwan encounter within that time frame. He explained that the ICC board was looking at ways of giving him "greater latitude" in disciplinary matters.

"Players make mistakes. Umpires make mistakes. We don't want the umpires to over-react," Speed insisted. "And if the on-field umpires haven't seen an incident there is nothing to stop the third umpire laying a charge."

Olympic Solidarity women volleyball coaches course

SPORTS REPORTER

The two-week long Olympic Solidarity women volleyball coaches course, organised by Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA), concluded in Dhaka on Thursday.

A total of 24 women took part in the course, the first of its kind in Asia.

Sri Lankan instructor KAK Wejepala conducted the course while Syrian Youssef Hilbawi acted as the course director.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman attended the closing ceremony as chief guest and handed over the certificates to the participants.

All eyes on Amelie



AFP, Paris

Emotional Amelie Mauresmo says she would prefer to play Serena Williams in Warsaw than in front of the fickle French fans at Roland Garros.

The 23-year-old Frenchwoman has beaten both the Williams sisters in the last month but admits she does not know how she will handle the pressure of playing at home.

"Everybody always hypes it up. The pressure can really get to you and the Paris fans are not always very supportive," she says.

"I'm trying not to put any pressure on myself this year," said Mauresmo who has never got beyond the fourth round at Roland Garros.

"For some reason it's always been easier to play better abroad." Canadian-born Mary Pierce was the last Frenchwoman to win at Roland Garros, three years ago, and so far Mauresmo has flattered to deceive.

She cannot forget the disappointment of 2001.

She came into the tournament at the top of her form only to lose to German Jana Kandarr, 56th in the world, 7-5, 7-5 in the first round, leaving the centre court fans in stunned silence.

Afterwards she explained that

just prior to taking to the court she saw her picture and story plastered over the front page of that day's L'Equipe newspaper and froze in the realisation of how much was expected of her.

Mauresmo says she also struggled to cope with the media storm she created when she admitted at the Australian Open in 1999 she was homosexual.

Last year a serious knee ligation injury almost forced her out of the game.

"But I'm fit now and have will give it my best shot."

Mauresmo's 1999 Australian Open semi-final win over Lindsay Davenport was only the seventh time an unseeded player had upset a Grand Slam No. 1 seed.

Her broad shoulders made her the butt of players' jokes at Melbourne in 1999 but then the 19-year-old handled the situation admirably and has no regrets about coming out.

"I'm very proud to have revealed my homosexuality. If that helps others in my situation, it's great," she said. "I'm more sure of myself now."

Last week she fought back from a set down to beat Serena Williams for the first time in six matches at the Italian Masters final in Rome after beating former world No 1 Jennifer Capriati in the second round.

Mauresmo failed to maintain form in the Rome final, losing to Belgian battler Kim Clijsters.

Williams' only other loss this year came against Justine Henin-Hardenne in the final of a tournament in Charleston, South Carolina last month.

Mauresmo has been plagued by injuries over the last few years and was sidelined for four months with a knee injury at the end of last year.

Her first tournament of the year was in February when she lost to Serena Williams in the Paris Open final.

To be the best



AFP, Paris

Both men are locked in a tight battle for the accolade of best player in the world.

And if Lleyton Hewitt wants to preserve his current lead over Andre Agassi, having displaced his rival only this week in the ATP entry system rankings, the Adelaide faces having to slog through seven best of five set matches on the strength-sapping red clay of Roland Garros.

Agassi briefly bundled Hewitt out of the pole position the Australian had enjoyed for 75 weeks but in going out early in Rome and not playing Hamburg he is now second to his young rival while still topping the ATP Champions Race, the guide to season form.

The 22-year-old Hewitt has yet really to prove himself on clay while Agassi, despite his curtailed build-up, arrives in the City of Light with the US Men's Clay Court Championship title in his pocket - to say nothing of the 1999 French Open title.

With the quasi-retirement of Pete Sampras, Agassi, who dumped Hewitt in last year's US Open semi-final, is now the elder statesman among the men and his record is the benchmark for all comers.

This year he will play his 16th French Open.

The 33-year-old, the oldest man

India aiming at C'wealth Games

AFP, New Delhi

India are confident of breaking the Australia-England-Canada axis and winning the right to host the Commonwealth Games in 2010, the country's leading sports official said on Friday.

The Indian capital of New Delhi and Hamilton, Canada will make their bid for the 2010 event at London on May 30 before the Commonwealth Games Federation makes its choice in Jamaica in November.

Indian Olympic official Randhir Singh, who will lead India's presentation in London along with sports minister Vikram Varma, said New Delhi was the favourite after Singapore withdrew its bid as a mark of Asian solidarity with India.

"Member-nations have told me they want the Games to be moved around instead of them being hosted usually in Australia, England or Canada," Singh said.

"Asia deserves to host the Games." The Commonwealth Games have been hosted in Asia just once, in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur in 1998.

Canada held the 1994 event in Victoria, England's Manchester hosted it last year, while the 2006 edition will be held in Melbourne, Australia.

Singh, a member of the International Olympic Committee and secretary-general of the Olympic Council of Asia, said New Delhi had the support of several Asian and African nations.

"India has never hosted the Commonwealth Games which will work in our favour because Canada has held it three times," he said.

Kiwis taste success

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shots at the right time. They were not able to put pressure on us."

Fleming drove home the advantage given by tall fast bowlers Jacob Oram (3-38) and Daryl Tuffey (3-32), who restricted Pakistan despite an impressive unbeaten 70 by middle-order batsman Younis Khan.

Pakistan missed the services of key fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar, serving with the ball during the last league game against New Zealand here on Tuesday.

They needed early successes to put pressure on New Zealand but failed to find wicket-takers in the absence of Akhtar, who had bowled with fire in his four games before being suspended.

The inexperience was reflected in bowling as Pakistan conceded 44 extras, including 25 wides.

"I think the total was defensible, but we conceded too many extras. We bowled too many wides," said Pakistani captain Rashid Latif.

"New Zealand played better cricket than us and they deserved to win."

Pakistan coach Javed Miandad said he was pleased with his side's overall effort but staggered by the number of extras his bowlers conceded.

"We gave too many extras but everyone was trying too hard," said Miandad. "I am very satisfied with the way they performed in general

though. They are inexperienced and this is the only way that they will learn."

When talented seamer Mohammad Sami had Chris Nevin caught cutting by Shoaib Malik at backward point for Pakistan's first wicket, Fleming had already laid a solid foundation with a 54-run stand.

He then consolidated his team's position with a 59-run stand for the second wicket with Lou Vincent, which eventually helped his team absorb a three-wicket effort from Sami.

Sami removed Fleming and Scott Styris (22) off successive deliveries to reduce New Zealand from 151-2 to 170-5, but his effort came too late.

In contrast, Pakistan were under pressure from the first over itself. Their woes began soon after Latif became the tournament's first captain to elect to bat after winning the toss.

SCOREBOARD Table with columns for batsmen (Tuffey, Sami, Shabbir, Kania, Extras, Total) and bowlers (Tuffey, Mills, Styris, Oram, Vettori, Harris).

NEW ZEALAND Nevin c Malik b Sami 17 Fleming c Khan b Sami 65 Vincent run out 13 Styris b Sami 22 Cairns c Razzaq b Ahmed 18 Oram c Khan b Razzaq 12 Harris not out 5 McCullum not out 4 Extras (lb-13, nb-6, w-25) 44 Total (For six wickets in 45.2 overs) 200

Fall of wickets: 1-54, 2-113, 3-151, 4-152, 5-170, 6-194.

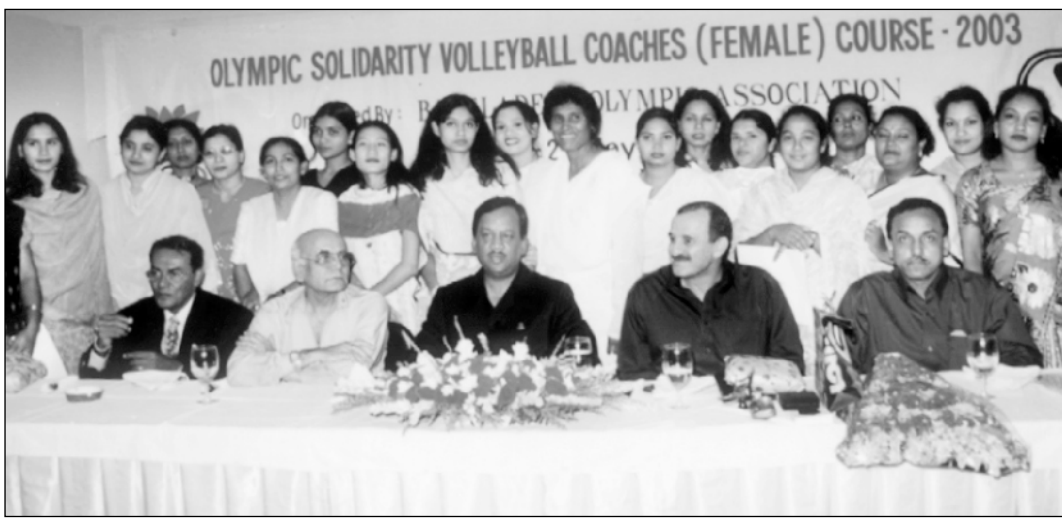
CRYPTOQUIP grid with letters and numbers for solving.

Q K N D C A F Y A D J M D Y I F X I A Y Q K Y F J N L M P F X W . K A D K Q Y V L W W F Q M K Y D J J .

" K F V Q , K F P F F C I " Yesterday's Cryptquip: MESSAGE PRINTED ON BACK OF ANIMAL CRACKER PACKAGE: "DO NOT EAT IF SEAL IS BROKEN."

Today's Cryptquip clue: F equals O

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.



State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman poses with participants at the end of an Olympic Solidarity course for female volleyball coaches yesterday.

Lara's battle

FROM PAGE 13 were rested in St Lucia.

WEST INDIES (from): Chris Gayle, Devon Smith, Wavell Hinds, Marlon Samuels, Ramnareesh Sarwan, Brian Lara (captain), Ricardo Powell, Carlton Baugh, Ridley Jacobs, Omari Banks, Vasbert Drakes, Mervyn Dillon, Corey Collymore, David Bernard, Ryan Hurley.

AUSTRALIA (from): Matthew Hayden, Adam Gilchrist, Ricky Ponting (captain), Jimmy Maher, Michael Clarke, Andrew Symonds, Michael Bevan, Brad Hogg, Ian Harvey, Andrew Bichel, Brett Lee, Jason Gillespie, Glenn McGrath, Nathan Hauritz.

Six cheers

FROM PAGE 13 third after beating Dhaka Education Board 4-3 in the tie-breaker after their place-deciding match ended 1-1 in regulation time. State Minister for Youth and Sports M Fazlur Rahman witnessed the final and distributed the prizes.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers for solving.