

Pakistan hockey manager quits

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan hockey team manager Abdul Rasheed resigned Sunday citing personal reasons, a week after his side lost the final of the Asia Cup to arch rivals India in Malaysia. "I have resigned and its because of personal reasons. Once I quit I dont want to create a controversy but my decision is not sudden," Rasheed told AFP. "Our team has shown improvement in the last two months and reached the final of the Asia Cup for the first time in 14 years so my resignation has nothing to do with defeat against India," said Rasheed, who guided Pakistan to their last World Cup win in 1994 as manager. He is the only man in hockey history to win a World Cup both as player -- in 1971 -- and as manager. Pakistan beat India by 4-2 in the group match but went down 2-4 in the final, handing their rivals a direct entry in the 2006 World Cup to be held in Germany. Pakistan's next assignment will be the Afro-Asian games to be held in Hyderabad, India, from October 24. It will be Pakisan's first visit to India since 1999. Pakistan Hockey Federation secretary Brigadier Musaratullah Khan said Rasheed's resignation disappointed him. "Rasheed had taken responsibility and it was disappointing that he left us in the middle of our campaign for Olympics," Khan said. Another former Olympian, Hasan Sardar, takes over as the third change on the team managers post.

McGrath out

FROM PAGE 13 Australian pre-Test camp here, and earlier indications were that he would be ready to take part in the first Test against Zimbabwe, starting at the WACA Ground Thursday. He had said all along he would not play unless he was close to 100 per cent fit. McGrath also indicated he was prepared to sacrifice the first half of the domestic summer to ensure his fitness for a gruelling schedule over the next 18 months. "For a fast bowler, when you've got ankle problems with your front foot, it can be a major problem," McGrath said. His absence means Australia will go into Thursday's Test without him and the suspended Shane Warne, who have 921 scalps between them. The last time the pair were absent from an Australian Test lineup was in last summer's fifth Test against England, when Australia lost by 225 runs. Western Australian fast bowler Brad Williams has been promoted to the Australian 12 for the first Test, but is expected to be given 12th man duties.

Proteas call

FROM PAGE 13 lost. Wyk, however, came into reckoning after scoring 226 in three matches against touring Sri Lanka "A" in South Africa. Gibbs had suffered a groin injury before flying to Pakistan but played a warm upmatch without any discomfort on Wednesday. He then pulled a stomach muscle in the teams training session on Thursday. McKenzie was lucky to get his fitness and is playing in the second match.

Playing

FROM PAGE 13 Decades of fighting prevented cricket authorities from establishing contacts with the three districts in the north of the island. Sumathipala said the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was receptive to promoting the game in the war-ravaged areas.



PHOTO: AFP

(From L-R) former Indian batsman-turned TV commentator Sanjay Manjrekar, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chief executive Rameez Raja (C) and former Pakistani captain Waqar Younis at a seminar on "Pakistan versus India, why not?" organised at the Lahore University of Management Sciences in Lahore on October 4.

Only way is cricket way

AFP, Lahore

Indians and Pakistanis should push their governments to allow cricket exchanges between the cricket-mad rivals to resume, former Indian batsman Sanjay Manjrekar said. "Politicians are careful over making the decision (to resume cricketing ties) but people can push them into it," Manjrekar said at a university seminar late Saturday entitled "Pakistan versus India, why not?" "Over the years it has become a major, difficult political decision and since the gap is getting bigger, the decision is becoming a major one," said Manjrekar, who played 52 Tests for India in the 1980s. The Indian government cut all bilateral cricket ties, as well as various travel and diplomatic links, with Pakistan following an attack on its parliament in December 2001

which it blamed on militants backed by Islamabad. No Indian team has visited Pakistan for a Test series since 1989-90. However, recent peace overtures between the hostile neighbours and India's clearance for a junior-level series have raised hopes that New Delhi could give the green light for its team to cross the border in February-March next year. "Government knows it is a difficult decision and it will depend on political weather in India that we tour Pakistan in February next year," said Manjrekar, who is a television commentator in Pakistan. Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chief executive Rameez Raja, who also addressed the PCB-organised seminar at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), said it was also important financially that India played Pakistan. "We can earn 11 million dollars in

20 days of cricket with India and it is imperative and important that India plays Pakistan," said Raja, who led a Pakistan team in 1997-98 to feature in India's Independence Cup. Former captain Waqar Younis told the jam-packed auditorium of around 500 students that he regretted playing just four Tests against India. "The biggest regret in my 14-year career is that I played only four Tests against India," said Waqar, who made his debut when India last toured Pakistan in 1988-89. "I think we are missing a great dual, people talk about Ashes series and South Africa vs Australia, but I think Pakistan versus India is the best," said Waqar. Pakistan and India met twice in Emerging Nations' Cup in Sri Lanka last week and an under-19 team is due to tour Pakistan next month.

'I'll be back'



AFP, Lahore

Former Pakistan cricket captain Waqar Younis, who was dropped after the team's first-round World Cup exit, has given himself one year to fight his way back into the national side before retiring. The 32-year-old paceman, who came in for heavy criticism after the World Cup this year, hit out at suggestions he should retire immediately and said he had high hopes of making a comeback. "No one can force me to retire and I won't listen to anyone, and no one in the Pakistan Cricket Board has told me to retire because I feel I can play for one more year," Waqar

told reporters. "I have had a good year with the Warwickshire county this year and hope I get another chance to play with them next year so I can fight back into the team," added Waqar, who will fly to Australia next week to play grade cricket there. Waqar, who formed a deadly bowling partnership with the retired Wasim Akram, was among eight players axed after the February-March World Cup in southern Africa. An official report blamed Waqar for his obstinate handling of the team and said he did not cooperate with other players. But Waqar refused to be drawn on the report's findings. "It was disappointing to lose the way we did in the World Cup but it's not new in Pakistan. I don't want to

be drawn into any controversy because I am still playing," said Waqar, who has rattled up 373 wickets in 87 Tests. He insisted that a comeback was still on the cards. "This is right that a sidelined player comes (back) as captain but I don't want to come as captain and am ready to stage a comeback as a player," said Waqar. He said he had recently held a meeting with Pakistan Cricket Board chief executive Rameez Raja. "I met Rameez but it was noting unusual. I will be back in Pakistan and will surely play in some of the domestic tournaments," he said. Waqar's 416 international one-day wickets of 416 is second only to Wasim's world record of 502.

Rainer ends drought

Sharapova's maiden crown



AFP, Tokyo

Top seed Rainer Schuettler of Germany posted his first title in two years when he outclassed Sebastian Grosjean of France to win the men's singles at the Japan Open tennis tournament on Sunday. In the women's event, Russian

pin-up Maria Sharapova captured her first WTA title when she beat Aniko Kapros of Hungary 2-6, 6-2, 7-6 (7/5), adding to her first doubles title with Thailand's Tamarine Tanasugarn Saturday. Schuettler, the Australian Open finalist, tamed Grosjean's occasional serve-and-volley game with a series of baseline winners to score a 7-6 (7/5), 6-2 victory. It was third time lucky for the German after two runners-up spots

this year, and his first victory over Grosjean in three attempts at major tournaments. "It was great. I enjoyed playing in the final and it was my first tournament victory this year, so I really enjoyed it. It was fun to play in Tokyo," Schuettler said. "Now, I have a very good chance. I've always been dreaming about playing in the Masters Cup. I played already in the Grand Slam final, but the Masters Cup is definitely my dream. I would be very proud if I could play." Grosjean got off to a flying start by breaking Schuettler in the opening game. However, it would be his last break of the match. The Frenchman gifted his opponent the first set with three consecutive mistakes on his favoured forehand at the end of the tie-breaker. Schuettler then went a break up in the opening game of the second set and never looked back to close out the set 6-2.



PHOTO: AFP

German Rainer Schuettler raises his arms with joy after defeating Sebastian Grosjean of France in the Japan Open final yesterday.

Myskina lifts Kemlin Cup

AFP, Moscow

Russia's Anastasia Myskina won her second consecutive WTA title, beating Amelie Mauresmo of France 6-2, 6-4 in the final of the 2.3 million-dollar Kremlin Cup here on Sunday. The fourth seed, successful in Leipzig last week, was registering her first win over second-seeded Mauresmo to become the first Russian WTA player to keep the trophy at home. The pair started nervously, trading early breaks in the opening set. But watched on by former Russian president Boris Yeltsin Myskina moved up a gear to make two more breaks to lift herself 1-0 up in 32 minutes. In the second set Myskina, ranked 10th in the world, broke again in the fourth game to a comfortable 4-1 advantage. The 24-year-old Mauresmo broke back in the ninth game but only to allow Myskina to break immediately again in the 10th for victory. Myskina said: "I hope the Kremlin Cup will stay in Moscow in the future. "My teammates and me will do our best to win in front of our home public at the next tournaments." She picked up a winner's cheque for 189,000 dollar with Mauresmo pocketing 102,000 dollars.

Radcliffe wins third title

AFP, Vilamoura

Paula Radcliffe won her third World Half-Marathon title here on Saturday with a runaway victory over defending champion Berhane Adere of Ethiopia. The Briton finished almost a minute and a half ahead of Adere in a time of 1hr 07min 35sec. Already the fastest woman in history over the full marathon course, Radcliffe set a fast early pace and was on course to break Elana Meyer's world best performance for this distance, but the Algarve sunshine and the early start took its toll and she finished 51sec outside the South African's mark. Radcliffe hit the front within two minutes of the race beginning around the holiday resort and marina and her nine-second lead over Adere at the five-kilometre mark grew as the race turned into a solo procession for the Briton. "The direct sunlight made it very hard," Radcliffe said. "I felt I was in the shape to do a fast time but I quickly realised that it wasn't going to happen on this course and in these conditions." She confirmed she was still most likely to run the marathon at next year's Athens Olympics. "At the moment I am thinking more in terms of the marathon, but things can change," she added.

The missing

FROM PAGE 13 the immediate formulation of a proper sports policy. It must be a rigid framework that outlines the rules and regulations, the way bodies are to be financed. More importantly the set-up of a sports body ought to be non-political with a clause stipulating that the tenure of a federation chief should be fixed according to a period of time lasting no more than two years. Federations must be made accountable for their actions and performances. If they fail to reach certain set targets they must be penalised. Furthermore, it is about time something is done to streamline our oversized sports arena to a manageable number. It is fair to say that some sports like weightlifting, cycling, kho kho and bodybuilding will never reach the dizzy heights of cricket. On the other hand, the chess federation deserves kudos because the officials are always busy holding tournaments round the year. They have even managed to attract sponsors at their own initiative. At the end of the day sport needs a new sense of direction. Simply holding roundtables, seminars and presenting national achievement awards will not produce the right results if we continue to look the other way.



PHOTO: AFP

A file photo shows Kashmiri man Mushtaq Ahmad putting a sticker to a finished cricket bat at a factory in Halmulla some 40kms south of Srinagar. Kashmir is famed for its excellent willow bats which are sold for between 100 and 700 rupees (two and 15 USD).

India means batting success



AFP, Halmulla

Jehangir Ahmed, a resident of this highway village in restive Indian Kashmir, is praying for an Indian win in the upcoming cricket series against New Zealand and Australia. The reason is purely commercial. "When India win the demand for cricket bats increases manifold," said Ahmed, 28, who owns Goodluck Sports -- a cricket bat manufacturing business that ships more than 20,000 bats annually to other states of India. "We did very good business during the cricket world cup and our sales increased by 70 percent," said Ahmed, whose grandfather Ghulam Nabi started the business some 35 years ago. India reached the final in March this year but were beaten by Australia. During the world cup Ahmed's firm sent more than 30,000 bats to the cricket-crazy Indian cities of Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and Hyderabad. The number would have been higher had India won the cup, said Ahmed. Mehraj-u-Din, 32, who works in an adjoining workshop, said bat makers are expecting good business this year as leading cricket-playing nations will be involved in various tournaments on the subcontinent. India this month host New Zealand for two Tests with Australia joining in later for a triangular one-day tournament.

Pakistan, meanwhile, has started playing South Africa in Pakistan. "Direct telecast of matches lures youths to the game with the result there is more demand for our bats," says Gul Mohammed Dar, 48, another manufacturer. Revolt-wracked Kashmir is famed for its excellent willow bats which are sold for between 100 and 700 rupees (two and 15 dollars) but which, after reaching the Indian markets, are re-sold at double that price. "Unfortunately our bats are not used by the international players," said Ahmed. "They prefer English willow which is light but hard and regarded as best for stroke making." Fresh willow takes seven months to dry before machines and men work on small bat-size willow blocks to give them the shape of cricket bats. But the industry that has survived the 14-year-old anti-Indian insurgency is facing problems on other fronts. "In the next five years we will have acute shortage of willow in Kashmir," said Abdul Majeed, deputy head of the 250-member Sports Goods Manufacturing Association of Kashmir. "People are more interested in cultivating fast-growing poplar than willow," Majeed said at his manufacturing unit named Decent Sports at Halmulla, 40 kilometers (25 miles) south of Srinagar, the summer capital. Majeed's association is also angry with the state government for allowing raw willow to be exported to the neighbouring state of Punjab.

"Our raw willow is being sold for peanuts to sports goods manufacturers from outside the state," he said. Majeed and other manufacturers say that the government has allowed only 150,000 bat-sized planks, known as cliffs, to be exported outside the state annually. "But I tell you more than one million cliffs find their way into Punjab courtesy of people with vested interests, including officials," said Majeed. "If this is not stopped the art of making cricket bats will soon go into oblivion in Kashmir," he said, advocating a ban on raw willow exports. The Kashmir industry employs some 10,000 local people and collectively exports nearly a million bats outside the state. One of India's first sports goods factories was set up in Jammu, the restive state's southern winter capital, way back in 1938 by the then king of Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh. The Maharaja was very fond of cricket. Indian Kashmir has hosted two one-day international cricket matches -- between India and West Indies in 1983 and between India and Australia in 1986. Three years later an armed anti-Indian insurgency broke out in the region that has so far left 39,500 people dead. Separatists put the toll at between 80,000 and 100,000. The region's local government is trying hard to bring international cricket back to the region. "If international cricket returns we will have lot of local business," said Ahmed Dar, another manufacturer.

Zim pushed all the way



REUTERS, Melbourne

Zimbabwe held on for a thrilling draw in their three-day tour match on Sunday after Western Australia scored 266 for four chasing 270 to win. Western Australia began their run chase aggressively with opener Mike Hussey and wicketkeeper Ryan Campbell, promoted to number three, putting on 128 in 100 balls for the second wicket. Hussey smashed 79 from 79 balls and Campbell hit 59 from 57 balls, but Marcus North (31 not out) and Shaun Marsh (six not out) could manage only 11 runs from the 38th and final over in a tense finish. All-round Peter Worthington also clubbed 45 off 27 balls for Western Australia as Zimbabwe's bowlers gave up seven runs per over. Western Australia captain Hussey had declared on his team's overnight score of 207 for six, still trailing Zimbabwe by 123 runs on the first innings at the WACA Ground in Perth. Trevor Gripper took advantage of the second opportunity to bat at the WACA before the first Test

against Australia starting there on Thursday by scoring 54 before Zimbabwe captain Heath Streak declared at 146 for six. Zimbabwe coach Geoff Marsh said the tourists would benefit from playing in such a tense match. "It's good to have a checkpoint going into the test to make sure that our guard's up," Marsh told reporters. "Hussey played very well and Campbell, they're two good players. They're on the verge of playing for Australia. "They got away from us and from there on the pressure was on. "For us it was good, but we would have been disappointed to lose the game, but it was good that we were under pressure from those guys."

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the third day of a three-day match between Western Australia and Zimbabwe at the WACA Ground on Sunday: **ZIMBABWE:** First innings 330 (C Wishart 100, A Blignaut 57, H Streak 45, Vermeulen 38, P Wilson 4-41) **WESTERN AUSTRALIA:** First innings 207-6 declared (M North 59) **ZIMBABWE:** Second innings Ebrahim c Taibu b Wates 6 Gripper c Campbell b Wilson 54 Vermeulen run out 30

Carlisle c Campbell b Wilson 9 Evans c Rogers b Wates 17 Taibu b Wilson 0 Irvine not out 15 Wishart not out 11 Extras: (lb-4) 4 Total: (For six wickets dec in 49.4 overs) 146 Fall of wickets: 1-21, 2-78, 3-98, 4-105, 5-111, 6-124 **Bowler O M R W** Wilson 14 6 26 3 Wates 10 1 53 2 Angel 8 4 10 0 Worthington 5 1 21 0 Casson 12.4 4 32 0 **WESTERN AUSTRALIA:** Second innings Rogers c Vermeulen b Blignaut 26 Hussey c Irvine b Gripper 79 Campbell stpd Taibu b Gripper 59 Worthington c Carlisle b Irvine 45 North not out 31 Marsh not out 6 Extras: (b-3, lb-8, nb-9) 20 Total: (For four wkts in 38 overs) 266 Fall of wickets 1-32, 2-160, 3-210, 4-240. **Bowler O M R W** Streak 13 0 81 0 Blignaut 9 0 60 1 Irvine 9 0 57 1 Gripper 7 0 57 2 **Result: Match drawn.**

Holyfield's career in doubt



AFP, Las Vegas

James Toney stopped Evander Holyfield in the ninth round of their heavyweight bout, possibly signalling the end of the 40-year-old former undisputed world champion's career. Toney had dominated the contest on Saturday from the start of the second round and was clearly leading on all three judges cards when the bout was stopped. After being hurt several times, Holyfield was finally knocked down

by the flurry of blows midway through the ninth round, prompting his trainer Don Turner to ask the referee to halt the fight. "I had to stop the fight because I didn't want to see my guy get hurt. I've seen four guys get killed in the ring and I didn't want to see another," Turner said. Toney 35, made a slow start and lost the first round but then took control of the fight, throwing far more punches and showing far more speed than the ex-champion. "Holyfield is a great fighter and I have a lot of respect for him but I was hungry ... I'm sorry I had to do that to him," Toney, who is the International Boxing Federation

cruiserweight champion, said immediately after the bout. Holyfield, who will be 41 later this month, admitted that he had a decision to make about his future. "Toney did beat me up. He out-hustled me ... I didn't get off with my punches like I wanted. I was a step behind," Holyfield said. Holyfield, known as "The Real Deal" has a reputation as one of the ring's warriors and fought bravely to the end. "A warrior is a person who does not quit. I did not quit in there," he said after the fight at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino.