



Ricky Ponting became the ninth Australian and the 35th in the world to have played 100

India, England finalise dates on Monday

REUTERS, Mumbai

Representatives of the Board of Control for Cricket in India will meet their England counterparts in London on Monday to conclude their fixture list, Indian board secretary Niranjan Shah said on Friday.

Shah told Reuters India would be represented by former board president IS Bindra and vicepresident Lalith Modi, both of whom are members of the board's marketing committee.

Zim cricketers' strike puts WI tour in doubt

AFP, Harare

Zimbabwe's cricketers say they will not go to West Indies in May for a Test and ODI tour unless their contracts are agreed, they are paid match fees going back to August last year, and if chairman Peter Chingoka remains in office.

Senior professional and allrounder Andy Blignaut told AFP: "We would be extremely sorry about this. We do not wish to damage the ICC tours programme nor make things difficult for West Indies."

United States lift Hopman **Cup title**

AFP, Perth

The United States claimed their fourth Hopman Cup international mixed teams tennis tournament title here Friday after defeating the Netherlands 2-1 in the final at Perth's Burswood Dome.

The American pair of Taylor Dent and Lisa Raymond were forced to a special match tie-break in the deciding mixed rubber which they won 10/7.

Michaella Krajicek had earlier beaten American veteran Raymond 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) while Dent had levelled the tie with a 6-1, 6-4 win over Peter Wessels.

The mixed doubles was a closely-fought affair but the Americans emerged winners 4-6, 6-2(10/7).

An MSC-Abahani FROM PAGE 12

to find an equaliser.

They survived a close call when Gilsun, taking a through from Parvez Babu, fired the ball wide of lone keeper Biplab in the 62nd minute. Biplab's legwork then saved a low drive by Felix from handshaking distance before Emeka almost made it 2-0 from a freekick but this time, Ali spotted the curling shot timely and fisted out for a corner.

Brothers paid for bringing youngster Emily and Liton too late in the match and even their inclusion could not find a hole in the tight Mohammedan backline and finally beat an outstanding Biplab. Yellow cards: Munna, Arman Aziz (Mohammedan) and Siraji, Felix (Brothers).

TEAMS

MOHAMMEDAN: Biplab, Nazrul, Odaf (Kamal, 46th minute), Rezaul, Hassan, Arman Aziz, Munna, Divine, Emeka, Alfaz (Nakib, 72nd) and Francis (Asad, 89th).

BROTHERS: Ali, Siraji (Liton, 66th), Sujan, Shuvra, Masud Rana, Parvez, Hicham, Abul, Gilsun (Elimy, 79th), Felix and Paul. Referee: Tayab Hassan.

Dravid says

Pakistan was a difficult place to play cricket.

"Pakistan is always tough but this Indian team has the capacity to face anything which comes its way, whether it's hard pitches, good bowling or any tough weather," said Chappell, who praised Dravid as captain.

"Rahul has shown himself to be a very good captain, he is learning very quickly and it is a tough job, there are certain areas that he needs to be courageous to take decisions. He has the capacity to be

the best India has had. India open their tour with a three-day match against Pakistan A at Bagh-e-Jinnah Stadium from Saturday. The first Test starts here from January 13.

Lanka's lost opportunity

Cricket

Sri Lanka's dream of a return to winning cricket was shattered on Friday when their batsmen squandered a great bowling performance by Chaminda Vaas to lose to New Zealand by 21 runs.

Shane Bond and Jeetan Patel were the bowling heroes for the home side as they pulled off an unlikely victory to go 4-0 up in the five-match series of one-day inter-

After being nicely set up by Vaas, who bagged a five wicket haul as New Zealand were restricted to a low score of 224 for nine, the Sri Lankan batsmen made a flying start.

At 136 for three in the 27th over a Sri Lankan victory appeared likely, but it all went wrong for the visitors as they lost the last seven wickets for 67 runs to be all out with 20 balls

They were still in the game, and ahead of the run rate, in the 39th over when a two-wicket blitz in three balls by Bond removed the last of the recognised batsmen and exposed Sri Lanka's fragile tail.

"After the start we got from (Jehan) Mubarak and (Kumar) Sangakkara we let ourselves down in a big way ... 225 was a gettable total," said a disappointed Sri Lankan captain Marvan Atapattu.

But it was a vital bowling performance for New Zealand after the batsmen fell 20-30 runs short of what was achievable, said captain "We probably weren't as good

with the bat as we needed to be and that's part of the area we need to develop, but we were gutsy enough to defend the score," he said. "Bondy did what we needed him to do. He came in and bowled fast and turned the game in our favour."

While Bond did the damage at one end finishing with three for 39, off-spinner and man-of-the-match etan Patel, playing only his fourth one-day international, baffled the Sri Lankans at the other taking two wickets and giving away only 23

With New Zealand already holding an unbeatable 3-0 lead in the series before the match, captain Stephen Fleming decided to experiment on winning the toss and elected to bat first.

New Zealand typically prefer to chase totals and faced with the unusual situation of setting a target they struggled for momentum.

Peter Fulton and Hamish Marshall both made half-centuries to anchor the New Zealand innings, and Fleming made 37, but the rest of the top order failed to fire.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the fourth one-day international between New Zealand and Sri Lanka in Wellington on

NEW ZEALAND	
Vincent c Muralitharan b	
Fernando	8
How c Sangakkara b Vaas	5
FlemingbVaas	37
Fulton c Maharoof b Fernando	50
Marshall c Vaas b Maharoof	50
Styris c Maharoof b Vaas	13
Cairns c and b Vaas	2
McCullum c Arnold b Vaas	1
Vettori b Muralitharan	7
Franklin not out	29
Bond not out	9
Extras: (lb-5, w-4, nb-4)	13
Total: (For 9 wkts in 50 overs) 2	.24

Fall of wickets: 1-14, 2-14, 3-85, 4-131, 5-154, 6-163, 7-165, 8-183, 9-

Bowler	0	M	R
Vaas	10	1	39
Fernando	10	1	51
Maharoof	10	0	49
Dilshan	10	0	37
Muralitharan	10	0	43
SRI LANKA			

Tharanga c McCullum b Franklin9 $Mubarak\,c\,Cairns\,b\,Patel$ Sangakkara b Cairns Jayawardene c McCullum b Atapattu c Vincent b Vettori 19 Dilshan b Bond 17 11

Arnold lbw b Patel $Maharo of lbw\,b\,Bond$ Vaas c How by Styris Bandara c Styris b Bond Fernando not out Extras: (lb-3, nb-2)

Total: (All out in 46.4 overs) 203 Fall of wickets: 1-16, 2-92, 3-106, 4-136, 5-156, 6-171, 7-171, 8-184, 9-

S u p e r - s Muralithara		a n d	lara	fo
Bowler	0	M	R	W
Franklin	7	1	38	2
Bond	9.4	1	39	3
Cairns	6	0	28]
Styris	4	0	22]
Vettori	10	0	50	1
Patel	10	0	23	2
Result: Nev	w Zeala ad the 5	nd v ODI	von b series	y 2 4-0
Toss: New Z	ealand.			

Umpires: Tony Hill and Darrell

be positive, it's the only way we can

Smith seeks revenge

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Graeme Smith was ever defiant after Ricky Ponting batted Australia to a 2-0 series triumph here Friday promising a tough time for the Australians in their return Test series in South Africa in March.

Ponting scored an unbeaten 143 as Australia easily chased down a 287-run target with more than 15 of the innings' allotted 76 overs remaining to win the final Sydney Test by eight wickets on the last day.

The skipper's gamble to declare an hour before lunch backfired but the South Africans were only interested in winning the match and not holding out for a draw having fallen behind in the series with last week's second Test defeat.

There are three more Tests to be played in South Africa in a few months and Smith is vowing the Proteas will hit back hard.

"When we get back home in front of our supporters, we're going to play for a win," he said. "We're going to back ourselves, we're going to be confident, we're going to stand up and we're not going to back down. "Certainly, when Australia come

to South Africa it's going to be one of their toughest times ever.'

Smith blamed missed opportu-

run ends

Former world number one Martina

Hingis failed to achieve a fairytale

victory in her comeback tourna-

ment here Friday but said her

confidence was high as she pre-

Hingis was beaten in the semifinals of the Australian women's

hardcourt event in three sets by

Flavia Pennetta in the fourth match

of her return to professional tennis

The five-time Grand Slam winner

took the first set easily before a lack of

fitness and a slight hip injury saw her succumb to the Italian world num-

The five-time Grand Slam

winner faded in the final set to lose

pares for the Australian Open.

after a three-year lay-off.

ber 23 in a tie-break second.

1-6, 7-6 (7/2), 6-2.

Tennis

AFP, Melbourne

and urged his players to develop a killer attitude to knock over Ponting's team the next time they

tunities and we need to be a little bit more decisive when our opportunities arrive," Smith said.

"In the first two Tests we let ourselves down in key moments, so that's certainly one key area we can "A team like Australia has been

dominant over the last few years when they get into that mode where they can smell the kill, they take it and that's an area that we're looking "I believe that against any other

team in the world we would have won this series, we would have dominated the series. "It's about the best team in the

world, when you get that sniff you must have that killer attitude. "We still believe we can

them, other teams think they can beat them. Credit to them, they've played the better cricket, they got the better results, and we're looking rward to the home series.

Smith backed his declaration decision as being positive and right for his team and for cricket.

"Everyone in the whole team wanted to be positive this morning

Hingis and France's Tatiana

Golovin then pulled out of their

doubles semifinal against Zimbabwe's Cara Black and

Australian Rennae Stubbs, with the 25-year-old Swiss admitting she was

Hingis retired in 2002 with foot,

heel and ankle injuries but

declared the Gold Coast tourna-

ment was the beginning of a seri-

She is set to play in the Sydney International later this month before

taking a wild card entry to compete in

the Australian Open beginning

January 16, an event she won three

about the wisdom of her comeback

but said her progress in her first

event had dispelled any fears she

no longer had the ability to succeed

on the women's tour.

Hingis admitted she had doubts

times at the height of her career.

ous comeback.

and go for a win," he said.

Hingis comeback

nities for his team's series loss here "Cricket needs positive games, it doesn't need teams batting out and drawing games. For us as a team, moving forward, we really need to

take South African cricket forward. "Looking back, we've had oppor-"To set a declaration and try to go for a win was in our minds the only way to play.

"Yes, we've lost but we've said throughout the game that the difference between 1-0 and 2-0 for us is nothing. It's still a loss of a series."

Smith said his team can take heart from the series with Jacques Rudolph batting for over seven hours to save the first Perth Test and having Australia in early trouble in Melbourne and amassing 451 for nine in the first innings of the Sydney Test.

"I think we've dominated a large portion of this Test match. We've had our noses in front the whole game and because of the weather we had to take a very big risk on a pitch that was probably playing like a third-day wicket.

"Throughout the series, we've really dominated sessions. We've had sessions where we've taken six or seven wickets. We've had times where we've really batted well.

"I think for a side that's come here with a lot of guys playing in Australia for the first time we'll take a lot of positives out of it.

Botha's bowling action reported

AFP, Sydney

The bowling action of South African off-spinner Johan Botha is to be investigated by the International Cricket Council (ICC), a team spokesman said after the third Test loss to Australia here on Friday.

Botha made his Test debut for the Proteas against the Australians and captured 1-26 and 1-77, but he has been reported by the game's world governing body for throwing.

The team spokesman said Botha would be allowed to bowl for South Africa in this month's triangular one-day series against Australia and Sri Lanka until the ICC officially

began its investigation. Meanwhile, the South African team was fined by ICC match referee Chris Broad for a slow over-rate on the final day of the Sydney Test, with the players fined five per cent of their match fees and captain Graeme Smith 10 per cent.



Participants of the Transcom Cup Golf Tournament pose with Chief of General Staff of Bangladesh Army and vice president of Kurmitola Golf Club Maj Gen Igbal Karim Bhuiyan (6th R) at the KGC course on Friday.

Mighty midgets can't convince **Argentine chief**

AFP, Buenos Aires

Argentina's pint-sized strikers Lionel Messi, Carlos Tevez, Javier Saviola and Sergio Aguero may strike fear into World Cup opponents, but their own football federation chief is not convinced.

"Those who would like to see these four play together can rent the film 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' rather than watch the World Cup," Julio Grondona, the president of the AFA, told the Ole newspaper.

"Football is a mixture of physiques and different techniques.

Messi, who plays at Barcelona, Tevez of Brazilian side Corinthians and Saviola of Sevilla are all assured of their place in coach Jose Pekerman's squad for the World Cup finals in Germany this sum-

Aguero, of Independiente, is tipped to be in the squad. x

Ugly scenes

FROM PAGE 12

0

9

12

formance as he thought that at the end, it was important who won the

"To me the result is more important than anything and although my boys didn't stick to my plans, I am happy," said Manik, who was satisfied to take his team to the final in his first assignment with the Black and Whites.

"As a coach it would be my third consecutive final in the tournament," said Manik who guided Muktijoddha to successive finals in the last two seasons. "I think country's football lovers will also be happy as they would be able to see the two most popular clubs in the final after a three-year gap.

"I told my boys to forget the past and start the new year in a happy mood. We were under pressure as Mohammedan failed to lift any trophy recently. Now we are satisfied and of course confident to give our loyal supporters something to cheer about," he added.

Imran's tips

FROM PAGE 12

most of in-form Akhtar.

"Akhtar has been a transformed bowler and won Pakistan the series against England. If he gets hard tracks he can come good again pecause there will be a lot of winter moisture for fast bowlers on the

Akhtar took 17 wickets in Pakistan's 2-0 Test series triumph over Ashes-winners England last Imran said that in beating

England, Pakistan had defeated tougher opponents than India, who recently beat Sri Lanka at

"It promises to be a very tough series but I think Pakistan have the edge. Besides their pace attack they have beaten Ashes-winning England and Inzamam is firing both as a good captain and as an ace batsman," said Imran.

He said Indian captain Rahul Dravid had also earned respect as a

"Dravid is a good batsman and he has got the respect of his team, which is the key to the success of a captain," said Imran, who led Pakistan to their only World Cup title in 1992.

Ozzyabek, Georgi **Transcom Cup** golf champs

SPORTS REPORTER

Ozgur Ozzyabek clinched the men's title while Supa Georgi won the women's crown in the Transcom Cup Golf Tournament at the Kurmitola Golf Club on Friday. A total of 318 golfers including

17 ladies took part in the two-day meet which was sponsored by Transcom Group. Chief of Army Staff of Bangladesh Army anď president of Kurmitola Golf Člub (KGC) Lt Gen

among the winners. A large number of participants including diplomats, high civil and military officials attended the prize giving ceremony. Latifur Rahman, Chairman and Managing Director of Transcom Group was also present at the function. The prize distribution was followed by a lucky

Moeen U Ahmed gave away prizes

Earlier Chief of General Staff of Bangladesh Army and vice president of KGC Maj Gen Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan inaugurated the presti-

OTHER RESULTS

Runner-up: J O Park; Senior winner: Lt Col Marzuk Ahmed (retd); Runner-up Nine Hole: Lt Col Shahriar A Chowdhury (retd); Best Gross: Syed Mohammad Ali; Ladies Best Gross: C D Hawang; Junior winner: Master Mudrek; Front Nine winner: Akira Myamoto: Back Nine winner: Mofizul Islam: Nearest to Pin: Reazuddin Ahmed; Longest Drive: Mario Omar Zavaley; Winner Nine Hole: Air Cdre Manzoor Alam; Senior Winner Nine Hole: Manzur Primera Liga

'Best' Barca set for derby

Football

Spanish league leaders Barcelona return to duty after the winter break on Saturday with a derby clash against city rivals Espanyol whose coach believes Frank Rijkaard's side is the best he has

Barcelona, who have 40 points from 17 games, enjoy a two-point lead over Osasuna who take on Racing Santander on Sunday.

But Espanyol coach Miguel Angel Lotina insists that the destination of the title this season is already a certainty.

"This is the best Barca I've ever seen," said Lotina.

"Things have changed and football has moved on, but this team is more superior to its rivals. The players are stronger and faster and for me they are the team playing the best and, what's more difficult, the most effective footDespite the flattery, Rijkaard is determined that his team don't let

the praises cloud their judgement. "We all know that historically these types of matches are special, both on the pitch and for the fans,"

said the Dutchman. "You never know before the game how you are going to react and that's what makes a derby special.

Rijkaard also warned his team's fans not to get carried away and that the time for celebration will come in May with what they hope will be a Spanish League/Champions League double.

"I don't believe in euphoria - I believe in hard work and doing things right," said Rijkaard.

"If we go out too overconfident, we'll fall into a dangerous trap. Any team we play is capable of making life difficult for us and the players have to show their maturity, continue to improve and forget any ideas about euphoria.'

Skipper Carles Puyol shows no sign of flagging despite having played 32 consecutive games and is an ever-present this season

Real Madrid, who are fifth but 11 points behind Barcelona, face fourth-placed Villarreal on

Sunday. Villarreal coach Manuel Pellegrini will be without injured striker Antonio Guayre but influentual midfielder Juan Pablo

Sorin should be fit. Real, without top scorer Ronaldo, could give a debut to new striker Antonio Cassano who was signed from Roma in midweek.

FIXTURES

(all 1600 GMT kick-off unless stated)

Athletic Bilbao v Deportivo La Coruna (1900), Espanyol v Barcelona (2100) Sunday

Alaves v Real Zaragoza, Cadiz v Getafe, Celta Vigo v Real Sociedad, Mallorca v Real Betis, Osasuna v Racing Santander, Sevilla v Malaga, Villarreal v Real Madrid (1800), Atletico Madrid v Valencia (2000)

SERIE A

Trezeguet looking for more

goes for Milan too," adds

Football

REUTERS, Milan

Serie A leaders Juventus face Palermo in Sicily on Saturday with striker David Trezeguet looking to score for the 10th successive

from the past nine games and is just two short of Argentine Gabriel Batistuta's all-time record of scoring in 11 consecutive Serie A With 14 goals from as many games this season, Trezeguet has

The France forward has 11 goals

Capello's side but points out his strike rate reflects the quality of service he receives. "The truth is I rely on the team and my goals are the fruit of the work of my team mates," he says.
"If the team is in good health and

been crucial to the success of Fabio

moving the ball around then I'm going to score goals. "We have everything in place to continue this marvellous run of form even though we know that Inter are a great team, with excellent individuals, who will be on our tails right to the end -- and that

Capello has few options in defence, though, with Alessandro Birindelli, Jonathan Zebina and Robert Kovac all injured and full-

DAVID TREZEGUET

back Gianluca Zambrotta sus-

Palermo, who have lost their last two games, have disappointed of late after a promising start to the campaign and coach Luigi Del Neri will likely be without attacking midfielder Franco Brienza

Juan Sebastian Veron will leave

when he returns to Argentina in the

only option for the former Bayer

Leverkusen ace come this summer.

and Chelsea have also been associated, while Bayern still hope to

Nevertheless, Inter are not the

Juventus, Manchester United

injury

Second-placed Inter Milan, on a run of six successive wins, play away to Siena on Sunday while AC Milan, nine points adrift of Juve in third place, host Parma at the San Siro.

Inter's Argentina international

cede the title to Juve with more than half of the season still left to "We won't give in until its math-

Walter Samuel is refusing to con-

ematically impossible," said the defender. "Hopefully we will get closer to Juve before we play them at home on February 12. We need to keep

them in sight and there's no shortage of belief at this club that we can catch them. **FIXTURES**

(all 1300 GMT kick-off unless stated):

Reggina v Fiorentina (1700), Palermo v Juventus (1930) Sunday AC Milan v Parma (1930), Cagliari Udinese, Chievo v Lecce, Empoli v Messina, Lazio y Ascoli, Samodoria y

Livorno, Siena v Inter Milan, Treviso v

who is struggling with an ankle Real 'leave' Ballack

to Inter

Football INTERNET, undated

Inter are in pole position to sign Michael Ballack after Real Madrid pulled out of the chase, according

the end of the season. However, stories in Italy on Friday claim that Real have opted to snub his arrival as a favour to the Italian giants.

negotiations. Now the Estadio Bernabeu outfit are prepared to do the same with regard to Ballack, given the excellent rapport between both

sive amount of business in recent years involving players such as Ronaldo, Walter Samuel and Luis

Real and Inter have done a mas-

Inter want the German playmaker to fill the void which



MICHAEL BALLACK

Fiorentina striker Luca Toni has

Saturday

Roma

outfit.

McGrath

Lee

Warne

Toni staying put

clearly stated that he is not even considering a move to Spanish giants Barcelona at the moment. Reports had suggested that he

was on the verge of joining the

Catalan outfit but Toni has echoed

the sentiments of his agent, Tullio

Tinto, and made it clear that he is going nowhere. The 28-year-old says he has a great deal of admiration for Barca star Ronaldinho, but he never made any comments that he was thinking of quitting the Serie A

He commented: "Me to Barcelona? This news has no substance, there has never been a request and I've not spoken with anyone. "This news is based on state-

ments I've not said. I just said, responding to a question, I consider Ronaldinho the world's best player. Nothing else. "2005 has been fantastic, starting in Palermo and continuing in

Florence, before going on to play

for the Azzurri," he continued. "It has been the best year of my career, but now I must look forward to 2006."

Ponting beats Proteas FROM PAGE 12

figure of the series with 117 in Melbourne and his two hundreds here to finish with 515 runs at an average of 103. Since returning from the Ashes series loss in England last

September, Ponting has accumulated five centuries in seven Tests

and is just one century behind Don

Bradman's 29 Test tons and four

behind leading Australian Steve Waugh's 32. Indian Sachin Tendulkarhasthemostwith35. Ponting also went past Englishman David Gower to become the 10th all-time leading

runscorer in Test cricket with 8,253

It was Australia's eighth win over South Africa in their last 11 Tests, with two drawn and the last loss coming in Durban in March 2002. Smith threw down the gauntlet,

setting the Australians a generous asking rate of 3.77 runs an over with his declaration at 194 for six, made much earlier than expected an hour before lunch. But his bowlers were incapable of forcing a result on an easy-paced

wicket and Ponting put on a match-

SCOREBOARD Final scoreboard on the fifth and last day of the third and final Test

partnership with Matthew Hayden

to seize the momentum and cruise

between Australia and South Africa at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Friday:

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 451 for 9 declared (Prince 119, Kallis 111; Lee 3-82) **AUSTRALIA:** First innings 359 (Ponting 120, Gilchrist 86; Nel 4-81) SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings

(overnight 94-3) Smith lbw b McGrath De Villiers lbw b Lee Gibbs run out (Hodge) 67 Kallis not out Prince c Ponting b MacGill 18 Rudolph c McGrath b MacGill Boucher st Gilchrist b MacGill 11 Pollock not out Extras: (b-3, lb-4, w-3, nb-2) Total: (For 6 wkts declin

Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-6, 3-92, 4-123, 5-129, 6-152 **Bowler**

> 15 2

10 3 48

11

45

MacGill 6 AUSTRALIA: Second innings Langer b Langeveldt Hayden c Smith b Botha 143 Ponting not out Hodge not out Extras: (lb-1, w-3, nb-4)

Total: (For 2 wkts in 60.3 overs) 288 Fall of wickets: 1-30, 2-212 **Bowler** M Pollock 2 55 Langeveldt 14 52 Nel Botha 12.3 77 Kallis 2 0 8 Rudolph 11 49 0

Result: Australia won by 8 wickets and clinch 3-Test series 2-0. Man-of-the-match: Ricky Ponting. Man-of-the-series: Ricky Ponting.