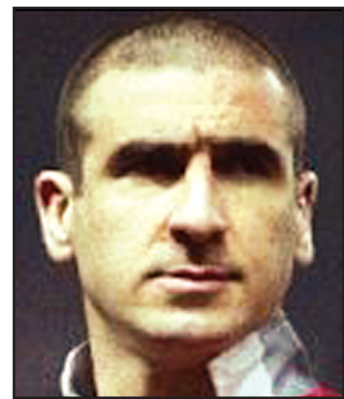




Did U Know?

At the 2005 Australian Open spectators ate approximately 159,000 ice cream cones and 18,000 hamburgers.



Eric Cantona

(Manchester United legend)

"I have the feeling that the club could lose its philosophy. That would be a pity now we've entered the age of making players like sheep."

While taking an unusual step of criticising his beloved former club in the wake of Roy Keane's exit.

What to WATCH

ESPN

Australia vs South Africa

Fourth ODI

Live at 9:15 am

STAR Sports

Australian Open

Men's/Women's Third Rd

Live at 6:00 am



Aktel Premier Div Cricket League SUPER SIX

Old DOHS vs Brothers Union

Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium

Victoria vs Sonargaon Cricketers

Venue: BKSP-2

Biman vs Mohammedan

Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium

Bangladeshi chess players dominate

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladeshi players dominated the seventh round of the 4th Parsvnath International Open Chess tournament in Delhi yesterday.

Grand Master Niaz Murshed beat WGM Tania, GM Ziaur Rahman beat IM Arun, IM Abdullah Al Rakib beat IM Rahul and IM Enamul Hossain Rajib drew with Singh to increase their tally to 5.5 points each.

FM Mehdi Hasan Parag bagged five points after winning his seventh round board against Adhiban.

In other matches, FM Sheikh Nasir Ahmed lost to Kidambi and Mohammad Ali lost to Saptarshi.

India's NZ tour not before '08

Aus-WI do the same

AFP, Wellington

India's cricket tour to New Zealand scheduled for early next year has been postponed until late 2008, New Zealand Cricket (NZC) said Thursday.

The tour, which was to include three Tests and five one-day matches, was postponed with the agreement of both countries, NZC said in a statement.

The World Cup had been rescheduled to the start of March from early April, not allowing enough time for the tour to take place, it said.

"Following the ICC's decision NZC and the BCCI discussed various rescheduling options before finally agreeing that the tour should take place in December 2008," chief

SEE PAGE 17 COL 5

BANGLADESH-SRI LANKA SERIES

No matches in Dhaka!

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

There are very little chances to host a Test match or a one-day international in Dhaka when Sri Lanka will tour Bangladesh in February-March this year.

With the Bangabandhu National Stadium, a venue approved by the International Cricket Council (ICC) already being handed over for football, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) only has two venues at its disposal in the capital, the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur and the Fatullah Stadium.

However, ICC official Roshan Mahanama has found both the venues incomplete.

Former Sri Lankan international Mahanama, who came to inspect five venues in the country awaiting recognition of the ICC to hold international matches, has completed his job but told nothing of his findings to the press.

"I have to report straight to the ICC what I have seen here. As I am assigned by the organisation, I can not disclose any of it due to the code of conduct," Mahanama told

at a press conference at the Mirpur Stadium indoor facilities yesterday.

"The BCB will know about the report from the ICC in seven days. I can only say good luck to Bangladesh."

"Personally, I feel that it would be helpful for the game and the people of country if Bangladesh play at different venues rather than playing at one or two fixed venues," he added.

BCB general secretary Mahub Anam, who was also present, informed reporters after the press conference that the board has already sent a proposed itinerary to the ICC and Sri Lanka, who are due in Dhaka on February 17.

"According to our proposed itinerary, two one-dayers will be held in Bogra, one ODI and a Test in Chittagong and one Test in Dhaka," said Mahub.

However, hosting of matches in Bogra or Dhaka depends on the approval of the ICC.

"The National Sports Council, which is renovating the Mirpur Stadium, is expected to hand over the players' and officials' lounges to the board by February 15 but the press and the commentary boxes are yet to be finished. It would take at least two months to finish the

works and our plan is to make temporary arrangements for the media people during the Bangladesh-Sri Lanka series," Mahub said.

The Fatullah Stadium also does not have complete facility for print or electronic media and it seemed clear that the BCB officials, although they have Dhaka in mind for one Test match, are not crossing their fingers for a positive report from Mahanama, who has seen construction works pending.

Mahub still hoped that they would get ICC's nod for two out of the three other venues outside the city -- divisional stadiums in Chittagong and Khulna and the Bogra Stadium -- that Mahanama has inspected.

Reportedly, Mahanama -- impressed by the facilities at Bogra -- has showed satisfaction over ground condition at Mirpur Stadium but he found the accommodation facilities in Khulna insufficient.

"We've got the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong being readied for Sri Lanka's tour. If we can not hold a Test in Dhaka we will shift it elsewhere. Still, our target is to get recognition for all the venues," Mahub added.

It seems that the board's 'favourite' venue Bogra is all set to host the second Test.

ZC suspends Test status

Cricket

AFP, Harare

Zimbabwe cricket lurched into another crisis on Wednesday when Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC) suspended its national team from Test matches for the rest of the year.

The shock decision, announced at a meeting here, means that the planned two-Test tour of the Caribbean, scheduled for April and May, will now not take place.

It is the second time in two years that Zimbabwe Cricket, split by ongoing claims of racism, corruption and player strikes, has been suspended from Tests.

A similar decision was taken in 2004 as results and performances on the field became increasingly humiliating.

"The interim board have decided to suspend Zimbabwe's participation in Test matches until early next year," ZC interim board chairman Peter Chingoka said in a

statement.

"The decision to suspend participation in Test matches was reached by ZC after consideration of the recent performances by the national and A teams.

"The young teams remain full of potential and hopes abound for their development into a strong and competitive performer in the Test arena.

"ZC are now putting in place a programme to galvanise the development of the Zimbabwe squads. They will work with other Test nations and the ICC itself to realise this objective.

"While the side goes through the programme to prepare adequately for the rigours of Test cricket, ZC have no doubt the team will be competitive in their ODI commitments under the Future Tours Programme."

It had been expected that Wednesday's meeting would have named a new skipper for the team after the resignation, and retirement from international cricket, of Tatenda Taibu with Andy Blignaut

tipped a favourite to take over.

But the more dramatic decision to pull out of Tests until 2007 was taken instead and came just 11 days after 37 players called off a planned strike.

They gave the ZC's new interim board three weeks to find a solution to an impasse over a long running dispute over pay and conditions.

Players representative Clive Field had said that the first reaction of the players to the government of Robert Mugabe taking control of cricket administration was to quit the game altogether, find other jobs or take their skills to other countries.

But after discussions he said they decided to negotiate back pay, new contracts (which were due last September) and match fees due from home series against New Zealand and India.

The 37 players said in the past that they would not play for the country while chairman Peter Chingoka remained at the helm.

Hewitt, Pierce crash out

Nakamura the lone Asian to stay after Mirza's exit

Australian Open

AFP, Melbourne

Third seed Lleyton Hewitt and women's fifth seed Mary Pierce were sent spinning out of the Australian Open Thursday, but an awesome Roger Federer glided through to the third round.

Hewitt's dream of glory in front of his home crowd was shattered by Argentina's Juan Ignacio Chela, who outclassed the Australian 6-4, 6-4, 6-7, 6-2.

"I was giving everything I had out there. You know, I just wasn't up to it tonight," said Hewitt.

The former Wimbledon and US Open champion, who was struggling with a left ankle injury, became the highest seeded casualty of the first Grand Slam of the season.

That honour had been Pierce's for several hours after she failed to find

the sizzling comeback form that swept her to two Grand Slam finals last year, falling 6-3, 7-5 to Iveta Benesova of the Czech Republic.

She was the second big-name flop on the women's side after Venus Williams.

A third top player could soon be joining them with Kim Clijsters continuing to struggle with a hip injury which she said threatened her campaign, which is good news for Martina Hingis whose remarkable comeback cranked up a gear.

The triple champion blitzed Finn Emma Laine 6-1, 6-1, and with Pierce out the draw has opened up for her.

She will now play Pierce's conqueror and will be astonished to find that she will not meet a seeded player until the quarterfinals, which is scheduled to be Clijsters if she survives her injury.

"Maybe in these three years I've freshened up a bit and now I can just go full gas," she told an ecstatic Melbourne Park crowd.

"I'm really just enjoying every second being out there."

It was an equally awesome rout by the 'Fed Ex', who rolled over Florian Mayer of Germany 6-1, 6-4, 6-0 in just 72 minutes on centre court as his drive for a seventh Grand Slam title revved up.

Federer, the world number one, issued an ominous warning that he can still get better.

"I think I can definitely improve little things. I can maybe still improve my returning game, my serving, my volleying. There's still potential left," he said ahead of his next clash against Max Mirnyi, the 30th seed from Belarus.

Hewitt's former girlfriend Clijsters, seeded two, has been installed as tournament favourite by the bookies but is playing one game at a time as she struggles to beat the hip injury that she developed in Sydney last week.

The US Open champion

SEE PAGE 17 COL 3

Premier League Super Six begins today

SPORTS REPORTER

Table-toppers Old DOHS start their Super-Six campaign in the Aktel Premier Cricket League today against Brothers Union at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium with a bid to not only repeat their first-leg result but also get one step closer to retain the title.

The final stage of battle for the most coveted domestic competition kicks off at three different venues with coloured dresses and white ball for cricketers.

Smarting from a seven-wicket defeat in the first phase, Victoria Sporting Club take on Sonargaon Cricketers at BKSP while Mohammedan Sporting Club also try to avenge their seven-wicket first-leg defeat to Bangladesh Biman at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium in the day's other fixtures.

Only a landslide fall by DOHS can open the window for the others in the title chase but the rest of the teams were very much practical about their chances and have their eyes rather on the runners-up spot.

Defending champions DOHS enter the Super-Six with 20 points having a four-point cushion over second-placed Victoria while Mohammedan, Sonargaon and Biman carry 14 points each.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2

BCB meeting on Jan 28

SPORTS REPORTER

The much-awaited meeting of the executive committee of Bangladesh Cricket Board will be held on January 28.

The third meeting of the newly-elected board has been convened hurriedly after media reports blasted the board for breach of constitution. Although the constitution says that the board must hold one meeting in every three months, the gap between the second and the third meetings will be more than that.



A LOT LEFT TO BE DONE: ICC inspector Roshan Mahanama (R) steps on to the playing field of the Mirpur Cricket Stadium on makeshift stairs on Thursday.

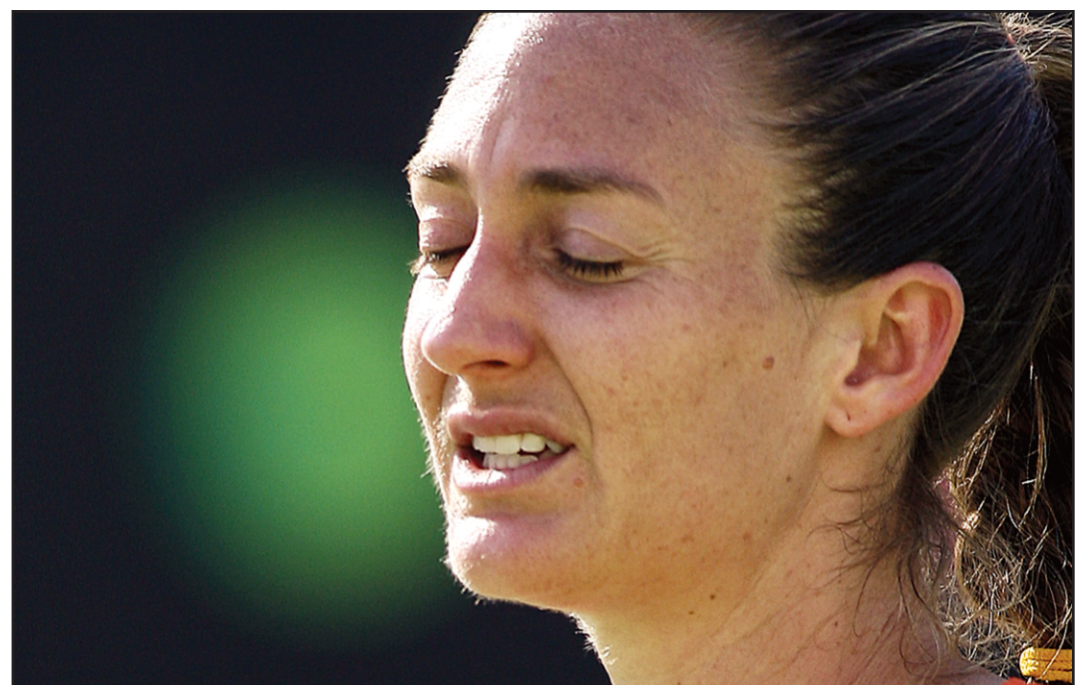


PHOTO: AFP

THE PICTURE SAYS IT ALL: Fifth seeded Mary Pierce of France is down and out of the Australian Open.