

Proteas pair punish NZ

AFP, Benoni

Test veteran Neil McKenzie and promising youngster Jean-Paul Duminy punished the touring New Zealanders in an unbeaten fourth wicket stand of 248 for the Rest of South Africa on the first day of a four-day match at Willowmoore Park on Friday.

The Rest of South Africa reached 355 for three at the close, with both batsmen on 125 not out.

It was hardly the warm-up that the Black Caps were seeking ahead of a three-Test series against South Africa starting at Centurion on April 15.

But it was the sort of performance pledged by McKenzie, the Rest captain, ahead of the match when he said his players would be seeking to force the national selectors' hands and to get the New Zealanders' tour off to a losing start.

McKenzie, 30, has played in 41 Tests but hasn't been selected for two seasons despite good domestic form in the current season.

The left-handed Duminy has played in five one-day internationals and is regarded as one of the country's most promising young batsmen.

The Rest took advantage of a slow, flat pitch after McKenzie won the toss and decided to bat.

Justin Ontong and McKenzie put on 65 for the third wicket before the former was out for 61 in the first over after lunch. The rest of the day belonged to McKenzie and Duminy, although both gave chances. McKenzie was dropped on 11 and Duminy on 28.

Bond struggled after his early wicket, conceding 51 runs in ten overs, including 22 off one over, including three fours and a six by McKenzie.

BRIEF SCORES

REST OF SOUTH AFRICA: 355 for 3 in 90 overs (Ontong 61, McKenzie 125, Duminy 125; Bond 1/51)

NEW ZEALAND: S Fleming, J How, M Pappas, P Fulton, S Styris, J Oram, B McCullum, D Vettori, J Franklin, S Bond, C Martin

Real v Reims -- half a century on

AFP, Madrid

Spanish giants Real Madrid and humble French second division outfit Reims may not have much in common these days but half a century ago it was a different story altogether.

On June 13, 1956, the two sides met in the first European Cup final, with Real winning the match 4-3 in Paris.

And to mark the 50th anniversary of that game Real have invited Reims to an exhibition fixture on May 9 to inaugurate their new training stadium in the suburbs of the Spanish capital.

The stadium has been named in honour of Alfredo di Stefano, the legendary Argentinian player who led Real to five consecutive European titles between 1956 and 1960.

Real vice-president Emilio Butragueno said next month's game would serve to "unite us around the figure of di Stefano and recall a fixture that changed our history".

Di Stefano, Real's 79-year-old honorary president who scored the first goal in the 1956 final, is recovering after undergoing quadruple heart bypass surgery in January.

While his club have gone on to be crowned champions of Europe nine times the intervening years have not been so kind to their fellow 1956 finalists with Reims currently languishing in 11th place in the French second division.

Attal: The smiling assassin



QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

Fahed Attal is quick to smile, but he is quicker to pounce. The sunny demeanour of the man who hails from war-torn, much disputed West Bank in Palestine, belies the predatory instincts associated with deadly marksmen.



Palestine striker Fahed Attal in action during the AFC Challenge Cup match against Cambodia in Dhaka on April 3.

Speaking through an interpreter in his hotel room, Fahed confirms the understandable. "My eyes are firmly on the cup," says the top scorer of the AFC Challenge Cup. "I want to win."

But his self-effacing and shy nature is evident. "All the goals that I have scored so far have been for

Palestine, not for myself. Personal glory comes later. The team first."

Attal admits that he has had some trouble acclimatising, although his six goals in the opener against Guam hardly provided any evidence of that.

"The humidity is difficult to get used to, but I have played three games and I am adapting well. I am happy to play here," relates Attal.

And although Attal is currently still plying his trade in Palestine, there is a decent chance that he will be playing in the lucrative leagues of the Middle East come next season.

His showing here also did nothing to dissuade potential suitors. "There are offers from Jordan and Qatar. The leagues there are very strong. I see myself playing there."

And on evidence it would be sooner rather than later. Fahed also speaks about the sufferings of his people. "The situation is very hard that is why we must win for Palestine."

He is a huge fan of Real Madrid and is all smiles when the topic of his favourite player is raised.

"Ronaldo," he replies, eyes twinkling.

Any chance he will one day replace his idol Real Madrid? "Inshallah, not impossible," he says and it is enough to understand the steely resolve within the man.

On his current team Attal says, "We are like one man. Everyone compliments each other, the players, the coach, manager and even the chairman. We complete each other."

The hitman from the war ravaged country, its stuff blockbusters are made of. Fahed Attal's star, though, has only just risen.

Jones joins injury list

Fifth England-India ODI today



BBC ONLINE, undated

Injured England wicketkeeper Gerard Jones is set to miss the fifth one-day match against India at Guwahati.

Jones strained his left thigh while batting at Cochin on Thursday and Matt Prior had to take over behind the stumps for India's innings.

Prior will keep the job for Sunday's match if Jones is ruled out as England try to bounce back from four defeats.

"To just roll over and let the last three games go is unacceptable," said seam bowler Matthew Hoggard.

"We'll be trying up the intensity and trying to make sure India know

we can beat them ready for if we meet them at the World Cup.

"The World Cup is a massive event for world cricket and we need to start winning. We've shown hints of what we can do and over the next three games we've got to throw everything into it," Hoggard told BBC Five Live.

Although a permanent fixture in the Test side, he was only drafted into the one-day squad as a replacement for Steve Harmison.

And his appearance in Kochi on Thursday was his first in a limited overs international for over a year.

Hoggard says England have a point to prove in the remaining games.

"I don't think it's gone wrong per se, we should have won the first game comfortably and with a bit of luck in the second we could have been 2-0 and we're playing, I think,

one of the best teams in the world at the moment.

"We can take a lot of positives from the way we have played, unfortunately we haven't gone on and won the two games that we should have won," he said.

"Experience helps a lot but we've got the talent and ability so hopefully the more games we play the better we'll get."

He will be available for Sunday's game despite being struck under the chin by a drive from Suresh Raina in Kochi.

"It is a little bit sore. I have no idea how fast the ball came back because I didn't see it."

"I have only ever been hit in the nets before -- I can't remember being floored in a game," Hoggard added.

Holding hits chuckers hard



AFP, New Delhi

Bowlers are getting away with illegal actions because umpires are afraid of calling them for political reasons, according to West Indian fast bowling great Michael Holding.

Holding, whose copybook, but lethal, bowling action earned him the nickname of Whispering Death, said it was not difficult to identify chuckers with the naked eye.

"Once you see something with the naked eye, you should be reporting it and having it assessed and measured properly," Holding said in an interview in the April issue of Mumbai-based 'Cricinfo' magazine.

"The difficulty is in the politics

surrounding it, with people afraid to report certain players."

Holding, now a respected television commentator at 52, hinted the Pakistani tearaway Shoaib Akhtar still does not have a clean action despite being cleared to bowl by the International Cricket Council.

"When you look at Shoaib Akhtar and (India's) Rudra Pratap Singh from the front, you see a bent arm with one and a straight arm with the other," he said.

"Politics is preventing people from doing what they should." Holding added the way out was "to get people in authority who have the backbone to do what is right, and not what is politically expedient."

Holding, who claimed 249 wickets from 60 Tests in the 1970s and 1980s, said excessive workload was to blame for the steady decline

of quality fast bowlers.

"It's the workload," he said. "I wouldn't have coped. I wouldn't have been able to play 12 years of Test cricket. It's ridiculous how much they're playing."

The West Indian great said the use of helmets and protective gear had made it easier for batsmen to face fast bowling these days.

"In our time we didn't have a lot of protection, so you would easily find out who didn't have the guts to stand up and face the fire."

"A lot of batsmen today, their technique is so faulty that if they were to have that 30 years ago, they'd be dead. They now take their eyes off the ball knowing that even if it hits them on the head, the helmet will protect them."

Boca fans take zeal to grave

REUTERS, Buenos Aires

Many fans of Argentina's most popular soccer team, Boca Juniors, pledge eternal devotion to the club. And with new Boca caskets on sale, they can put their money where their mouths are.

Die-hard fans can buy their own coffins decorated in Boca colours and symbols for between 2,000 pesos and 2,500 pesos (650 dollars to 800 dollars), a small fortune for many of Boca's working-class followers.

"The coffin lets me express my feelings and show what happened to me during my life. And maybe it will bring a smile to someone's face who remembers when we went to see a match together," said Hernan Marini, who works with a funeral home that offers the caskets to prospective corpses.

Marini, 24, is buying a blue coffin etched with the team's shield on its lid -- the subtlest of three official Boca Juniors caskets made in a factory outside Buenos Aires.

The idea is not entirely original. One of Boca's soccer field chants says: "The day I die, I want my coffin, painted blue and gold, like my heart."

The coffin comes in two, flashier versions, one in a bright, solid blue and the other which is blue with a painted yellow banner "draped" on the outside. Both sport the Boca shield.

Marini said on Friday he didn't want to go overboard with the colors and symbols.

"I didn't want people to enter the chapel and be surprised or take it as a joke," he said.

Maradona backs Eng

INTERNET, undated

Diego Maradona admits he fears England could be a major rival for Argentina at this year's World Cup.

While he believes favourites Brazil will take some beating, England too he rates as potential challengers.

"I don't know if England are going to reach the final but it's a team that worries me as a potential rival of Argentina," said Maradona.

"This is the best English national team that I have seen in my life."

Maradona has spoken of his admiration for David Beckham but it is Wayne Rooney that he believes can light up Germany in the summer.

"They have a very good player like David Beckham," he continued.

"Many people say that he is only a marketing product but that is something that has been invented."

"Beckham has enough quality to lead his team and in addition, England have in the team a player like Wayne Rooney."

"He is really going to have a very good performance at the World Cup."

"I don't have any doubt that he is going to be one of the best players in the competition."

"He can even transform himself in to the topscorer in World Cup history. He is an incredible striker and is going to give a lot of glory to England."

Milan derby moved forward

AFP, Rome

Next week's derby between AC Milan and Inter Milan has been brought forward a day to give AC Milan an extra 24 hours to prepare for their Champions League semi-final, first leg against Barcelona.

The match was originally scheduled for Saturday, April 15, but will now be played on Friday, April 14 at 1830 GMT.

The remaining nine Serie A matches of the 35th round of games will be played on Saturday afternoon at 1300 GMT.

AC Milan face Barcelona at the San Siro on April 18, before the second leg in Spain on April 26.

Aftab again

FROM PAGE 12 old ball while Rasel is good with the new one.

"To counter (Muttiah) Muralidaran we had a left-hander (Shahriar Nafees) in the middle order in the last series but no plans to change the order now," he said replying to a question about the batting order.

Smith returns

FROM PAGE 12 rot against New Zealand, who they beat 4-0 in a one-day series last October and November.

The game at Centurion will be followed by Tests in Cape Town and Johannesburg.

SQUAD

Graeme Smith (captain), Jacques Kallis (vice-captain), AB de Villiers, Herschelle Gibbs, Ashwell Prince, Jacques Rudolph, Mark Boucher, Shaun Pollock, Nicky Boje, Andre Nel, Mahyava Ntini, Boeta Dippenaar, Andrew Hall, Garnett Kruger, Hashim Amla, Dale Steyn.



Tottenham Hotspur striker Mido (L) fights for possession with Sylvain Distin of Manchester City during their Premiership match at White Hart Lane on Saturday.

PREMIERSHIP Spurs on course for Europe



AFP, London

Tottenham Hotspur pulled clear of the chasing pack as a 2-1 win over Manchester City here at White Hart Lane on Saturday kept them on course for Champions League qualification.

Martin Jol's side have come under increasing pressure from bitter north London rivals Arsenal, but goals from Paul Stalteri and Michael Carrick either side of half-time were enough for them to cling on to fourth spot for now.

Victory saw Spurs go five points in front of the Gunners ahead of Arsenal's match away to Manchester United on Sunday.

Spurs came close to a spectacular opener after 15 minutes when Carrick blasted a 25-yard free-kick

which was uneasily turned round the post by former England No 1 David James.

Two minutes later City's Trevor Sinclair played Darius Vassell in but the former England striker dragged his shot wide. Then Ben Thatcher's slack headed backpass let in Robbie Keane, but his weak looped effort was caught comfortably by James.

Some neat play around the box then saw teenager Micah Richards shoot straight at Spurs' current England keeper Paul Robinson from 14-yards.

And seven minutes before the break Keane fired a shot at goal from inside the area, only for James to brilliantly tip the ball on to the bar.

But with half-time looming, Spurs went ahead through Stalteri's 44th minute strike. Keane worked space for a shot from the edge of the area which was well beaten out by

James, and Canadian defender Stalteri knocked in the rebound from close range.

The goal came at a perfect time for Spurs, and it no doubt contributed to their lightning quick start to the second half.

Within three minutes Carrick had doubled their lead. Tainio played the ball to him on the right and the former West Ham midfielder chipped down before volleying past former Hammers teammate James.

Spurs looked to be coasting although the scoreline seemed harsh on City. But that injustice was reduced when Georgios Samaras pulled a goal back for Pearce's side in the 52nd minute.

Sylvain Distin's long throw found the left foot of Samaras and his hooked effort found a way past Robinson.

Toni aims at Turin taboo



INTERNET, updated

Luca Toni has never scored against Juventus and Fiorentina are without a win in Turin for 18 years, but the hitman hopes to break both taboos on Sunday.

"I have never put a goal past the Bianconeri, so I hope that time has come," said the Viola record-holder who has already netted 26 this season.

"We'll try to win at the Stadio

Delle Alpi, but we know that we'll face a strong side which will be very angry after their Champions League exit."

Juve are without a win in four official games, during which they've scored just once and had four players sent off. It's arguably the worst possible time to come face to face with their long-standing bitter rivals from Tuscany.

"The Bianconeri will be fired up to beat us, but we'll be equally ready for the challenge, if not more, because there is a rivalry there going back through history."

The Viola are just one point clear of Roma in fourth place and the battle for the final Champions League spot is set to rage on until the end of the season.

"It'll be a very tough game, but we have another six rounds left and will try to string together as many points as possible," said Toni.

"We know that everything is on the table and we'll gamble all we have to bring this European dream to us and all of our fans."

Toni has captured the imagination of the Stadio Artemio Franchi crowd, but as yet hasn't earned himself a nickname a fact that prompted newspaper 'La Gazzetta dello Sport' to begin a search for the perfect moniker.

"I saw that," smiled the Italian international. "I've read some intriguing ones and others I really hope I don't get lumbered with! I have to say my favourite so far has been Padron Toni."

It's a reference to the patriarch character in Giovanni Verga's novel of Sicilian life, 'I Malavoglia', whose name was Padron Ntoni.

Other candidates include 'Zeus', 'The Purple Giraffe' and 'SuperTonic'. There was already a nickname of sorts with the wildly popular T-Shirt 'Toni e Furmini' Tuscan dialect for 'Thunder and Lightning.'



LUCA TONI

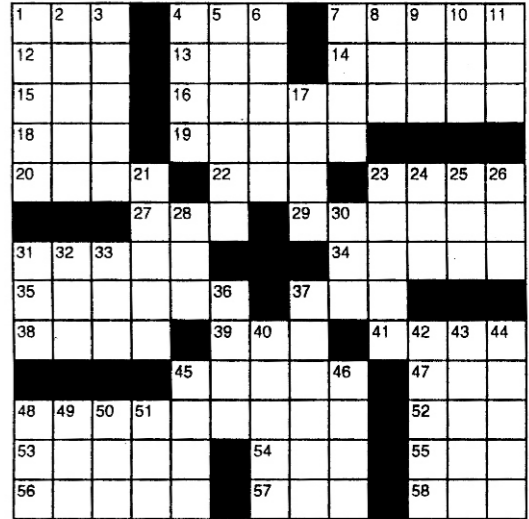
CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
 1 Tease
 4 Symbol of intrigue
 7 Recipient
 12 Rhyming tribute
 13 Harlem room
 14 Motionless
 15 Catcher's place?
 16 Huge Asian snake
 18 Freddy's street
 19 Follow relentlessly
 20 Additionally
 22 Bullring bravo
 23 Retain
 27 Easy card game
 29 Paycheck recipient
 31 Salmonelella cousin
 34 Big dipper
 35 Publisher
 37 Cromy
 38 Formerly
 39 Listening device

DOWN
 1 'M'A'S'H' locale
 2 Pastoral work
 3 Considers
 4 Chinese kitchen-ware
 5 Magazine honcho
 6 Hackneyed lady
 7 Sleuth, slangily
 8 Lennon's lady
 9 Beak
 10 Mess up
 11 LAX info
 12 Little hooter
 13 Jazz singer
 14 Diana
 24 Conclusion
 25 Conger

Solution time: 25 mins.

DOGS RATE STOP
 EVA ALUM PERU
 GARY BARRA ETAIN
 SOB FINALLY
 CLINIC LEX
 ROZ TOW DUCAT
 AVERN TIM PAGE
 BEGIM TIG STIN
 BEGUP DEMAND
 MELLODIC SIG
 AMIS CAPTAINS
 SILTY OGEE TEA
 STYE TEAR YEW



CRYPTOQUIP

RP L T B I J N G Y X B S O R S B B A
 V W B A P B J L J N W I N P V
 W V A E E B B W B A , R ' X S V U B
 T R U L T B J Y N S B A V S O B A .
Yesterday's Cryptogram: THE PRECINCT'S NEW POLICE DOG WAS SO GOOD. FOR A WHILE HE WAS THE SCENTER OF ATTENTION.
 Today's Cryptogram Clue: X equals D
 The Cryptogram is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals Q, it will equal Q throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

Kahn agony continues



AFP, Berlin

Oliver Kahn's miserable weekend continued on Saturday, conceding three goals as German champions and league leaders Bayern Munich slumped to a 3-0 defeat at Werder Bremen.

German international goalkeeper Kahn discovered Friday that he would be his country's number two at this summer's World Cup finals -- with Arsenal's Jens Lehmann first choice -- and hoped to ease the pain by helping Bayern edge closer to a 20th German title by winning at Bremen.

However the 36-year-old Kahn was helpless as Bastian Schweinsteiger scored an awful own goal to put Bremen in front on 33 minutes.

Danish international Daniel Jensen and Tim Borowski sealed the game late on to pile more misery on Kahn.

Bayern need just 11 points to defend the title but they are stumbling with the finishing line in sight. There are five games left in the Bundesliga season.

Germany manager Jurgen

Palestine the team

FROM PAGE 12 we have got three days' rest compared to our opponents' one-day. It would be good for us."

Kyrgyzstan, after their match against Cambodia was washed out, had to win two matches on successive days to qualify for the knockout stage after losing their opener to Pakistan and coach Boris Podkorytov thinks that coming from low temperature to a very hot condition affected the footballers' performance in the first match.

"Against Pakistan players did not follow my instructions. They have recovered and the understanding is now good and we are gradually improving. It's bad luck that we are having just one day's rest. No one can control rains," said Podkorytov, who took over shortly before the tournament.

"Palestine have good combination and sound technique. They are also used to the modern technologies of football," he added.

INDIA-NEPAL

India, who have sent their youth side instead of the national team, have to strongly depend on three-goal striker Vimal Pariyar to deliver the goods against Nepal as their midfielder Lalmaisawma

Hamar will be serving first of his two-match suspensions after being sent off during the final group game against Chinese Taipei.

Midfielder Xavier Vijay Kumar, who missed last two matches, is still doubtful while goalkeeper Paul Shilton suffered an ankle injury during the training on Saturday.

"I will know their fate only tomorrow morning. I hope that they are fit as it will be a very difficult game for us," India's Uzbek coach Islam Akhmedov said.

"Our reserve goalkeeper Arindam Bhattacharya is equally good and is capable of handling the pressure."

Nepal also have injury worries with Basanta Thapa and Pradeep Maharjan on the crocked list. "I am confident of victory tomorrow. I hope Basanta and Pradeep to be fit before tomorrow's game," said coach Shyam Thapa.

"We lost to the senior Indian side in the SAFF Championship last December 1-2 and I am confident that my team can beat this young team," he added.