

Sachin unsure of WI tour

AFP, Chennai

Indian cricketer Sachin Tendulkar said on Friday it was too early to say whether he would be available for the upcoming Test series in the West Indies as he is still recovering from shoulder surgery.

"I am preparing to the best of my ability and feeling better now," said Tendulkar, 33.

"I have to undergo a fitness test in Mumbai on May 23. After that I will be able to tell whether I am fit for the West Indies. It is not the right thing to give my judgement before that," he said.

The Indian team for next month's four-Test series in the Caribbean will be named a day after Tendulkar's fitness test.

"At this moment the goal is to get fit as early as possible. That is what I was targeting for so many days. That remains my goal," Tendulkar said after a five-day fitness programme in the southern city.

"Whether I am going (to the West Indies) or not, I will still meet him and figure out how I am progressing," said one of the most prolific batsmen in contemporary cricket with a world record 35 Test and 39 one-day centuries.

But a career spanning 16 years has begun to take its toll with a spate of injuries in recent times, the most notable being a tennis elbow problem two years ago that also required surgery.

Udal wants to play

BBC ONLINE, undated

Shaun Udal believes he could play in next week's second Test despite missing out on England's development squad.

Udal, who took four key wickets in England's series-tying victory over India two months ago, was given the news from selector David Graveney.

"David said if England do consider two spinners to be one at the top of the list.

"I would be extremely disappointed if we picked two spinners and I wasn't the second one," Udal told BBC Sport.

Udal, 37, is the only man to have played a Test over the last six months to miss out on a place in the 25-man group.

He has slipped a spot down the pecking order behind Monty Panesar, who took two wickets in the drawn first Test with Sri Lanka at Lord's.

But he believes his ability as a batsman and fielder still make him the ideal replacement with Ashley Giles expected to take until July to recover from a hernia.

"It didn't surprise me -- it's a development squad, which means it's something for the future with guys that are going to be playing for England in years to come," he said.

"Monty is basically just a bowler. He has worked very hard on his fielding and he continues to work hard on his batting.

"But, without being cruel, it's going to be a few years until he will get up the order, but at number eight and be as accomplished a cricketer as Ashley is."

Speed is the name

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"My goal here is really just to train well."

Klinsmann, who desperately needs something special from his midfield after injury ruled out Sebastian Deisler, doesn't agree.

"He should expect to play -- everyone here can expect to play," the coach said. "But he'll be all right. The other young players will look after him."

Football & fashion

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this year, incorporating its hour-glass-like category logo -- the primary element on its "Teamgeist" ball, the official ball of the World Cup -- into all its apparel. It's most noticeable on the side panels of the jerseys. Nike and Puma, however, have gone a different route, developing a specific look for each team.

So individual is the U.S. uniform, with a red-blue stripe down the left side of the white shirt, that the concept was continued down the left side, including the left sock. There's no danger of the players putting the sock on the wrong foot, either. Nike's socks this year are sewn for the right and left, and labelled as such.

None of the manufacturers will say how much their presence at the World Cup is worth.

"The global market for soccer gear comes to billions of dollars a year. So by virtue of size alone -- the number of eyeballs, and the number of those eyeballs who are looking to spend -- the Cup is clearly extremely important," said Evan Osborne, who teaches sports economics at Wright State in Dayton, Ohio.

"If one of a company's sponsored teams wins the Cup, so much the better, but even being there is vital."



PHOTO: AFP

Indian captain Rahul Dravid raises his bat in celebration after scoring a century during the first one-day international against West Indies at Sabina Park on Thursday.

Dravid outshines Gayle

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Been delayed by an hour, after early morning showers drenched the Jamaica capital.

Earlier, Agarkar made the breakthrough in the 14th over however, when he had Morton caught behind for 23 edging a drive playing off the back-foot.

The second ODI will be contested at the same venue on Saturday, and the third will be played next Tuesday at Basseterre's Warner Park which will be hosting its first ODI.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the first one-day international between West Indies and India at Sabina Park on Thursday:

Table with 2 columns: Player, Runs. WEST INDIES: Gayle c Dravid b Agarkar 123, Morton c Dhoni b Agarkar 23, Sarwan lbw b Harbhajan 2.

Table with 4 columns: Player, Runs, Wickets, Overs. Lara c Kaif b Patel 35, Chanderpaul c Sehwaag b Pathan 18, Samuels run out (Sehwag) 10, Baugh not out 12, Bravo not out 0, Extras: (lb-15, w-7, nb-6) 28, Total: (For 5 wkts in 45 overs) 251, Did not bat: Bradshaw, Taylor, Edwards. Fall of wickets: 1-86, 2-94, 3-176, 4-222, 5-233, 6-248.

Table with 4 columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Pathan 9 1 50 1, Patel 9 1 48 1, Rudra 7 0 45 0, Harbhajan 9 2 33 1, Agarkar 9 0 38 2, Sehwaag 2 0 22 0. Result: India won by five wickets and led the five-match series 1-0. Man-of-the-match: Rahul Dravid. Umpires: Steve Bucknor, Asad Rauf.

The English ministry of defence

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meet England in a World Cup semi-final this summer if things go to plan.

He added: "Everyone says Ronaldinho the best player in the world, which I personally agree with. He's a very strong player, he's got great feet and is a great finisher. He scores goals, he's quick. He's absolutely got everything.

"But going into a game against him I don't think we would show him too much respect or let him get away with things.

"Paulo Ferreira marked him really well and got really tight to him when we played him with Chelsea. And against England he'd be up

against the likes of Gary Neville, who is a fantastic world class player -- and I'm sure he'll know how to deal with him."

In fact, England's defence is so strong that head coach Eriksson could have a dilemma as he prepares for his team's opening game of the World Cup against Paraguay in Frankfurt on June 10.

With Sol Campbell coming through the Champions League final against Barcelona unscathed he has four top-quality centre-backs available for two positions.

"It's a good situation to be in," said Terry. "I hope I get the nod and if I do I'll give it everything.

"I think I have improved a lot since two years ago at Euro 2004. I've got two titles under my belt and a lot of experience in the Champions League, so I'm certainly feeling very confident."

Another England defender in confident mood is Carragher, who has just won the FA Cup Final with Liverpool in a mammoth tussle against West Ham, but he admits he could miss out to Terry and Ferdinand.

"They're two top players," Carragher said. "And at the moment I'm behind them. Hopefully before the World Cup or during the World Cup there'll be time and I'll play a part.

"But I've voted for John Terry as Player of the Year for the last two seasons and his performances speak for themselves. And Rio is another top player. It shows that England's defence is very strong."

Mexico 1970: The height

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overcame Peru's spirited challenge.

In the semi-finals, Italy and Germany spent the first 90 minutes of their game standing off each other like wary tigers, with Karl-Heinz Schnellinger equalising in injury time after Boninsegna had opened for the Italians in the 8th minute.

Tired legs and high emotion combined to provide a goal feast in extra-time as the ball went into the net five times, with Italy getting the last word to win an epic encounter 4-3.

Brazil, meanwhile, wiped clean memories of their defeat to Uruguay at the 1950 World Cup final by putting three goals past their South American rivals after shipping a goal early on.

The Brazilians arrived in the final at the summit of their art, and their match against Italy turned into a carnival of all the best that the game has to offer.

The poor Italians were simply overwhelmed as Tostao, Gerson, Pele, Jairzinho, Rivelino and the rest gave the sporting world a lesson in football.

It was 1-1 at one point as Italy's Boninsegna equalised Pele's early strike.

Jarzinho had been kept at bay by the brilliant Fanchetti for most of the game but this time his probing paid off albeit with more than a little slice of luck. Fanchetti took the ball off Jarzinho but it rolled to Gerson who stepped away from a challenge and scored with a crisp cross-shot. Within minutes Gerson's deep cross was headed across goal by Pele and Jarzinho miskicked in from close range after nipping in ahead of Fanchetti.

The game was over at that point and the last celebratory goal showed all the Brazilian skills. Clodoaldo held off several challenges to feed Jarzinho on the left. He rushed inside but again Fanchetti did not let him pass. He transferred the ball to Pele who passed to Carlos Alberto. The ball bobbed at the last moment but Carlos Alberto still crashed his shot past Albertosi's right hand post. They called it the "PRESIDENTS GOAL" as the President had predicted they would score four.

This was Brazil's third World Cup triumph, and as a recognition of their achievements they were allowed to take the famous Jules Rimet trophy home for good.

Ton up Tharanga

AFP, Hove

Opening batsman Upul Tharanga did his case for keeping a place in Sri Lanka's Test team no harm at all with a gritty 140 as the tourists scored 283 for four come stumps on the first day of four against Sussex here Thursday.

Former captain Sanath Jayasuriya arrived during the drawn first Test at Lord's concluded Monday, having reversed his retirement from the five-day game.

And although the veteran left-handed opener was not included for the Sussex match, the tourists' last before next week's second Test at Edgbaston, Sri Lanka coach Tom Moody refused to rule Jayasuriya out of either the second or concluding third Test.

But Tharanga, who responded to the disappointment of making just 10 in Sri Lanka's meagre Lord's first innings of 192 by making 52 in their match-saving second innings of 537 for nine declared, carried on that good form, albeit against an under-strength Sussex.

The 20-year-old, himself a left-hander, batted for five-and-a-half-hours before exiting shortly before the close when he mistimed a pull off Luke Wright to paceman James Kirtley, captain in his first match of the season since remodelling his bowling action, at mid-on.

Tharanga faced 252 balls with 18 fours.

He shared in a second-wicket stand of 113 with Michael Vandort (44) as Sri Lanka, who won the toss before a small crowd.

Freddie gets more support

AFP, London

Andrew Strauss has insisted it was England's fielding not the captaincy of Andrew Flintoff which cost the home side the chance of going 1-0 up in their three-Test series against Sri Lanka.

Despite being made to follow-on at Lord's, the tourists -- who saw captain Mahela Jayawardene lead their resistance with a second innings century -- batted for over 14 hours to ensure that the series opener ended in stalemate.

But they were helped on their way by a shoddy England display which saw nine catches in all dropped during the course of the match.

And England opening batsman Strauss said it was their fallible fielding and not the leadership of Flintoff that meant the side were heading into next week's second Test at Edgbaston still all square.

"The slip fielding aspect of last week was very disappointing from our point of view," said Strauss.

"In the end we had 28 chances to take 20 wickets and we didn't do it," he added after becoming the president of the junior section of the Primary Club, a cricketers' charity which assists blind players and whose membership is largely drawn from players who've been out first ball in any form of the game.

"From my point of view, the two I dropped I saw all the way in and I suppose I misjudged the pace of them," said Strauss.

"To dwell on it too long would be wrong, though, because the nuts and bolts of the game -- the batting and the bowling -- were in brilliant shape," explained Strauss, speaking at The Oval on Thursday.

"I couldn't do what I had to do, I didn't have the game to beat her in the second set. I tried to play like I had in our other matches, but it was an off-day."

Safina, younger sister of Marat Safin, had never won a set against Clijsters but this third-round upset victory came just days after the Belgian had won her first clay title in nearly three years with victory at Warsaw.

"I came to the court tired after a late doubles last night," said the 19th-ranked Safina.

"But I saw that she wasn't playing well, I told myself that I had to take my chances, I had to go for them.

"Kim is a great baseliner and she hits the ball hard. You just have to wait for any little chance you get and take it. It's really difficult to play her."

In the next round, Safina squares off against fellow Russian Elena Dementieva, the fifth seed, who advanced over German Anna-Lena

"I couldn't do what I had to do, I

Top class knock: Chappell



BBC ONLINE, undated

India coach Greg Chappell paid tribute to Rahul Dravid after the captain's 105 inspired a five-wicket victory in the opening one-day game against West Indies.

After a rain-delayed start, India won in the final over and Chappell said: "They'd set a very competitive score and Rahul obviously played very well.

"We needed someone to get a hundred at the top of the order, he took it upon himself and played a top class innings.

"To get a win when we didn't play as well as we have been is satisfying."

Chappell believes that Dravid has found his niche in the one-day game as an opener.

"His innings was better than 100 strike rate, that's awesome for someone who a few years ago they said couldn't play one-day cricket," the coach enthused.

Chappell was also delighted with the return to form of Mohammad Kaif, who shared 123 in 21 overs with Dravid.

"We felt he would come back and we've tried to give him as many opportunities as possible," he said.

"Looking ahead to the World Cup we still see him as a very important player in the side."

Chris Gayle, whose ferocious

batting has won him many admirers around the world, hit 123 from 131 balls in the first ODI against India on Thursday at Sabina Park, incidentally his twelfth hundred as well.

For Gayle, his inside-edge off a delivery from Munaf Patel that bounced past his leg-stump and into the fine leg region was a momentous occasion.

"It is very special because it was my first hundred in either a Test or an ODI on home (Jamaican) soil," remarked the big Jamaican left-hander.

"It's very, very pleasing, and I hope it's the first of many more to come.

"After watching a couple of my innings against Zimbabwe, I recognised that I was starting slow and I know that's not typically Chris Gayle," he said.

In the end, Gayle was disappointed that West Indies could not ride to victory on the crest of the wave of his hundred, but acknowledged the competitiveness of both sides.

"We are two very competitive teams in which the batting plays a very important part," he said.

"India batted really well and that partnership between Rahul Dravid and Mohammed Kaif was very important. The Indian captain really dug in deep and sewed the game up for them."

Safina downs Clijsters



AFP, Rome

Determined Dinara Safina slammed the door on any chance for Kim Clijsters to return next week to world number one, dumping the second seed out of the Rome Masters 6-4, 7-6 (7/2) on Thursday.

The Russian 16th seed had lost six previous matches with Clijsters, who won Rome in 2003 but came into this edition well off her game.

Reclaiming the title would have seen the Belgian take over top spot in the world rankings from Amelie Mauresmo.

"I started missing from the start and just totally lost my confidence," confessed Clijsters, who said she could only begin training for Roland Garros in the wake of defeat.

"I couldn't do what I had to do, I

Groenefeld 7-6 (7/1), 3-6, 6-1.

Venus Williams duplicated her best showing of the season with a quarter-final place after beating 2005 finalist Patty Schnyder 7-6 (7/2), 3-6, 6-1.

It was the American's seventh win without a defeat in that series and puts the former world number 1 into a match-up against Jelena Jankovic, who put out Katarina Srebotnik 7-6 (9/7), 6-1.

Italian qualifier Romina Oprandi, playing in only the second WTA event of her career, humiliated fragile Russian Vera Zvonareva 6-0, 6-1 the last eight

The defeat in 71 minutes was the most embarrassing of Zvonareva's career, her previous worst a 6-2, 6-0 hammering last year at the German Open by Czech Republic's Kveta Peschke.



PHOTO: AFP

Kim Clijsters of Belgium plays a backhand against Dinara Safina of Russia during the third round match of the Rome Masters on Thursday.



BITS AND BOBS

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Zwanziger said.

"If we have indications, firstly that the security situation is critical, and secondly that people are coming to the stadium without officially issued tickets, there will be intensive checks.

"And then those who don't have (official tickets) will be spotted, and they'll have paid a lot of money and they'll be sent home. So I'd advise them to spare themselves the frustration."

On Ebay's German Web site, www.ebay.de, the top bid for a ticket for Brazil versus Australia on June 18 was 431 euros (\$551) on Thursday afternoon, while a seat for Germany versus Poland on June 14 was fetching 445 euros, in both cases several times the official price.

Cahill on the mend

AFP, Sydney

Injured Everton midfielder Tim Cahill said Friday he was well on the way to recovery from a knee ligation injury in the countdown to Australia's World Cup opener with Japan in Kaiserslautern on June 12.

43,000 tickets available

INTERNET, undated

The World Cup Organizing Committee announced Thursday that a further 42,495 tickets will be made available for this summer's showpiece soccer tournament.

The tickets, which will be available to fans worldwide, were returned by FIFA, the sport's international governing body which can keep a maximum of 30,000 tickets for last-minute sales.

First refusal for the tickets will go to fans who have signed up for the conditional sales program, with any remaining tickets going on sale to the general public via fifaworldcup.com, the tournament's official web site.

"We are happy to note that almost 3 million tickets have not only been sold but also been delivered," committee vice president Horst R. Schmidt said. "That equals a ratio of 95 percent. We have set our sights on the 100 percent mark now."