

Lara laments lack of fire

West Indies captain Brian Lara claimed neither his side nor India seem incapable of delivering the knockout punch in their Test series after the third Test ended in a draw.

Chasing 392 for victory, India reached 298 for four in their second innings, when the two sides decided it was pointless to continue on the last day with three overs remaining.

Lara told reporters it showed that both teams were lacking firepower in the second innings.

"In Antigua and St Lucia, India could not get us out, and now in this Test, we could not get India out," he said.

"There were a few testing moments, but it was an intriguing Test and we have moved on to the final match in Jamaica now."

India captain Rahul Dravid preferred instead to focus on his team's batting qualities.

"The series has been very competitive, and this Test match was quite interesting," he said.

"West Indies got a good first innings total and we had to fight with our backs to the wall."

"I thought losing a few quick wickets early on the fourth morning put us under a bit of pressure, but I think we did well to fight back and force a draw."

Lara felt it was a good comeback for his side, following the tense finishes they had endured in the first two Tests, where they narrowly escaped with draws.

"I am very proud of the way the guys played," he said. "Chris Gayle and Daren Ganga set us up at the beginning of the match with a solid opening partnership, and Ramnaresh Sarwan got a hundred which was good."

"It was really exciting cricket for us over the first two or three days."

"We knew we were in a good position in which we could force a win and, unfortunately, this did not happen, but we were in front and we stayed in front for the majority of the match."

Lara felt there were a few chances and half chances that they should have made count in the Test but he paid tribute to his opponents.

"They played well and we fought the best we could," he said. "We have to move on and take some sort of confidence out to Jamaica and look for the win."

"It's been a good ground for us against India, and so we will be looking for a win there."

Dravid reckoned that his side were up to the challenge of a chase on the last day and with a bit more luck could have come close.



Did U Know?

For the first time in 22 years, the holders Argentina lost their opening match in the 1982 FIFA World Cup, beaten 1-0 by Belgium.



Talk Turkey



Malcolm Speed

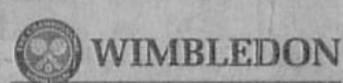
(ICC chief executive) "China is the world's most populous country and the ICC would like to support cricket in China as much as possible."



What to Watch

ESPN England vs Sri Lanka Fourth ODI Live at 3:45 pm STAR Sports Wimbledon Championships Second Round Live at 4:30 pm

A stylish Swiss start



AFP, London

Roger Federer and Martina Hingis provided Switzerland with the perfect World Cup hangover cure with stylish, winning starts to their Wimbledon campaigns on Tuesday.

A day after the Swiss football team failed to convert a single penalty in a shoot-out against Ukraine, world number one Federer scarcely missed a shot as he took out his frustration on unfortunate Frenchman Richard Gasquet.

The 20-year-old was not given even the faintest whiff of a chance to get into the contest as Federer completed the rain-interrupted match 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 win in just one hour, 12 minutes.

It was a performance that extended Federer's winning run on grass to a record 42 matches, passing the mark he had previously shared with Bjorn Borg.

Ominously for those seeking to stop the Swiss star's bid for a fourth consecutive Wimbledon title, Federer could not recall opening any Grand Slam in better form.

"It was one of the toughest draws I have had so far to come up and play as well as I did, particularly over two days, I was very happy," he said.

"I don't know if it was my best first round display but it is up there."

Hingis's straight sets victory over Ukrainian Olga Savchuk also represented a milestone with the former world number one making her first appearance on the lawns of the All England Club for five years.

Like her compatriot, Hingis wasted no time wrapping up her rain-interrupted first round match 6-2, 6-2, 24 hours after the contest was hit by the rain that washed out most of Monday's play.

Hingis, who won here as a 16-year-old in 1997, resumed playing at the end of 2005, three years after retiring, and has defied the odds by re-establishing herself as a force to be reckoned with in the women's game.

"It's nice to be back," she said, before revealing that she had done most of her preparation for her return to the grass on an indoor court.

"I think that's somehow my secret and I don't think I'm the only one," she said. "When Andre (Agassi) won he was practising indoors. Somehow it gets your technique back together."

"It's quicker, the bounce is right and you don't have all the outside effects. I need to get some rhythm before I go out there and play because it kind of messes up your technique."

On her last appearance in southwest London, Hingis lost in the first round to the unheralded Spaniard Virginia Ruano Pascual in what was one of the biggest shocks in the history of the tournament.

A repeat of that kind of upset was never on the cards this time around with the 25-year-old mastering a more powerful opponent with the touch and range of shots that allowed her to dominate her sport as a teenager.

Third seed Justine Henin-Hardenne, who is bidding to win the only Grand Slam that has eluded her, was absolutely ruthless in her 6-0, 6-1 demolition of China's Yuan Meng, who simply could not cope with the pace of the Belgian's groundstrokes.

"I was very consistent, very aggressive. It was just the kind of match you need in the first round," Henin reported.



Twelfth seed Thomas Johansson was the biggest casualty in the early action, although his four-set defeat at the hands of his vastly experienced compatriot Jonas Bjorkman did not come as a major surprise.

Gael Monfils, the 21st seed, also went out, beaten in four sets by Russian Igor Kunitsyn.

After rain washed out all but 35 minutes of play on Monday, the distinction of being the first winner of the 2006 Championships fell to Czech Kvetka Peschke, a 6-3, 6-0 winner over Kristina Brandi.

Peschke's reward was a second round meeting with former US Open champion Svetlana Kuznetsova, who despatched Italian Romina Oprandi 6-3, 6-2.

With fine weather expected for the rest of the week, organisers were hoping to have their match programme back on schedule by the end of Wednesday.

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WC BRIEFS

De Telegraaf newspaper on Tuesday.

"If a great player of the calibre of Kalou was available and the manager of my club turned him away, he would have to face the consequences. The same applies for Verdonk," said the man who led his country to the 1974 final in which they lost to West Germany.

Not for Cologne Switzerland striker Marco Streller was furious with the crowd in Cologne as his nation was eliminated by Ukraine in a penalty shootout on Monday.

"People were singing 'Lukas Podolski' or 'Germany is heading for the final'. They showed a total lack of respect," Streller fumed.

He said FIFA was to blame for selling, in his words, "95 percent of the tickets to Germans, while Swiss fans had trouble finding any".

Streller's criticism might guarantee him a rough ride when the club season starts -- he plays for FC Cologne.

Biased One of China's leading TV commentators sparked controversy when he abandoned all neutrality in Italy's close-run win over Australia.

"Viva Italia," Huang Jianxing shouted after Francesco Totti's penalty in the final seconds ended Australian hopes on Monday.

"There is no need for them to go home because most of them live in Europe. Goodbye," he added.

Opinion is divided on Chinese Internet discussion sites about his clear support for Italy. Some viewers want him sacked, others approve.

Award for Ecuador Ecuador's squad are to receive a special award for their World Cup showing next Monday from President Alfredo Palacio after their battling run to the second phase, a government spokesman said on Tuesday.

Coach Luis Fernando Suarez and his 23 players are to be given a state reception at the presidential palace, secretary of state for communication, Enrique Proano, said.

"President Palacio will decorate the players and then host a lunch for them and their families," Proano said.

Ecuador beat Poland and Costa Rica before losing to Germany in the group stage from which they qualified for the first time on only their second appearance in the finals after 2002. In the second round a David Beckham freekick for England undid their hopes of further progress as they went out 1-0.

ICC to inspect Kenya venues

AFP, Nairobi

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has sent referee Mike Proctor to Kenya to inspect facilities as the country prepares to resume hosting one-day international matches, local officials said Tuesday.

Kenya is set to host Test-playing Bangladesh in three one-day matches next month and the programme will culminate with the inaugural ICC World Cricket League in January 2007.

That brings together the six associate members which have qualified for next year's World Cup in the West Indies.

During his visit, the South African-born Proctor was due to tour five venues in Nairobi, including the Nairobi Gymkhana club which staged the 2000 ICC Knockout tournament, and the Indian Ocean coastal town of Mombassa.

"We need to have many of our facilities upgraded for official ODIs", Cricket Kenya (CK) chairman Samir Inamdard told AFP.

"Apart from Nairobi Gymkhana, the other existing facilities need to be upgraded as well."

New Kenyan coach Roger Harper last month criticised the local administration for doing little to improve the facilities saying that the abundant cricket talent was not enough to make Kenya compete at the highest level.

Hargreaves, Ferdinand's urge to ref

AFP, Buhlertal

Owen Hargreaves and Rio Ferdinand on Tuesday urged the referee of their quarterfinal clash against Portugal to let the game flow and keep the yellow cards to a minimum.

Their call follows the official in Portugal's last match against the Netherlands handing out a record four red cards and 16 yellows.

"The referees have been very tough, in my opinion over tough," said Ferdinand at England's training camp in southern Germany.

"A lot of tackles that have been booked, well the yellow cards have been handed out too freely."

"But that's the way it goes and we've got to deal with that and the team that deals with that best will be the team that wins."

Hargreaves said some of the decisions made at the World Cup have been hard to understand and called for a free-flowing game on Saturday.

"All the referees, just like the players, you've got the best refs in the world," he said.

Frings warns (Javier) Saviola, (Hernan) Crespo and the others," Mertesacker said.

"They can turn quickly and are very fast. We need to defend as a team and double up. If we allow them one-on-one situations it will be difficult."

Gout kept few precious scoring chances against the wall-like Italian if he had played some part. But his manager said the 27-year-old Kewell came down with the painful form of arthritis soon after the Croatia match last Friday in Stuttgart.

"Harry is a shot duck. He has never been in so much pain all his life," Bernie Mandic said here.

"He's had the game of his life for the Socceroos (against Croatia), and then been shot down by this. It's unbelievable."

Gout can be treated by non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and it normally takes up to three days to recover, but there was only a four-day break between games and Kewell was no chance of taking to the field.

Mandic said Kewell had never previously suffered the condition.

Coach Gus Hiddink told a post-match press conference that Kewell was on crutches because of a swollen ankle, but did not mention gout.

Debutants' delight more capable of raising themselves from the turd pile and Andriy Gushin saw his 70th-minute header from a corner scrape the far post with Zuberbuhler completely lost.

Extra-time saw the rather bizarre substitution with just five minutes remaining to penalties of Frei by Mario Lustrinelli.

Frei left the pitch shaking his head.

The penalties proved catastrophic for the Swiss as while Shevchenko saw his saved by Zuberbuhler, Marco Streller, Ricardo Cabanas and Tranquillo Barnetta all failed to convert their to allow Gusev his deserved moment of glory.

"It's a real disappointment -- but we must get over it. I had a good feeling when Shevchenko missed his kick. But nothing came of it and we are on our way home," said Swiss coach Kobi Kuhn.

Another tame draw

AFP, Basseterre

West Indies and India both failed in their bids for victory in the third Test that ended in a predictable draw at Warner Park here on Monday.

Chasing 392 for victory, India reached 298 for four in their second innings, when the two sides decided it was pointless to continue on the last day with three overs remaining.

The result means the four-Test series is still level at 0-0, after the first two Tests at the Antigua Recreation Ground and the Beausejour Cricket Ground ended in tense draws. The final Test begins on Friday at Kingston's Sabina Park.

Four Indian batsmen -- Virender Sehwag, Venkatsai Laxman, skipper Rahul Dravid, and opener Wasim Jaffer -- all completed half-centuries to keep the visitors in the hunt for most of the day.

Dravid struck four fours and one six in the top score of 68 from 131 balls in 2-3/4 hours and has drawn level on the Test aggregate list with England's Graham Gooch with 8,900 runs.

The Indian captain added 100 for the third wicket at the height of the chase with Laxman, whose 63 contained 10 fours from 106 balls in two hours and 20 minutes.

Sehwag had hit eight fours in 65 from 75 balls in 1-3/4 hours and Jaffer collected five boundaries in 54 from 118 balls in close to three hours to lay the platform for the Indian chase.

Sehwag and Jaffer added 109 for the first wicket to excite the chase buds of the Indians, but the game failed to be a genuine contest when Mahendra Dhoni was caught at extra cover for 20 off Jerome Taylor about an hour before the end to leave India on 273 for four.

West Indies had declared their second innings on 172 for six about 35 minutes after they continued from their bedtime total of 113 for four.

Daren Ganga, who was named man-of-the-match, struck eight boundaries from 74 balls in 1-3/4 hours in an undefeated top score of 66 for the home team that followed his Test-best 135 in the first innings.

Anil Kumble was India's most successful bowler with three wickets for 60 runs from 12 overs, and Shantha Sreesanth collected two for 19 from six overs.

Jaffer and Sehwag then emerged from a sedate start on the hard, true easy-paced pitch and gradually gained control with languid strokeplay to carry India to 109 without loss at lunch.

Fortune smiled on Sehwag twice, after he scored two to reach 4,000 runs in Tests.

On five, Chris Gayle dropped him at first slip off Jerome Taylor in the fourth over of the chase, and in the final 10 minutes before lunch, Ramnaresh Sarwan dropped him on 56 at straight extra cover off Dwayne Bravo.

Sehwag had survived a torrid new ball spell in which he was peppered by a succession of short-pitched deliveries on the body, where he is vulnerable, from Pedro Collins and Taylor, and reached his 50 with a straight drive for a boundary off Bravo.

After the interval, West Indies had immediate success, when Sehwag was adjudged lbw playing back and across to a well-pitched first delivery from Corey Collymore.

Jaffer was then caught at first slip off Pedro Collins with the drinks break in reach to leave India on 143 for two.

Laxman and Dravid, India's two most celebrated batsmen, then continued the visitors' hunt for runs -- and ultimately victory -- and took them to 200 for two at tea.

Laxman had driven Marlon Samuels to mid-on for a single to reach his 50, but he was dismissed about 25 minutes after the break, when he top-edged Collins and was caught at second slip.

India still needed 149 runs and a minimum of 25 overs were still available, when Mahendra Dhoni came to the crease and dispatched his first ball -- from Collins -- over long-off for a six.

Collins, who suffered the indignity of a second six at the hands of Dhoni later in his innings, and the pressure continued to mount on the Indians for quick runs.

Dhoni eventually cracked and drove Taylor ferociously to Gayle to deflate India's chances of a late charge for glory.

Earlier, West Indies predictably chose to pursue quick scoring instead of caution, and suffered an early setback, when Bravo was caught at long-on for nine off Kumble in the first over of the morning.

Ganga then swept Harbhajan Singh through backward square leg for two to reach his 50 and got things moving in a brief, but exciting partnership of 32 with Marlon Samuels.

Harbhajan made the breakthrough, when he deceived Samuels in flight and had him stumped for 20 that included three well-placed, leg-side boundaries before the declaration came.

SCOREBOARD Scoreboard at close on the fifth and final day of the third Test between West Indies and India at Warner Park on Monday.

WEST INDIES: First innings 581 (Ganga 135, Sarwan 116; Harbhajan 5-147)

INDIA: First innings 362 (Laxman 100; Collymore 3-63; Taylor 3-118)

WEST INDIES: Second innings (overnight 113 for four) Gayle c Dhoni b Sreesanth 54; Ganga not out 66; Sarwan c Dravid b Sreesanth 23; Lara st Dhoni b Kumble 19; Chandernaul c b Kumble 11; Bravo c Sreesanth b Kumble 9; Samuels st Dhoni b Harbhajan 20; Ramdin not out 13; Extras: (b-4, lb-7, w-1, nb-1) 13

Total: (For 6 wks dec in 32 overs) 172

Fall of wickets: 1-3, 2-46, 3-81, 4-102, 5-120, 6-172

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Rows: Patel (7, 0, 43, 0), Sreesanth (6, 1, 19, 2), Kumble (12, 0, 60, 3), Harbhajan (7, 0, 39, 1), INDIA: Second innings, Jaffer c Gayle b Collins (54), Sehwag lbw b Collymore (65), Laxman c Lara b Collins (63), Dravid not out (68), Dhoni c Gayle b Taylor (20), Yuvraj not out (20), Extras: (b-9, lb-8, w-1, nb-2) 20, Total: (For 4 wks in 85 overs) 298, Fall of wickets: 1-109, 2-143, 3-243, 4-273, Bowler, O, M, R, W, Collins (18, 1, 66, 2), Taylor (11, 1, 40, 1), Collymore (15, 3, 40, 1), Samuels (20, 3, 68, 0), Bravo (7, 1, 36, 0), Gayle (14, 2, 31, 0), Result: Match drawn, Man-of-the-match: Darren Ganga.



WE DID IT AGAIN! Opposing captains Brian Lara (L) and Rahul Dravid shares a laugh at the end of the drawn third Test between West Indies and India at the Warner Park Stadium in St. Kitts on Monday.

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Footballers inspire 'em

AFP, Manchester

England's cricketers will look to follow the example of their football counterparts as they try to end their one-day losing streak against Sri Lanka here at Old Trafford.

Sven Goran Eriksson's men may have come under fire for the quality of their football at the World Cup in Germany but the team have remained unbeaten on their way through to a quarterfinal against Portugal on Sunday.

By contrast, England's injury-hit cricket team are already 3-0 down in the five-match international series after a trio of reverses against Sri Lanka extended their poor record in one-day internationals to eight defeats in their last 10 matches.

And with the final fixture of the series at Headingley on Sunday, England opening batsman Marcus Trescothick knows another poor display could see fans heading for the exits to watch the last eight World Cup clash in Gelsenkirchen.

"We can't compete with the football, that's for sure," Trescothick told reporters at Old Trafford here Tuesday. "The only series that would compete with that is against the Australians."

"But we want to put on a performance every game we play. It's not just a case of making a special