

Teams to go for broke
Ind-WI final Test from today

AFP, Kingston

West Indies captain Brian Lara insisted Thursday that his side are capable of snatching a series win against India.

Lara was speaking ahead of the fourth and final Test, which opens on Friday at Sabina Park with the series level after three matches.

The first three games at the Antigua Recreation Ground, the Beausejour Cricket Ground, and Warner Park all ended in draws, and both Lara and India head coach Greg Chappell had to acknowledge that neither seems capable of delivering the knockout punch.

Both teams flew into the Jamaica capital on Tuesday with their sights set firmly on a victory that would clinch the series.

"I think it is important that this Test doesn't end in a draw as well," remarked Lara.

"It would be disappointing to play four Tests and end up with four drawn matches, so I would really like to see the skill levels of the players both in batting and bowling improve, and hopefully we'll have a good Test."

After hanging on for tense draws in the first two Tests, West Indies scared the living daylights out of the Indians with a solid batting performance at Basseterre that gave them hope of victory.

"I am definitely seeing an improvement in our performances," Lara said. "We are improving slowly, and the fact of the matter is that we are still in a series against India, who is ranked higher than us, with one Test to go shows that there's some kind of performance enhancement in the way we have played so far."

Victory would give West Indies their first series success in four years over a side rated higher in the ICC Rankings.

Ironically, a victory over Sri Lanka at Sabina Park, where Lara sprung the surprise package of Fidel Edwards on the unsuspecting visitors, did the trick, but the batting superstar has no such ace up his sleeve this time.

Sakib, Forhad

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the number of players to be selected, keeping in mind the length and the number of matches. Fifteen players are to be selected in the side.

The Tigers will play eight one-day internationals -- three in Kenya and five in Zimbabwe -- during their month-long tour to Africa.

Mehrab Hossain Jr. was also reportedly discussed after his brilliant form for Bangladesh A in Zimbabwe which included a couple of hundreds in the same match.



Did U Know?

Dutch striker Robby Rensenbrink scored the 1000th goal in the 1978 World Cup.



Talk Turkey



Maxi Rodriguez
(Argentine midfielder)

"We respect them, but we have no fear. We are looking good and we feel we can beat anybody."

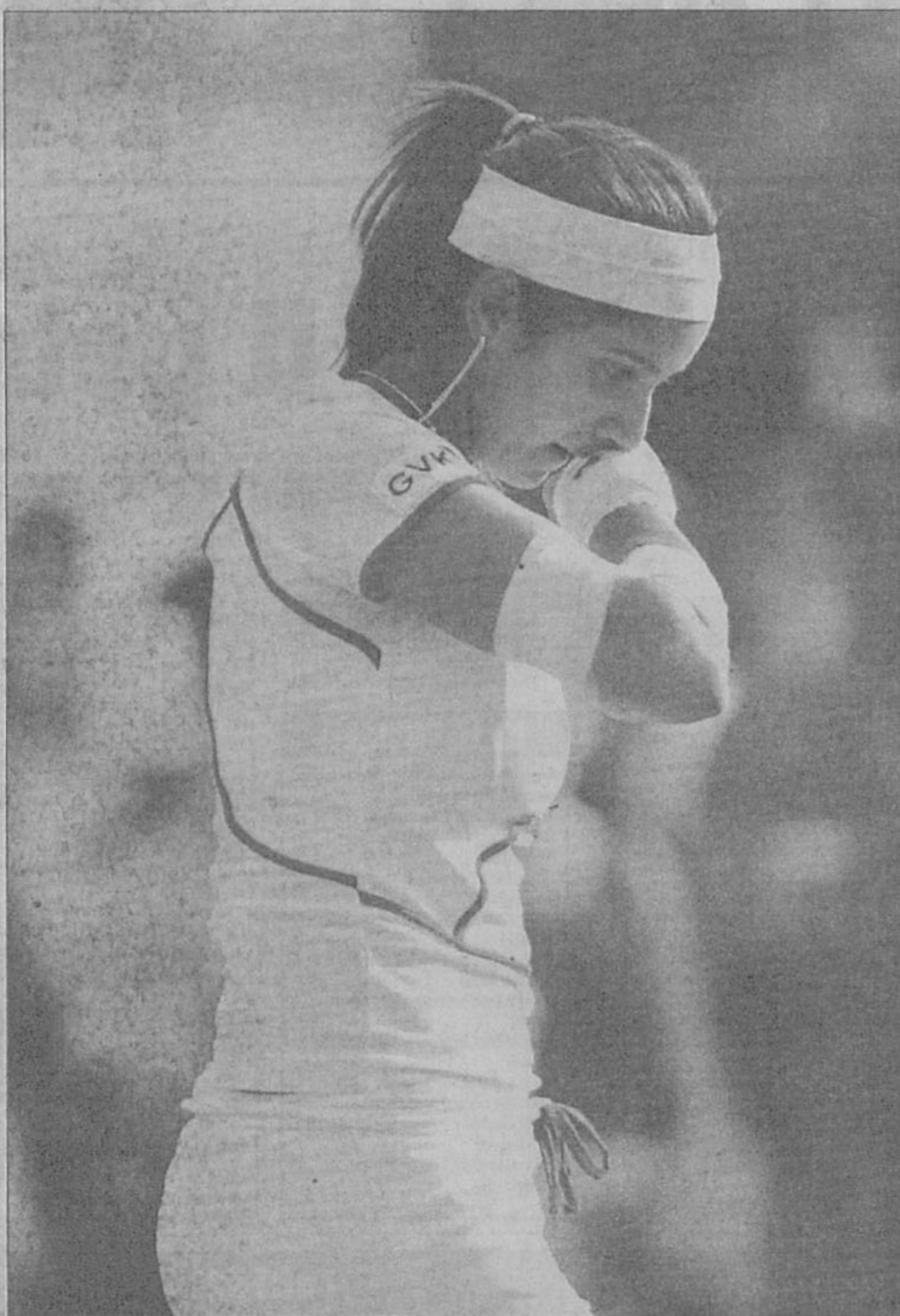
On the eve of their quarterfinal match against Germany.



What to Watch

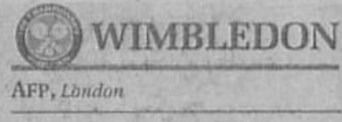
TEN Sports
West Indies v India
Fourth Test, Day One
Live at 9:00 pm

STAR Sports
Wimbledon Championships
Second Round
Live at 5:00 pm



India's Sania Mirza ponders her tactics during her match against Russian Elena Dementieva in the Wimbledon Championships in London late on Wednesday.

Brilliant Agassi showing



AFP, London

Andre Agassi and Maria Sharapova showed why they have the right to call themselves Wimbledon champions as they cruised into the last 32 of the men's and women's singles on Thursday.

Veteran showman Agassi, taking his final bow at the All England Club, looked far less rusty than he had done in a laboured first round win over Boris Pashanski as he navigated past Italy's Andreas Seppi in straight sets.

Seppi put up a valiant fight but the 1992 champion's clinical touch on the key points made the difference in a 6-4, 7-6 (7/5), 6-4 victory.

The win put Agassi on course for a third round meeting with French Open champion Rafael Nadal, although the second seed was involved in an almighty battle with American qualifier Robert Kendrick over Centre Court.

Australian Open finalist Marcos Baghdatis had the easiest passage into the third round, his opponent Andrei Pavel having retired injured after only three games of their match.

Novak Djokovic, the talented

Serbian teenager who is being courted by Britain's Lawn Tennis Association, did his credentials for a passport switch no harm by dumping Spanish 11th seed Tommy Robredo out of the tournament.

Leading by a set when their second round match was interrupted by nightfall on Wednesday, Djokovic completed a 7-6 (7/5), 6-2, 6-4 victory to set up a winnable third round meeting against Russian Mikhail Yuzhny.

Fourth-seed Sharapova was close to her intimidating best as she crushed Ashley Harkleroad, a fellow Florida resident who was not afforded the slightest bit of neighbourly compassion.

After a 6-2, 6-2 win in just over an hour, Sharapova declared herself happy with her form, although the 2004 champions appeared more concerned about the impact on her image of her recent revelation that she enjoys collecting stamps.

Philatelists around the world have been delighted to learn that they share their hobby with one of the sporting world's most glamorous figures but Sharapova is not quite so happy about the interest.

"Everyone's calling me a dork now," the 2004 champion admitted.

Meanwhile, Indian teenager Sania Mirza crashed out in the first round on Wednesday evening losing 7-6 (7/5), 7-5 to seventh seed Elena Dementieva after a keenly fought contest.

The 19-year-old from Hyderabad, playing at only her second Championships at the All England Club, lost the first set on a tight tie-break before her Russian opponent closed out the second set 7-5.

Mirza had taken a set off the world number eight in their last meeting, a third round encounter at Indian Wells in the United States in March, but the teen failed to cope with her opponent's accuracy on the grass courts.

My agent said not to talk about that because he's definitely gotten so many emails from people.

"We're getting emails from, like, stamp collecting magazines asking if I can do an interview. It's just a hobby. I'm actually good telling stories, but that is one I should have never talked about."

It was another good day for the Chinese women as Peng Shuai join Li Na and Zheng Jie in the third round courtesy of an impressive straight sets win over the Israeli 20th seed Shahar Peer.

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TACTICS

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holding midfielder, came back in but he helped keep the team up in the opposition's territory to cement a scintillating 6-0 win.

Javier Mascherano is the tireless ball winner who plays better alone rather than sharing the burden with a teammate, like Cambiasso. With the wingers he helps keep Juan Roman Riquelme supplied in the area immediately in front of the box where his superb short and long passes find the strikers.

Attack: Only this Argentina team could enjoy the luxury of keeping players like Carlos Tevez and Lionel Messi on the bench, keeping them in reserve for potential match-saving roles.

The coach's striking vote has gone to Hernan Crespo, who has scored once in each of his three appearances, and Javier Saviola, playing with the freshness and skill of his River Plate days.

Saviola roams across the front of the attack while Crespo hovers in the box, although Mexico's tactics of keeping the ball in Argentina's half in their second round match meant Crespo often had to drop deep and he may find a similar problem with Germany.

General: Germany like to attack from the start and have scored early goals in three of their four matches. They have so far shown no inclination to sit on their leads, always going forward looking for more.

It remains to be seen how vulnerable their defence will be to the darting runs of the Argentina players, or how the team would react to going a goal or two behind.

Argentina have fended off late pressure well and have enough talent on the bench to keep any defence busy.

A lucky toilet

AFP, London

Thai tennis star Tamarine Tanasugarn lifted the lid on her Wimbledon success on Thursday, putting her run to the third round down to a lucky toilet.

Tamarine sent Shinobu Asagoe's victory plans down the pan when she defeated the Japanese number four 6-3, 7-5 on Court 17.

And now Thailand's top women's tour player is determined to commandeer the same toilet again before her clash with Polish wild card Agnieszka Radwanska -- the French Open and Wimbledon junior champion.

"I'm using the same toilet from the first day so that's my lucky toilet," Tamarine told AFP.

"The same shower room too, I stick to the same one in the locker rooms."

"It seems the toilet's worked," she revealed.

Tamarine has reached the Wimbledon fourth round six times in her career and the 29-year-old is ready to gamble on her adaptability to defeat Radwanska to get there again.

"I don't really know her. I haven't seen her play," the world number 164 said.

"She won junior Wimbledon last year so I guess she's very tough."

"It's hard when you don't know how they're playing and how they're hitting. You have to gamble. I have to find out during the match and maybe change but I'll stick to my plan first."

"I just want to go out there and play my game."

Imran supports appeal system

AFP, Karachi

Former Pakistan great Imran Khan Thursday backed a proposal to allow teams to appeal against umpiring decisions, saying it could help minimise controversies in cricket.

"This is the best innovation so far and would make the game much fairer. The use of such innovations would make the game more attractive," Khan told AFP.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) is considering a proposal to allow teams to appeal against on-field umpires' decisions.

A team would have the right to refer three decisions per innings made by an on-field official to the TV umpire. If approved at next month's ICC meeting the rule is likely to be experimented with in the ICC Trophy in India in October this year.

A similar system was successfully implemented in America's National Football League with teams permitted to challenge two refereeing decisions per half, resulting in an immediate TV replay review.

Khan, who took 362 wickets in 82 Tests for Pakistan, said he confronted some bitter moments due to umpiring decisions during his 21-year career.

"During my career so many times some critical decisions changed the complexion of the match and the most notable being the semi-final of the 1987 World Cup when I was given out caught behind when I was not out."

"We couldn't win a series in the West Indies in 1988 just because Viv Richards was not given out in the final Test. Had we had an appeal system we would have benefited," said Khan, now member of the national parliament.

The 53-year-old former all-rounder said he was surprised at the decision by the Pakistan Cricket Board to oppose the proposed system.

"People who stick to traditions would oppose it. They opposed the innovation of run outs and stumping decisions referred to the TV umpires, but it has successfully minimised the controversies," said Khan, who proposed neutral umpires back in the 1980s.

Khan said umpires were prone to mistakes but would be extra vigilant if appeal system was introduced.

Poll, Ivanov

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referee Valentin Ivanov who officiated in the brutal Portugal v Netherlands last 16 round game which saw him hand out a record four red and 16 yellow cards.

But German official Markus Merk was chosen despite a series of controversial decisions, including awarding a disputed penalty to Ghana, which saw them beat the United States 2-1 and qualify for the last 16.

The 12 referees chosen are: Toru Kamikawa (Japan), Coffi Codjia (Benin), Benito Archundia (Mexico), Horacio Elizondo (Argentina), Jorge Larionda (Uruguay), Mark Shield (Australia), Massimo Busacca (Switzerland), Frank De Bleeckere (Belgium), Luis Medina Cantalejo (Spain), Markus Merk (Germany), Michel Lubos (Slovakia), Roberto Rosetti (Italy)

Ballack confident



AFP, Berlin

Germany captain Michael Ballack believes the hosts are slight favourites for Friday's World Cup quarterfinal against Argentina and said they were far from intimidated by the South Americans.

Ballack has been a key figure in stabilising Germany's suspect defence -- they have kept three consecutive clean sheets -- and he feels the hosts can now send Argentina packing.

"We are not afraid of Argentina. Our performances show we should not be afraid of anyone," Ballack said at Wednesday's press conference.

"We really believe we can win the title. We have not had confidence like this for a long time."

Argentina forward Javier Saviola said his team had a 60-40 chance of going through but Ballack disagreed.

"I see it exactly the same way -- but in Germany's favour. We are not outsiders and not content just to play well against Argentina," said the new Chelsea man.

"We want to progress and I would say it is 60-40 for us."

"We are meeting a terrific opponent and they deserve the utmost respect but we have to look at our game not theirs."

Argentina's brilliant playmaker Juan Roman Riquelme is regarded as the Villareal star would not be marked.

"The coach has talked about a few players but I do not think we will man-mark Riquelme," the 29-year-old said.

"We have to play our game and not focus too much on the opponents."

Argentina will certainly watch out for Ballack who has scored 31 goals from midfield at a ratio of almost one every two games.

He has yet to score at these finals -- although he hit the post in the 2-0 second round win over Sweden -- but is not concerned with personal targets.

"I had a lot of shots against Sweden but unfortunately none went in. I am not thinking of scoring. I just want the team to do well," Ballack explained.

The former Bayer Leverkusen player, who missed the 2002 World Cup final through suspension, was forced to sit out Tuesday's training session with a swollen ankle but

says he is fully fit for Argentina.

"It was just a knock but I am okay now," Ballack said.

Ballack missed the opening 4-2 win over Costa Rica with a calf injury as manager Jurgen Klinsmann ignored his pleas to play.

There had been suggestions of a bust-up between the pair over the incident but Ballack said everything was fine.

"I have a great relationship with the coach. He showed faith in me straight away by naming me captain," said the ex Bayern Munich star.

"He is not long out of football himself. He talks a lot with the players and the coach is close to me and the rest of the team."

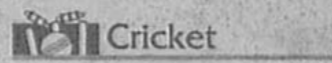
In August 2004 Klinsmann stripped goalkeeper Oliver Kahn of the captaincy and gave Ballack the armband.

Klinsmann says Ballack has developed through the responsibility of being captain and become a real leader for Germany.

"In two years Michael has helped the team enormously. He is a leader on and off the pitch," Klinsmann said.

"He has really developed over the past two years and there is a lot more to come."

Lanka further clear



AFP, Manchester

Mahela Jayawardene's second hundred in as many matches was the backbone of Sri Lanka's 33-run one-day international victory against England at Old Trafford here Wednesday as his team went 4-0 up in the series with another decisive win.

The Sri Lanka captain, dropped twice, made 100 after scoring an unbeaten 126 at the Riverside on Saturday where the 1996 world champions took an unbeatable 3-0 lead.

Together with opener Upul Tharanga (60) he shared a second-wicket stand of 137.

England fought back before an unbroken eighth-wicket partnership of 68 in 38 balls between Farveez Maharoof (58 not out) and Malinga Bandara (28 not out) led the visitors past the 300-mark.

Defeat, with eight balls to spare, was injury-hit England's ninth in 11 one-day internationals, their

hopes of salvaging something from this series now resting with Saturday's finale at Headingley.

But the problems that threaten to derail their chances at next year's World Cup in the Caribbean were evident here with England bowling 21 wides and none of their batsmen scoring a fifty let alone a hundred.

"It's certainly frustrating," England captain Andrew Strauss told reporters after another dispiriting display. "We've identified the areas we need to improve and we haven't improved them so far."

"We've got to bowl straighter and we need our batsmen to get hundreds like theirs have done -- they (Sri Lanka) have got four in four games."

"There are a lot of guys in our squad who've got one game left to show what they can do."

By contrast Sri Lanka coach Tom Moody was elated by the way his side, even with the series won, maintained their grip.

It is very easy to take your foot off the pedal," the former Australia international said.

WC BRIEFS

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unveiling of the largest football shirt ever. The shirt is composed of 1,000 different shirts from around the world and measures a whopping 330 square metres after Hamburg sports federations spent ten months stitching it together.

Increasing seats

As the tournament progresses more and more fans are going home as their teams are knocked out. But the journalistic fraternity is still around in as much force as ever and organisers are having a headache to fit them all in to an ever decreasing number of matches. Organisers have already had to make available a few extra media seats for the semifinals and final. Whereas Munich and Dortmund, hosting the semis, previously had 600 press seats that will now be boosted to 2000. Berlin's Olympic Stadium, which will host the final, will be bulging with 3000 journalists rather than the current contingent of 600.

Wrong ones

After an Argentine comic gatecrashed a German training

session a German joker tried to gain 'revenge' on the hosts' quarterfinal rivals. The German prankster went to the Argentine hotel in the southern town of Herzogenaurach accompanied by a Franz Beckenbauer and a Diego Maradona lookalike and tried to gain entry to team headquarters. A few journalists were briefly fooled into chasing after a possible interview -- but the police weren't and the pair failed to make it past security.

Imperialistic American!

Actor Spike Lee is not alone in lamenting referee's mistakes which cannot, as yet, be rectified by technology. Lee, a keen fan, told the official FIFA website that instant replays ought to be brought in.

"I might sound like an imperialistic American but they've got to bring in instant replays."

"Also, the field is too big, the game is too fast. Twenty years ago one man could referee a game. Now it's too fast -- you need more than one referee on the field and you need instant replays."

"The players played with everything they had today (Wednesday) and finished the job nicely."

England saw openers Marcus Trescothick and fellow left-hander Alastair Cook, on his one-day international debut, putting on a run-a-ball fifty stand as the hosts chased 319.

But on 44 Trescothick, dropped on 18, chipped Lasith Malinga straight to Bandara at mid-off and, six balls later, 77 for one became 85 for two when Cook played on to Dilhara Fernando for 39.

Strauss and Ian Bell rebuilt the innings before both exited with the score on 161.

First Strauss edged off-spinner Tillakaratne Dilshan through to wicket-keeper Kumar Sangakkara for a run-a-ball 45. And two balls later leg-spinner Bandara had the unlucky Ian Bell, on 30, stumped by a fumbling Sangakkara.

Sangakkara was far tidier when stumping recalled batsman Vikram Solanki (10), a dismissal which left England 178 for five in the 35th over and out of the game.

Fittingly Jayawardene took the catch that ended the match when Liam Plunkett holed out off Malinga, England 285 all out.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the fourth one-day international between England and Sri Lanka at Old Trafford on Wednesday.

SRI LANKA: 318 for 7

ENGLAND

Trescothick c Bandara b Malinga 44
Cook b Fernando 39
Bell st Sangakkara b Bandara 30
Strauss c Sangakkara b Dilshan 45
Solanki st Sangakkara b Bandara 10
Dalrymple b Fernando 33
Jones c Maharoof b Dilshan 23
Bresnan run out 20
Plunkett c Jayawardene b Malinga 29
Kabir Ali run out 0
Harrison not out 2
Extras: (b-1, lb-3, w-6) 10
Total: (All out in 48.4 overs) 285
Fall of wickets: 1-77, 2-85, 3-161, 4-161, 5-178, 6-212, 7-241, 8-273, 9-273, 10-285.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Vaas	8	0	45	0
Malinga	9.4	0	63	2
Fernando	7	0	47	2
Maharoof	1	0	11	0
Bandara	10	1	43	2
Dilshan	10	0	46	2
Jayasuriya	3	0	26	0

Result: Sri Lanka won by 33 runs.
Man-of-the-match: Mahela Jayawardene.



Emirates's Bangladesh area manager Hanif Zakaria (R) delivers his speech during a press meet at a local hotel on Wednesday. Emirates, one of the fastest growing flight operators in the world, is also a proud sponsor of the FIFA World Cup Germany 2006. Also seen is Kazi Wahidul Alam, public relations consultant of Emirates Bangladesh.