

Russians rule Day 2

AFP, Budapest

A violent storm put a premature end to the second day of the European Swimming Championships here on Tuesday but not before eastern European countries had swept almost all before them.

Russian men won two of the titles on offer with Arkady Vyatchanin claiming gold in the 100 metres backstroke while 2001 world champion Roman Sludnov won the 100m breaststroke dethroning two-time champion Oleg Lisogor of the Ukraine, who had to make do with the bronze.

There was a first for Norway as well as Alexander Dale Oen took the silver behind Sludnov to become the first swimmer from his country to take a medal at a major long course championships.

However Lisogor's compatriot Sergiy Breus made up for his failure by defending his 50m butterfly title with the only non eastern European gold going to Therese Alshammer as the soon to be 29-year-old veteran led a Swedish 1-2 in the women's 50m butterfly.

Vyatchanin's victory came as something of a surprise as the new European record holder Helge Meeuw was unable to transform that into championship winning form as he sloped in in only seventh place and local hero Laszlo Cseh failed to defend his title successfully finishing in sixth.

However the world and European champion at the 400m medley bounced back just before the storm hit by qualifying for the final of the 200m medley.

Another swimmer to storm back after an opening disappointment was France's female swimming star Laure Manaudou.

Farhat to miss

FROM PAGE 17
"We've had many situations like this -- India at Bangalore (where Pakistan won by 168 runs in March last year to square the series at 1-1) and in Jamaica against the West Indies (a 136-run victory seeing Pakistan draw level at 1-1 in June 2005).

"But at the moment we have a lot of hard work to do.

"We had a very good team meeting two days after the Test match and the boys are very determined to bring it back.

"You have to accept at this level that you can lose. The good thing, funnily enough, was that we lost in three days because it gave us time in which to recover. There's a good energy in the team now, a good vibe and hopefully they'll fight back."

NZC receives

FROM PAGE 17
NZC chief executive Martin Snedden said the amount paid by the government was what his organisation had claimed.

In announcing the compensation payment, Finance Minister Michael Cullen said the government considered the tour by Zimbabwe was inappropriate because of the Zimbabwean government's continuing human rights abuses.

"The Labour-led government made an important stand over this tour in order to send a strong message to Robert Mugabe's government over its appalling human rights record and continuing abuse of democratic principles," Cullen said.

"It is only fair that we now compensate New Zealand Cricket."

Sonali Otit

FROM PAGE 17
"Everybody had welcomed Saiahuddin's association with the federation because they had believed that his involvement would definitely make impact in the game. But unfortunately he had to walk out from the post due to disagreements with BFF president about the selection of the officials for national team," they added.

Brazil-Argentina

FROM PAGE 20
Juan (Bayer Leverkusen/GER), Lucio (Bayern Munich/GER), Luisao (Benfica/POR)

Midfielders: Dudu Cearense (CSKA Moscow/RUS), Edmilson (Barcelona/ESP), Julio Baptista (Real Madrid/ESP), Gilberto Silva (Arsenal/ENG), Elano (Shakhtar Donetsk/UKR), Jonas (Flamengo/BRA), Morais (Vasco/BRA), Wagner (Cruzeiro/BRA)
Forwards: Daniel Carvalho (CSKA Moscow/RUS), Fred (Lyon/FRA), Robinho (Real Madrid/ESP), Vagner Love (CSKA Moscow/RUS)

Real confirm

FROM PAGE 20
saying he had received an offer from English champions Chelsea for a three-year contract.

Turkish side Fenerbahce, now managed by Brazilian Zico, were also reported to be interested in him.

Roberto Carlos, who has won three Champions League titles with Real, retired from international football after the World Cup in Germany.



Indian spinner Harbhajan Singh climbs a wall as part of a special training camp for the cricket team in Bangalore on Monday. PHOTO: AFP

Pollock boosts Proteas

AFP, Colombo

South Africa's veteran all-rounder Shaun Pollock returns for the second Test against Sri Lanka from Friday with a war cry to teammates to rise from despair and defeat.

The 33-year-old missed the first Test, which Sri Lanka won by an innings and 153 runs, to be wife Trish's side for the birth of their second daughter.

Pollock, who needs six wickets to become the first South African to join the 400-club, said he was raring to play and lend the necessary experience in the absence of the injured Graeme Smith and Jacques Kallis.

"We can either wallow or swallow," he told reporters. "Wallow in self-pity or swallow the bitter pill and get on with it."

"One should not think too much about what happened. There is one Test left and not much time before it starts."

"You should draw a line through the previous performance and look ahead."

Sri Lanka's big win in the first Test was built around captain Mahela Jayawardene's brilliant 374, his

world record stand of 624 with Kumar Sangakkara (287), and Muttiah Muralitharan's 10-wicket haul.

But Pollock believed the defeat at the Sinhalese sports club was not without its silver lining.

"There were some positive aspects," he said. "We had them two wickets down for 20 runs, it could have been three for 30. Then, we could have put some pressure on their inexperienced middle order."

"Take away Muralitharan and the rest of the Sri Lankan bowlers would have struggled to take wickets on the slow track," he said.

Pollock, a veteran of 101 Tests, said he was geared for a tough contest at the Sara Oval and believed his side could fight back.

"From all reports we've heard, the wicket for the second Test is going to be even lower and slower than it was for the first Test," he said. "But there's no point dwelling on the negatives. We just have to get on with it."

"Test cricket on the sub-continent can be the opposite of the way it is at home, where a team can be 100-5 half way through the first day, both teams are dismissed by the end of day two and then the wicket becomes flat."

"But here the 'flat' part comes

first. We need to prepare ourselves for a hard, patient fight going right down to the final session on day five."

With Makhaya Ntini and Dale Steyn likely to share the new ball, Pollock will be the stock bowler required to keep one end tight -- something nobody managed to do in the first Test.

"It's going to be even more of a holding role than usual but that's fine," he said. "From a bowling perspective, having a batsman caught at cover is just the same as caught at slip. It doesn't really matter."

Pollock, who has scored 3,444 Test runs at an average of 31.59 over two centuries, is also expected to prop up the middle-order.

The former captain, whose father Peter and uncle Graeme are household names in South African cricket, said retirement had not yet crossed his mind.

"I still enjoy every moment of my cricket," he said. "It is hard to leave one's family at home, but I still enjoy the game as much as I ever did."

"The day when I don't enjoy it, will be time to pack up and retire."

Zim to return soon: Speed

AFP, Harare

Zimbabwe could return to Test cricket in six months, International Cricket Council (ICC) chief executive Malcolm Speed said on Tuesday.

"Ultimately it will be a decision of the ICC board but there will be an evaluation first," Speed told a media conference in Harare when he asked when Zimbabwe might resume playing Test matches.

Speed added that Zimbabwe could return in six, 12 or 18 months. The Zimbabwe government took control of cricket in January and one of the first decisions taken was to withdraw the national team from the Test arena.

The chairman of Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC), Peter Chingoka, was non-committal when asked when Zimbabwe might play their next Test.

"We are still aiming at next year. We don't have an exact date yet," Chingoka told the media conference.

"We have a young team and we still need to play some more three and four-day cricket."

"We have a development programme that we are pursuing, and we are planning more of these games...to build the team and to raise our game."

Zimbabwe have been forced to select an inexperienced team since April 2004, when most of their experienced players quit the game

or opted to further their careers in other countries after a dispute with the board that followed Heath Streak's axing as captain.

Zimbabwe have lost nine of their last 10 Tests, seven of them by an innings.

They last won a one-day international against a major cricket nation when they beat the West Indies by 21 runs in Harare in November 2003.

Chingoka said no players had been ruled out of selection.

"From where I sit, any player who is available is free to come and join the team," he said.

Speed and ICC president Percy Sonn are on a fact-finding trip to Zimbabwe which they undertook at the invitation of ZC.

Sonn emphasised that Zimbabwe, and by definition ZC, remained part of the global cricket family.

"We support Zimbabwe's development programme, and the need to play more three and four-day cricket," Sonn said.

"Zimbabwe requested to have time to put its house in order, to get to the level they believe they can play."

"This is a brief interruption. They remain a full Test cricket nation."

Allegations of mismanagement have been levelled at senior administrators and Speed said: "It's apparent that Zimbabwean cricket is going through a very difficult time."

"That is why we are here: to meet with the interim board and others to listen to their plans for Zimbabwean cricket in the next few years."

Hollies cap put on sale

REUTERS, Melbourne

The cap worn by Eric Hollies, the England leg-spinner who denied the great Don Bradman the chance of averaging 100 in Test matches, is to be auctioned in Melbourne this month.

Australia's Bradman, widely regarded as the finest batsman in cricket history, needed four runs in his final innings at The Oval, London in 1948 to achieve the phenomenal statistic.

But Hollies, who died in 1981 aged 68, bowled "The Don" second ball for a duck, leaving the Australian with an unprecedented average of 99.94 runs in 52 Tests.

The cap, which is accompanied by a letter of authentication from Australian opener Arthur Morris to whom it was handed after the match, is expected to raise up to 30,000 Australian dollars when it goes up for auction on August 16.

STAN CHART SCHOOL CHESS

Sandipan finish in style

SPORTS REPORTER

Sandipan Chatterjee of Kolkata completed a brilliant trip as he finished as unbeaten champion in the Class VI to X group in the 8th Standard Chartered School Chess Tournament at the NSC conference room yesterday.

Sayantana Das, who also hails from Kolkata, did the same as she also clinched the title unbeaten in the class KG to V group. Sayantana earned 8½ points.

A prize distribution ceremony was held in the presence of chief guest CEO of Standard Chartered Bank Osman Morad, President of Bangladesh Chess Federation Syed

Shujauddin Ahmed, general secretary Jamilur Rahman, and vice-president Professor Jahangir Chowdhury.

The last round games were held yesterday morning. In the last round Babu, Aniruddah, Sayantana, Saayan and Siam won their matches respectively.

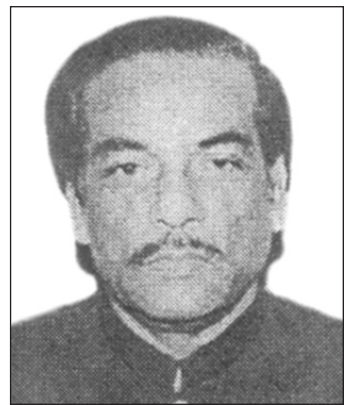
As many as 222 students from 58 school participated in the tournament.

Nazrul no more

SPORTS REPORTER

Renowned sports organiser Nazrul Islam Khan died in the city early Wednesday. He was 75.

Nazrul Islam, popularly known as Badal bhai, had been suffering from old age complications for a long time.



NAZRUL ISLAM KHAN

He was a vice-president of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) and former president of Farashganj Sporting Club. He had a long association with the old city club as a financier and a well-wisher.

BFF and Farashganj SC expressed deep shock at his death and prayed for the salvation of the departed soul and conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family members.

Steve pushes

FROM PAGE 20
"It changes unbelievably with the weather."

Harmison, who came home early from the tour of India with a shin injury, has struggled to find his rhythm this season.

And there was a scare when he pulled up with some pain in his side on day two in Manchester but he insists he is in good shape for the third instalment of the series.

"It was giving me very little trouble at the time. It was built up a bit because of what I did in the first innings and the timing of the whole thing," he added.

"If it had been the first over of the day I might have gone off for five minutes and come back on but with it being the last one it was a journalist's dream come true!"

"It was no major drama and I woke up in the morning feeling quite good."

"Since I've come back from India and the injury I've been getting better slowly and surely."

"I felt it coming together at Lord's and from ball one at Old Trafford everything clicked into place nicely."

Hiddink unwelcome to certain quarters

Football

REUTERS, Moscow

Guus Hiddink has not even started work as Russia soccer manager yet he has already become the darling of local fans and media.

During a four-day visit to Russia last month, Hiddink was followed by a horde of reporters, photographers and television camera crews, and mobbed by well-wishers and autograph seekers.

While the Russian public have quickly fallen in love with the charismatic Dutchman, who will be the country's first foreign manager, some of his fellow coaches from Russia's old guard have given him the cold shoulder.

Former Russia manager Valery Gazzayev was one of the most staunch opponents of Hiddink's appointment, saying a foreigner could never understand the secret of the Russian soul.

"I strongly believe that being just a good coach is not enough to lead our national team," said Gazzayev.

"You must be a real patriot, thoroughly understand our national identity, character and traditions, and for that you must be born here."

Gazzayev, who last year became the first Russian coach to lift a European club trophy when CSKA Moscow won the UEFA Cup, has queried Hiddink's standing.

"This year I was invited to attend an elite coaching course by UEFA but I didn't see Hiddink there," Gazzayev said recently.

Another former Russia manager, Oleg Romantsev, also criticised the hiring of the Dutchman, saying the Hiddink-led Australia used primitive tactics at the World Cup.

Local media mocked such comments, pointing to Romantsev's own record as Russia manager.

Romantsev coached Russia at

the 2002 World Cup in Japan and South Korea, where they failed to progress from one of the easiest first-round groups. The team were dubbed 'Jurassic' for using outdated tactics while the manager was criticised for selecting an ageing squad and adopting an overly cautious approach.

Gazzayev succeeded Romantsev following the 2002 fiasco but fared no better. He lost to Georgia, Albania and Israel, prompting him to quit in August 2003.

Other Russian coaches, including ex-national team managers Yuri Syomin and Anatoly Byshovets, questioned Hiddink's ability to communicate with the players.

"Obviously, Hiddink will have a language problem, so I don't know how effective his coaching would be," said Syomin, who quit as Russia manager last November after failing to guide them to the World Cup finals.

A high-ranking Russian soccer official said privately that most of Hiddink's opponents were simply jealous of his success.

"I just can't see any reason other than that," the official, who did not want to be identified, told Reuters.

Officials in the Russian FA feared that club managers would refuse to co-operate and to give Hiddink information on the national team players.

After some intense lobbying by Russian soccer chief Vitaly Mutko, who was responsible for luring Hiddink to Russia, Gazzayev was forced to soften his stance.

He even briefly met the Dutchman following last month's CSKA league match at Zenit St Petersburg, saying afterwards: "I told Hiddink that I respect him as coach but I'm still opposed to the idea of hiring foreigners for our national team."

Hiddink's huge salary, paid in part by Chelsea's billionaire owner Roman Abramovich, has also irked Russian coaches.

According to media reports, Hiddink will earn close to 3 million dollars per year. Bonuses could put that figure even higher.

Mutko says the Dutchman will be worth every penny.

Hiddink has achieved success at club and international level, winning titles with PSV Eindhoven and Real Madrid and leading the Netherlands and South Korea to the World Cup semifinals. He also guided relative newcomers Australia to the second round of this year's finals in Germany.

At least he will have no language barrier when talking to compatriot Dick Advocaat, who was named Zenit coach in late June after stepping down as manager of South Korea following their elimination from the World Cup finals.

Advocaat has nothing but praise for his fellow Dutchman.

"Guus Hiddink is a world-class coach and I think you should be very happy to have him here," Advocaat told Russian media.

Russia's players also expressed confidence in Hiddink.

"I think Hiddink will bring a winning mentality to our national team," said Russia captain Alexei Smertin.

Yegor Titov, Spartak Moscow captain and one of Russia's most influential players, added: "It's been a long time since we achieved anything worthwhile."

"We're all starving for success and if Hiddink holds the key to our future, then it doesn't really matter if he is Dutch, French or Italian. He is our coach."

Hiddink will make his debut as manager in a friendly against Latvia on Aug. 16 before the Russians begin their Euro 2008 qualifying campaign by facing Croatia on Sept. 6.

KP ton round the corner

Football

AFP, Leeds

Kevin Pietersen has insisted a hundred is "just around the corner" as he bids to join England's list of century-makers in the ongoing Test series against Pakistan.

The South Africa-born batsman has stepped out of the limelight during the opening two matches of the four-Test series and has yet to make 50 in his three innings so far.

In the drawn series opener at Lord's, Paul Collingwood, Andrew Strauss, Alastair Cook and Ian Bell all reached three figures, with Cook and Bell both repeating the feat in England's innings and 120-run victory in the second Test at Old Trafford.

The Manchester match, where England won inside three days, also saw fast bowler Stephen Harmison twice take five wickets in an innings, with emerging left-arm spinner Monty Panesar dismissing five of Pakistan's top six on the final day.

Pietersen, in the run-up to the second Test, challenged the lesser-known names in the side to compensate for the loss of injured Ashes-winning skipper Michael Vaughan and star all-rounder Andrew Flintoff.

"I'm not really there to shoulder the responsibility of the whole England team," the Hampshire shot-maker explained.

And while the likes of England young guns Cook, Bell and Panesar all responded to Pietersen's words at Old Trafford, the man himself now wants to make a major contribution come the third Test which starts at Leeds's Headingley ground on Friday.

"I've missed out in two Test matches now," Pietersen admitted. "It would be nice to get a hundred and I know I'm training and doing everything I'm supposed to do to prepare as best I can."

"If it happens it happens, but if it doesn't I'm sure it's around the corner somewhere," the 26-year-old added.

Despite his relative lack of success against Pakistan this series, Pietersen's overall Test figures remain impressive.

In 16 matches he has scored 1,350 runs at an average of more than 46 with four hundreds. Nevertheless, six innings have passed since he got to fifty.

But the previous time Pietersen endured such a run he ended it, in style, with a Test-best 158 against Australia at The Oval that helped England secure the draw it needed to take the Ashes series 2-1.

The current English Test season saw Pietersen off to a blistering start with back-to-back hundreds against Sri Lanka at Lord's and Edgbaston.

"I did get consecutive hundreds a couple of months ago so I'm not going to put loads of pressure on myself saying I have to get this or that," he explained.

"I've been speaking to (Yorkshire bowler) Matthew Hoggard about Headingley and he says it has been a very good wicket all season. Hopefully it's a good batting track, but with some bounce in it as well like Old Trafford."

Pietersen, speaking Tuesday at the Leeds launch of Test sponsors npower's urban cricket scheme for children, was delighted by the manner of England's victory at Old Trafford.

"We took on board a mentality where we had no complaints and no

talking about injuries and just went out there and played.

"The boys responded to it well with some amazing individual performances from people like Cook, Bell, Harmison and Panesar."

"There was that time that key players kept going down and just when you think things couldn't get any worse someone else would go down."

"Injuries are a problem but we made a conscious decision not to talk about them too much and accept this is the best XI England have now -- the emphasis must be on concentrating on winning games of cricket for England again."

Milan allowed

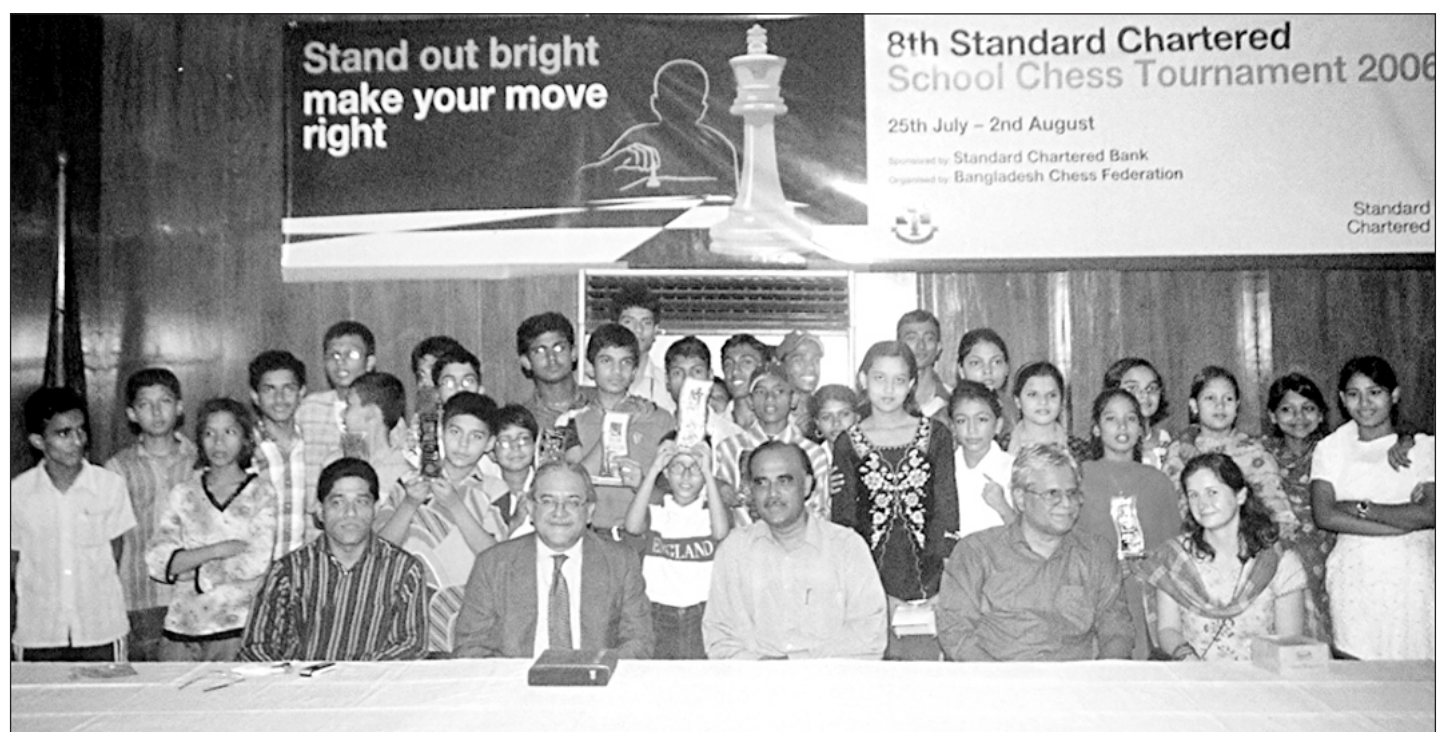
FROM PAGE 20
"UEFA and the club's opponents will observe with the utmost attention the future attitude of AC Milan around UEFA club competition fixtures."

"UEFA will not hesitate to intervene severely, should AC Milan be involved in any activities aiming to arrange improperly the outcome of a match."

Milan lawyer Leandro Cantamessa was quoted by Gazzetta dello Sport as saying: "There were no alternatives. We are innocent and things could not have gone differently."

"Being in this situation has taken away some of our calmness, but now everyone can concentrate on the European event."

Italy will have four teams in the competition with Inter Milan and AS Roma entering at the group stage and Chievo Verona and AC Milan entering at the third qualifying round.



Winners of the 8th Standard Chartered School Chess Tournament pose with the country-head for the bank, Osman Murad and others.

PHOTO: COURTESY