

## Another washout

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's troubled tri-series reeled under another blow on Wednesday as slippery ground conditions forced the home team's game with India to be abandoned.

As South Africa awaited a final security assessment on whether it was safe to play in bomb-hit Colombo, organisers had hoped for a prompt start to the day-night international on Wednesday.

But heavy overnight rain and another sharp shower on Wednesday morning waterlogged the Premadasa stadium and left ground staff struggling to dry the slushy outfield despite a brief spell of sunshine.

Match referee Chris Broad of England abandoned the match at 3:15 pm (0945 GMT) as conditions did not improve. The game will now be played on Thursday, weather permitting.

The original series opener between South Africa and Sri Lanka was rained off on Monday and cancelled again on Tuesday following South Africa's reluctance to play amid security fears.

South Africa indicated they wanted to return home following a blast close to their team hotel here on Monday which killed seven people and injured eight.

The Proteas, however, agreed to extend their stay in Colombo pending an independent security assessment by the International Cricket Council which was expected to be announced later on Wednesday.

According to the revised schedule, the abandoned Sri Lanka-South Africa game will be played on August 29, the day of the final, which has now been put off until September 2.

South Africa's first match, if they take part in the series, will be against India on Saturday.

Each team is due to play the other twice in the league before the final. A reserve day has been kept aside for all matches in case of rain.

## France are

FROM PAGE 20

date with the Italians at the Olympic stadium.

For Vieira the final, which ended 1-1 with France eventually losing on penalties, was a personal disappointment as he had to come off injured after an hour's play.

"I've gone over the final many times in my head on holiday," he said.

"The Italians didn't perhaps play as well as us, but they won, and you only remember the winners."

"For me it was hugely disappointing. It was awful having to come off injured. And then we let in a goal from a set piece when we knew that was their strong point."

"And the scorer (Marco Materazzi) was the player that I'd been marking."

## COLOMBO CLIPS

FROM PAGE 17

Indoor Stadium as Ahsan Habib Parash came from behind to beat Nepal's Pashupati Paneru 15-21, 21-16 and 21-11 in the first round.

Abdul Hannan knocked out Maldives' Afjan Rasheed 21-19, 16-21 and 21-11.

The Bangladeshis, however, lost in the quarterfinals to Indians opponents in the afternoon.

Parash went down fighting to Chetan Anand 13-21, 22-20, 7-21 while left-hander Nikhil Kanetkar outplayed Hannan 21-7, 21-11.

The doubles pairs also got as far as the last eight stage.

Parash and Rasel Kabir Sumon, who beat Nepalese pair Bal Ram Thapa and Pasupati Paneru 21-13, 21-19, lost to India's Rupesh Kumar and Sanave Thomas 22-20 and 20-17.

Mokhtar Hossain and Mostafa Javed were ousted by local boys Thushara Edirisinghe and Duminda Jayakody 18-21, 17-21. Earlier, the Bangladeshi duo defeated Syed Abdul and Arash Irfan of Afghanistan.

Team captain Sumon said he was still happy because the Bangladesh players fought bravely against the favourites.

"In spite of our lack of exposure, we played good here today," Sumon said. "Now we will concentrate on the team event."

The team event will start on August 19.

## Spain held

FROM PAGE 20

Hernandez missed the game through injury, while their new FC Barcelona teammate, Iceland's Eidur Gudjohnsen, was rested because the European champions play Espanyol in the Spanish Supercup on Thursday.

## Ukraine

FROM PAGE 20

Imamaliyev's kick from 25 meters out.

Midfielder Oleh Husev also netted a goal before intermission, and the scoring did not let up in the second half with forward Andriy Vorobey just barely slipping the fifth goal past Azerbaijan goalkeeper Farhad Veliyev in the 71st minute.

Forward Oleksiy Belik tucked on the final goal in the 91st minute.

# Pakistan hope to save grace

Cricket

AFP, London

With the Oval Test always the last of an English cricket season, there have been many occasions in the past when a new player has been drafted in with the series lost in the belief that there's nothing to lose.

But the climax to the current series between England and Pakistan which gets underway at the south London venue on Thursday departs from the familiar formula in that it is the tourists, not the hosts, who are set to make changes.

England, 2-0 up in the four-match series after victories by an innings and 120 runs and 167 runs at Old Trafford and Headingley respectively, are set to field an unaltered side, having won a Test campaign for the first time since last year's Ashes success.

Pakistan, in the ongoing absence of Shoaib Malik, are set to try their fourth opening partnership in as many matches with Mohammad Hafeez, out of Test cricket for nearly three years and one of several late additions to the squad, in line to partner Imran Farhat at the top of the innings.

There is no denying the quality of a middle-order which reads Younis Khan, Mohammad Yousuf and Inzamamul Haq.

But so fallible have Pakistan's various opening combinations proved against an England attack missing Ashes stars Andrew Flintoff and Simon Jones, as well as the guiding hand of Ashes winning captain Michael Vaughan, that Hafeez -- who made 180 against Australia A last month and can also bowl off-spin -- is now going to get his chance to prove he can succeed where the likes of Salman Butt, Taufeeq Umar and Kamran Akmal have failed.

However, Pakistan fans will rightly point out that when it comes to bowling injuries their side has been the harder hit.

Pace trio Shoaib Akhtar, Navedul Hassan and Mohammad Asif have missed all three Tests so far. Their

absence has left Pakistan short of a cutting edge.

Umar Gul has persevered well but Mohammad Sami, a few lively overs at Headingley excepted, has had a mediocre tour.

And with leg-spinner Danish Kaneria being repeatedly outbowed by England slow left-armers Monty Panesar, Pakistan's bowlers have struggled to impose themselves.

On Tuesday, Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer ruled Akhtar (left ankle) out of the match.

Nevertheless, Woolmer was keen to preserve a semblance of optimism by saying of Asif (elbow) and Naved (groin): "They have to be in contention. But Shoaib will not play."

And of Hafeez, he added: "He played extremely well in Australia and was going to fit into our one-day squad so it made sense to try to get him going."

For England, who last year sealed the Ashes with a draw at The Oval, the whole season has been viewed through the distorting prism of the tour of Australia starting in November.

Ian Bell may be on the verge of joining the late Ken Barrington as the only England batsman to have scored four hundreds in as many Tests but the weakness of Pakistan's attack will not have gone unnoticed by Australians who remember his Ashes struggles with Glenn McGrath and Shane Warne last year.

Pace bowler Sajid Mahmood, after his and England's humiliation during the 5-0 one-day series thrashing by Sri Lanka, took four for 22 in Pakistan's second innings at Headingley where he regularly hit the 90mph mark.

All of other England's Ashes replacements -- No 3 batsman Alastair Cook (in for Vaughan), Panesar (in for the injured Ashley Giles) and wicket-keeper Chris Read (recalled at Headingley) have all shown their worth.

One ongoing concern for England remains strike bowler Stephen Harmison, a cricketer of either feast or famine.

His six for 19 in the second Test



England's new sensation left-arm spinner Monty Panesar in a jolly mood at training on Wednesday before the fourth and final Test at The Oval in London.

showed what can happen when he is in the mood. The worry for England is that when circumstances are less than ideal, Harmison can be anonymous, unlike the greats who still find a way through.

For England though, greatness can wait. Remembering how to win Tests will do for now.

### TEAMS

**ENGLAND:** Marcus Trescothick, Andrew Strauss (capt), Alastair Cook, Kevin Pietersen, Paul Collingwood, Ian Bell, Chris Read

(wkt), Sajid Mahmood, Matthew Hoggard, Stephen Harmison, Monty Panesar, Jon Lewis.

**PAKISTAN:** Imran Farhat, Mohammad Hafeez, Younis Khan, Mohammad Yousuf, Inzamamul Haq (capt), Faisal Iqbal, Kamran Akmal (wkt), Abdul Razzaq, Shahid Afridi, Mohammad Sami, Umar Gul, Danish Kaneria, Shahid Nazir, Rao Iftikhar Anjum, Navedul Hassan, Mohammad Asif.

## Second batch

FROM PAGE 17

athletics wrestling, karate, judo, taekwondo, archery and volleyball -- will depart on August 20.

Though the football competition already started the opening ceremony of the eight-nation regional event will be held on August 18 in the Sri Lankan capital.

## Qatar complete

FROM PAGE 17

**BANGLADESH:** Aminul, Fayyal Ahmed, Hasan Mahmud (Abul), Rajani Barman, Nazrul Islam, Motiur Munna, Arman (Farhad), Arif Khan Joy (Captain) (Kanchan), Mostafa Parvez, Farhad and Alifaz Ahmed

**Referee:** Muktar Al Yarimi (Yemen)

**Red Card:** Abdullah Abdul Aziz (Qatar)

**Yellow Card:** Abul (Bangladesh) substitute of Hasan.

## Bashar returns

FROM PAGE 17

Bashar also lauded his teammates for clinching their first-ever away series at Kenya.

"It is not how you win, but the fact that you win, is important. I watched the last match and I was happy with the way the boys finished the tour."

The leading Bangladesh batsman sustained the injury during the fielding of the second one-day match against Zimbabwe at Harare.

## Euro journey

FROM PAGE 20

Australia to the second round where the Socceroos' adventure ended when they were knocked out by Italy to an injury-time penalty by Francesco Totti.

Hiddink has since moved on to Moscow where he will try and work his magic with Russia, with his first competitive match in charge the September 6 qualifier with Croatia.

Jürgen Klinsmann's decision to bow out after steering Germany into third at the World Cup resulted in his assistant Joachim Low handed the task of trying to continue the Mannschaft's revival.

He has a tough first qualifier ahead with the Republic of Ireland's visit to Stuttgart.

Otto Rehhagel's champions Greece meanwhile have endured a rocky time of it since their spectacular triumph in Lisbon, failing to make it to the World Cup.

## Footwear conflict

FROM PAGE 20

qualifier for the Euro 2008 against the Republic of Ireland," said Low.

Meanwhile, German clubs are to receive compensation of 45,000 euros (58,000 dollars) from the DFB and the German professional league (DFL) when a player is selected to play for the national side, the weekly Sport Bild reported.

The new agreement comes into effect immediately.

The previous payment was 6,000 euros (7,600 dollars).

# Shoaib counted out of Oval tie

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

Pakistan pacesman Shoaib Akhtar is out of the final Test against England, with the tourists reluctant to risk him at The Oval with limited match practice.

The 31-year-old missed the first three Tests as he worked his way back from long-term ankle problems.

Also out are openers Salman Butt and Taufeeq Umar, who have been sent home after disappointing at Headingley, meaning a recall for Mohammad Hafeez.

He will open with Imran Farhat as the tourists make top-order changes again.

Shoaib returned to action for his country in a game against West Indies A on Saturday but bowled only 11 overs because of bad weather.

He had been out of competitive cricket since January because of a stress fracture and will now concentrate on the five-match one-day series which begins on 30 August.

Fellow seamers Navedul Hassan (groin) and Mohammad Asif (elbow), who have rejoined the squad after injury, might have to do the same.

Coach Bob Woolmer appeared

unsure whether they would take the field at The Oval on Thursday morning.

"They have to be in contention, yes. The way they bowled was very encouraging," the Englishman said.

"It certainly would be a gamble. It would be a difficult thing to do as they have not bowled for a month."

We would like to have kept Salman Butt and Imran Farhat together right the way through the series.

Pacesman Samiullah Niazi has also returned to Pakistan but Woolmer insisted the coming and going was not a sign of disarray in his camp.

"There is no chaos here -- it is controlled chaos if anything," he said.

"We brought Asif and Rana back to get them going again, Shoaib is here training with us for the one-days."

"He will be fit for them so there are a lot of positives. We are in keeping with the Pakistan tradition of large touring parties."

Hafeez will win his fourth Test cap after impressing for Pakistan A in the recent Top End Series in Australia.

The 25-year-old, who also bowls off-spin, will be part of yet another new opening combination for the visitors.

# Hingis in third round

Tennis

INTERNET, undated

The seventh-seeded Martina Hingis advanced to the third round of the \$1.34 million Rogers Cup on Tuesday night with a 7-5, 7-6 (7-5) triumph over Mara Santangelo of Italy.

While Hingis was one of eight players to receive a first-round bye, Santangelo had to rally for a 6-7 (2-7), 6-4, 6-2 triumph over Austrian Sybille Bammer on Monday.

A winner here in 1999 and 2000, Hingis battled back from a 4-1 deficit in the second round to move on. The

Swiss next will meet No. 11 Daniela Hantuchova of Slovakia or American qualifier Jamea Jackson.

In the only other second-round match Tuesday, fifth seed and rising star Nicole Pietrangeli outlasted fellow Czech Lucie Safarova, 3-6, 7-5, 6-1.

Canadian wild card Marie-Eve Pelletier delighted local fans by upsetting No. 16 Na Li of China, 6-4, 6-2.

The 24-year-old Pelletier is ranked just No. 337 in the world due to a recurring foot injury.

"I have to say that my best performance so far was actually qualifying for the Australian Open, but I do

think that this is the best win of my career," said Pelletier, the first Quebec native to advance to the second round here since Helene Pelletier in 1984. "With all of the foot and ankle injuries I've had, this win is really good for me."

The other two seeds in first-round matches moved on, as No. 10 Anna-Lena Groenfeld of Germany beat Shuai Peng of China, 6-3, 6-3, and Hantuchova routed Argentine Gisela Dulko, 6-2, 6-0.

Each will play an American qualifier in the second round, with Groenfeld facing Shenay Perry and Hantuchova taking on Jackson.

Top seed and defending champion Kim Clijsters learned she will face Stephanie Dubois in the second round after the Canadian wild card defeated Italian lucky loser Tathiana Garbin, 6-4, 6-4.



Swiss tennis star Martina Hingis makes a double-handed return to Mara Santangelo of Italy during the Rogers Cup at Stade Uniprix in Montreal on Tuesday.

## U-17s end

FROM PAGE 17

Vietnam by 3-1 before bouncing back in the second game with a 2-1 victory over Laos.

Phyoo struck twice for Myanmar in the 14th and 44th minutes after Zowlin opening the score in the early sixth minute.

Emon scored the consolation goal for Bangladesh in the 86th minute.

The Bangladesh team returns home Thursday night.

## Proteas pull

FROM PAGE 17

New Zealand abandoned their tour in 1987 after a blast in Colombo's Pettah region, which houses the main bus and train stations, killed 110 civilians and two policemen.

The New Zealanders suffered another shock in 1992 when a blast outside their team hotel in Colombo killed the country's Naval chief Clancy Fernando. However, they went ahead with their two Test matches and three one-dayers.

Australia and the West Indies refused to play their World Cup matches in Sri Lanka in 1996 when a powerful bomb in downtown Colombo, blamed on rebel Tamil Tigers, killed 91 and injured 1,400 a few days before the tournament.

## Villa takeover

FROM PAGE 20

billionaires."

The possibility remains that Padfield's group could join forces with one of the two other interested parties -- local businessman Michael Neville and a group of foreign investors represented by former England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson's agent Athole Still -- to scupper Lerner's takeover.

Padfield said that "irrevocable undertakings" given to Lerner will become void if another bid of five percent or more above Lerner's is made, meaning any offer over 66 million pounds will be given consideration.

A formal offer could be made next week and it is believed Padfield's group would guarantee an instant transfer kitty of 30 million pounds to new manager Martin O'Neill during the August transfer window.

Seven-times English title winners and European Champions in 1982, Villa have struggled to maintain their position among the elite of English football in recent years, falling well behind the likes of Manchester United, Chelsea and Arsenal and Liverpool in terms of playing talent and resources.

# Eventful summer

FROM PAGE 20

and penalties to AC Milan, Lazio and Fiorentina. Only Milan will be allowed to play in European competitions this season.

All four teams will start the season with negative points.

Cannavaro and Juventus teammate Gianluca Zambrotta both decided to leave Italy for Spain. Cannavaro will play for Real Madrid under former Juventus coach Fabio Capello, while Zambrotta will take the field for FC Barcelona.

Cannavaro is already ready to hoist another cup: the Champions League. "I'm 33 years old and I've only gone so far as the semifinals," Cannavaro said. "My goal is to play the final with Real Madrid and win the cup."

Camoranesi called his agent to say he didn't want to play in Serie B, but he apparently changed his mind.

Both Alessandro Del Piero and Gianluigi Buffon committed themselves to Juventus before the team was demoted. Del Piero, mostly used as a substitute last season, should get more playing time this year.

## Lacklustre

FROM PAGE 17

"Football is for intelligent people, if you are not intelligent enough to cope with different situations in the ground, you can't be successful. I don't have any magic solution. I am a coach, not God. No one can make them winners in a short period. We now must beat India to go into the semis," he said adding that his offensive strategy of fielding three strikers was right. "They tried but could not do much."

Skipper Feroz Mahmud Titu said their focus would be on the India game. "We did not play well but it was better than the game against Nepal. We believe that we can play better. We are determined to win the last group match and be in the semis."

# Women's cricket: the untold stories

FROM PAGE 17

Two years on, the West Bengal team came on a return visit to Dhaka. Another friendly match was played between the two teams at the then Metropolitan Women's Sports Complex as no other venue could be arranged due to non-cooperation of the authorities concerned. We must not forget to mention Wasim, the then manager of the cricket team of Mohammedan Sporting Club, who accommodated the West Bengal team at his Banani house during those difficult days.

In the 1980s, there were only five countries -- England, Australia, New Zealand, India and the West Indies -- who would play the World Cup. Bangladesh could directly compete without playing in the qualifying rounds. Unfortunately at that time, the government, the Bangladesh Cricket Control Board (BCCB) and the NSCB could not realise that the women could prove themselves and had a bright future ahead. No organisation came forward to support them. At one stage, all activities of the women cricketers came to an end, killing off the desires and dreams cherished in their hearts.

Later on, despite their frustrations, the girls would go to the Women's Sports Complex, for their sheer attraction to the game of cricket and practise informally amongst themselves. After a gap of 12 years, the BCCB tried to revive women's cricket in 1997. They wished to make a national team target-

ing the World Cup to be held in November 2000 in New Zealand.

Coach Altaf was given the responsibility to train the players and Putul was appointed as trainer to assist him. The organisers of Abahani Krira Chakra also got ready to have a tournament among the school, college and university girls and received good response too. But all their efforts went in vain, as there was no proper coordination to materialise the initiative. The then president of BCCB, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, finally took a sincere initiative and decided to take a woman official in the board to work on the matter. This process sadly was also left unfinished.

Afterwards, in 2005, the BCCB took appropriate steps for rejuvenating women's cricket in the country. In April 2006, Ali Asghar, MP, current president of BCCB, along with his colleagues Mahbub Anam, Rafiqul Islam and others formed the 'Women's Wing' of BCCB under the able leadership of Fahima Hossain Jubile, MP. Fahima also took the initiative of informing the members of the Jatiyo Sangsad about the development.

The new committee arranged a three-month training camp at the Women's Sports Complex in Dhandhondi. Hamida Begum, deputy director of NSC, and Kamrunnabha Dana, secretary of Women's Sports Association, are providing full support to the committee. An exhibition match was played on June 8, 2006 at the

Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur. Asghar inaugurated the match and other members of BCCB were present there. The veteran Altaf was the chief coach and he was assisted by Level 1 coaches Parvin Putul and Shahin Akhter, the managers were Ayesha Akhter and Neela Hasan. Dr Farzana Akhter was the doctor for both the teams. Players of the Red Team were Tajkiya (captain), Sumona, Papiya, Doli Dey, Moushomi, Nayeas, Muriel, Nipun, Shahhaj, Tahmina, Snigdha, Fatema, Farzana and Sadia. Lisa (captain), Sazia, Ayesha, Kajol, Anee, Fancy, Jorna, Simonti, Mahmuda, Auper, Badhon, Tania, Supriya, Rupa and Rachi made up the Green Team.

The next plan of action is to have a District Championship very soon for which the districts are preparing accordingly. Though the BCCB is constantly cooperating, even then that may not be enough to sustain the training programme in long term. In our country, there are many organisations assisting and sponsoring men's cricket. Some institutions are working for the uplift of women in various sectors and hunting for talented girls in different fields. Regarding women's cricket, there are talented resources ready to be tapped, trained and then blossom into international cricketers like the men's team. An important requirement is sponsorship and financial support to nurture them. The country has lost many bright players in the past and we

must not wish to lose any more in the future.

Our goal should not only be to visit few countries, once or twice, to improve the knowledge of the game and gain confidence and experience, but to have an organised system to build skilled woman cricketers and the process will have to be uninterrupted. Otherwise, the revival of the game after twenty years will not make much sense. After struggling for more than two decades, women's cricket now appears to be taking a good shape under the encouragement and guidance of BCCB. Support from the International Cricket Council for women's cricket in Bangladesh will act as a fillip to the spread of the game in the country. The game needs patrons to ensure that talented women are attracted to the game and can sustain themselves during the strenuous training camps and play with confidence and class in the matches later on. I am optimistic that the authority will continue to give all support and the patrons will come forward for having a good national women's cricket team that will compete in the World Cup in near future.