

Imran slates ODI effort

AFP, Karachi

Former cricket great Imran Khan Tuesday said he was dejected at Pakistan's poor performance in the one-day series against England's "weakest" outfit.

"This was the poorest performance by any Pakistan team and considering England was the weakest one-day outfit, I am disappointed at the one-day series result," Imran told AFP.

The Pakistan team returned Tuesday after losing the four-Test series 3-0, which included forfeiture of the final Test at The Oval over a ball-tampering row. England also squared the five-match one-day series 2-2.

"I am amazed at the result, this same England team was thrashed 5-0 by Sri Lanka in one-dayers three months ago," said Imran, who is now a member of the Pakistan parliament.

Imran led Pakistan to a 2-1 series loss in England in 1982, the last time Pakistan was defeated in a Test series in England. Five years later Imran led Pakistan to a series win in England. Pakistan also won 2-1 on the 1992 tour of England and 2-0 in 1996 before they drew 1-1 in 2001.

But the 53-year-old former all-rounder blamed the Test series loss to injury problems in Pakistan team.

"Pakistan lost the Tests because their main bowlers Shoaib Akhtar, Mohammad Asif and Navedul Hasan were injured, even England missed their captain Michael Vaughan and Andrew Flintoff, but they did well," he said.

He strongly criticized Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer for not helping Inzamam with a proper strategy.

"Woolmer muddled things and it's amazing that he has failed to find a suitable opening pair in two years," said Imran, who said Pakistan need to solve this problem before next year's World Cup in the Caribbean.

"Pakistan is still the most dangerous team after Australia but they are losing one-day matches despite having the world-class talent.

"It all boils down to strategy and where Inzamamul Haq lacks, Woolmer fails to compensate," he said.

"I am as surprised as anyone in the public how Pakistan lost. I don't agree that players were tired due to a long tour, some of them were fresh and did not play in Tests."

5 share lead in women's chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Tanima Parveen shared the lead with four others at the end of the second round of Begum Laila Alam Women's FIDE Rating chess tournament yesterday.

Tanima beat Shaati Majumder at the BCF hall room to extend her collection to maximum two points.

Also on two points are Zakia Sultana, Sharmin Sultana Shirin, Farjana Hossain Anny and Shamiha Sharmin Shimmi.

Eriksson pulls

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"I don't defend him, and there are things he did he should have avoided, but I can understand that he had had enough."

"He has tried to adapt to the style where you hunt people all through the night but he has had enough."

Eriksson had been invited to be among the VIP speakers alongside World Cup-winning coach Marcello Lippi and France's Raymond Domenech but pulled out at the weekend.

Houllier

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service of the team, which is a little bit different to being at Nantes when I was allowed to roam the midfield.

"Here, I'm given orders and I obey them. But that's fine with me. The important thing for me is to play."

"If they asked me, I would play as a right-back against a team like Real."

Real travel to the French gastronomic capital itching to sate their hunger to avenge those setbacks last season.

Spain goalkeeper Iker Casillas said Monday: "Last season's first game was perfect for Lyon. They scored three goals in the space of 25 minutes."

"Maybe this will give us a chance for revenge."

With the exception of injured defender Michel Salgado and Casillas, who have been replaced by youth team players Javi Garcia and Adan, Fabio Capello has kept faith with the side which beat Levante 4-1.

Brazilian striker Ronaldo is still recovering from injury, and Capello is keeping fans guessing after pulling club captain Raul off at half time on Saturday.

The only striker he is virtually certain to stick with is his former Manchester United marksman Ruud van Nistelrooy - who scored a hat-trick against Levante.



Bangladesh batsman Mohammad Ashraful (L) practices slip catching with coach Dav Whatmore's assistance at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Battle on for last four

Hockey

AFP, Monchengladbach

Favourites the Netherlands defeated England 4-3 at the men's field hockey World Cup championship here Monday but their semifinal berth rests on the outcome of other teams' results.

The Dutch must beat India in its last pool match Tuesday and hope Germany falters against South Africa or South Korea to be able to make the semifinals.

"We will wait and hope," said Dutch coach Roelant Oltmans.

James Tindall scored two field goals and Richard Mantell a sizzling penalty corner conversion for England's three goals.

Teun de Nooijer and Ronald Brouwer scored field goals for Netherlands, who wrapped up the game thanks to two penalty corner goals by Taeke Taekema.

"We are hopeful we will be in the playoff for fifth but we have a lot of work still to do," said England coach Jason Lee.

Argentina unexpectedly upset Pakistan 1-0 and Pakistan must win against Australia in its last Pool A match and rely on Spain losing to winless Japan for Pakistan to make the semifinals.

Matias Vila fired a penalty stroke inside the left post eleven minutes into the second half for the only

score of the match.

Sohail Abbas missed seven penalty corner attempts for Pakistan.

"We played on emotional forces rather than tactics today (Monday) and I am thankful to all the players who gave everything on the pitch," said Argentina coach Sergio Vigil.

"This was a crucial match for us and we did everything right, except score," said Vigil's counterpart Shahnaz Sheikh.

South Korea converted a penalty 80 seconds from the final hooter to beat India 2-1 after India held a 1-0 lead early in the second half.

India has only one Championship point, from its draw with South Africa.

If India loses to Netherlands in its last Pool B match, India will play off for ninth to twelfth place.

South Korea moved to 10 points and is a strong contender for its first-ever semifinal berth in a World Cup.

Shivendra Singh scored India's goal ten minutes after the break and South Korea had nine penalty corners in the second half with Jong Hyun Jang converting the last two with powerful flicks into the top of the net.

"We had to play open hockey because we needed the three points from this match and that opened us up to penalty corners being awarded against us," said

India coach Vasudevan Baskaran.

New Zealand suffered its first loss of the Championship, beaten 3-1 by Spain.

But Kiwi coach Kevin Towns was confident his side could make the semifinals by beating Olympic champions Australia.

"We are overdue for a win against Australia and they are a weakened team and a very different team, without Matthew Wells and Grant Schubert," Towns said.

Spain sealed their 3-1 win with goals from David Alegre, Santiago Freixa and Eduard Tubau.

Alegre opened the scoring after nine minutes from a build-up by Eduard Tubau. Sojo earned a penalty corner nine minutes later, which Santiago Freixa converted high into the right of the net.

Spain scored again in the first minute of the second half with a goal created by Freixa's work along the right and a pass to Tubau free at the top of the circle who made a thundering drive into the back-boards.

Hayden Shaw converted New Zealand's second penalty corner and the Kiwis found another gear as strikers Simon Child and Phillip Burrows made seven powerful shots which went wide of goal in the second half.

"I was happy with our performance in the second half but not happy with the first half or the final result," Towns said.

Inzy far from happy

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq Tuesday termed his team's overall performance in England as "unsatisfactory", saying that the team badly needed to improve its fielding in one-day cricket.

"Our overall performance was unsatisfactory and we should have performed better than we did," Inzamam said on returning from the two-and-a-half month tour.

Pakistan lost their last one-day international at Birmingham on Sunday, which left the five-match series all square at 2-2 after the first game at Cardiff was hit by rain.

Earlier Pakistan lost the four-match Test series 3-0, which included an unprecedented England win by forfeit following a ball-tampering row at The Oval last month.

The defeat in a Test series in England was Pakistan's first since 1982.

The only positive outcome from

the tour was experience gained by the youngsters in Pakistan team, Inzamam said.

"Several youngsters toured England for the first time and the tour provided them with a wealth of experience and I hope they build on this experience in future," he said.

Inzamam singled out fielding as his team's main weakness.

"If we need to progress we must improve our fielding which plays a crucial part in one-day cricket," said Inzamam, who will appear before a code of conduct hearing on September 27 and 28 in London over the Oval incident.

Pakistan refused to take the field after umpires Darrell Hair of Australia and Billy Doctrove of the West Indies changed the ball and awarded five penalty runs to England over suspicions the ball had been tampered with by Pakistan.

Pakistan's protest led to the first forfeiture in Test cricket's 129-year history.

Inzamam insisted his team's action was for the sake of their country's pride.

"It was not a matter of win or lose, it was a matter of country's pride and I won't comment much on that," said Inzamam, who was chided by the International Cricket Council (ICC) for his comments on the issue last week.

Pakistan vice captain Younis Khan, and pacemen Shoaib Akhtar and Navedul Hasan stayed back in England for personal reasons.

Coach Bob Woolmer who was also disappointed with the tour, describing it as the toughest of his career.

"It was disappointing not to do as well as we hoped. Probably it was the toughest tour of my career for many reasons," Woolmer told AFP from Cape Town.

"Some positives did come out of the tour and they were Mohammad Asif, Umer Gul and Younis Khan -- who all did well on the tour but overall it was a disappointing tour," said Woolmer, a former England batsman.

Pakistan's next international assignment is the eight-team ICC Champions Trophy in India next month.

Rooney

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But United will go into the match on the back of a four-match winning start to their Premiership campaign and buoyed by the memory of how they comfortably out-

classed Rangers when they met the then Scottish champions in the group stages of the Champions League three years ago.

Even Celtic boss Gordon Strachan has admitted that this match may have come a little too early for his new-look squad.

New signing Thomas Gravesen however was upbeat about the Glasgow side's chances of pulling off an upset at Old Trafford.

"They are the kind of games you love to play as a footballer," said the Danish midfielder. "We can go to England with confidence and we will do our best down there."

"People think that the Scottish league is not so strong, but I think we can prove them wrong."

Dutch striker Jan Vennegoor, another of Strachan's new signings, admitted Celtic were far from the finished article at the moment.

Not driven by racism

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Darrell Hair, the Australian umpire at the centre of The Oval controversy last month, has hit out at suggestions that his decisions which led to the forfeiture of the Test were hasty, and, even worse, motivated by racism.

In a detailed interview in The Mail on Sunday, Hair said he was forced to intervene because he absolutely had to, and that there were no other extraneous factors, which influenced his decision-making.

"The umpires intervene only when they decide the game is not being played within the spirit of the game," Hair said.

"People will tell you in matches I have umpired in the past 20 years that I have shown considerable restraint. There have been many times when official action could have been taken but wasn't because you try to control the issue and resolve it on the pitch."

"All good umpires will have a quiet word rather than jump in. I prefer the principle of non-intervention. That is a preferable route compared with someone making a song and dance about something that could be resolved quietly. But the decision to intervene finally depends on the seriousness of the matter."

Hair also said he was deeply hurt by accusations of racism, and by comments that his offer to the ICC -- that he would quit umpiring if offered 250,000 pounds -- were motivated by personal greed.

"It really upsets me when people describe me as racist, because they have no idea how I spent my childhood and how that shaped my beliefs in adulthood," said Hair.

"How can people judge me to have prejudices when I went to school in Australia alongside Chinese children, Hungarian refugees and all manner of other nationalities? I grew

up in Orange, in central New South Wales, living next door to a large family of Aborigines. I had some of my happiest times playing rugby and cricket with the children. They were like brothers and sisters to me.

"It's particularly hurtful when I count as some of my closest friends the Pakistan umpires Aleem Dar and Asad Rauf, and the Sri Lankans Asoka de Silva and Peter Manuel. We are men from different cultures drawn together by the game of cricket. We exchange views and I have always found men of that calibre tremendously supportive."

Denying the charge of greed, Hair



DARRELL HAIR

said: "Money has never been a driving force in my career as an umpire. No umpire I know does it for money. I can honestly say I am earning less than half I could have commanded in salary had I stayed in the private sector as sales manager of a clothing manufacturer in Melbourne."

Hair also admitted that some of the comments made after the incident had upset him and Amanda, his wife. "Amanda has been affected by this," he said.

"Normally she is very strong, an implacable woman. I think it has affected her because she knows a lot about cricket. She has spent a lot of

her time on cricket committees and has a passion for the game herself. Some of the ill-informed comments made have upset her deeply. No matter how much I tell her not to worry, she does worry because she does not like to see what she perceives as injustice."

Despite all the controversy, Hair maintained that he was gratified by the amount of support he had received.

"I can honestly say that all the letters, emails and text messages I have received have been supportive. The vast majority of people who have written, I have never met. A lot of them clearly do support the role of the umpire. None of the letters have been abusive. The messages I have received from official cricketing bodies around the world have been very encouraging."

Hair has had controversial moments with the teams from the subcontinent in the past as well, but he insisted that he enjoyed officiating there.

"Pakistan is particularly receptive to a visiting umpire like myself," he said. "Their idea of a venue for a chat about umpiring is one of their wonderful restaurants. They are very hospitable people and the discussion goes on all night. The subcontinent has so many happy memories for me and officiating in that region has been instrumental in improving many aspects of my umpiring."

The hearing against Inzamam will take place on September 27 and 28, and the outcome could well determine if Hair continues as an international umpire.

"My wish is to carry on and enjoy the rest of my career as an umpire," Hair clarified. "That is what I would like to do. My contract runs to April 2008. After that, who knows? How I am involved in cricket after that date is in the mixing bowl."

Legalised betting a possible solution

Football

REUTERS, Singapore

A legalised betting system is vital to winning the battle against match-fixing, according to Asian Football Confederation general secretary Peter Velappan.

With Vietnamese soccer dogged by yet another fixing scandal, Velappan believes Singapore's approach to organised gambling can act as an example to its Southeast Asian neighbours.

"We have seen football corruption in countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam in the past," Velappan said on a recent visit to Singapore.

"Singapore had also come under the spotlight previously but they've always been very active in trying to stamp out football corruption."

"The AFC are very satisfied with what Singapore is doing to weed out match-fixing," he told the Today newspaper.

"Other countries are doing their part but Singapore are a good role model as far as tackling football corruption (is concerned)."

Last week, Vietnamese police said they had identified the man behind a match-fixing scandal at last year's Southeast Asian Games.

Ly Quoc Ky is accused of running an underground betting ring which allegedly paid players to fix the scoreline of Vietnam's group stage match with Myanmar at the 2005 SEA Games soccer tournament in the Philippines.

Police said Ky had gone on the run and had ignored calls to turn himself in to face the charges.

He is accused of paying seven players 500 million dong (\$31,000) each to ensure Vietnam won the game by a single goal.

A slender victory for Vietnam against the much weaker Myanmar attracted favourable odds, given the country's high scoring record going into the tournament.

Seven people linked to the match are currently in detention awaiting trial, six of whom are under house arrest.

Truong Tan Hai, a former national team player, was arrested two weeks ago on two counts of bribery, after he allegedly fixed the SEA Games match and a V-League title decider in 2001.

Freddie to lead

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Left-arm spinner Ashley Giles is included despite having been ruled out for the whole of this English season with hip and hernia injuries, although his inclusion is subject to him proving his fitness before the team arrive in Australia in November.

Lancashire pace bowler James Anderson, out all season with a back injury was also included while Durham quick Liam Plunkett has made it into the main squad despite a side strain in the second half of the season.

Strike fast bowler Stephen Harmison is also included after missing the one-dayers against Pakistan with a side injury.

Meanwhile senior opening batsman Marcus Trescothick made the 16-man squad despite the stress-related illness which forced him to miss the Champions Trophy event.

But there was no place for Glamorgan quick Simon Jones, one of the heroes of last year's Ashes where his reverse-swing bowling played an important part in England's 2-1 victory.

The Welshman has been out all season with a knee injury and has been advised not to return to first-class cricket until the 2007 English season.

"Simon recently travelled to America for a re-assessment of the left knee which was operated on earlier in the summer by a specialist in Colorado," explained ECB chief medical officer Dr Peter Gregory.

"He underwent an arthroscopy which showed that the knee has

responded well to the micro-fracturing treatment designed to repair the joint surface.

"The specialist is encouraged by Simon's progress but he has advised that any return to competitive cricket should be delayed until next season in order to give the surgery the best chance of succeeding."

England's squad contains only four players -- Giles, Trescothick, Matthew Hoggard and Harmison -- who played in the final Test of the previous Ashes tour at Sydney four years ago.

Despite reports claiming Vaughan would shadow the squad out in Australia and continue his rehabilitation down under, the ECB have also confirmed he will remain in England and not travel out to Australia until he is ready for cricket-related training.

The first Ashes Test starts at Brisbane on November 23.

ASHES SQUAD

Andrew Flintoff (captain), James Anderson, Ian Bell, Paul Collingwood, Alastair Cook, Ashley Giles, Steve Harmison, Matthew Hoggard, Geraint Jones, Sajid Mahmood, Monty Panesar, Kevin Pietersen, Liam Plunkett, Chris Read, Andrew Strauss, Marcus Trescothick.

CHAMPS TROPHY SQUAD

Andrew Flintoff (captain), James Anderson, Ian Bell, Rikki Clarke, Paul Collingwood, James Dalrymple, Steve Harmison, Ed Joyce, Sajid Mahmood, Jon Lewis, Kevin Pietersen, Chris Read, Andrew Strauss, Michael Yardy.

National carrom from tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

The three-day 4th National Carrom Championship will begin at the National Sports Council gymnasium tomorrow.

Secretary of Youth and Sports Ministry Mohammad Sirajul Islam will inaugurate the meet in the morning.

So far, 19 clubs have confirmed participation in the competition, which will have four events -- men's singles and doubles and women's singles doubles, told Bangladesh Carrom Federation joint secretary Abdul Kader Biswas at a press conference at the NSC conference room yesterday.

Federation president Dr Sheikh Abdus Salam and other officials were also present.

Eto's proud

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you start flying, you might disappear and nobody will remember you."

He also believes that the group Barcelona find themselves in is very tricky: "Chelsea are one of the best teams in Europe, and the German teams [in this case Werder Bremen] always fight very hard. Levski are unknown, but they will also throw in everything because they have nothing to lose."

He also said that he believed it was vital to begin with a win, not to cause fear among opponents, but to tell everyone that Barcelona were not entering the fray as Champions, but as any other team willing to fight it out.

The Catalans face Bulgarian debutants Levski Sofia at the Camp Nou later tonight.