

**Hingis in quarters**

AFP, Kolkata

Top seed Martina Hingis scored a hard-fought 6-2, 7-5 win over Tzipora Obziler in the second round of the Kolkata Open tournament on Wednesday.

The world number nine from Switzerland took 84 minutes to dispose of her 130th-ranked Israeli opponent and set up a quarterfinal clash with Tamarine Tanasugam of Thailand.

Hingis, who had looked in complete control of her first-round match against Hungarian Melinda Czink, made quite a few unforced errors but used her experience to pull off a win.

"There were ups and downs in the second set," said Hingis. "I definitely played better in the first round and gave my opponent a lot of opportunities today."

Earlier in the day, Tanasugam, a regular in Indian tournaments, sweated it out for a 2-6, 6-3, 6-2 win over Abigail Spears of the US.

Knowing that Tanasugam had two tough matches and a doubles match to boot, Hingis said she hoped the Thai player was tired.

"I have played her a couple of times before and have been successful. I hope to be victorious here on Friday," she said.

Hingis earned the first break in her match in the fifth game and consolidated her lead with a break in the seventh. She then held serve to win the first set.

In the second set, Obziler produced some fine down the line winners and powerful serves but lost the crucial 11th game after four deuces. Hingis then held serve, completing the victory with a brilliant cross-court winner.

Fourth seed Aravane Rezaei of France had an easy 6-1, 6-2 outing against Tatiana Poutchek of Belarus in the same round.



PHOTO: AFP

Lleyton Hewitt (R) of Australia and team captain John Fitzgerald rest during a practice session at the Parque Roca Stadium in Buenos Aires on Wednesday.

**A virtual**

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Their first game against each other here was abandoned due to rain, but Australia had the upper hand with India on the ropes at 35-5.

Ponting said they will target the batsmen again on Friday, but were not underestimating them, aware that Dravid, Virender Sehwag and Yuvraj Singh could find form any time.

"I think India will be a little bit worried about their batting, but we can be a little bit worried as well because they have a lot of good players, some exceptional one-day players," he said. "And you know with quality players like that it is only a matter of time before they click. We have to make sure, when we get the chance, to put those players under pressure."

**TEAMS**

**INDIA** (likely): Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid (captain), Virender Sehwag, Yuvraj Singh, Suresh Raina, Mahendra Dhoni, Ajit Agarkar, Harbhajan Singh, Rudra Pratap Singh, Sri Sreesanth, Munaf Patel.

**AUSTRALIA**: Matthew Hayden, Simon Katich, Ricky Ponting (captain), Damien Martyn, Andrew Symonds, Michael Hussey, Brad Haddin, Brad Hogg, Brett Lee, Stuart Clark, Glenn McGrath.

**Butcher Boucher**

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Sedgars Park in Potchefstroom on Wednesday:

**SOUTH AFRICA**: 418 for five (Boucher 147 not out, Bosman 80, Petersen 80, Kallis 50; Kamungozi 2-70, Utseya 2-77)

**ZIMBABWE**  
Duffin lbw b Nel 8  
Sibandac Langeveldt b Nel 1  
Chibhabha c Boucher b Telemachus 46

Masakadza c Boucher b Telemachus 55  
Taylor not out 19  
Matsikenyeri not out 16  
Extras: (lb-14, w-4, nb-4) 22  
Total: (For 4 wickets in 50 overs) 247  
Fall of wickets: 1-9, 2-103, 3-206, 4-212

Did not bat: Chigumbura, Utseya, Kamungozi, Mupariwa, Rainsford

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Nel	8	1	41	2
Van der Wath	8	0	43	0
Langeveldt	8	2	34	0
Hall	9	0	29	0
Telemachus	8	0	33	2
Duminy	6	1	35	0
Kemp	3	0	18	0

**Result: South Africa won by 171 runs and clinch the 3-ODI series 3-0. Toss South Africa.**  
**Man-of-the-match: Mark Boucher.**  
**Man-of-the-series: Mark Boucher.**  
**Umpires: Daryl Harper and Brian Jerling.**

**Sachin return**

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tournament," he said. "But it doesn't mean that I have lost faith in them. I still have confidence that they can play. I think they are decent cricketers."

But asked how long he and the selection committee could persist with them, Lara said: "I feel there are people knocking on the door and if these guys don't take their opportunity now they are going to be replaced."

While the batsmen have been lacking, the West Indies bowling has performed much better, and Lara is pleased with that.

"I am getting a little happier in that area," he said. "The cause for concern is in the batting."

**Vengsarkar set for hot job**

AFP, New Delhi

Former Test captain Dilip Vengsarkar is expected to take over as India's chief selector when the cricket board holds its annual meeting next week, an official said on Thursday.

Vengsarkar emerged the strongest candidate to replace Kiran More, who has completed four years in the job and is not eligible for re-nomination at the annual meeting in Mumbai on September 27 and 28.

The selection committee comprises one elected representative from each of the five zones demarcated by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and the most senior person is elected the chairman.

The Mumbai-based Vengsarkar, 50, will be nominated by the West Zone in place of More, whose last year as chairman was marked by the controversial sacking of Test captain Sourav Ganguly.

"Dilip is an ideal candidate for selector considering his vast experience as an international cricketer," West Zone official Ratnakar Shetty told AFP.

Vengsarkar, who retired in 1992 after a 16-year career as a top-order batsman, played 116 Tests and scored 6,868 runs at an average of 42.13 with 17 centuries.

He also played 129 one-day internationals and captained India in 10 Tests, winning two and losing five while three were drawn.

Former left-arm spinner Venkatapathy Raju is set to replace V.B. Chandrasekhar as the selector from South Zone, according to zonal representative Shival Yadav.

Raju, 37, claimed 93 wickets in 28 Tests, but was never considered again after being dropped in 2001 during the home series against Australia.

Three other selectors, Ranjib Biswal (East Zone), Sanjay Jagdale (Central) and Bhupinder Singh (North) are expected to be re-nominated. None of them played Test cricket.

**T&T venue**

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Grenada National Stadium has also suffered construction problems but they are both now on track to be completed on schedule.

Dehning added: "Earlier this year, other stadia were considerably behind in their construction schedules but, under careful monitoring, they are now on track."

The Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad will be used for group B matches involving Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh and Bermuda.

**Head-butt a hit**

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Zidane lost his cool shortly before the end of extra-time and was sent-off bringing an inglorious end to his stellar career, claiming he had suffered incessant crude remarks from Materazzi.

Materazzi, who was sent-off several times during his brief Everton career prompting him at one point to think his career might be over, claimed that Zidane had tugged at his shirt and said he could have it after the match.

According to Materazzi he replied "I would prefer your sister".

**Newcastle goal**

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Way of me getting it to Stevie (Gerrard) properly so I looked up and saw the keeper off his line and so I thought I'd have a go for it.

"It was vital that he (Harper) slipped, maybe if he hadn't he would have saved it."

Goalkeepers will have to be on red alert whenever Alonso gets on the ball from now on as he insisted he would continue to try his luck from long range.

He added: "I love to practise it with the trainers. Many times they shout at me because I throw a lot of balls away but it is something I like and I will keep trying."

**Mancini lost**

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"The penalty takers are Ibra, Marco Materazzi and Fabio Grosso. Ibra wanted to take it because he felt he could score, but unfortunately he missed."

"In any case, we are pleased with the result and the team's performance," said the former Lazio man.

Javier Zanetti was also pleased with the outing and was close to scoring the second goal of the evening only to see his shot cannon off the post.

"Once again I am denied a goal! For a moment I thought I would be able to celebrate tonight's victory with me on the scoresheet," the defender told Inter Channel.

"Unfortunately I hit the post, it's a pity, but maybe next time," added Zanetti, who is two matches short of 500 appearances.

"We all helped each other and we succeeded in doing what the Coach asked us to do, which was to get three important points at a place where it's never easy to get points."

**Cricket changing trend**

SALEQUE SUFI

Only a couple of years back, the ardent of followers of the game did not even dream of what is happening in cricket these days. 280-plus scores in 50-overs-a-side games are now repeatedly successfully chased. Unbelievable batting skills, tremendous hand-eye coordination, spectacular catches, sparkling fielding skills aided by third umpires adjudicating photo finishes, snickometers confirming faintest of ticks, stamp vision evidencing lbw situations, technology is driving the old game beyond grammar of its mother country. If only controversies and allegations of match-fixing did not tarnish the virginity our game of love could find much more popularity across the universe by now.

With the ICC Champions Trophy round the corner and gala show of World Cup in the Caribbeans not very far away, the major contending nations are closing in their ranks so narrowly that Aussies may be very hard pressed to retain its all conquering standing. One-day cricket has really become a lottery. Kuala Lumpur is currently witnessing some of the all time great artists of world cricket in their true elements. Little Tendulkar after a long lay off played a gem of an innings scoring his fortieth century. While carrying his bat, his innings blossomed in arrogance with flamboyance. Indian score of 309 also came under serious threat as the Caribbeans started off in their calypso brand. Great Lara was showing his prowess when rain brought premature end to a match pregnant of new dimensions.

The opening match of the tournament also demonstrated the glorious uncertainties. Australian attack appeared rusty as Chanderpaul unleashed series of powerful strokes all around with ferocity and venom. Gayle matched strokes for strokes. It appeared that the Caribbeans were cruising. Australia's 270-plus score appeared ordinary. As the Caribbeans were happily cruising Aussies bounced back and effected dramatic collapse of their opponents to win in traditional style.

The India-Australia clash was supposed to present new challenges. It was billed as extension of duet, a great encounter --

McGrath against Tendulkar. Ponting won the toss and elected to bat against a relatively young and less-on-experience Indian pace battery. It was another experiment of opening combination with Watson taking on the new cherry with young Jaques. Watson unleashed sparkling attacking strokes to wrest the initiatives. It did not matter though Jaques, Ponting and Martin went cheaply, the Australians were well on course for a run-fest. But Dravid was intelligent enough to take away the pace. Turbanated Harbhajan and cheeky Shewag chipped in with accurate spin bowling that brought Indians back in the game. Seamers in the second spell bowled with better control to restrict the Aussies below 250. A great game was on the cards. McGrath and young Johnson started very aggressively against Tendulkar and Dravid. The very first ball Tendulkar received from McGrath struck his helmet. He was unruled. The last ball before the unfortunate rain saw Tendulkar giving him a charge and score the only boundary of the innings. Rain interfered. Although play resumed after some delay the Duckworth-Lewis put unusual pressure and the wicket became skiddy. Young Johnson created panic with his pace and swing which accounted for all Indian great guns. Indians were reeling at 35 for 5 in 8 overs when rain came to their rescue. It's a poetic justice as the Indians got the reverse in their previous game and here they got the grace.

Indian bowling however does not have the firepower to contain the free flowing stroke-makers of the opponents. But they have some very intelligent spinners who can frustrate them with accuracy and turn.

Australians are however relying on pace and swing. Emerging Johnson, Cosgrove and Jaques flew back as planned earlier. No country in cricket arena has greater depth and diversity than the Aussies have at the moment. Katich, Hayden, Ponting, Clark, Hussey, Symonds can turn up and demolish given opportunity for that.

All three teams in DLF Cup have equal chances. The team which holds nerves will win it. There is very little to choose between the teams. West Indies have Gayle, Sarwan, Chanderpaul and Lara. Their

bowling, though inexperienced, has great potential. Three teams are studded with superstars and crowd pullers. The venue itself may not have been most ideal as the wickets look under prepared. Crowd response is not encouraging too. Just think if this tournament was organised in Bangladesh it could have calmed down the political heat and dust to a great extent.

However, it is encouraging that cricket is gaining back its crowd-pleasing reputation after a rude jerk and shock after The Oval fiasco.

**Ponting wants Hair to return**

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Australian captain Ricky Ponting has backed controversial umpire Darrell Hair to return to international cricket, saying he was one of the best in the business.

Hair told Australian media on Wednesday that he would travel to India for the Champions Trophy next month despite many believing his career was over following the fiasco at The Oval Test between England and Pakistan last month.

Ponting said it would be good to have his countryman back.

"If he's one of the best umpires in international cricket then of course he should be umpiring," Ponting said in Malaysia, where Australia are playing a tri-series with the West Indies and India.

"You need to have the best umpires umpiring cricket at the highest level and obviously Darrell has been on the international panel for a long time.

"There's been a bit happening over the last month or so with Darrell but I have always considered him to be a very good umpire and we will see how he performs in the Champions Trophy."

"I think it would be good for Darrell to get back on the horse again. I'm not sure what sort of reception he will receive in India but at the end of the day that probably doesn't really matter.

"As I say, it is important to have the best umpires umpiring international cricket and obviously the ICC consider him to be one of those. If he wasn't he wouldn't be there in the first place."

**Aussies up against it**



AP, Buenos Aires

Argentina is home for the Davis Cup, and that could pose a lot of trouble for Australia.

The last time the Argentines lost a Davis Cup series at home was in 1998 against Slovakia. Since then, they've won nine series, eight of them 5-0 sweeps.

That formidable record awaits Australia when the Davis Cup semifinals start Friday, with Argentina eyeing its first final in 25 years. The winner of the best-of-five format will play the United States or Russia for the championship.

"Any time a team comes here, they know perfectly well that they are going to have a difficult time beating us here because we are very strong at home," said David Nalbandian, Argentina's top player.

The Argentines beat the Aussies last year and will have 14,000 fans cheering them this time at Parque Roca stadium.

Lleyton Hewitt sounded unfazed

by the challenge of playing the Argentines on clay, preferring to focus on the "huge prize at the end."

"We are the underdogs. There's no doubt about that," Hewitt said Tuesday. "I know Argentina hasn't lost in eight or nine years playing at home and that is a great record to have. But one day things are going to change, and whether it's this weekend, who knows?"

Australia has won 28 Davis Cup titles and Hewitt predicted his team has a chance at another.

"We believe we've got an outside chance of pulling off a memorable victory here," the former top-ranked player said.

Hewitt, who reached the US Open quarterfinals, and Mark Philippoussis will play singles, with Wayne Arthurs and Paul Hanley also on the Aussie squad. Argentina features Nalbandian, Jose Acasuso, Agustin Calleri and Juan Ignacio Chela. Argentine captain Alberto Mancini has yet to name his team before Thursday's draw.

"I'm evaluating them day by day and seeing who can best adapt to

Hewitt's style of play," Mancini said. "The arrival of Hewitt changes our view on the team. Obviously, he's a player we respect."

Hewitt, whose 28 singles victories make him Australia's most successful Davis Cup player, had been reluctant to commit to play because of a knee injury and an aversion to clay. But Australia captain John Fitzgerald said Hewitt will be there.

"He always puts 100 percent on the court when he plays every day, especially when he plays for his country," Fitzgerald said.

Hewitt has clashed on the court with several Argentine players and initially has security concerns since arriving Sunday.

"I think I made it out to be a bigger thing than it is," Hewitt said. "People around the courts and the hotel have been absolutely fantastic. So right now I'm trying to concentrate on what I can do" to play well.

Last year, Argentina stunned Australia 4-1 in Sydney on grass.

"We won in Australia, and we are going to win here," Nalbandian said.

**Mauresmo off to solid start**



AFP, Beijing

France's Amelie Mauresmo spoils home country hopes at the China Open as the double 2006 Grand Slam champion eliminated Sun Tiantian 6-3, 6-2 on Thursday.

The world No. 1, who has lifted the Australian Open and Wimbledon titles in her best season ever, took just 69 minutes to reach the quarterfinals at the Beijing tennis centre after a bye.

"I'm happy about the game I played," said Mauresmo. "It was not easy to wait so long to play. I'm happy I finally got my first match here. I'm looking forward now to the next round."

Serbian sixth seed Jelena Jankovic beat out another French woman, Marion Bartoli, 6-3, 6-2.

"I played really well today,

concentrated and tried to play the best I can," said Jankovic, who lost 10 of her first 11 matches this season before turning the corner at Rome in May with a quarterfinal and a change in attitude.

"I wasn't enjoying the game at all, and I wasn't fighting. I was not the same person as I am now. I wasn't concentrating at that time," said the No. 17 Serb.

Russian third seed Nadia Petrova moved into a quarterfinal matchup with Jankovic as she crushed Greek Eleni Daniilidou 6-1, 6-2 in 67 minutes, firing ten aces while saving all eight break points she faced.

American Lindsay Davenport and Russian Elena Vesnina were both facing second-round matches against Chinese opponents.

Mauresmo earned the first set against Sun, the 2004 Athens Olympic doubles gold medalist, in 36 minutes, recovering after losing

an early break of serve. But the top seed wasted no time in consolidating, collecting a break to start the second set and reaching a 5-1 lead against the No. 111 from Beijing.

Sun saved one match point before Mauresmo advanced with four breaks of serve and five aces in her efficient debut at the event.

Mauresmo won her 44th match of the season against just 10 defeats, in a 2006 campaign which has so far netted four titles.

**FIDE rating**

FROM PAGE 21 ratings will take part in Group A and unrated and below 2100 rated players in Group B in the Swiss League competition.

The total cash prize money would be Tk 1,00,000.

**Nafees: veni, vidi, vici**

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"This is the first step on way to reach my ambition. I want to play for the country for at least eight to ten years and I want to carry on my form and play as best as I can," said Nafees in his brief speech after taking the award.

"I also dedicate this success to my coach Wahidul Ghani, without whose guidance I would have not come this far," he added.

The other man who dominated the show was Mohammad Rafique who pocketed the Best Bowler and best All-Rounder awards.

A nonchalant Rafique told the audience that "luck" played behind his accomplishment. "To win something you need luck and that's why I am here to take two trophies," the ace left-arm spinner and an explosive batsman on his day said in his reaction.

Rafique's performance in the last year saw him grab 19 and 27 wickets in ODIs and Tests respectively in

addition to 285 Test runs and 189 runs in the shorter version of the game.

The other nominees in the two categories were fast bowler Mashrafe Bin Mortuza and Razzak (Best Bowler) and Aftab Ahmed and Mashrafe Bin Mortuza (Best All-Rounder).

Rafique, along with wicketkeeper Khaled Mashud, was also honoured for their 100 ODI appearances during the last season.

Rookie all-rounder Sakib Al Hasan, who edged Forhad Reza and Mushfiqur Rahim to win the Emerging Cricketer's award, said that it would be his inspiration for becoming a regular face on the national team.

Young Tiger of the Year Mehrab Hossain Jr, who won ahead of Nazmus Sadat and Nadif Chowdhury, dedicated the award to former national captain Khaled Mahmud Sujan.

"Young players like us have a lot to learn from a fighter like Sujan bhai. His interest and inspiration have driven many of us including me to come this far. I am grateful to him," said Mehrab, not only expected to make his international debut during next month's ICC Champions Trophy in India but also billed to solve the everlasting problem in the opening slot.

Cricketer-turned-umpire Nadir Shah took the Best Umpire's award while the awards for journalists went to the New Age's Azad Majumder (print media), ntv's Khairul Amin Tuhin (electronic media) and Daily Janakantha's Mir Farid (photo journalist).

Apart from giving the Lifetime Achievement Award to Bangladesh speedster late Daulatuzaman, the Bangladesh Cricket Board also honoured the contribution of Liberation War martyrs Shaheed Jewel and Shaheed Mushtaque.