

BCCI, ICC at odds again

PTI, Mumbai

Daggers were drawn once again between the ICC and BCCI with the Indian board on Wednesday saying that the reservations of the game's world governing body on Mohammad Azharuddin attending an official function smacked of double standards and bias.

BCCI's chief administrative officer Ratnakar Shetty said the recent statement of ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed that it would be a grave mistake to talk of Azhar's case and that of others in the same breath was "highly disappointing, if not outrageous".

"It is no secret that the ICC and some Boards have gone out of their way to help cricketers who have been as much guilty as Azhar is made out to be but did not show the same consideration for the former Indian captain just because the Indian Board in its exuberance tried to be holier than thou under extraneous pressures," Shetty said in a strongly-worded statement.

"For Mr. Speed to say that it is proved that Azhar had fixed matches is an authoritative and loaded statement coming from the ICC Chief Executive, and he should refrain from taking such high moral stance," Shetty said the Board had realised that it had perhaps been too harsh on its players, including the former Indian captain, considering the way the other boards went about protecting the guilty.

"His (Speed's) assertion that Shane Warne and Herschelle Gibbs had already been fined and suspended by their respective cricket Boards and that their cases cannot be compared with that of Mohammed Azharuddin who had been banned for life by the Indian Board, sounds bizarre," he said.

Indo-Pak legends head to Toronto

CRICINFO, undated

A Pakistan legends side will play their Indian counterparts at the Rogers Centre in Toronto, Canada on March 3 next year.

The match comes one week before the start of the World Cup in the West Indies.

Wasim Akram will captain the Pakistan side, and Mohammad Azharuddin India in the 50-overs-a-side game. The organisers and Canadian Cricket Association president Ben Sennik hope for a capacity crowd of 60,000.

Canada holds the record attendance for a cricket match in North America, when around 43,000 watched a game at the same venue in 1989 (when it was called the Skydome).

This new event, which is billed as an attempt to bring "community togetherness through sports and entertainment", is being presented by M+D Community Corporation in partnership with the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Canadian Cricket Association.

Kaka saves

FROM PAGE 20 Milan's Georgian defender Kakha Kaladze and Bonera were cautioned in quick succession before the visitors tested Zlitka again.

Janjulovski broke down the left and crossed for Ricardo Oliveira whose glancing header was gathered at the second attempt by the Anderlecht keeper.

Milan spent the last 10 minutes of the first period camped in Anderlecht's half and carved out two half-chances.

Kaka shot straight at Zlitka from the edge of the box before Inzaghi's poorly-timed diving header rolled wide.

Milan were reduced to 10 men in the 47th minute when Bonera picked up his second yellow card for kicking the ball away.

Ancelotti withdrew Brazilian striker Oliveira for defensive midfielder Cafu, but rather than retreat and try to hold on for a draw, the Serie A giants threw caution to the wind.

And their adventurous approach quickly paid dividends.

After Lucas Biglia's appeal for a free-kick on the edge of the Milan penalty were turned down, the visitors broke swiftly and punished their hosts with a lightning counter-attack.

The ball was worked quickly to Seedorf on the left and he picked out Kaka, who let fly with venom to leave Zlitka helpless.

Nelson Dida kept Milan's lead intact with a brilliant one-handed save to deny Mohammed Tchite five minutes from time.

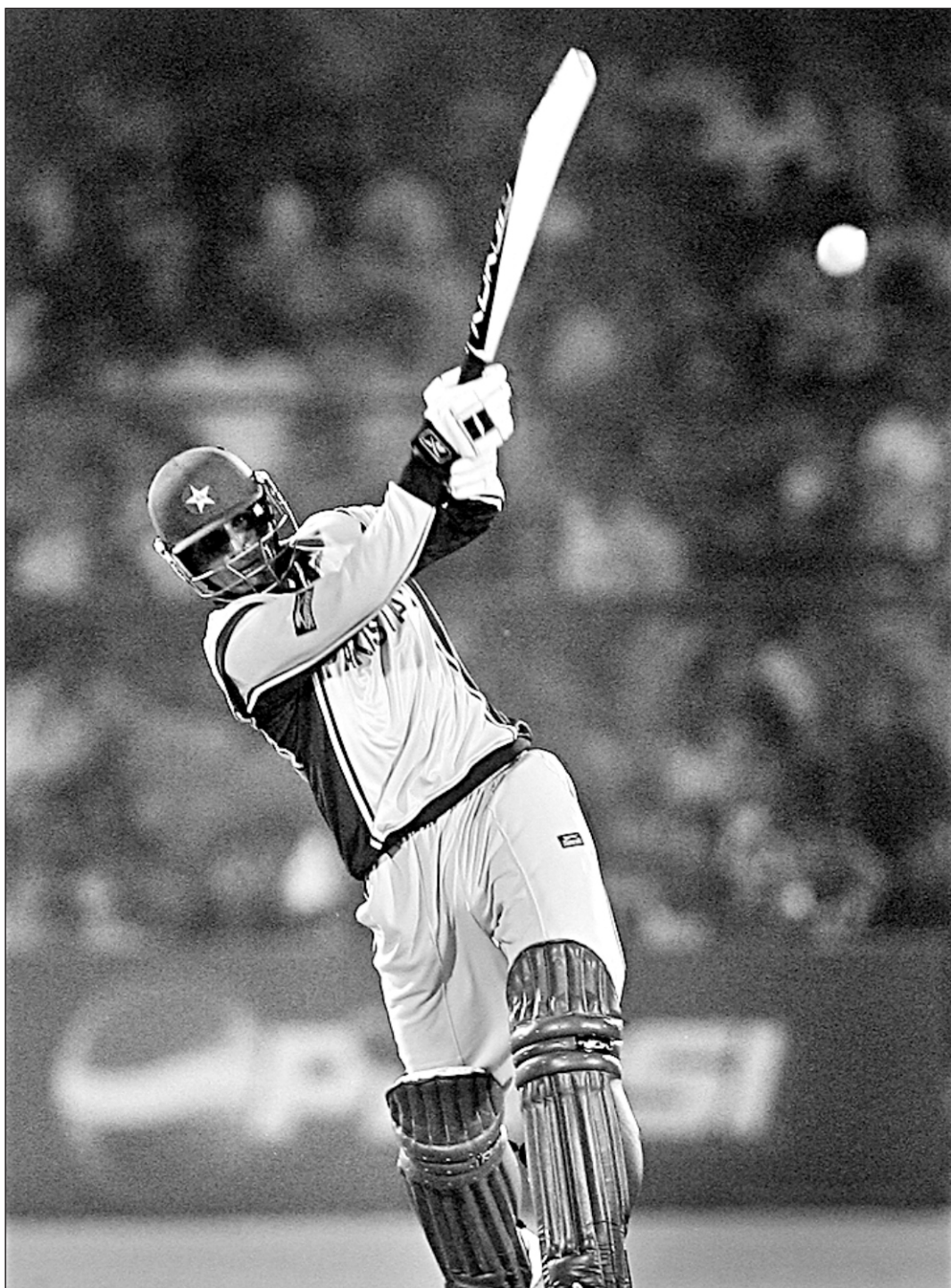
And the Brazilian keeper breathed a sigh of relief moments later when Roland Juhasz's header rattled Milan's crossbar.

The Real show

FROM PAGE 20 display we moved on and played a great game just three days later. We won and took a great stride forward in the Champions League.

There will be little time, however, for Real to rest on their laurels as they host arch-rivals Barcelona at the Bernabeu on Sunday.

"Now we have to maintain this rhythm for the Barcelona game," said Real's sporting director Predrag Mijatovic. "This win will boost our confidence for that game."



Pakistan all-rounder Abdul Razzaq hits a six in a Champions Trophy Group B match against Sri Lanka at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur on Tuesday.

Inzi wishes drug duo well

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Banned Pakistan skipper Inzamam-ul-Haq Wednesday backed teammates Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif to be cleared of doping charges, saying they must have taken banned drugs accidentally.

Former Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Shaharyar Khan agreed that they were likely the victims of ignorance, but he said that all of Pakistan's players were warned to consult doctors before taking any medicine.

"I hope they have taken a medicine inadvertently and the medical panel would consider that, because they are our main hopes for next year's World Cup," Inzamam told reporters in Karachi.

Akhtar and Asif were sent home from the Champions Trophy in India on Monday after testing positive for the banned steroid nandrolone, and are set to face a PCB disciplinary tribunal later this week.

The minimum penalty for a first doping offence under International Cricket Council (ICC) rules is a two-year ban but the PCB says the home board will determine its own punishment.

Inzamam, who is currently serving a ban of four one-day inter-

nationals for bringing the game into disrepute during The Oval Test fiasco against England in August, said the pair must get a fair hearing.

"I don't think they would suffer the worst of fates and (hope they) would be available to play for Pakistan in the World Cup," said the 36-year-old. Pakistan are considered among the leading contenders for the tournament in the West Indies next March and April.

Separately ex-PCB chief Shaharyar, who resigned two weeks ago amid a row over the team captaincy, said he believed Akhtar and Asif would not have taken steroids on purpose.

"We had warned the players, especially all those who were injured, they must consult doctors before taking any medicine and it's hugely disappointing that two key players are now facing charges," Shaharyar told AFP from Lahore.

The former diplomat added: "Warnings were included in their central contracts as well. But they did not heed them -- in fact players do not read their contracts."

However Shaharyar said that it was up to the tribunal to assess why the pair had tested positive, "whether they have taken it to cure their injuries or it's for the enhancement of performance."

Meanwhile the former chief dismissed accusations by former captain Imran Khan that the timing

of the tests was wrong and that they should have come before the naming of the squad for the Champions Trophy.

"The ICC has a clear policy on doping and had directed member countries to have dope tests on the players, and that is why we conducted tests in late September," he said.

Shaharyar's last two months as PCB chairman were mired in controversy, beginning with The Oval Test when Pakistan refused to take to the field to protest a penalty for alleged ball-tampering.

The ICC cleared Inzamam of altering the condition of the ball but found him guilty of bringing the game into disrepute, leaving him with the four-match ban that has kept him out of the Champions Trophy.

Shaharyar quit on October 6 after Younis Khan caused further chaos by very publicly declining to be a "dummy captain" Inzamam. New chairman Ashraf then reinstated Younis.

Pakistan however proved they could overcome the loss of three key players when they defeated Sri Lanka by four wickets in their opening Champions Trophy match at Jaipur on Tuesday.

Ambulance

FROM PAGE 20 Chelsea doctor, he wanted to keep (Cech) out of the public eye, so the other option was to go in a wheelchair, in a lift, up to the waiting ambulance.

Asked whether the local emergency services were unhappy with Mourinho's claims, Ainsworth told BBC Radio Five Live: "We're slightly annoyed that he is bringing us into it all, we did our best for the player following the request of the Chelsea doctor."

"We took him (to hospital) as quickly as we would take any member of the public to hospital. "We have been brought into it now but I have got every assurance for him and the rest of the Chelsea team that we did our utmost, as did the rest of the medical team, at the Madejski Stadium for the care of his players."

Despite Ainsworth's reassurances, Chelsea were not leaving the issue drop on Wednesday.

The club's director of communications, Simon Greenberg, told BBC Radio Five Live: "We have got several serious questions that we would like the FA, or the appropriate authority, to look into. "Those will be submitted to the FA along with other questions regarding incidents that took place in the game."

Greenberg said Chelsea wanted the Czech incident and another that left reserve goalkeeper Carlo Cudicini unconscious, as well as "the medical procedures that were in place... looked into".

HEARING OF AKHTAR, ASIF PCB appoints three-man tribunal

AFP, Karachi

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Wednesday unveiled a three-man tribunal that will hear doping charges against fast bowlers Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif, possibly as early as this week.

The tribunal will be chaired by barrister Shahid Hamid and will also include former Test captain and coach Intikhab Alam and an unnamed doctor who is an expert on doping, PCB chairman Nasim Ashraf said.

New-ball pairing Akhtar and Asif were sent home from the Champions League in India on Monday after testing positive for the banned steroid nandrolone. They are waiting for the results of 'B' samples.

"Shoaib and Asif are likely to appear before the tribunal later this week," cricket chief Ashraf told reporters at a press conference in the southern city of Karachi.

"On the recommendation of the tribunal and of the overall findings we will take action. The responsibility is on the alleged offenders (to prove their innocence) because it is an individual act," he said.

Tribunal chairman Hamid represented former Pakistan player Salim Malik during a match-fixing inquiry in 1998 but left midway through the case. Malik was given a life ban in 2000.

The doctor on the tribunal will be named on Thursday, the PCB said.

Ashraf vowed on Tuesday to take a zero tolerance approach to doping, while adding that Akhtar and Asif would be allowed to fight their cases through checks on their 'B' samples.

Really

FROM PAGE 17

It was hardly felt that Pakistan played the match without some key players rather they looked desperate to put behind all off-the-field events.

So it was understandable the way the Pakistani team celebrated their victory under the lights. It seemed that they had won a war rather than just a game.

Interestingly, the drama was yet to be over as the journalists spent tense moments because of the Pakistan skipper's late arrival at the post-match briefing.

It took more than half an hour for Younis Khan appear with man-of-the-match Abdul Razzak, who claimed four wickets for 50 before launching himself in an explosive 24-ball 38 and hammer a match winning six off seamer Dilhara Fernando.

But the 29-year old won the hearts of the media during the lively briefing with his all smiling appearance. Although ICC media officials requested not to ask any question about the doping scandal, the Pakistan skipper did not mind sharing his views. And he also explained that their delay was due to performing namaj after the match.

He pointed two major issues behind the day's success, faith in Allah and team effort.

"We were a bit nervous because of the incidents but thanks to Allah we overcame everything. I think we have done it because we kept faith in Allah as Muslims and played as a team," said the soft-spoken Younis.

He, however, expressed his to meet India at any stage of the meet.

"There are fans of both teams here. In Pakistan, there are also a huge number of supporters of the Indian team. So it would be fantastic to see the two teams in action at any stage, whether it is the semifinal or the final. I am also looking forward to an India-Pakistan match," said an excited Younis, who along with his teammates visited the Ajmer Sharif

Follow rugby

FROM PAGE 20

on his chest before firing home in the 86th minute.

"At first I thought he'd given an offside and disallowed it," Henry told Arsenal's website. "But to say that I handled it and to give me a yellow card for handball when I didn't is wrong."

"People talk about footballers behaving like rugby players and accepting decisions. But rugby players can talk with the referee. We can't."

"When you come at them, try to speak to them then they don't give an answer and won't even speak to you. That is difficult to take."

"I would like the game to be a bit like rugby at times because in football you just cannot speak to referees."

CSKA leapfrogged Arsenal to take top spot in Group G on seven points with the London side on six after three matches. Porto have four points while Hamburg SV are yet to get off the mark.

Henry praised CSKA for playing "some brilliant stuff at times" but says Arsenal are on track for the knockout rounds.

Arsenal next face CSKA at the Emirates stadium on November 1.

Final not in Mumbai?



AFP, Mumbai

The International Cricket Council (ICC) will be requested to shift the Champions Trophy final from the Brabourne Stadium here if the wicket does not improve, a senior official said on Tuesday.

Crickets Club of India (CCI) president Raj Singh Dungarpur, whose club oversees the Brabourne stadium, said he was unhappy at the dusty wicket that had been laid out for the matches here.

"With the monsoon having just ended, our staff did not get enough time to prepare good wickets for the tournament," Dungarpur told AFP.

"We will see how the wicket behaves on Wednesday when Australia plays the West Indies. If it still has low bounce, I will put my hands up. "I will ask the ICC to shift the final, scheduled to be held here on November 5, to some other venue."

The wickets for the two matches played so far at the Brabourne Stadium have been ridiculed by the teams for its dry, dusty surface

which hampered strokeplay. Brian Lara's West Indies could only muster 80 runs against Sri Lanka on Saturday and on Monday South African captain Graeme Smith slammed the pitch after his team went down to New Zealand by 87 runs.

"The pitch broke up, the ball turned a hell of a lot. I don't think the pitches are going to provide 100 overs of good cricket," said Smith, whose side is ranked second behind Australia in the one-day game.

New Zealand, who were restricted to 195, hit back to bowl South Africa out for 108 in 34.1 overs as the ball kept low and spun alarmingly.

"We take pride in the wickets we have prepared in the past at the Brabourne Stadium," Dungarpur said. "So it pains me to see it behave like this."

"I can't blame anyone. My staff have tried their best to make a sporting wicket in the short time available. But it has not worked."

The Brabourne Stadium hosted Test cricket till 1972 till the Mumbai Cricket Association built its own Wankhede Stadium nearby and began holding international matches there from 1974.

The Wankhede Stadium was ruled out as a venue for the

Champions Trophy because of the ICC's regulations that want a "clean" stadium free of private advertising commitments.

That was the reason why some of the best cricket stadia in India, like the Eden Gardens in Kolkata, the Chepauk in Chennai and the Chinaswamy Stadium in Bangalore were also left out.

The Champions Trophy matches are being held in three other venues besides the Brabourne Stadium -- the Sawai Man Singh Stadium in Jaipur, the Motera stadium in Ahmedabad and the Punjab Cricket Association ground in Mohali.

The Brabourne Stadium has so far hosted two matches, the final qualifying match between Sri Lanka and the West Indies on October 14 and the opening Group B match between New Zealand and South Africa on Monday.

It is also due to host another Group B game between New Zealand and Sri Lanka on Friday after Wednesday's Group A clash between Australia and the West Indies.

Vaughan backs Flintoff

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

Michael Vaughan believes Andrew Flintoff would deserve to keep the England captaincy if the team retains the Ashes in Australia this winter.

Flintoff was given the job for the tour because Vaughan is still recovering from knee surgery.

"If you win the Ashes in Australia, that's a hell of an achievement."

"I've loved being the captain, the last three years have been the best of my career, but it's not the be all and end all for me," Vaughan commented.

He admits the chances of him returning to the England squad before the end of the Ashes series are a "long-shot" and a "dream".

The Yorkshire batsman told BBC Sport: "I just want to play cricket once again. First and foremost, I need to go to Perth and join up with the Academy, get through a few [practice] sessions and play a few games."

"It'll be a nice day when I can ring up David Graveney and say 'I'm available for selection'. There'll be a grin on my face if I can do that by the

end of December."

Vaughan, who led the team to a 2-1 win over Australia last summer, is not getting carried away with talk of a comeback and expects a battle to regain his place in the England side.

"You've got to respect the guys in the team. I don't have any given right to walk straight back into the England cricket team."

"I've got to make sure the knee is good to enough to play cricket and I've got to be in good enough form for the team to allow me back in," he said.

"We've got some really good players in the team, some role models for kids to look up to -- the England team is a good team to be around because we do play entertaining cricket."

"Even when we lose, we do play entertaining cricket, it's always good to watch. I hope we continue to play the game in the right spirit because that creates a lot of interest with a lot of people."

"The most important thing is playing good, competitive cricket and that's exactly what we're going to need this winter."

Vaughan's main target is to be fully fit in time for the one-day series against Australia and New Zealand,

which starts in January.

But he added: "I've got so much weeks to even allow me to get on a plane to go out to Australia."

England chairman of selectors David Graveney says the frequent change of captains in the national team does not create any particular problems.

"With the management team involved and the senior players nobody every captains a team on their own," he said.

"They do it together but Freddie just happens to be captain for this particular series."

Meanwhile, Marcus Trescothick, who lives near Graveney in Somerset, is training at the National Cricket Academy in Loughborough after a holiday in the Canary Islands.

"I am entirely confident he can handle it this winter," said Graveney of the man who suffered a major loss of form last summer.

Trescothick is not in the squad for the Champions Trophy in India because of a "sensitive medical condition".

Federer eases through

Tennis

AFP, Madrid

Roger Federer stepped onto an indoor court for the first time in nearly a year and calmly produced his 15th match win in a row to advance at the Madrid Masters Series on Tuesday.

The record-breaking Swiss, who last played here in 2003, weathered the storm to see off Chile's Nicolas Pietrangeli 6-3, 6-2 for a place in the third round after a bye.

After sitting out 2005 after rolling an ankle, the world No. 1 could not have been more satisfied.

"I played the big points better than he did," said Federer, whose current win streak includes another US Open as well as 10 days ago in Tokyo.

"I made it easier for myself. The match could have turned out much harder. This was the perfect result for a first round."

Federer's last ATP indoor match was a five-set loss to David Nalbandian in the Masters Cup final last November.

The Swiss is chasing his tenth title of the season and would thrill Spanish fans if he and second seed Rafael Nadal were to meet in the Sunday final.

Andy Roddick rose to the occasion under the critical eye of coach Jimmy Connors, while Briton Tim Henman made life a misery for the hosts with his defeat of Spain's David Ferrer also on Tuesday.

Roddick fired down his ninth ace to advance over Sebastian Grosjean 6-4, 7-6 into the third round.

Henman eliminated No. 14

Ferrer in an inconsistent win, reaching the third round 6-1, 4-6, 6-1 as he played his second match in as many days.

Seventh seed Tommy Robredo clawed back pride for Spain and stayed in contention for the season-ending event in China through his defeat of Argentine Juan Chela 7-6, 7-6.

The Spaniard stands seventh in the points race after winning 13 of his last 18 matches.

Connors, who has been with former No. 1 Roddick, made what amounted to a surprise appearance in Spain.

The former great had said that he would oversee Roddick's progress at US events only, presumably leaving him with his regular coach during the remainder of the season.

Roddick himself said he never really expected the iconic coach to appear for the European season.

Sixth seed Roddick stands 8-1 against Grosjean after a workman-like performance at the Madrid arena lasting nearly 90 minutes.

Test countries

FROM PAGE 17 The West Indies are set to start their own testing procedures in near future.

"Cricketers are role models," Speed said in a statement.

"They need to be sending out the right messages to the public and that is one of the reasons why we must have a zero tolerance on drug use in any context."

"Traditionally, cricket has been regarded as a low-risk sport when it comes to the subject of drug use but that does not mean we can be or are complacent in any way."

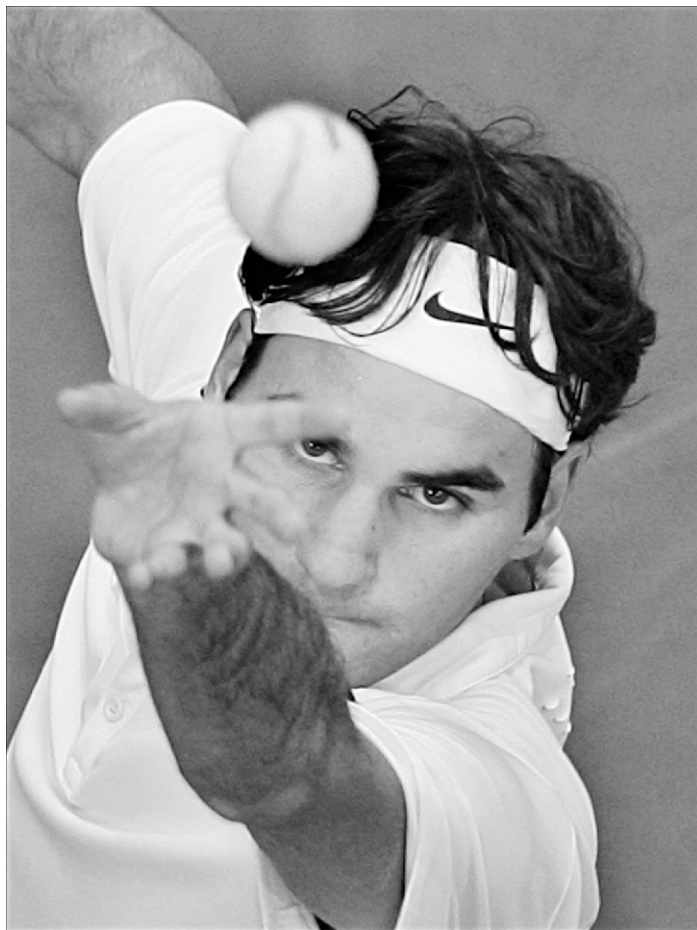
Doping tests will be conducted in six matches of the ongoing Champions Trophy tournament in India, with four players in each game chosen randomly to provide samples after play.

No player has so far been tested.

Asif, Shoeb

FROM PAGE 17 the police and a judicial inquiry into the incident has been ordered.

Ishtiaque Ahmed Babloo, joint secretary of the NSF, will accompany the shooters. They are expected to receive treatment at the Bumrungrad International hospital in the Thai capital.



World number one Swiss Roger Federer serves to Chilean Nicolas Massu during their Madrid Masters Series match at the Rockodromo Arena in Madrid on October 17.