



PHOTO: INTERNET

US star Andy Roddick spins his racket during a portrait shoot at a club in Shanghai on Friday.

Nilphamari sink Lalmonirhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Nilphamari crushed Lalmonirhat by 135 runs in the BCB Young Tigers under-14 National Cricket tournament at the Gaibandha Stadium yesterday.

Pallab (32) and Diamond (35) steered Nilphamari to 192 all out in 49.2 overs but the Lalmonirhat reply was awful as they were bowled out for 57 runs in 17 overs. Habib took four wickets while Rinku scalped three victims for the winners.

Boje wants to face police

CRICINFO, undated

Nicky Boje, the South African spinner, has said he did not have apprehensions about travelling to India for the Champions Trophy, insisting that his omission from the squad had nothing to do with the risk of being questioned by the Delhi police regarding match-fixing.

"I don't know what the Indian media is writing about me. I do not have to fear for anything," Boje, captain of a South African side for the Hong Kong Sixes, told The Indian Express. "I was ready with the answers to the questionnaire sent by the Delhi Police and I had even readied my lawyer to accompany me. But I was dropped from the squad. That is the fact."

Boje and Herschelle Gibbs had avoided touring India since 2000, after supposedly failing to obtain any assurance from the police with regards to questioning on the match-fixing scandal. But Boje pointed out that if Gibbs could travel, so could he.

Walkover

FROM PAGE 17 day earlier, we could have taken a decision. We were prepared and waited for Mohammedan," Pila said. "According to bylaws it was a walk-over. We have refereed the matter to the BHF executive committee," he added.

Booters leave

FROM PAGE 17 qualifiers, Babloo felt that it would be better to give the youngsters an exposure ahead of the Asian Cup, where Bangladesh play South Korea, Bahrain and Vietnam in the group stage.

"We will play positive and hope to take revenge against Hong Kong," told Babloo.

Bangladesh lost to Hong Kong 1-0 at home but during the Asian Cup qualifier four years ago Bangladesh had drew 2-2 away.

"We have a young team but I feel that we are capable of bringing good results from Hong Kong," said Babloo who chose goalkeeper and national captain Aminul, Rajani, Nazrul, Parvez Babu, Matiar Munna, Alfaz and Farhad among the seniors.

The team will return on November 17.

SQUAD **Goalkeepers:** Aminul, Himel; **defenders:** Titu, Waly, Siraji, Anful, Rajani, Nazrul, Parvez, midfielders: Arman Aziz, Abul, Faisal Mahmud, Munna; forwards: Robin, Emily, Zahid Hossain, Alfaz and Farhad. **Officials:** Mojammel Haque Mukta (manager), Hasanuzzaman Bablo (coach), Bayzid Alam Jubair (assistant coach), Moshiyur Rahman (physician).

Classy line-up in Masters Cup



AFP, Shanghai

He's described as the best player tennis has ever seen, but Roger Federer will have to show every ounce of his class to win his third Masters Cup title.

The world number one faces an unexpectedly tough group before a likely match-up with his arch-rival, Rafael Nadal, or the in-form Nikolay Davydenko in the latter stages.

Federer opens the tournament on Sunday against sometime-nemesis David Nalbandian, who rallied from two sets down against the injured Swiss to win last year's epic final.

He will also face Ivan Ljubicic, the world leader in indoor wins this season, and the big-serving Andy Roddick in the Red Group round-robin.

While Federer cruised through an injury-ravaged field to the 2005 final, this year's competition is shaping up to be one of his toughest challenges.

However few would bet against the 2003 and 2004 champion, who has only lost twice in four Masters Cup campaigns and has declared himself in impeccable shape after sitting out last week's Paris Masters.

"I came to Shanghai last year with injuries, but I have 100 percent confidence in my health situation this year," he said.

"Fitness-wise, I am perfect. There are no concerns over ankles, knees and so on after such a demanding season. I just can't wait

to hit the first ball on the court."

Federer will be keen to make amends for last year, when the battling defeat to Nalbandian not only cost him a Masters Cup hat-trick but saw him fall one short of John McEnroe's 1984 season record of 82-3.

He arrives here after another incredible year, winning 11 titles, including three Grand Slams, and to take his career haul to 44, and losing just five matches in 92.

Nalbandian has a strong record against Federer, beating him six times in 13 meetings. However he has lost three semi-finals to the Swiss this year, including in straight sets at last month's Madrid Masters.

Ljubicic has not won against Federer in three years but has taken him the distance several times, including to three tie-breakers in the Miami final.

Roddick will be hoping to spring a surprise under the tutelage of advisor Jimmy Connors, after taking a set off Federer in the US Open final.

Federer will be wary of Russia's Davydenko, newly elevated to world number three after 67 wins this season including the Paris final.

But a major question-mark hovers over the heavy-hitting Rafael Nadal, who dominated the Swiss early in the season but whose form has evaporated since he lost the Wimbledon final.

However, the 20-year-old said he has recovered from an abdominal problem that kept him away from Paris and is highly motivated for his Masters Cup debut.

"I feel okay. I was practising very

hard last month and I arrive in Shanghai with my best motivation," Nadal said.

The Spaniard won four finals against Federer, including the French Open, on his way to five titles in the early part of the season. But his biggest scalp since Wimbledon has been 13th-ranked Tommy Haas in Madrid.

Gold Group brackets Nadal and Davydenko with James Blake and Tommy Robredo, who are also playing the competition for the first time after breaking into the top 10 this season.

Shanghai organisers will be hoping for better luck than last year when injuries robbed the tournament of Nadal, Roddick, Andre Agassi, Lleyton Hewitt and Marat Safin.

They will also want to put on a good show with tennis chiefs keen to move the elite tournament to Europe in 2009.

Shanghai is also contracted to host next year's tournament with an option for a further edition in 2009.

However, last year's pull-outs drew bitter complaints from officials here who splashed out 200 million dollars on the state-of-the-art Qi Zhong Stadium complex.

Red Group Roger Federer (SUI), Ivan Ljubicic (CRO), Andy Roddick (USA), David Nalbandian (ARG)

Gold Group Rafael Nadal (ESP), Nikolay Davydenko (RUS), Tommy Robredo (ESP), James Blake (USA)

Hosts are in command

FROM PAGE 17 ending up with an impressive 5-25 in 12.5 overs. He was well supported by Sonnet and Arafat Salahuddin who took two wickets each.

Set a gettable target of 247 runs, Barisal were again off to a decent start but Imran Ahmed fell for 18 to national paceman Shahadat Hossain.

Veteran spinner Rafique came in as the first change and ripped through the top-order, taking three wickets and being involved in the run-out of Nasiruddin Faruq as well.

CHITTAGONG v SYLHET On a clear morning, national discard seamer Tareq Aziz took the first three wickets of the Sylhet first innings in his probing spell.

The visitors never recovered from the early loss and slowly lost their way on the day, to be bowled out for exactly 100 in 40.1 overs. Tareq later came back and took the final wicket of the innings to have figures of 4-44. His new-ball partner Ashkur Rahman and off-spinner Sabbir Khan took two wickets each for the hosts. Only captain Rajin Saleh held fort as he hung around patiently for 26. Alok Kapali (11) and Ejaz Ahmed (12) were the only other batsmen who reached double figures.

In their second innings, the visitors were comfortably placed at 130 for two when stumps were drawn early due to bad light. Opener Golam Rahman struck a patient 48 before being Sabbir's first victim. The right-arm spinner took both the wickets that fell in

the second innings.

BRIEF SCORES **DHAKA:** First Innings- 173 and Second Innings: 227 all out in 78.5 overs (Nadif 53*, Ayub 39; Arman 5-25, Arafat 2-59); **BARISAL:** First Innings: 154 and Second Innings: 78 for 5 in 32 overs (Hannan 21; Rafique 3-22).

CHITTAGONG: First Innings: 268; **SYLHET:** First Innings: 100 all out in 40.1 overs (Rajin 26; Tareq 4-44, Sabbir 2-5, Ashkur 2-30); Second Innings- 130 for 2 in 54 overs (Golam 48, Imtiaz 33; Sabbir 2-26).

Dehring warns

FROM PAGE 17 lifestyle and culture.

"To relegate the largest event -- and the greatest Caribbean collaboration -- in our history to the sports pages is a travesty and it is time the media shows its understanding of the realities of hosting a mega sporting event."

The World Cup is being held in the Caribbean for the first time but the build-up has been beset by problems.

Outrage has been expressed over hotel prices which have been trebled on some islands while some stadia have suffered construction delays.

In an effort to placate international media furious over the spiralling cost of accommodation, some islands have acted to ease the burden.

The Jamaican and Saint Lucia governments have agreed to waive hotel taxes for all media accredited for the March-April tournament.

Dehring said he hoped other venues would follow suit.

Walsh trusts Taylor

REUTERS, Mumbai

Fast bowling great Courtney Walsh believes Jerome Taylor has the potential to carry forward West Indies' glorious tradition in pace bowling.

The 22-year-old Taylor impressed with his searing speed and sharp movement in the recent Champions Trophy as he emerged the highest wicket-taker in the competition with 13 wickets.

The loose-limbed Taylor took a hat-trick to hand world champions and eventual winners Australia a surprise 10-run defeat in the league phase to set up an exciting tournament.

"Obviously he has got the pace, but apart from that he can also swing the ball which makes him impressive," Walsh said at a Jamaican tourism function.

Taylor's presence lends sharpness to the attack as West Indies, under the leadership of Brian Lara, aim to turn around their fortunes after a difficult phase when they plummeted in the Test and one-day rankings.

West Indies, who finished runners-up in the Champions Trophy, are now considered serious contenders in the World Cup that they host in March-April.

Walsh, 44, finished with 519 Test wickets when he retired in 2001. His departure left a huge vacuum as the West Indies, once a factory for quickies with the likes of Andy Roberts, Michael Holding and Malcolm Marshall, were unable to unearth a top-class strike bowler.

Taylor, currently with the national team in Pakistan, has played a handful of Tests and 23 one-dayers after making his international debut three years ago.

Biman regain solo lead

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Biman regained solo lead in the Dutch-Bangla Bank First Division Chess League when they edged their co-leaders of the previous round Chittagong Mohammedan 2.5-1.5 yesterday.

Biman, who have played seven games, stretched their collection to 24 points while Mohammedan and Destiny 2000 follow on 23 points. Both the second-placed sides, however, have played eight rounds.

Leonine are on 20.5 points at third place but like Biman, they have also played seven matches.

On the day, Biman's Grandmasters Ziaur Rahman and Reefat Bin Sattar drew their matches against Chittagong Mohammedan's International Master Enamul Hossain Rajib and Prothomesh Mokal respectively. IM Rakib was held by IM Roktim Bannerjee while FM Mehdi Hasan Parag delivered the only Biman victory beating FM Syed Mahfuzur Rahman.

In other matches at the Chess Federation hall-room, Destiny beat Rajshahi 3-1, Naryanganj Chess Club beat Dhaka University 2.5-1.5, Muktiyoddha blanked Prodeep Sangha 4-0, Sonali Bank beat Farashganj 3-1, Faith beat Titas 2.5-1.5 and Toyota Motors beat Friends Chess Power 2.5-1.5.

Dravid blames key players

PTI, Bangalore

In a grim message ahead of the big engagements, including the World Cup, captain Rahul Dravid on Saturday sought to blame his "key players" for the Indian team's slump and said it was high time they delivered.

Dravid said India's lack of consistency in recent tournaments was largely due to the collective failure of the top players and the team could regain its winning momentum only if that aspect was corrected.

"I just think that we need to get performances from lot of our key players. Last season when we were doing really well, lot of players in the team were performing consistently and were sort of playing if not up to their potential, sometimes even above their potential", Dravid told PTI in an interview here.

"For the last 2-3 series we have not been able to get consistent performances from most of our key players. That's something you need to correct. There's quality in the team but we need to get back into putting in consistent personal performances which will help the team", he said.

The Indian team has been going through a lean phase, particularly in the shorter version of the game since the tour of the West Indies in April this year.

The team lost the one-day series in the Caribbean, failed to reach the final of the DLF Cup tri-series in Malaysia and were knocked out of the recent Champions Trophy before the semi-final stage.

PCB wants more matches

PTI, Karachi

Pakistan have decided to press for the right to host more matches of the 2011 World Cup which it will jointly host with India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) awarded the hosting rights of the World Cup to the four South Asian countries this year in April and under an initial agreement Pakistan is to host 16 games, including one semi-final.

India would be hosting 22 matches and the final, Sri Lanka nine and a semi final and Bangladesh six games including the opening ceremony.

But sources said Pakistan is now having second thoughts about the number of matches they have got after India insisted on hosting the final.

Music stops!

FROM PAGE 17 Bravo, who hit a brilliant 108 in his team's tour opener earlier this week, held out to leg-spinner Danish Kaneria for 32 while Denesh Ramdin (12) missed a sweep off Kaneria's last ball before lunch to leave West Indies 122-6.

SCOREBOARD Scoreboard on the first day of the opening Test between Pakistan and the West Indies at the Gadafi Stadium in Lahore on Saturday:

WEST INDIES: First Innings

Gayle lbw b Nazir	34
Ganga c Younis b Gul	3
Sarwan c Younis b Nazir	3
Lara c Akmal b Gul	61
Chanderpaul lbw b Nazir	5
Bravo c Nazir b Kaneria	32
Ramdin c Hafeez b Kaneria	12
Mohammed c Akmal b Gul	35
Taylor lbw b Gul	8
Edwards c Malik b Gul	2
Collymore not out	1

England face tough NSW



AFP, Sydney

England vice-captain Andrew Strauss says he welcomes the prospect of facing a Test-strength New South Wales bowling attack to help the tourists recover from a disastrous tour opener before facing Australia in the Ashes Test series.

Opener Strauss said England have a point to prove in the three-day game against NSW, starting at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday, after Friday's 166-run capitulation to the Prime Minister's XI in Canberra.

Strauss was one of three England batsmen shown up by short-pitched balls in Canberra, but has dismissed suggestions the tourists will struggle against the rising ball during the five-Test Ashes series, which gets underway in Brisbane on November 23.

He said they would not shy away from a NSW attack, featuring Test pacemen Glenn McGrath, Brett Lee, Stuart MacGill, Stuart Clark and Nathan Bracken.

The quintet boast 984 Test wickets between them and will be out to keep the pressure firmly on England ahead of the first Test.

Strauss said the NSW bowlers would be chasing England scalps, but could also help the tourists regain their edge.

"The Aussies no doubt are going to want to claim a scalp, they're going to want to beat us quite desperately," Strauss told reporters here Saturday.

"We've got a bit of a point to prove after yesterday, you don't play any uncompetitive games over here."

"They've (the NSW bowlers) all played a lot of Test cricket and that (attack) is as strong as you get.

"That's brilliant for us, it's great to have a look at them before the Test and it's great also to tune yourself into Test match psyche."

"To really get mentally right in a similar way to how you would approach a Test match, it's great for us."

Strauss, Alastair Cook and Kevin Pietersen were all out to mis-timed pull shots, but Strauss dismissed claims England's batsmen would struggle against the short ball on this tour.

He said although Australian wickets were quicker than English pitches, it would only take the tourists a few innings to familiarise themselves to the conditions and then play instinctively.

"You've just got to play the conditions," he said.

"Sometimes when the ball's old it is possible to take on that really short one, but generally in this part of the world the pull shot and the cut shot are generally productive."

"The hook shot is a little more risky and it's just a question of making sure you judge which one to hit and which one not to."

England and NSW have agreed to play 14 players during the three-day match, which will not have first-class status, but only 11 players a side can bat.

England (from): 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.

NSW (from): Simon Katich (captain), Nathan Bracken, Beau Casson, Stuart Clark, Michael Clarke, Ed Cowan, Nathan Hauritz, Moises Henriques, Phil Jaques, Jason Krejza, Brett Lee, Stuart MacGill, Glenn McGrath, Aaron O'Brien, Daniel

ICC betrays Hair?



AFP, Sydney

The International Cricket Council rated Australian Darrell Hair the second-best umpire in the world before it sacked him for alleged incompetence, reports here said Saturday, citing secret documents.

Sydney's Daily Telegraph newspaper said it had uncovered a copy of the last annual personal performance appraisal that Hair received before the ICC's board of directors sacked him with a 7-3 vote last weekend.

The ICC's decision came after Pakistan lodged a complaint against Hair for his role in the historic forfeited Oval Test against England in August and demanded an inquiry into his conduct.

Under the headline 'Ultimate Betrayal', the daily said the confidential files, prepared by ICC's umpiring chiefs, revealed Hair was ranked equal-second on the ICC's elite umpiring panel with Australian Simon Taufel believed to be number one.

In pure decision-making, Hair was ranked top of the panel, making 253 of 263 correct decisions last

year -- a success rate of 95.5 percent compared with 94.8 percent for all umpires, the Daily Telegraph said.

Each decision that an umpire of the panel makes throughout the year is assessed on video.

The newspaper said it was primarily the results of the umpiring document that had prompted ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed to appeal to the board not to sack Hair.

Speed and other senior ICC officials felt that no matter what the merits of the inquiry's findings of the Oval Test, where Pakistan was penalised runs amid accusations of ball tampering, no fair-minded assessment could justify sacking Hair based on his overall performance, it said.

The match was forfeited, for the first time in Test cricket's 129-year history, when Pakistan refused to return to the field in protest at Hair's ball-tampering accusations.

Captain Inzamamul Haq was later cleared of illegally altering the ball, although he was banned for four one-day matches for bringing the game into disrepute.

The document also praises Hair for his "strong sense of fairness which underlines all that you do ... you are constantly striving for con-

sistency".

And Hair is applauded in the document for his confidence, his concentration levels, consistent body language and first-class knowledge of the laws of the game.

"It is not always possible to be black and white when applying the code of conduct to player behaviour and this is where you have to make judgment calls," it says.

"Your pragmatic approach to problem-solving has enabled you to find commonsense solutions that arise."

Hair has made no decision about his future since being sacked, although his departure has caused a stir in umpiring ranks around Australia.

Former England Test bowler Peter Loader told The Daily Telegraph he would wear a black armband in Perth grade cricket Saturday for what he believes is "the death of the spirit of cricket".

Cricket Australia this week called for the ICC to explain its reasons for dropping umpire Hair off the panel.

The organisation has offered Hair the chance to move back to Australia and umpire in the local Sheffield Shield competition, but it is likely he will continue to reside in England.

Thorpe can't be sure



AFP, Sydney

Former Test batsman Graham Thorpe said he is happy to sit on the fence during the upcoming Ashes cricket series as he watches his former England team mates take on Australia.

Thorpe has taken up a two-year contract as the New South Wales batting coach but since Andrew Flintoff's tourists arrived here, journalists have sought his opinion on the England side for which he played 100 Tests.

England step up their Ashes preparations with a three-day match against NSW at the Sydney Cricket Ground, starting Sunday.

"I guess it will be a bit strange," Thorpe told The Sydney Morning Herald Saturday of coaching against England.

"I know people will be interested to know who I want to win, but I just want it to be a good game of cricket."

"I realise that that sounds like fence-sitting, but that's how I feel. It's completely different now -- you spend so much of your life boxing away in one corner, and now you're on the other side."

This weekend Thorpe, 37, will be

sitting alongside Glenn McGrath, Brett Lee, Michael Clarke and Simon Katich in the SCG Members' Pavilion.

Thorpe, who underwent a highly-publicised marriage break-up and bouts of depression which forced him from England's previous tour of Australia, can empathise with England opener Marcus Trescothick.

Trescothick withdrew from England's Champions Trophy squad because of a stress-related illness.

Trescothick claimed this week he was prepared for the Australians to sledge him about his condition. Thorpe sincerely hopes that his is.

"There is going to be plenty of rib-ticking out there for sure when he gets out there to play but if he is in the same sort of form he was last time they met he will be fine," Thorpe said.

"I think he has more on his plate from everything that has gone on and that goes hand in hand with the job."

"The moment you say, 'I am struggling to concentrate because of X' the way the media is, you are going to throw more pressure on yourself, he has to be able to deal with it."

In Thorpe and Troy Cooley, Cricket Australia could feasibly compile quite the dossier on

England's batsmen and bowlers after both recently left prominent positions in Duncan Fletcher's England squad.

Thorpe, says he has not yet been approached to divulge information prior to the Ashes, and is concentrating on his role with NSW.

"I think it will take me a while to earn the kind of reputation in Australian coaching where they would be using me like that," Thorpe said.

"I am very much looking forward to the Ashes. Last year's series was an incredible contest. I think Australia have an advantage in how far they bat down the order. But please don't ask me who will win this week."

Agarkar fit to tour SA

CRICINFO, undated

Ajit Agarkar has passed a fitness test on his left thumb and been cleared for India's forthcoming tour of South Africa, starting in a week's time.

Agarkar, who injured himself while fielding during