

Uncertain conditions at Sydney worry both Aussies and Indians

SYDNEY, Jan 1: Uncertain weather and wicket conditions have left India and Australia confused on the eve of the third cricket Test starting here tomorrow, reports AFP.

Refusing to take chances that could ruin well-planned strategy, both camps delayed naming their playing elevens.

Persistent rain over the last few days has raised doubts about the nature of the relayed Test wicket at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG).

The grim forecast of more showers has not eased matters for the worried rivals and groundsman Peter Leroy.

"The rain has slowed down the final preparation of the wicket," said Leroy, who oversaw the relaying of the SCG centre strip, a haven for spinners in the past.

"The wicket itself is as hard as we can get it, but it's suffering after being under the covers for so long," he said.

The two teams had a good look at the wicket when Leroy removed the covers on rainless Wednesday for final touches.

"The moisture underneath will make the ball move about in the morning session, but apart from that it should be a good batting wicket," Leroy said.

Australia, enjoying a 2-0

lead in the five-Test series, look set to bleed Victoria's rookie leg-spinner Shane Warne.

Captain Allan Border said it was the right time to give Warne, 22, ago at Test level.

"It will hold him in good stead if he comes through this Test against the Indians who are renowned players of spin bowling," Border said.



NARENDRA HIRWANI...in?

"He should respond to the challenge well because he is very promising and is the sort of bowler we really need," he said.

With Warne almost certain to play, the Australians have a hard choice between fast bowlers Merv Hughes and Mike Whitney for the final

MERV HUGHES...out?

The beleaguered Indians, toying with various combinations to stop the Australian juggernaut, named a 14-man squad for the Test.

Opener Navjot Singh Sidhu, who flew in early Wednesday to bolster the brittle batting, is a prominent inclusion and almost certain to take the field.

Sidhu, 28, is expected to replace Krish Srikanth.

India may also drop left-arm spinner Venkatapathy Raju to play leggie Narendra Hirwani, a last-minute exclusion for the Melbourne Test.

But the tourists' main worry is the fitness of wicket-keeper Kiran More who has pulled a hamstring muscle.

"We are hoping he will be fit by Thursday morning," said cricket manager Abbas Ali Baig of More, who top scored with a gritty 67 in the second Test besides taking three catches and effecting a stumping.

If More fails a fitness test, reserve keeper Chandrakant Pandit will be pressed into action.

Pandit, whose three previous Tests have all been in the role of a batsman, scored a fluent century in a four-day game against Queensland in Brisbane before the Melbourne Test.

TEAMS

AUSTRALIA: Allan Border (captain), Mark Taylor, Geoff Marsh, David Boon, Dean Jones, Mark Waugh, Ian Healy, Craig McDermott, Merv Hughes, Shane Warne, Bruce Reid, Mike Whitney.

INDIA: Mohammad Azharuddin (captain), Ravi Shastri, Navjot Singh Sidhu, Krish Srikanth, Sanjay Manjrekar, Sachin Tendulkar, Dilip Vengsarkar, Kapil Dev, Manoj Prabhakar, Javagal Srinath, Kiran More, Chandrakant Pandit, Narendra Hirwani, Venkatapathy Raju.

India picks 30 W Cup probables

BANGALORE, India, Jan 1: India announced 30 probables yesterday for the World Cup cricket tournament, but retained strokefull Mohammad Azharuddin as the skipper, reports AFP.

C. Nagaraj, secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), told reporters in Bangalore that the final squad would be picked either in late January or early February.

The World Cup, hosted by Australia and New Zealand, begins February 22.

Nagaraj said the probables included all 17 cricketers now in Australia, including Azharuddin, seven standbys for the Australian tour and six

mostly old faces.

He said the Australian Cricket Board had asked the BCCI to name the probables by December 31.

The BCCI thought it fit to pick 30 players because it (BCCI) will have better scope to choose the best among the lot," Nagaraj added.

India trail 02 in the five-Test series against Australia, and Nagaraj said the team had disappointed the selectors.

"Nobody is happy about the team's performance. But since there are three more Tests, we hope they will pick up," he said.

Tuesday's announcement came hours after dashing opener Navjot Sidhu left for Sydney to beef up the beleaguered Indian team in the third Test starting Thursday.

The 17 Indians in Australia are: Mohammad Azharuddin, Ravi Shastri, Krish Srikanth, Kiran More, Dilip Vengsarkar, Sachin Tendulkar, Sanjay Manjrekar, Chandrakant Pandit, Venkatapathy Raju, Javagal Srinath, Kapil Dev, Manoj Prabhakar, Navjot Singh Sidhu, Pravcn Anur, Saurav Ganguly, Subroto Banerjee, Narendra Hirwani.

The seven standbys are: Vinod Kamble, Ajay Jandaja, Yogendra Bhandari, Prashant Vydyia, Anil Kumble, Vijay Yadav, Atul Wasan.

The six others are: W V Raman, Sardendu Mukherjee, Maninder Singh, Winston Zaidce, Chetan Sharma and Vivek Ruzdan.

McQuillan beats the heat

BRISBANE, Jan 1: Rachel McQuillan overcame sweltering conditions to become the second Australian into the third round of the Australian women's Hardcourt tennis championship here today, reports AFP.

The Australian number one and eighth seed beat compatriot Kerry-Anne Guse 6-3, 6-1 on the Centre Court to book a third-round meeting with Finn Petra Thoren.

McQuillan, 20, entered the tournament at the last minute after Australia's quick exit from the Hopman Cup at the hands of the Dutch team.

Thoren, who spent Christmas Day in a plane to reach the tournament, beat 15th-seeded Latvian Larissa Savchenko in the first round Monday and continued her success in the second round with a win over Frenchwoman Sandrine Testud.

McQuillan joins North Queensland teenager Nicole Pratt in the last 16.

In other matches Wednesday, 13th seeded American Debbie Graham beat Argentinean Cristina Test, and fourth seed Radka Zrubakova of Czechoslovakia outclassed Frenchwoman Sybille Niox-Chateau 6-0, 6-3.

Nelson gives up title

LONDON, Jan 1: Britain's Johnny Nelson, denied four defences of his European cruiserweight championship in 1991, has relinquished the title to concentrate on his bid for the IBF world crown.

That takes place in Paris on January 30 against American holder James Warring, whose sights are set on a big money defence against the legendary Tommy Hearns.

Nelson has not fought since March 12 when he beat Belgium's Yves Monsieur in his only defence of the EBU title. Then, one by one, the challengers fell away.

Nelson was even training in Paris ready to fight Akim Tafer in October when the Frenchman pulled out with a twisted ankle.

Seeds tumble in Brisbane

BRISBANE, Jan 1: Canadian Rene Alter and German veteran Claudia Kohde-Kilsch upset seeded players Wednesday in the second round of the US \$150,000 Danone Queensland Open women's tennis tournament, reports AP.

Alter trounced 12th-seeded American Linda Harvey-Wild 6-4, 6-2, while Kohde-Kilsch scored a 6-1, 6-4 triumph over No. 11 Regina Rajchrtova of Czechoslovakia.

Third-seeded Sabine Appelmans of Belgium, fourth-seeded Radka Zrubakova of Czechoslovakia, 10th-seeded Magdalena Maleeva of Bulgaria and 13th-seeded American Debbie Graham all won second-round matches to advance to the last 16.

Appelmans progressed with a 6-2, 6-2 win over Metke Babel.

Appelmans, who this week was named Belgian Sports Personality of the Year, hit the ball too consistently deep for her young German opponent.

She now faces power-server Graham. The former NCAA singles champion from Fountain Valley, Calif, triumphed over Cristina Tessi of

Argentina 6-3, 6-4 with hard-hit shots.

Maleeva defeated Australian kristin Godridge 6-1, 6-2, while Zrubakova downed Sybille Niox-Chateau of France 6-0, 6-3.

Andrea Temesvari of Hungary, a lucky loser, advanced to the third round when opponent Claudia Porwik of Germany withdrew, suffering from food poisoning.

Left-hander Alter played smart tennis to defeat the more powerful Harvey-Wild and thrived on the slow-paced Rebouad Ace synthetic courts.

"My game is better suited to these courts than hers," said the Toronto resident. "I frustrated her by getting a lot of balls back and mixing it up."

Appelmans was impressive in her first match in six weeks.

"The first match in a tournament is always the toughest," said Belgian teen-ager, who had a first-round bye.

"I tried to keep the pressure on her, and my experience was a big factor in the hot conditions."

Appelmans has risen to 18th in the world following tournament victories last year in Phoenix and Nashville. She is aiming for her third win in four tournaments.

"It can't even think about

winning a tournament at this stage," Appelmans said. "I only take it one match at a time."

Kohde-Kilsch, the former world number five, saw her ranking drop to a 12-year low of 84th in 1991.

She began 1992 in more impressive style, pairing power and patience to roll over Rajchrtova.

Maleeva said she had expected a tougher fight from the normally combative Godridge.

"But I made it easier for myself with the way I played," said the 16-year-old sister of Katerina Maleeva and Manuela Maleeva-Fragniere.

Maleeva already is ranked 38th in the world and says she doesn't want to rush up the computer list.

"The pace I am moving at now is fine. Slow and steady-like my personality," she said.

Hungarian Andrea Temesvari got a free ride into the third round after the withdrawal of German Claudia Porwik with food poisoning.

The tournament is part of the Kraft Tour and offers a first prize of US \$15,000.

It is one of a series of warmup events for the Australian Open and continues through Sunday.

Ivanisevic justifies wild card

ADELAIDE, Jan 1: Top seed Goran Ivanisevic beat defending champion Nicklas Kulti in the first round of the Australian men's hardcourt tennis championship here Tuesday, reports AFP.

Ivanisevic, the left-handed Croatian ranked 16th in the world, avenged his first-round defeat at the Swede's hands last year with a straightforward 6-3, 6-3 in 58 minutes.

Kulti, a year earlier, went on to beat Michael Stich, the future Wimbledon men's singles champion, in the final.

With 12 aces, the 20-year-old Ivanisevic looked impressive in his first tournament outing since straining an Achilles tendon five weeks ago, vindicating the decision of organisers to give him a wild card entry.

Second-seeded Jan Siemerink was one of four seeds who tumbled in the first round.

The left-handed Dutchman, aged 21 and ranked 26th in the world, looked anything but a top-flight player as he crashed 6-2, 7-6 (7/3) to Australian John Fitzgerald, 10 years his senior.

Fitzgerald, best known as a formidable doubles player, is ranked only 205 in singles, and said this "was probably the best match I've ever played out there, certainly on that court."

In other upsets, fifth-seeded Austrian Thomas Muster went down in three sets to American Bryan Shelton and eighth-seeded Italian Cristiano Caratti lost in three sets to tall Swiss Marc Rosset.

Third seed Javier Sanchez of Spain was beaten late Monday by South African Christo van Rensburg in the most closely contested match so far in the 182,500 US dollar tournament.

The three-day long sports was participated by the members of Ansars and VDP of all the districts of Khulna Division. Khulna district team became group champion while Jessore district became the runners-up.

Divisional Commissioner of Khulna Mr Aminuddin Chowdhury was present as chief guest and distributed prizes among the participants.

Ansars sports

KHULNA, Jan 1: The Khulna divisional annual sports of Bangladesh Ansars and VDP concluded here at Khulna Stadium yesterday, reports BSS.

The three-day long sports was participated by the members of Ansars and VDP of all the districts of Khulna Division. Khulna district team became group champion while Jessore district became the runners-up.

Divisional Commissioner of Khulna Mr Aminuddin Chowdhury was present as chief guest and distributed prizes among the participants.



Magic's story AP's best

NEW YORK, Jan 1: Magic Johnson's announcement that he tested positive for the virus that causes AIDS was the overwhelming choice as The Associated Press sports story of the year for 1991 in a US poll, reports AP.

Johnson's Nov. 7 announcement received 338 points and 29 first-place votes in balloting released Wednesday by the AP.

Johnson, who had led the Los Angeles Lakers to five NBA titles, announced at a dramatic news conference that he was retiring from pro basketball because of the positive test.

Minnesota's tense seven-game victory over Atlanta in the World Series was second with 236 points and three first-place votes. The Twins beat the Braves 1-0 in 10 innings in Game 7, the fourth game of the Series decided on the final swing.

Mike Powell's long-jump record was third with 177 points and two first-place votes. He jumped 29 feet, 4 1/2 inches (8.5 meters) on Aug. 30 at Tokyo, breaking the previous record of 29-2 1/2 (8.90 meters) set by Bob Beamon at

the 1968 Olympics.

The New York Giants' 20-19 victory over Buffalo on Jan. 27 in the closest Super Bowl ever was fourth with 120 points, followed by Nolan Ryan's record seventh no-hitter, a 3-0 victory over Toronto on May 1. Ryan, who struck out 16 and walked two in the game, received 112 points and one first-place vote.

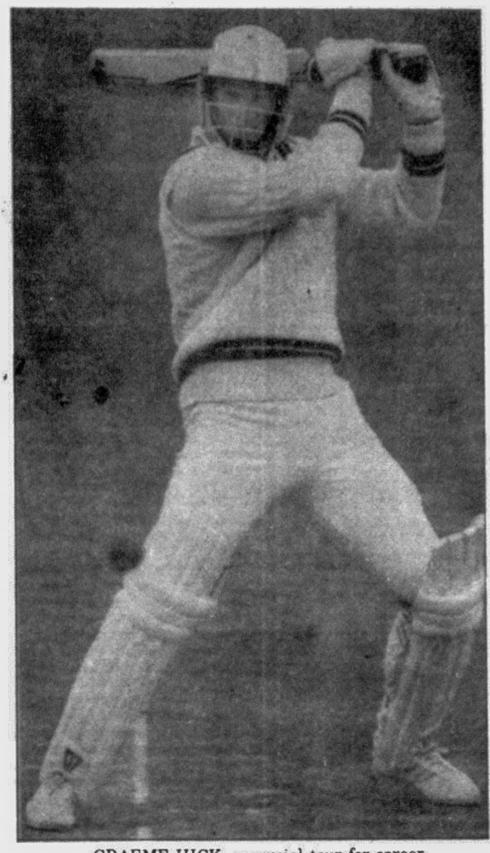
The Chicago Bulls finished sixth for their first NBA championship, five-game victory over the Los Angeles Lakers that ended with a 108-101 win on June 12.

Duke's upset 97-77 victory over defending champion UNLV in the NCAA basketball tournament semifinals on March 30 was seventh with 109 points.

Carl Lewis' world record of 9.86 seconds in the 100 meters on Aug. 25 at Tokyo was eighth with 94 points. Lewis was four-hundredths of a second faster than the previous record of 9.90 set by Leroy Burrell at the US Championships two months earlier in New York.

The Mohammedan Sporting Club team which annexed the Victory Day hockey title beating arch-rivals Abahani Krira Chakra in the final on Tuesday.

AUCKLAND, New Zealand, Jan 1: The real Graeme Hick will be asked to step forward tomorrow and start proving that last summer's poor showing was nothing more than a temporary aberration, reports



GRAEME HICK...a crucial tour for career

Windy sweep series

GOLD COAST, Jan 1: Opener Philo Wallace made an unbeaten 40 runs Wednesday as the West Indies scored a crushing seven-wicket victory over a Queensland state XI in a limited-overs cricket match at Carrara Oval, reports AP.

The win gave the West Indies a 3-0 sweep of the series between the two teams.

The tourists dismissed Queensland for just 79 runs and then made 80 for three in response in just 20 overs after recovering from 22 for three.

All-rounder Carl Hooper supported Wallace and was unbeaten on 15.

The West Indies took only 28.4 overs to dismiss the Queensland team, which had lost the two previous matches by three wickets and 11 runs.

The tourists ripped through the flimsy Queensland line-up. Trevor Barsby and Stuart Law, with 12 runs apiece, were the top scorers, while the West Indies gave away 21 extras.

The West Indian bowlers shared the wickets with Curtley Ambrose taking three and Hamish Anthony, Carl Hooper and Keith Arthurton two each. Anderson Cummins was the only bowler without a wicket.

The only setback for the tourists was an injury to Robert Haynes, who pulled a hamstring on a soggy outfield while chasing a pull shot from Barsby.

Haynes limped from the field and is expected to miss the West Indies' next two matches against New South Wales XI before the Caribbean team resumes its World Series Cup campaign.

Scores: Queensland XI 79 (Curtly Ambrose 2-16); West Indies 80-3 (Philo Wallace 40).

West Indies won by seven wickets.

scored 827 runs at an average of 63. And the following winter he returned to do even better, clocking up 1,228 runs for an average of 94.

But Hick knows recent success counts for a lot less than recent failure, particularly with the critics. And an early dismissal on Thursday would put him right back under pressure.

Auckland possess three-quarters of New Zealand's likely Test and one-day international pace attack in Danny Morrison, Willie Watson and Chris Pringle, so none of England's batsmen can expect an easy ride during the 50-over match.

And with torrential rain having ruined plans for a lengthy outdoor practice session on Tuesday, the tourists will not be properly acquainted with kiwi conditions.

"We only had three days available to practise before the first match and to lose one of those to the weather is very disappointing," said captain Graham Gooch.

"Our six-week indoor build up at home was very useful but there's nothing like batting and bowling outside. Auckland will be a very tough side to beat and there's no doubt this is a hard first game for us."

With precious little time for experimentation on this tour, England are likely to pick what they consider to be their best available one-day team from the start, bearing in mind Ian Botham and Richard Illingworth do not join the squad until late January.

That may mean new vice-captain Alec Stewart keeping wicket as well as opening the batting, with Jack Russell omitted.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Winter pear

5 Very, in Paris

9 Child's game

12 Wild ox

13 — among thorns

14 Corrida cheer

15 Urban dwelling

17 Colorless

18 Carry

19 Philosopher

21 Re-nowned

24 Makes public

25 Swan genus

26 Capriati of tennis

30 Stitch

31 — There' (79 movie)

32 Harem room

33 Horse trainers

35 Small piece of ground

DOWN

2 Yoko — 3 Farm breeder

4 Moderate gallop

5 Turkey — (dance)

6 Rake

7 Dangerous curve

8 Sowing

9 Urban citizens

10 Jai —

11 Roman clan

16 Mortar trough

20 Son of Gad

21 Nibble at snacks

22 Olive genus

23 Source of colonial news

24 Miller and Jillian

26 Small, rugged vehicle

27 Goddess of healing

28 Yellow cheese

29 Appraise

31 Blow stormily

34 Jane or John

35 Straw mattress

37 Varnish ingredient

38 Carnivore's food

39 Spicy stew

40 TV police drama of the '70s

41 Grafted (Her.)

44 Spanish gold

45 Anglo-Saxon letter

46 Narrow inlet

47 London suburb

Solution time: 24 mins.

Yesterdays answer 7-2

CRYPTOQUIP

JNUK RUWENCKA MDTUDKU

KUVPDLM RD MJCT, CR

NUHIM RD ACPU NCT

IDDH ELUM.

Yesterdays Cryptoquip: TENNIS STAR HAD A PRETTY GOOD YEAR; HE REPORTED A NET GAIN.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: T equals M

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.