Courier inching closer to No 1

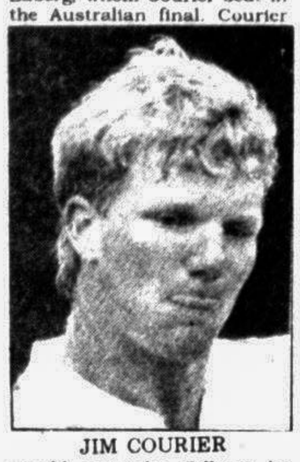
SAN FRANCISCO, Jan 31: Being No 1 would rank second for Jim Courier, who prefers earning Grand Slam victories over his top rivals than any number rating handed him by a cold, calculating computer reports AP.

Courier would become the first American in 6 1/2 years to be ranked the No 1 tennis player in the world if he reaches the final of the Volvo San Francisco next week. He is currently ranked second behind Stefan Edberg of Sweden.

"Tennis is not about rankings, it's about titles," Courier said Thursday in a conference call. "That's what is important to me. I much prefer my French and Australian titles to being N 2 in the world because the computer can be partial.

"Stefan or Boris (Becker) could play 30 tournaments and I play 15, and although I have a better record, they play more tournaments and will be ranked higher. Winning tournaments isn't like that. If you won the tournament, you won the tournament."

The 21-year-old from Dade City, Fla., who earlier this month added the Australian Open title to his 1991 French Open championship, is 19 points behind the top-ranked Edberg, whom Courier beat in the Australian final. Courier



JIM COURIER

would overtake Edberg by reaching the semifinals at San Francisco and earn 15 bonus points. Reaching the final would erase any need for bonus points, which are earned by beating a player ranked in the top 200.

The last American to be ranked No 1 in the world was John McEnroe on Aug 26, 1985.

"It would be significant to me that the last guy from the country (to be ranked No 1) was McEnroe," Courier said. "To follow him would be an honor. I think it's a goal every tennis player or athlete would like to achieve, and I'm on the verge of it. It would be something I would always have."

And it appears that, once on top, Courier could hold onto that distinction for a while because the ATP computer rankings are based on a player's result over the previous calender year.

Courier will play tournaments at San Francisco, Brussels and Stuttgart in the next month. He only has to improve upon disappointing 1991 results at Memphis and Philadelphia to increase his lead over Edberg.

Edberg won at Brussels and Stuttgart in 1991, but is scheduled to skip Brussels this year before playing at Stuttgart.

"If you get (to No 1) to stay there, you can't think about it," Courier said. "If you do, it's more taxing. I don't think anybody who has been up there... you have to keep winning. That's what you have to concentrate on... If you don't have points on the computer, You have nothing to defend."

Courier vaulted up the tennis ladder in 1991, jumping from No 25 to No 2 by winning tournaments at Indian Wells, Calif., and Key Biscayne, Fla., before winning his first Grand Slam title at the French Open. He also was runner-up at the 1991 US Open.

Courier won his first professional tourniament at Basel, Switzerland, in 1989, but credits his third-round victory over Andre Agassi in that year's French Open as the beginning of his climb to the top.

"That was a big match because it showed me I could play with the big boys," Courier said. "Every top player has one match that shows he belongs up there. That was the one for me."

And if he makes it to No 1 Courier expects little to change away from the tennis court.

"I don't think my off-court life will change," he said. "I'm very happy with it. It's obviously working for me... Changes are not a foregone conclusion... but I guess a few more people will recognize me."

Sanchez slips, as Sabatini Navratilova cruise

TOKYO, Jan 31: Top seeds Gabriela Sabatini and Martina Navratilova reached the semifinals but Arantxa Sanchez Vicario failed to join them at the Pan Pacific Open indoor tennis tournament today, reports Reuter.

Top seed Sabatini, the defending champion, shrugged off a strong challenge from unseeded American Pam Shriver to win her quarter-final match 6-2, 6-7, 6-4 after being 4-1 down in the final set.

The world number three from Argentina managed to break Shriver's service in the sixth game and went on to take the match with a series of sparkling service return winners.

Sabatini now plays unseeded Japanese Kimiko Date who produced the day's major upset by dispatching the former French Open champion Sanchez Vicario 6-3, 6-4.

"Today was not my day. I made a lot of mistakes," said Sanchez Vicario, ranked fifth in the world.

The second-seeded Navratilova bidding for an unprecedented 158th career title in women's tennis, scored a comfortable 6-4, 6-3 win over eighth seed Laura Gildemeister.

In November, Navratilova equalled Evert's record of 157 titles when she beat world number one Monica Seles of Yugoslavia to win the Virginia Slims of California.

Navratilova, playing her first competitive tournament this year, will play fast-improving Bulgarian teenager Magdalena Maleeva in her semifinal.

The unseeded Maleeva, a surprise 6-1, 6-2 winner over fourth seed Jennifer Capriati, followed up that win with a 6-2, 6-4 success over fifth seed Helena Sukova of Czechoslovakia.

Davis Cup squad

MELBOURNE, Jan 31 : Todd Woodbridge and Wally Masur were named Friday to represent Australia in men's singles at the Barcelona Olympic Games tennis tournament, reports AP.

Rachel McGuillan and Nicole Provis were selected to play in the women's singles and to team in the women's doubles.

Woodbridge will pair with veteran John Fitzgerald in the Australian men's doubles team.

Thoren reaches semis

AUCKLAND, New Zealand, Jan 31 : Petra Thoren of Finland upset sixth-seeded Italian Raffaella Reggi-Concato 6-3, 6-2 Friday to advance to the semifinals of the dlrs 100,000 Nutri-Metics Classic women's tennis tournament, reports AP.

Thoren, an unseeded 22-year-old from Helsinki, reached the first semifinal of her career.

Top-seeded Andrea Strnadova of Czechoslovakia and unseeded American Robin White also progressed.

Strnadova struggled past fifth-seeded Alexia Dechaume of France 7-6 (7-3), 6-7 (6-8), 6-2 and white defeated Monique Javer of Britain 3-6, 6-3, 6-1.

Strnadova will play either No 3 seed Larisa Savchenko-Neiland of Latvia or No 8 seed Bettina Fulco-Villella in the semis. Thoren faces White.

Thoren kept Reggi-Concato under constant pressure with her solid groundstrokes. The Italian, who has not played since June because a foot injury, never came to terms with the difficult windy conditions.

"That's the way I like to play. It was one of my best matches," Thoren said after playing aggressively to win in just 63 minutes.

"I knew I had go out and win the points because hitting from the baseline with her would have been too tough."

White, a 28-year-old from Del Mar, Calif., recovered from a slow start to beat Javer, who became upset when a series of line calls went against her.

"She's too good a player to worry about something like that," White said. "You can't get bothered by it and should just carry on with the game."

Strnadova wasted three match points in the second set tiebreaker before beating Dechaume in a 2-hour 10-minute marathon.

Strnadova led 6-3 in the tiebreaker before Dechaume reeled off five straight points.

McEnroe opts out

MILAN, Italy, Jan 31 : John McEnroe has pulled out of next week's Milan indoor tennis tournament, organisers said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

The 32-year-old American, who requested an received a wild card entry, said he needs a break after the efforts of recent weeks.

McEnroe recently reached the quarter-Finals of the Australian Open and is in the US squad for this weekend's Davis Cup tie with Argentina in Hawaii.

Secured condoms

ALBERTVILLE, France, Jan 31 : Safe sex has taken on a new meaning in the French spa of Brides-les-Bains, where the only condom machine is behind a security fence protecting athletes at the Winter Olympic village, reports Reuter.

An Olympic village official on Thursday said one local woman trying to buy condoms from the dispenser became furious when guards refused to let her near it.

"Even the condoms are reserved for the athletes," the woman screamed.

An Olympic village doctor who saw the incident obliged by giving the woman a packet of three condoms from a stock brought in for athletes at the February 8-23 Albertville Winter Games.

Brides-Les-Bains will accommodate about 700 games athletes. Much of the Olympics village is in the the spa resort itself and a security fence has been erected on either side of the street where the condom machine stands.

The official said she knew of no plans to move it.

"If people want to buy condoms they could ask someone on the other side of the fence to put the money in for them," she said.

Olympic blackmail

ALBERTVILLE, France, Jan 31 : Road maintenance workers threatened on Thursday to go on strike and block traffic during the Albertville Winter Olympics unless French authorities give them more money, reports Reuter.

About 400 workers in bright orange snow jackets marched through Albertville sounding horns and ringing cow bells to press for wage rises and better working conditions sought nationally by the communist-backed CGT trade union.

Regional union official Claude Besenval said public sector authorities had until the games opening ceremony on February 8 to meet the demands or face possible strike action including road blockades. "The threat remains," Besenval said.

The maintenance workers could be vital to the success of the 16-day Olympics if a major snow-clearing operation has to be launched to keep open the narrow mountain roads linking venues spread over 1,600 sq km (640 640 square miles) of the French Alps.

The CGT demands include wage rises.

Tyson's accuser testifies

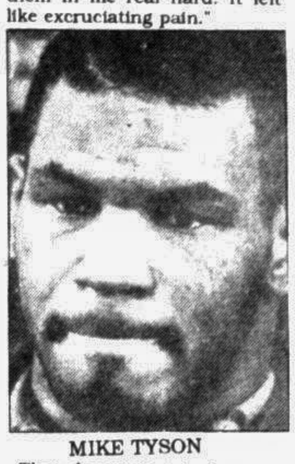
INDIANAPOLIS, Indiana, Jan 31: An 18-year-old college student testified on Thursday that what she thought would be an innocent date with Mike Tyson turned into a night of "excruciating" pain when the former heavyweight champion ripped her clothes off, laughed, pinned her to the bed and raped her, reports Reuter.

The woman, who has charged Tyson with raping her last July when she was in town to compete in the Miss Black America contest, testified for about 1-1/2 hours as the second witness in the trial which began on Monday.

With Tyson looking on without much expression from his seat at the defence table, the woman said Tyson lured her into his room saying he had to get something and shortly afterwards stripped her and forced her down onto the four-poster bed in his suite in the Canterbury Hotel.

"I was telling him to get off me," said the woman. "He said 'don't fight me' and for a second I froze ... (then) I was punching him on the arm and he didn't even feel it."

She said the fighter put "his fingers in my vagina ... jammed them in me real hard. It felt like excruciating pain."



MIKE TYSON

That description is important in the case because one of the four counts the fighter is charged with is criminal deviant conduct, specifically "digital penetration."

If convicted on all counts, Tyson could go to jail for 63 years. Tyson, 25, denies the charge, saying the woman agreed to have sex with him.

She was asked by chief prosecutor Greg Garrison what she did after Tyson had penetrated her with his finger.

"Please you're hurting me. Oh ! please stop, don't. He started laughing like it was a game....," she said.

One of the counts of criminal deviant conduct charges Tyson with performing counselling us on the alleged victim.

Seeking to establish that the alleged victim had resisted Tyson, Garrison led the witness into describing what she did.

"I started thinking about everything that would get him off me. I told him I have a future, I'm going to college... I don't need a baby..."

"So we'll have a baby," she said was Tyson's response.

She went on to say that Tyson forced himself inside her. "It felt like somebody was ripping me apart. I don't know how to explain it. It hurt."

She said that Tyson, who at 20 was the youngest world heavyweight champion in history, repeatedly told her "don't fight me" and at one point said "don't fight me mommy."

The alleged victim testified that after Tyson finished with her he noticed that she was crying and said, "I was just a cry baby and said You're only crying because I'm big."

The alleged victim said that before she arrived with Tyson at his hotel the fighter hugged her "And he went to kiss me... I jumped back ... His breath kind of smelled too."

She said Tyson told her she was "not like the city girls. You're a nice Christian girl."

Samaranch asks Barcelona hotels to lower prices

BARCELONA, Spain, Jan 31 : IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch on Thursday urged Barcelona's hoteliers to moderate prices for the Summer Olympic Games, reports Reuter.

The International Olympic Committee chief told a news conference after a meeting with mayor Paqual Maragall and city businessmen that Spain was beginning to appear in lists of Europe's most expensive couritries and had lost its popular, cheap image.

The high cost of hotels has been a continuing source of discord between the IOC and COOB '92, the Barcelona Games Organising Committee.

Room costs for Olympic sports officials have been set at about 450 dollars per night for five-star hostels, 320 dollars for four-star and 220 dollars for three-star accommodation.

Samaranch noted that hoteliers had agreed last September to cut single room rates by 15 per cent. "I hope they will continue on this line," he said.

Maragall said he was concerned that a balance be maintained between prices and quality of hotels.

"We have to ensure that improving what hotels offer does not mean prices must go up," he said.

Lottery for Japanese soccer

TOKYO, Jan 31: A soccer lottery is being considered in Japan to raise funds for the promotion of and development of Japanese sports, ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) members said after a meeting today, reports AFP.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

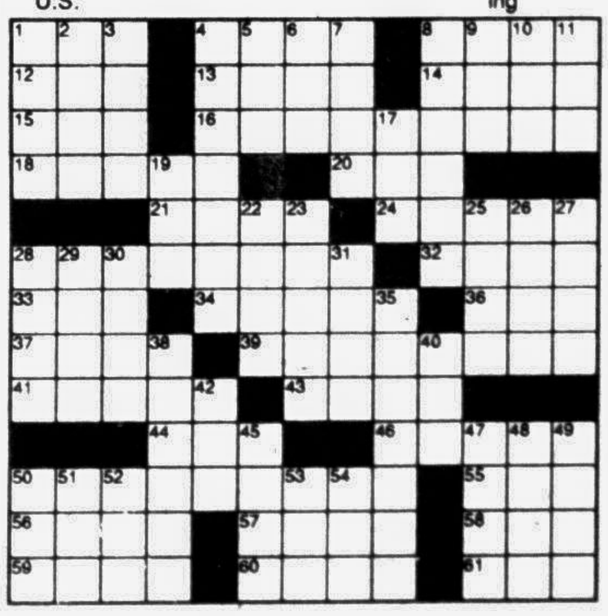
ACROSS
1 Boxing great
4 — opera
8 Garment worn in Calcutta
12 Disfigure
13 "Cogito, — sum" (Descartes)
14 Greek competition
15 Med. org.
16 Police barrier
18 Capital of North Vietnam
20 Scale member
21 Take out
24 Domineering
28 Motorist's aids
32 Table drink
33 California fort
34 Bridal path
36 Statute
37 Dross of metal
39 Highway hazards
41 Spanish missionary in the U.S.
43 Monthly chg.
44 Venomous snake
46 Likeness
50 Rural inn
55 Farm animal
56 Feed the kitty
57 Elevator man
58 Room in a harem
59 Sport shirts
60 Pre-Easter season
61 Cozy retreat

DOWN
1 Eastern nanny
2 Tibetan monk
3 Oil-producing country
4 Brazilian bird
5 Gold, to Cortes
6 Turkish officer
7 Seed containers
8 Willow twig
9 Past
10 Fabled bird
11 India, for one
17 Cratchit or Clampett
19 Strange
22 Animal's den
23 English Derby town
25 Farm building
26 Unexpected obstacle
27 Evergreens
28 Marion or Diana
29 Band on a shield
30 Jewish month
31 Lattice strip
35 Most irritable
38 Military ratings
40 Height of fashion?
42 Hardwood tree
45 Steno's milieu
47 As like as two peas in —
48 French novelist
49 Actor Richard
50 Maze runner
51 "My — and Only"
52 Had a bite
53 Indian .
54 Wrongdoing

Solution time: 28 mins.

A	S	T	A		S	T	A	T		A	C	T
D	O	O	M		A	O	N	E		R	H	O
S	T	R	O	N	G	B	O	X		M	I	L
			U	R	E	Y		T	O	S	C	A
B	A	S	R	A			D	I	R	T		
A	N	T	S		T	A	I	L	O	R	E	D
C	O	R		C	R	I	M	E		O	B	I
K	N	O	T	H	O	L	E		S	N	O	B
		N	E	A	T			S	I	G	N	S
T	O	G	A	S		E	T	O	N			
A	D	E		S	T	R	O	N	G	A	R	M
C	O	S		E	A	S	T		E	L	I	A
O	R	T		S	T	E	S		S	P	A	T

Thursday 's answer 7-31



7-31 CRYPTOQUIP

R V N B S N N Y M B O S Y N T N S H K S L N Y V O S Y X T K S Y N S R K Z O L N Z K H N S Z K T N M.

Thursday's Cryptoquip: BEFORE THE FAMOUS TREE SURGEON SEES A SINGLE "PATIENT," HE HAS TO LIMBER UP.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: S equals R

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.

World Series Cup : Aussies were far superior

A M Chowdhury

The Australians maintained their supremacy in one-day cricket by lifting the Benson & Hedges World Series Cup with ease, the Indians failing to stretch them to the third encounter of the finals. That they were very near to doing that speaks of India's determination to fight it out to the last, and the margin of only six runs does a lot of honour for the vanquished.

The Indians were defeated in the second final, but definitely not outplayed as they were in the first, in which they crumbled for 145 with three overs to spare and 89 runs short of the target. After being 72 for 1 India slumped to 84 for 4; the batsmen following were somewhat panic-stricken.

In ten matches during this triangular tournament Australia lost only two — one each against India and West Indies — and in the only match that was washed away by rain they faced a modest West Indian total of 160. India, on the other hand, won only three matches (one against Australia and two against West Indies), tied a match against the West Indies and lost six (five against Australia and one against the West Indies). The West Indies, third among three, lost four (two each against both the opponents), tied one with India and split points with the Australians in the only rain-interrupted match. They won only two games, one each against Australia and India. The match results alone clearly put the Australians well above their opponents.

The Australian squad under Allan Border played the matches with extreme professionalism and their superiority in all the departments of the game was clearly manifest: of course, in fielding they were superb and their opponents were nowhere near them. They effected 17 run outs in ten matches, whereas India could manage only 7 in ten, and the West Indians hit the stumps in time only on 6 occasions in 7 matches (in one match rain did not allow them to have a go at the Australians).

If we look at it from another angle, the picture will be clearer. The Australian batsmen were run out only 6 times in 9 matches (twice against India and 4 times against the Windies). Indian batsmen were run out 13 times (11 times against Australia and twice against West Indies) while the West Indian batsmen were run out 11 times (6 times against Australia and 5 times against India). That means Indian batsmen were definitely not running well under the pressure of tight Australian fielding. That also proves the agility of the Australian batsmen in taking their runs; they were running twos while others hesitated in taking a single. When big hitting is not possible runs have to be accumulated in singles and twos and this the Australians did with amazing ease; the sluggishness in the fielding of their opponents made their task less risky. The Australians were toweringly above their opponents in running between the wickets and in their alertness on the field, with good pick-up and accurate throwing.

Australian batting came off very well in the tournament. Their highest compilation was 234 for 6 in the last match of the pre-X'mas round against the Windies and their lowest was 101 all out in the first encounter with India in which Ravi Shastri produced his finest one-day bowling spell of 5 for 15 at the WACA ground, Perth. David Boon was their highest run-getter: 432 in 9 innings at an average of 61.72 with four 50s and the only ton of the tournament. Geoff Marsh compiled 282 (average 31.33) with two 50s, Allan Border totalled 220 (average 36.66) with one 50. Dean Jones, the 'one-day magic' as he is called, could not flourish consistently and compiled 196 (average 28.00) with two 50s. Tom Moody (184 with two 50s) averaged 23.00. Boon and Marsh gave Australia sound start on majority of occasions and the former proved to be too good for most of the bowling. Boon's ability to keep the scoreboard moving was of great advantage; he never looked like being bogged down. The only batting failure for the Australians was Mark Waugh.

Craig McDermott was the peak of the Australian bowlers. He took 21 wickets conceding only 13.43 per victim and 3.08 runs per over.

Bruce Reid, who played only 5 matches, was highly economical (2.73 runs per over), but took only 4 wickets conceding 33.5 runs for each. Steve Waugh proved useful with the ball and his figures of 16 wickets at an average of 19 runs (3.78 per over) are impressive. His 60 runs in 7 outings at an average of 12.00 should not be taken at their face value. He usually appeared on the scene when only a few overs remained.

Mike Whitney, playing in 8 matches, bagged 9 wickets at an average of 25.55, but conceded only 2.94 runs per over. The figures of the pace bowlers do clearly tell the story that they were right on the target and very few batsmen could take liberty with them. Only Peter Taylor, the spinner used regularly, was taken advantage of; his each over cost him 4.26 and each wicket (total bag of 10) 35.30. The key to Australian success was the accuracy of their pacemen. The fluent batting of the upper order batsmen provided the right back-up. In only one match, against Shastri's spin at Perth, they looked like being in trouble.

Individual performances of the Indians come fairly close to those of the Australians. Sachin Tendulkar, the teenage batting sensation, totalled 401 with four 50s averaging 44.55. Only David Boon had a better record in the tournament. He was too good for his age, learnt quickly to cut down his lofty shots, and batted with flourish and assurance. He was the only Indian batsman who faced the bowling with ease and once settled, looked like establishing the supremacy of the willow over the leather. He clearly demonstrated that he is the one to be feared and respected by the opposing bowlers and cheered by the crowd even in enemy territory. In the second final he stood between the Australians and victory and had Azharuddin not played that indiscreet shot off Border and stayed a little longer, it was not an impossibility that the Australians could have been stretched to the third decider.

Krish Srikkanth's tally of 313 (averaging 31.30) with three 50s justified his inclusion in the team. He was not as sharp as he used to be, but the day he came to be his own self India looked like winning and actually did win on three occasions when he scored 60, 82 and 60. His other two scores of 42 and 41 against Australia went in vain. Sanjay Manjrekar scored two 50s in the third and fourth match, but later withered away and his tally of 188 (average 18.80) does not really do justice to his potentials. Other batsmen performed moderately: Ravi Shastri scored 159 (av. 17.66), Kapil Dev 151 (av. 25.16) and Amre 131 (av. 18.71). India's greatest disappointment was their skipper Muhammad Azharuddin, who totalled only 136 at an average of 15.11. India had a right to expect something better than that from one of her leading batsmen.

Contrary to all speculations, Indian bowlers performed reasonably well. Manoj Prabhakar was impressive with 12 wickets at an average of 26.25 conceding 3.66 runs per over. Javagal Srinath, in his maiden tour, did bowl quite well and his 11 wickets cost him 28.09 apiece and gave away 3.86 per over. Kapil Dev bagged 9 wickets at 30.55 apiece and his dispensation per over was 3.52. But the figures do not really reflect the quality of the bowling of the highest wicket taker in one-day cricket (to date his tally stands at 217), his first spell in almost all the matches was a superb demonstration of controlled swing bowling. Venkatpathy Raju played only four matches and bowled quite well to capture 6 wickets at 23.92 apiece giving away 3.83 per over, a very good performance for a spinner in one-dayers. Ravi Shastri's initial success (5 for 15) did not continue and his 8 wickets cost him 31.87 apiece and he conceded 3.93 runs per over. That Sachin Tendulkar had to be often used as a bowler is a proof of the lack of depth in the Indian bowling. He was called in to bowl in 9 matches and in one he did bowl the full quota of 10 overs conceding 38 runs.

Indian batsmen did not avail themselves of all the opportunities of taking singles and often took only one when two could be taken. Their poor running between the wickets cost them quite a few runs in every match and these few proved to be vital. They came so near yet too far in the second final.

The West Indian team, being in the process of rebuilding, was not really expected to be in the finals. A solitary point in their bag in the first leg of the tournament was demoralising. That they could shed off all initial inhibition and could win two matches, one each against India and Australia, was highly creditable. The coming back to form of their skipper Richie Richardson greatly contributed to their change of fortunes. They were edged out by the Indians in the last match.

The West Indian bowling was throughout good and accurate. Curtley Ambrose was the most economical bowler of the tournament. He conceded only 2.85 runs per over and his 9 wickets cost him 21.77 apiece. Malcolm Marshall took 8 wickets at an average of 30.12 and Anderson Cummins took 10 wickets at 27.70 per wicket; while the former gave away 3.54 runs per over and the latter 4.04. Hooper's 7 wickets cost him 252 runs (av. 36.00) and his per over dispensation was 3.70. These figures compare very favourably with those of the Indian and Australian bowlers.

However, the West Indian batting did not produce the expected runs. Desmond Haynes, the top batsman in one-day cricket with little over 7000 runs to his credit, could compile only 293 runs with four 50s at an average of 36.62; Richie Richardson came second with 185 with two 50s averaging 23.12. Brian Lara, Carl Hooper or Keith Arthurton played one or two good innings here and there, but lacked consistency. It was obvious from the tournament that their batting needs to be improved; some solidity has to be imparted to the middle order. Of the three teams they seemed to have had a longer tail, which rarely wagged.

The triangular tournament did provide lots of thrill and the second final carried the thrills to a nail-biting stage and the Indians came tantalisingly close. For the first time in the tournament Border & Co looked like nervous. When Sachin Tendulkar and Praveen Amre were pushing the score at a good pace and India was approaching her goal, the pressure on the fielders resulted in a few overthrows and missed catches. But once they got rid of the 'little master' (a title which for long was adduced to another great batsman of this subcontinent, Hanif Mohammad, and I beg to be forgiven by the readers for using the same title for this Indian batting genius, who is going to be the batsman of the current decade) they looked like getting back their composure.

The Indians were beaten, but cannot be said have been humiliated. They can take comfort from the performances of a few and would obviously hope for better performance from others. The most miserable man at the moment is their captain Muhammad Azharuddin, whose highest score in the ten match series was 31 and in every outing he put up an air of haste, which is clearly indicative of nervous condition, which in turn caused further panic in the team resulting in a number of run outs in which he himself was involved. He is really undergoing a long 'nasty patch' and cricket-lovers would wish him all luck so that he can settle down to a relaxed mood with a confidence-retrieving score in the coming two Tests.

Whether the tour schedule of staging one day matches interspersed by Test matches did any good to the tourists or caused distress for them is a moot point. Test matches and one-day games are different brand of cricket. Not that every one can adjust to the changed atmosphere with ease. Would the result have been different had the one-dayers been played in one go either before or after the five Tests? Keep on thinking.