



Shri Lanka's opener Roshan Mahanama (R) pushes a ball from Australia's medium-pacer Tony Dodemaide (not in picture) past skipper Allan Border (L) on the second day of the third and final Test between Shri Lanka and Australia at Moratuwa on Wednesday. — AFP photo

Ranatunga stems Lankan slide

MORATUWA, Sri Lanka, Sept 11: Skipper Arjuna Ranatunga became the first Sri Lankan to score 2000 Test runs as he helped steer Sri Lanka to safety on a rain-affected third day of their third Test against Australia here Thursday, reports AFP.

Ranatunga (45) and wicket-keeper Hashan Tillekeratne (52) shared a record-breaking 99-run unfinished stand for the fifth wicket to take Sri Lanka from an overnight 143 of four to 215 for four at the close.

Shri Lanka were, however, still 122 runs short of Australia's first innings total of 337.

Heavy rain before the commencement of play washed out the first four hours and it was only in the final session that play was possible under overcast conditions. Thirty of the scheduled 90 overs were bowled in this session.

Thursday's heavy showers inundated parts of the outfield at the Tyrone Fernando Stadium, the world's latest Test venue. It required a strenuous effort by ground staff to drain out the water with the aid of buckets.

Ranatunga, 28, the sole survivor of the team that played in Sri Lanka's first Test against England 10 years ago, reached a personal milestone of 2,000 Test runs including three centuries in his 36th Test.

The mark came up when he pushed leg-spinner Shane Warne to fine-leg for a single. The Sri Lankan skipper hit three fours in his knock while Tillekeratne had five boundaries.

Both left-handed batsmen survived chances, Ranatunga being dropped on 10 by slip fielder Mark Taylor off spinner Greg Matthews and wicket-keeper Ian Healy letting off Tillekeratne on 40 off Warne.

The 26-year-old Tillekeratne later hit Matthews for two fours in an over that brought him his second Test half-century in his tenth Test match.

Both batsmen began their innings quietly before opening up against the spin duo of Matthews and Warne to beat the previous best fifth wicket partnership against Australia, which also featured Ranatunga.

Former Test captain Duleep Mendis, who is the present Sri Lankan cricket manager, and Ranatunga set up a 96-run fifth wicket stand against Greg

Chappell's Australian side in 1983. The unbroken fifth wicket stand also helped prop up Sri Lanka's oft criticised weak middle-order line-up which cliff-hanger.



ARJUNA RANATUNGA

has badly let down the side in previous Tests. Matthews bowled a tight spell and did well with a wet ball to give away just 50 runs in his 28 overs. Warne proved to be a little expensive, his seven overs costing 30 runs.

With Friday's rest day and intermittent rainy weather, a draw seems to be the likely outcome in the final Test unless Sri Lanka's batting collapses when play resumes on Saturday to set the stage for a

SCOREBOARD
Full scoreboard at the end of the third day of the third and final Test between Australia and Sri Lanka at the Tyrone Fernando Stadium here Thursday.

AUSTRALIA: 1st innings 337 (Allan Border 106, Ian Healy 71, Greg Matthews 57, Chappell 5-82)

SRI LANKA: 1st innings Roshan Mahanama lbw Matthews 50

Hathurusinghe c Boon b McDermott 2

Curusinha c Healy b McDermott 0

Aravinda de Silva b Dodemaide 58

Hashan Tillekeratne not out 52

Arjuna Ranatunga not out 45

Extras: (lb3, nb4, w1) 8

Total: (for 4 wks) 215

Fall of wickets: 1-4: 2-4: 3-11: 4-16

Bowling: O M R W Craig McDermott 23 5 68 2

Tony Dodemaide 14 4 56 1

Tom Moody 3 0 8 0

Greg Matthews 28 8 50 1

Shane Warne 7 2 30 0

To bat: Sanath Jayasuriya, Champaka Ramanayake, Dulip Liyanage, Don Anurasiri, Muttiah Muralidharan.

Umpires: K T Francis and B C Corry.

India, Pakistan agree on joint WC bid

KARACHI, Sept 11: Pakistan and India are to bid to jointly host the 1995 World Cup cricket tournament and have agreed to reschedule next month's Asia Cup to allow an Indian team to take part, officials said Thursday, reports AFP.

"Now that Pakistan is a world champion, it would be fitting that the next World Cup is held in the subcontinent," said Shahid Rafi, secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in Pakistan (BCCP).

"We will also persuade Sri Lanka to join," Rafi said.

He said to ensure Indian participation in the Asia Cup, the tournament has been postponed and fresh dates will be announced after the Asian Cricket Conference meeting at Lahore in October.

India had refused to participate in the tournament which was scheduled to begin in October.

He said the super Wills Cup matches will be held in October and November before the departure of the Pakistan cricket team to Australia for the triangular one-day match series.

The decision was taken after a meeting between Rafi and the former secretary of the Indian Board, Jagmohan Dalmia on Wednesday.

Dalmia, visiting as special envoy of the Indian Cricket Board, has been nominated as the joint coordinator for the 1995 World Cup.

Dalmia said he would contact the International Cricket Council (ICC) to muster support for the bid which has to be submitted by December 1.

He said in view of South Africa and England planning bid to host the Cup, Pakistan and India would have to work hard to get their bid accepted.

The BCCP secretary said a Pakistan cricket team will visit India next year to play Test and one-day series.

The Indian side will pay a return visit to Pakistan soon after that, he said.

Sidek on course for a treble

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 11: Except for defending champion Rashid Sidek of Malaysia, three other top ranking players were stretched to rubber sets en route to the singles semi-finals of the 180,000 US dollars Malaysian Open badminton championships here Thursday, reports AFP.

Rashid, Malaysia's number one and seeking a hattrick row in the five-day tournament, cruised to a 15-6, 15-2, victory against China's Ge Cheng in the quarter-finals.

Rashid faces China's Wu Wenkat, who is joint third and fourth seed, in the semi-final. Wu made amends to his erratic play in the first game to overcome Park Sung Woo of South Korea 9-15, 15-9, 15-7 in a match that lasted 70 minutes.

Danish Olympic bronze Medalist Thomas Steur Lauridsen, seeded number two behind Rashid although he had beaten the Malaysian in all their three previous encounters, struggled to eliminate Indonesian junior Fung Permadi 15-10, 2-15, 15-10.

In the other semi-final, Lauridsen has to cross rackets with Malaysian Foo Kok Keong who beat South Korean Kim Hak Kyun 15-9, 8-15, 17-7. Foo, Malaysia's number two, is also the joint third and fourth seed.

In the women's singles, top seed Huang Hua of China packed off Thailand's Somharath Jaronsiri 11-5, 11-5 to book a berth in the semi-finals.

She meets joint third and fourth seed Sarwendah Kusumawardhani of Indonesia who outclassed Sweden's Lim Xiaoping 12-10, 11-8.

Giantkiller Yuni Kartika, who stunned Asian Badminton Confederation (ABC) champion Ye Zhaoying of China in the preliminary round, continued her winning ways, beating Christine Magnusson of Sweden 1-11, 11-1, 12-10.

In the other semi-final of the women's singles, Yuni meets South Korea's Lee Heung Soon who clinched a hard-earned win against China's Lim Xiaoping 7-11, 12-10, 11-8.

Shah Sports Cup

Kashmitola Shaheen Smriti Sangsad and Swadesh Samaj Kallayan Sangha will clash in the final of the third Shah Sports Cup soccer tournament on September 15 at 3 pm at the Hazaribagh Park ground in the city, says a press release.

Kashmitola beat Lalbagh Tarun Sangha 5-4 while Swadesh Samaj Kallayan edged past Golam Mustafa Lane Kishore Sangha 1-0 in their respective semifinals.

The tournament committee has adjudged Bhai Bhai Sporting Club of Chandpur as the best disciplined team of the meet.

Lendl rallies against Edberg

NEW YORK, Sept 11: Defending champion Stefan Edberg was locked in a fifth-set duel with three-time winner Ivan Lendl when rain suspended play, leaving the last semifinals berth in the US Open to be determined today, reports Reuter.

The Swede led 6-3, 6-3, 3-6, 5-7, 2-1 with Lendl about to serve the fourth game when play was called. The match will be resumed following the men's doubles final today, which begins the programme on the stadium court at 11 am (1500 GMT).

The winner of the Edberg-Lendl clash will advance to a

semifinals match against American Michael Chang, who outlasted gritty South African Wayne Ferreira in five sets that took four hours, 17 minutes to play.

Edberg seemed safely on course to book his trip to the final four on Thursday after winning the first two sets against the ninth-seeded Lendl, but the 32-year-old former world number one refused to quit and fought off four match points, in the 10th game of the fourth set.

Lendl, trailing 0-40 and 4-5 on his serve, scrambled back to reach deuce, saved another match point with a service winner and then won the game with another stizzling service to Edberg's backhand.

Edberg, who looked invincible in the early going, struck a backhand volley wide as Lendl broke him at 30 in the next game to lead 6-5.

Rain caused a one-hour, 10 minute delay before Lendl returned to the court and held serve to send the match to a fifth set.

The fifth set went according to serve until rain returned after 16 minutes of action and prompted the suspension until Friday.

The fourth-seeded Chang, the 1989 French Open champion, wore down the freckly-faced Ferreira, who was hampered by a strained thigh muscle, 7-5, 2-6, 6-3, 6-7, 6-1 in their match.



Andre Agassi (L) shakes Jim Courier's hand after losing Thursday's quarter-final in the US Open. —Star TV photo

Courier wins war of baseliners

NEW YORK, Sept 11: The bruising rivalry between Jim Courier and Andre Agassi exploded into all-out baseline war on Wednesday, blistering the US Open with their fury, reports Reuter.

"Everyone was talking about how I am not playing well," said a haggard Courier, pacing in the locker room to fend off leg cramps from his nearly four-hour effort in beating the Wimbledon champion 6-3, 6-7, (8-6), 6-1 6-4 in a quarter-final battle.

"I'll tell you what, you can't look me in the eye and tell me I didn't play a good match out there tonight," challenged Courier, the Australian and French Open champion. "If you do, I will tell you are a liar, or you don't know much about tennis."

The top-seeded Courier and eighth-seeded Agassi tried nothing fancy or tricky. They just stood on the National Tennis Centre stadium baseline, loaded up on their forehands and blasted bullets at each other with unrelenting intensity.

"It was pretty big, pretty big hitting," said Courier. "We were standing back there and

whacking from the baseline there were not too many flat out unforced errors out there.

"Both of us were trying to make the other one run. You have to keep him on the defence."

The pace of the match left Agassi feeling the need to beef up his fitness if he is to tame Courier's power.

"With Jim you are going to need to rise to the occasion physically on every ball because everything is so heavy and powerful," said Agassi. "He is stronger than I am. I want to get out there and get stronger."

The rivalry, which turned antagonistic a few years ago when Courier competed with Agassi for the attention of coach Nick Bolletieri, has evolved in the last two years into a high-stakes series.

Courier has won the last four meetings, including the 1991 French Open final and another win in the Roland Garros semifinals this year.

Wednesday's battle, their first clash in a US Open, held the promise of even fiercer fights in the future.

"I think that the intensity of the match out there, kind of crystallizes the competition

that they (fans) are going to be seeing from us for a while," said Agassi.

Grabb and Reneberg settle score

NEW YORK, Sept 11: Jim Grabb and Richey Reneberg avenged their heartbreaking Wimbledon final loss by beating John McEnroe and Michael Stich 3-6, 7-5, 7-6 (7-2), 4-6, 6-2 on Thursday to reach the US Open doubles finals, reports Reuter.

"We came into this match carrying some baggage and some history so it is nice to win the long match this time," said Grabb of the pair's record setting loss at Wimbledon.

"It definitely makes it a little bit sweeter."

The second-seeded Grabb and Reneberg, who had a to wait through a rain delay of two hours, 44 minutes, will play the fourth-seeded Kelly Jones and Rich Leach in an all-American final today.

McEnroe and Stich had held off the American team in a Wimbledon record 83-game 5-7, 7-6, 3-6, 7-6, 19-17 match in July.

That marathon final took five hours and one minute not including an overnight darkness suspension at 13-13 that forced completion on Monday after the scheduled Sunday finale.

India won't call off SA tour

NEW DELHI, Sept 11: India's forthcoming cricket tour of South Africa will go ahead although the government is concerned about political violence in the republic, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

The killing of African National Congress activists in the Cricket homeland on Monday had further aggravated the situation which the Indian government would continue to monitor, he said.

Several organisations in South Africa had appealed to India to call off the tour, saying it would legitimise Pretoria's rule, he added.

India are scheduled to play four Tests and seven one-day internationals in South Africa on a 10-week tour starting late next month.

It will be the first official cricket tour of South Africa for 22 years. The republic's isolation ended last year when they were re-admitted to the International Cricket Council (ICC), the game's world ruling body.

South Africa's comeback to official international cricket was marked by a series of one-day matches in India last November.

They returned to Test cricket on an historic tour of the West Indies in April, but have yet to play an official Test at home since isolation.

Benjamin to play for Worcester

LONDON, Sept 11: West Indian paceman Ken Benjamin has signed for Worcestershire as their overseas cricketer for next season, it was announced on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Benjamin agreed a one-year deal and will replace Tom Moody, the Australian batsman whose country are touring England next year.

The 25-year-old Benjamin has made one Test appearance, against South Africa in Bridgetown last April.

Border calls for rule changes

COLOMBO, Sept 11: Australia's Test captain Allan Border has called for a rule change after Sri Lankan batsmen came off for bad light while spinners were operating, reports Reuter.

The rain-hit third and final cricket Test between the two countries seems destined for a draw when the match resumes on Saturday after the rest day on Friday.

Sri Lanka, needing to force a win here to square the series, start the fourth day at 215 for four wickets in reply to Australia's first innings total of 337.

Nearly five and a half hours playing time has been lost through rain in the current match.

Border said: "The weather has spoiled what would have been a good Test match. The wicket is the best we've played in the series."

Following the constant interruptions for bad light which has been a feature during Sri Lanka's innings, Border said: "There should be an international ruling given to umpires to call off play only in extreme cases."

"There is a lot of tactical play involved in coming off for bad light, rather than for reasons of not being able to see the ball. We are losing too much cricket this way."

The comments came after Sri Lanka's Hashan Tillekeratne and skipper Arjuna Ranatunga had accepted the umpire's offer for bad light on the third day when spinners

were operating at either end.

With Sri Lanka's prospects of forcing a win looking dim, Manager Duleep Mendis said: "We have two options left."

"Declare behind Australia and expect them to give us a reasonable target to chase or to go over their total by 50 or 75 runs and put them under pressure. We have opted for the second one."

Sri Lanka are expected to bat at least another three hours on Saturday before closing their innings. But everything depends on the weather.

Mendis defended Sri Lanka's refusal to play on the rest day saying "on two occasions against India and Pakistan the decision to play on rest days had backfired on us and we did not want to take a chance."

Gooch sees Essex through

LONDON, Sept 11: Graham Gooch hit a magnificent century to lead county cricket champions Essex to a remarkable win over Derbyshire on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Set a massive 440 for victory after being dismissed for a paltry 96 in their first innings, Essex showed their pedigree by reaching the target with four wickets in hand.

England captain Gooch was again the hero with an unbeaten 123, the 98th century of his career, but it was no one-man show.

Wicketkeeper Mike Garnham scored a fighting 66 in a sixth-wicket stand of 129 with Gooch and then Derek Pringle (28 not out) helped his skipper add 84 to clinch victory.

At the end, Gooch described his team's fightback as "a top drawer performance."

He admitted: "Once we had gone for 96 I think that made us more determined second time round. It was very satisfying and was as good as anything I can remember in my time with Essex."

Derbyshire captain Kim Barnett added: "That was an example to everyone else in



GRAHAM GOOCH

and he hardly played a false shot in a superb exhibition which lasted more than six hours.

Derbyshire's cause was hampered by injuries to West Indian fast bowler Ian Bishop, who was struggling with shin and Achilles tendon problems, while paceman Dominic Cork had to leave the field with a back spasm.

It was the first time in their history that Essex had scored over 400 in their second innings to win a match.

Career-best bowling of five for 79 in 19 overs by 17-year-old Glamorgan paceman Darren Thomas paved the way for an 86-run victory over Kent at Canterbury.

Thomas had an opening spell of three for 22 in eight overs as Kent, needing 329 to win, slumped to 189 for eight and left themselves little chance of the victory they needed to improve their prospects of finishing runners-up behind Essex.

Kent must now wait until the last match to know if they can retain second place but Glamorgan's fought win of the season means they will not finish bottom of the table.

Time to break the monotony?

NEW YORK, Sept 11: The women at the 1992 US Open have gone to great lengths to shed their label of predictability and now it is up to Maryjoe Fernandez to finish the job, reports Reuter.

In Friday night's semifinals the seventh-seeded Fernandez was to take on world number one Monica Seles, the only player expected to reach the final four who actually got that far.

In the other semifinal Arantxa Sanchez Vicario faces Manuela Maleeva-Fragniere, the fifth and ninth-seeded survivors of the upset-ravaged women's competition.

In recent years at the major tournaments the men's competition has been volatile, while the women were placid and predictable, teetering on the edge of downright boring

as they adhered almost religiously to expected form.

More often than not, all or nearly all of the top eight rolled into the quarter-finals and on the final Saturday either Steffi Graf or Monica Seles was left standing.

At Wimbledon Graf beat Seles, at the French Seles beat Graf. The two have scooped up the last seven Grand Slam titles and 11 of the last 13.

Martina Navratilova and Gabriela Sabatini, who round out the top four, claimed the other two.

Critics have argued that tournament officials might as well abandon the first 126 matches and just let Graf and Seles slug it out for the title.

But suddenly Graf and Gaby are gone. Martina's missing, and Capriati's been capped. Is there no respect for ranking anymore?

Fernandez, the Olympic doubles champion, has lost her

last 12 meetings with the top-seeded Yugoslav. But if the current trend holds, this is the year for the American to make the breakthrough to her first US Open final.

"It is going to be a tough match but I am happy to be playing against her," said Fernandez, who abandoned her usual passive baseline game to upend Sabatini in the quarter-finals.

Defending champion Seles has posted five easy straight-set wins, never losing more than five games in a match.

But she was suffering from a virus and a bad throat during the quarter-finals, which could sap her unparalleled strength, and she has yet to face a seeded player.

Seles remains the prohibitive favourite. "I think Monica is going to win it now for sure," Graf predicted.

But in the year of the upsets, Seles could be ripe to be picked off by the newly aggressive Fernandez.

For her part, Sanchez has never played better. The always enthusiastic 20-year-old is brimming with confidence and with good reason.

The speedy Spantard is coming off a huge quarter-final win over Graf that followed a 6-0, 6-1 humiliation of 14th seed Zina Garrison.

She also scored her first career win over Seles in the final of the Canadian Open two weeks ago, a psychological edge she may well need on Saturday.

Sanchez should have no trouble disposing of Bulgarian-born Swiss Maleeva-Fragniere, an unimpressive baseliner and a fixture of the bottom half of the top-10 for the past nine years.

"I know if I play like I did (against Graf) I can win the next match," said Sanchez, the last truly surprising Grand Slam champion when she won the French in 1989.

"I would very much like to be in the final."



Manuela Maleeva-Fragniere prepares to receive younger sister Magdalena Maleeva's serve during their US Open quarter-final clash at Flushing Meadows on Wednesday. Magdalena defaulted with an injury to ensure Manuela's passage into the semifinals. —Star TV photo