

Nat'l v'ball

Sports Reporter

Four teams — Patuakhali, Jhenidah, Khulna and Police — won their respective matches on the second day of the first phase in the national volleyball championship at the Kushtia Stadium yesterday.

The day was also marked with two walk-overs as Comilla and Dinajpur failed to turn up, leaving Moulovibazar and Noakhali winners by default.

All the four matches were decided by straight sets with Patuakhali trouncing Kurigram 15-11, 15-9, 15-13 and Jhenidah thrashing Bogra 15-10, 15-8, 15-8.

Police earned a 15-3, 15-10, 15-6 win over Agricultural University while Khulna beat Netrakona 15-5, 15-10, 15-12.

Office hockey league result

Sports Reporter

Bangladesh Army beat lowly Police AC by a solitary goal in the Sonali Bank office hockey league to register their second win at the Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Maqsoodul Haque scored the match-decider from a penalty stroke in the 57th minute.

In a rather one-sided affair on the rainhit day, Army got 13 short corners but failed to score due to poor marksmanship.

The day was then saved for the frustrated Army when they were awarded a penalty stroke 13 minutes before the final whistle.

With this win, Army upped their collection four points from three matches while Police is yet to open their account after completing same number of outings.

Illingworth unworthy?

LONDON, Mar 29: Former Test all-rounder Ian Botham on Monday condemned the selection of Ray Illingworth as England's new cricket supremo and said the sport's administration needed "a total overhaul", reports Reuter.

Speaking in a radio interview, he said Illingworth, who begins his new duties next month, would struggle to command respect from leading players after criticising some of them during his job as a television commentator.

"Illingworth, for the last 10 years, has made his living out of sitting in a commentary box and, at times, slagging off players he's now going to pick."

"I think that's very, very difficult. If you criticise players for a profession as a media man, it's very hard to come back into the fold and start picking the side," said Botham.

Botham said the players were not to blame for the fact England have lost 11 of their last 13 Tests.

"In any other walk of life, if a company was sliding like the English team have slid, then surely it's the management at the top of the tree that would be looked at, instead of blaming the players. I think the whole game in England needs a total overhaul."

Botham said his choice instead of Illingworth would have been former England fast bowler Bob Willis.

"I don't see why you have to be 60 years old and 20 years out of the game before you get considered for the job," he said in reference to the 61-year-old Illingworth.

"Once you get to the middle or late 30s you are too old to play but it seems you're not old enough to select a side until you're at least 20 years out and 60."

"That is totally illogical to me. Surely you should have someone who has been out of the game only a few years and still has his finger on the pulse, knows what the modern game is about and, more importantly, knows the players."

Donald rules himself out of one-day series

DURBAN, Mar 29: South African fast bowler Allan Donald will not play in the four one-day matches against Australia which follow the current Test series, reports Reuter.

Convenor of selectors Peter Pollock said on Monday Donald had asked not to be considered because of a troublesome hamstring.

Donald said he was "absolutely exhausted" and looking forward to returning to Birmingham, England — his home during the English country season.

"I will spend a bit of time in the Warwickshire nets with coach Bob Woolmer to keep in shape. I'll also be playing golf and preparing myself physically and mentally for South Africa's tour to England in June."

Hard hitting all-rounder Adrian Kuiper takes Donald's place in the 13-man squad.

BFF really means business

Sports Reporter

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is planning to unleash a package of tournaments this year to refurbish its dwindling coffers. It was decided in the routine meeting of BFF's executive committee on Sunday with president Oli Ahmad, in the chair.

When the present committee, led by Communications Minister Oli Ahmad, assumed the office couple of years back, the financial inheritance was worth Taka one crore and eighty four lakhs, which now has plummeted to Taka one crore ten lakhs.

BFF's fund-refilling project may begin with national club championship, a contest comprising clubs from all over the country. A committee, headed by veteran political figure Saifuddin Ahmed, a BFF member, has already been formed to implement the decision.

SAARC football tournament is another tourney BFF is planning to stage. Two officials each from the other six SAARC countries will be invited to finalise the meet.

Federation Cup, a regular feature in country's domestic football engagements, will be held in all probability after the DMFA Cup, scheduled for an April 25 start.

The meeting also fixed the officials for the Under-19 and Under-16 teams. Nazrul Islam has been appointed the manager of the Under-19 team which will take part in the sixth Asian youth football championships, due to be held in Saudi Arabia from April 12. M A Aziz Babul will be the assistant manager of the 24-member Bangladesh team. Former national football and hockey player Abdus Sadek will be the chief coach while Swapan Kumar Das, also a former Bangladesh international, will be his deputy.

The players picked are: Mohiul Hasan Shahjada (captain), Risat Shamim Abir, Murad Ahmed Milan, Shahid Miah, Amiruzzaman Motin, Mizanur Rahman Dawn, Asaduzzaman Sagar, Iqbal Hossain, Nazrul Islam, Abdul Qayyum Santu, Ariful Kabir Farhad, Lutfar Rahman Nayan, Ripon Bhawal, Rezaul Karim, Anwar Hossain, Anwarul Islam, Sabbir Hossain, Prodip Kumar Podder, Asaduzzaman Asad and Mohammed Azim.

Bangladesh will play their first match against hosts Saudi Arabia on the inaugural day. The contingent is expected to leave Dhaka for Riyadh on April 8.

Kazi Mishu, general secretary of the Dhaka Metropolitan Football Association (DMFA), will be the manager of the Under-19 team, which will take part in the 29th Asian Under-19 championship, scheduled to be held in Saudi Arabia in June.

The camp for the trial of the prospective players, under Ashraf Ali, will be called soon.

Elemental curse continues

Sports Reporter

The nature seems to be crossed at the Pepsi Cup 20th national cricket championship as rain reigned for the second consecutive day at the Dhaka Stadium to force postponement of the first semifinal between last year's winners Chittagong and fancied Sylhet.

The match, which was reduced from an 80-overs-a-side fixture to a 50-over one, could only progress until the first ball of the 31st over when bad light halted play. Subsequent heavy downpour removed any chances of resumption.

Sylhet, who were put in to bat first on a damp pitch by the Chittagong skipper Minhazul Abedin, resume on 120 for five today provided rain stays out of the plain.

On contrary, if rain prevents any play today the Bangladesh Cricket Control Board (BCCB) will have to convene a meeting to decide the fate of the match as the tournament by-laws provide no explicit measure to handle such emergency situation.

With only two of their recognised batsmen at crease, Sylhet would, however, fare better if the authority decides to give the match a fresh start.

The match had a delayed start yesterday under overcast sky, dispelling speculation of yet another abandonment. The two Sylhet openers — Athar Ali Khan and former national captain Gazi Ashraf Hossain — found themselves in trouble right from the start with the new ball often keeping low and coming late to the bat.

Ashraf, widely known by his nickname Lipu went first after he was caught by Akram Khan off medium paceman Morshedul Alam Chowdhury, having scored only nine with a couple of fours. Four runs later on 17, national skipper Faruque Ahmed fell to a catch by Ishtiaque for no score to give Morshed his second wicket.

Salahuddin, the off-spinner, rocked the already rocking Sylhet innings when Sanwar was clean bowled after scoring only two.

With the side precariously placed on 25 for three, Aminul Islam joined Athar Ali in the middle and together they withstood the pressure for the next 24 runs until Athar lost his wicket to Rubel. The all-rounder stayed at the crease for 59 balls and hit two boundaries for his sweaty 24.

Skipper Golam Faruque, coming after the departure of Athar, decided to go flat out against the Chittagong bowlers and with Aminul Islam playing the sheet-anchor role, the former national cap kept the fielders on their toes, punishing every loose ball and going for singles and doubles whenever there was a chance.

When badlight halted play, Golam Faruque had accumulated a 43-ball 42, slamming three fours and a six in the process. The other unbeaten bat is Aminul Islam, who scored a patient 30 off 57 balls with only one shot across the fence.

Weiss shows Becker way out

OSAKA, Japan, Mar 29: Three-time Wimbledon champion Boris Becker became the biggest casualty Tuesday when he fell victim at the hands of Robbie Weiss in the first round of the 650,000-dollar Salem Open tennis tournament, reports AFP.

The former world number one from Germany failed to keep a 3-0 lead in the final set to go down 6-4, 3-6, 4-6 to the spirited American.

Other American top seeds — world number one Pete Sampras, defending champion Michael Chang, Ivan Lendl and Andre Agassi — went through safely with straight-set wins.

Sampras staved off four set points in the first set to beat Stephane Simian of France 7-5, 6-3, while second seed Chang trounced Joern Renzenbrink of Germany 6-1, 6-0.

Agassi breezed past his compatriot Doug Flach 6-1, 7-5 and Lendl brushed aside Japan's Thomas Shimada 6-2, 6-1.

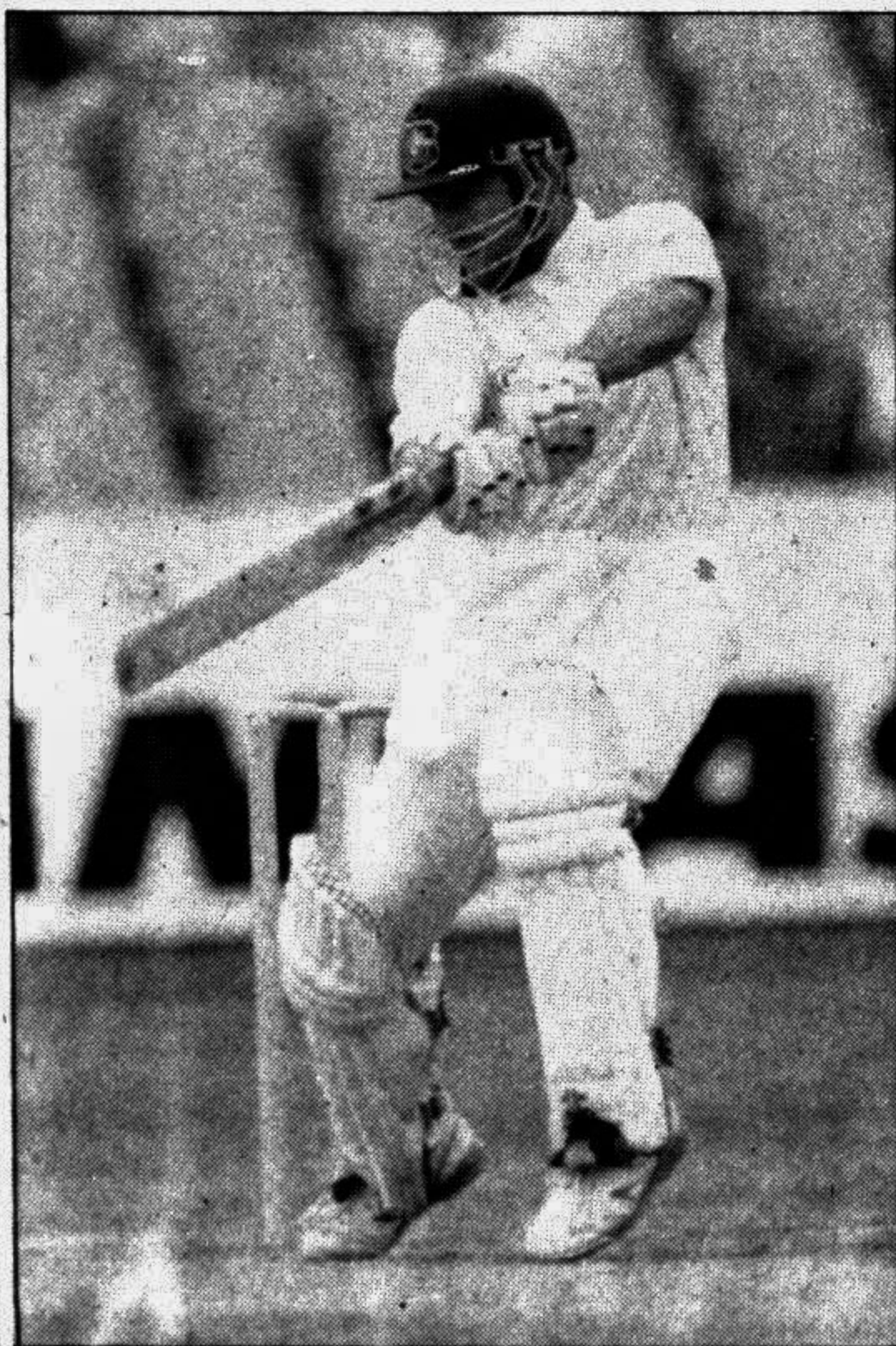
"It's probably my second-biggest win. I beat Sweden's Stefan Edberg when he was ranked two in 1992, and I beat Lendl when he was ranked sixth. So this is actually my third best win," said a jubilant Weiss.

"But anytime you beat someone like Becker, you can't say it's my third best win. It's a great win for me," added the 113rd-ranked American.

After going down 0-3 in the final set, Weiss pulled off a timely break in the fifth game and was donated another at 30-40 in the ninth game when his forehand return hit the net-cord and landed in Becker's court, putting him ahead 5-4.

"I played a very good game at 1-3 to break him and I was lucky to get a couple of net cords at 4-4 to break him again. I was surprised I came back from being down 0-3," said Weiss.

The American competed his victory with a backhanded passing shot to avenge his loss to Becker at the 1992 US



Australian opening batsman Michael Slater tries to cut a ball too close to his body during his innings of 95 on the last day of the third Test between Australia and South Africa at Durban yesterday. — AFP photo

Things will go on as they have been

DURBAN, South Africa, Mar 29: Australian cricket players will not be deterred by violence in Johannesburg and Durban, team officials said Tuesday, reports AP.

The decision not to make any changes in the tour of South Africa came after at least 31 people were killed in shooting and other fighting that broke out Monday as nationalist Zulus marched in Johannesburg.

In addition, Zulus loyal to Inkatha have been waging a low-grade civil war with ANC loyalists, also predominantly Zulu, in Natal Province, where the third South Africa-Australia cricket Test winds up this week. Since Friday alone, according to police, 61 people have been killed in political violence in Natal.

A spokesman for the United Cricket Board of South Africa said security has been tightened in Durban for the final Test. The Australian government has warned tourists not to travel to South Africa until the end of May.

Durban Test drawn

DURBAN, South Africa, Mar 29: The third and final Test between South Africa and Australia ended in a draw here today.

The draw left the series tied at 1-1.

WI 221 for 6 at lunch

PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad, Mar 29: West Indies were 221 for six at lunch, a lead of 145, on the fourth day of the third cricket Test against England at Queen's Park Oval today, reports Reuter.

Scores: West Indies 252 and 221-6, England 328.

Lodhi maintains his lead

Sports Reporter

Pakistan's Mahmood Ahmed Khan Lodhi maintained his solo lead but the scenario at the top of the points table in the United Insurance IM tournament went through a change with only one player chasing the leader in the second place on completion of the ninth round matches at the National Sports Council chess room yesterday.

Lodhi, the bouncy pathan who beat Monday's joint leader Kalimullah Khan in his ninth-round encounter, with a collection of seven and a half points, now remains half a point clear of IM Ziaur Rahman, who outmanoeuvred Indian Subrajeet Saha to finish the day solely in the second position.

However, the third slot remains crowded as it has been from Day One with as many as seven players sharing the place with six points. The septet comprises IM Reefat Bin Sattar, FIDE Master Syed Tahmidur Rahman, Kalimullah Khan, Ziaul Kader Tuhin, Jamilur Rahman, Sheikh Nasir Ahmed and Paritosh Bhattacharya — one of the four Indians taking part in the eleven-round tournament.

Saha, who shared the top position with Lodhi and Kalimullah on Monday, slipped down to fourth position and the two other Indians — Pritan Singh and teen-ager Suryashekhar Ganguly — also found themselves on the wrong end of the table yesterday to go further down.

Pritan lost to Nasir while Ganguly, the eleven-year-old who was rated rather extravagantly prior to the start of the meet, resigned to Arifuzzaman Shikdar.

Nat'l snooker begins today

Sports Reporter

The 10th national snooker championships organised by the Bangladesh Billiards and Snooker Federation (BBSF) get underway today at the Dhaka Club Billiards Room at 10 in the morning, says a BBSF press release.

Forty-nine players from different clubs in the country are likely to take part in the meet.

NSW complete another double

SYDNEY, Mar 29: Defending champions New South Wales thrashed Tasmania to retain their Sheffield Shield title today and complete their second successive double in Australian cricket, reports Reuter.

Fast bowler Phil Alley grabbed a career best five for 24 to wrap up the home side's win by an innings and 61 runs on the final day at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

New South Wales' 42nd Shield title, their sixth in the past 12 years, followed their victory in the Mercantile Mutual limited overs competition two weeks ago.

Captain Phil Emery, who lost the services of leading players Michael Slater, Mark Taylor, Steve and Mark Waugh and Glenn McGrath because of their Test commitments during the season, praised his young side's resilience.

"We've had our hard times and have come back," Emery said.

Tasmania, resuming at 92 for five, crumbled to defeat in little more than an hour.

The visitors, appearing in the first Shield final, made 255 and 126 in reply to New South Wales' commanding first innings of 442.

Alley, a surprise selection ahead of former Test fast bowler Wayne Holdsworth, surpassed his previous best of five for 43 against Western Australia in Perth last season.

Congratulations to Tasmania for making the Shield final — I certainly don't think it will be the last time they will be competing in one," Emery said after being presented with the Shield trophy.

Batsman Michael Bevan, called up last week to Australia's limited overs team, laid the foundation for New South Wales' big first innings total with a fine 113.



Ziaul Kader awaits Jamilur Rahman's move during their ninth round match of the United Insurance International Masters' chess tournament at the National Sports Council chess room yesterday. The match ended in a draw. — Star photo

India-NZ third one-dayer today

Tendulkar may open again

WELLINGTON, Mar 29: Sachin Tendulkar's blockbusting innings against New Zealand at the well-known showed how effective he can be as an opener, Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin said today, reports AFP.

In fact, Azharuddin believes it showed just where his vice-captain's future could lie.

"He should open because usually when he comes in he is under pressure and only has a few overs to bat," Azharuddin said.

"For a batsman like him he needs more than four or five overs."

"On Sunday he showed how good he can be. He has the technique and the temperament to be able to do it."

Tendulkar, coming in for the injured Navjot Sidhu, demolished the New Zealand attack at Eden Park with a whirlwind 82 off 49 balls.

His mercurial innings included 15 fours and two sixes.

Azharuddin said Tendulkar will probably only remain as an opener if Sidhu is again unavailable for the third match of the series here Wednesday.

Sidhu has a strained neck and did not take part in Indian training today.

But team management are hopeful the hard-hitting opener will have made enough progress to take the field.

He will be selected if fit.

"We will wait until tomorrow (Wednesday)," Indian manager Ajit Wadekar said.

"He has made a big improvement and should have improved more before the match."

Should Sidhu be fit, Tendulkar will likely revert to his normal batting position further down the order.

Wadekar indicated India were unlikely to make changes to their starting 11 from Sunday unless the condition of the Basin Reserve wicket dictates it.

There are 15 players in the squad, he said, and India have the armoury to cope with all conditions.

India's only real concern is the weather.

"We don't like playing in this cold," Wadekar said of the overcast and cool Wellington weather.

Despite profiting most from the low-scoring encounter in Auckland, the Indians are hoping for a higher-scoring contest like the first match in Napier, which New Zealand won by 18 runs.

The Basin Reserve pitch usually provides a contest of 200 runs each or more, and the first one-dayer of the summer resulted in a 213-202 win to Pakistan in a 48-over encounter.

Wadekar said the short duration of the Indian tour meant it was hard for players to get into good touch, but Sunday's result showed that progress was being made.

He added the batsmen are likely to be in even better form Wednesday.

New Zealand were unlikely to change their lineup, despite the drubbing in Auckland.

TEAMS

NEW ZEALAND: Ken Rutherford (captain), Bryan Young, Blair Hartland, Stephen Fleming, Shane Thomson, Chris Harris, Adam Parore, Matthew Hart, Gavin Larsen, Danny Morrison, Chris Pringle.

INDIA: Mohammad Azharuddin (captain), Ajay Jadeja, Navjot Sidhu, Vinod Kambli, Sachin Tendulkar, Sanjay Manjrekar, Kapil Dev, Rajesh Chauhan, Nayan Mongia, Anil Kumble, Javagal Srinath.

Becker back in Davis Cup?

BONN, Mar 29: Three-times Wimbledon champion Boris Becker looks set to return to Davis Cup action for Germany after a controversial break of nearly two years when the holders take on Spain in July's quarterfinals, reports Reuter.

German Tennis Federation chief (DTB) Claus Stauder indicated strongly on Tuesday that Becker would be part of the team to play the Spaniards on grass at home in Halle just over a week after the end of the Wimbledon Championships.

"I sincerely hope and also believe that he will come back," Stauder told Reuters.

"Boris said he was ready to play in the Davis Cup again at the start of the year ... we are going to talk to him and I will do everything I can to get him in the team."

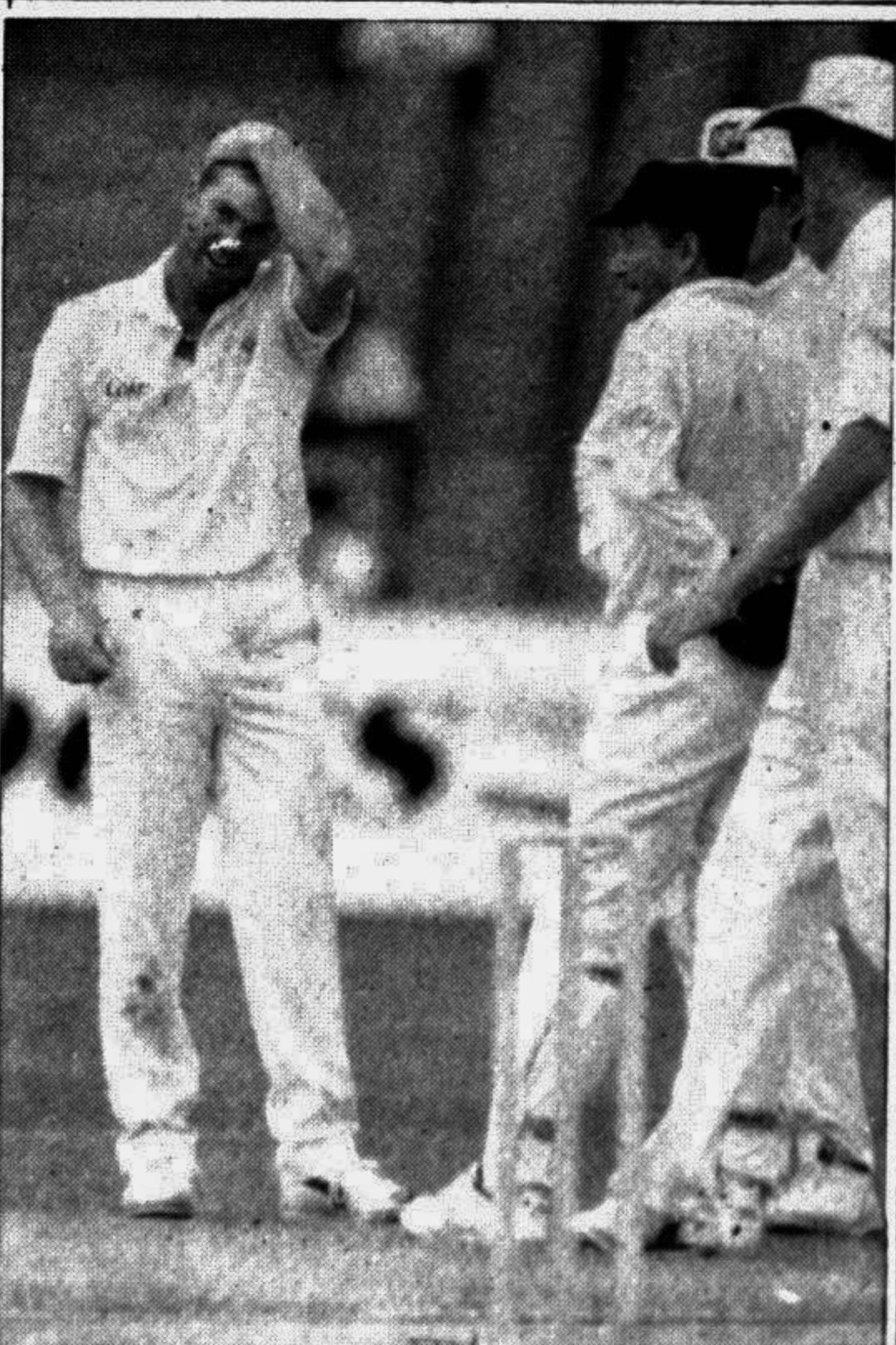
Becker, who has dropped to 14th in the world rankings after taking a break from the game while his wife gave birth to a son at the start of this year, last played for his country in a relegation playoff match against Belgium in September 1992.

His decision to miss the prestigious team competition to concentrate on his ranking last year came under heavy fire from teammate and fellow Wimbledon champion Michael Stich and the players were embroiled in a public row.

Stich, who has had to play in the shadow of Becker despite his own success, initially refused to play if Becker came back in the team and was recently very critical of Becker's comments about drug abuse in the game which he said were "stupid."

But Stauder said the two players had made up their differences.

"There is no problem there anymore. They both have re-



Aussie leg-spinner Shane Warne takes a relaxed look at the dismissed, departing South African batsman during fourth day's play of the third Test between Australia and South Africa in Durban on Monday. — AFP photo

WTA's top 20

ST PETERSBURG, Florida, Mar 29: Top 20 women's tennis players as ranked by the Women's Tennis Association on Monday, reports Reuter.

1. Steffi Graf (Germany)
2. Arantxa Sanchez Vicario (Spain)
3. Conchita Martinez (Spain)
4. Martina Navratilova (US)
5. Jana Novotna (Czechoslovakia)
6. Gabriela Sabatini (Argentina)
7. Mary Joe Fernandez (US)
8. Manuela Maleeva-Fragniere (Switzerland)
9. Kimiko Date (Japan)
10. Anke Huber (Germany)
11. Lindsay Davenport (US)
12. Natalia Zvereva (Belarus)
13. Mary Pierce (France)
14. Magdalena Maleeva (Bulgaria)
15. Jennifer Capriati (US)
16. Amanda Coetzer (South Africa)
17. Zina Garrison Jackson (US)
18. Helena Sukova (Czech Republic)
19. Sabine Hack (Germany)
20. Nathalie Tauziat (France)