

Indians sweat unnecessarily

Sports Reporter

India made heavy weather of an apparently undemanding winning target before carving a four-wicket victory over traditional rivals Pakistan in yesterday's crucial match of the four-nation SAARC cricket tournament at the Dhaka Stadium.

Appallingly inconsistent wicket plus inexplicable tentativeness of the upper order led to moments of worry in the Indian camp, but the theoretically most balanced outfit in the fray steered home in 33 overs, posting 123 for the loss of six wickets to overhaul the paltry Pakistani total of 120 in 47 overs, three short of the regulation quota of 50 overs.

Yesterday's win, India's second after a facile 44-run triumph over Sri Lanka on December 23, virtually assured Praveen Amre's men of a final slot in this quadrangular series. On the other hand, Pakistan will now have to beat the Lankans by a handsome margin to avert a premature elimination from the week-long tourney.

If hosts Bangladesh beat India by an emphatic margin, hypothetically improbable the proposition might sound to many, though possible for the puritans who believe cricket is a game of glorious uncertainty. Rameez Raja's men would have nothing to do but rue their low-scoring habits.

Pakistan's aggregate in the previous two matches, 288 runs, is the lowest compared to India's 305, Bangladesh's 335 and Sri Lanka's 305.

Already the hosts enjoy an edge over the Pakistanis and if the biggest upset takes place, the representatives of the world champions in the instant version of the game will have little choice but to improve their scoring records in the last league match.

For the Indians, who have been battered by the Pakistanis everywhere for the last few years at international level, it was some sort of a reprieve, not to mention their unbeaten record at the Dhaka Stadium spanning the last four encounters.

In the morning, Test-discard Salil Ankola rightaway vindicated his skipper's decision to bat first, striking very early in the Pakistani innings when the right-arm seamer castled opener Raja, who flopped for the second successive match, for nought with the scoreboard reading nine.

Prashant Vaidya made things even worse for the first users of the painfully under-prepared wicket, sending back Ghulam Ali nine runs later for four.

When Ankola struck again, inducing an edge from opening bat Sajid Ali, Pakistan were precariously placed at three for 29. From then on the fate of the match was quite perceptible with the batsmen coming and going at regular interval.

Although, Zahid Fazal, Ijaz Ahmed (jr) and Naem Ashraf tried to initiate some sort of a fightback, a paltry Pakistani total was an unavoidable reality.

A 32-run partnership for the fourth wicket between Fazal and Ahmed plus a gritty 32 from left-hander Ashraf spared the second national Pakistan selection from closing their campaign well short of one hundred.

Fazal, who produced a superlative 98 against India at Sharjah a few years back, made a chancy 20 while Ahmed was sent back for 22.

Indian wicketkeeper Vijay Yadav, who was later named the man-of-the-match by the Bangladesh Cricket Control

Board (BCCB), had a happy hunting time behind the stumps, effecting three dismissals plus playing his role in a run out.

Prashant Vaidya had the best analysis of three for 23 in nine overs while Utpal Chatterjee made the most of the pressure applied by the seamers earlier to mop the tail, claiming three for 28 in his nine-over spell.

Ankola picked two and vice-captain Rajesh Chauhan one but unfortunately the most

Nadeem Khan left-arm that kept low. Rathore sent the ball to the fence on three occasions in his 58-ball 33.

Skipper Amre didn't quite justify his claim for a recall in the Indian Test squad when the right-hander, in a rather amateurish fashion, went after a Naem Ashraf delivery that moved away from the off stump only to present a regulation catch to Sajid Ali at backward point.

Atul Bedade, reputed for his bullish batsmanship, couldn't get a chance to deliver his



economical bowler of the team, Venkatesh Prasad, who conceded only 13 runs in his nine overs, returned empty-handed.

A modest target ahead and plenty of overs in hand, India were given a sound start by the openers and the first wicket fell at 37 when Arun Kumar misjudged an Aamir Nazir delivery that moved fractionally away from him and offered a rather simple catch for the man behind the stumps, Rifaqat Ali. Kumar made seven.

Vikram Rathore, the other opener, appeared to have things well under control before being undone by a

goods as he was run out by a brilliant throw by Saqlain Mushtaq from mid-wicket. The hard-hitting batsman managed only one.

With six down at 109, man-of-the-match Yadav took over and along with Chatterjee at the other end, steered India home with no further damage. Yadav danced down the wicket and heaved Mushtaq over the mid-wicket for a huge six that landed in the stands to end the chase.

When the diminutive Indian wicketkeeper-cum-batsman returned to pavilion after an well-made 31, the Indians were well past the winning

target — 123 for six in 31.3 overs.



Scoreboard of the Pakistan-India match in the four-nation SAARC cricket tournament at the Dhaka Stadium:

PAKISTAN:				
Rameez Raja	b Ankola	0		
Sajid Ali	c Yadav b Vaidya	4		
Ghulam Ali	c Yadav b Ankola	8		
Zahid Fazal	c Ankola	20		
b Chatterjee				
Ijaz Ahmed	c Yadav b Vaidya	22		
Naem Ashraf	lbw Chauhan	32		
Rifaqat Ali	c Bedade b Chatterjee	1		
Saqlain Mushtaq	run out	14		
Nadeem Khan	b Vaidya	1		
Moshin	Kamal c Amre	2		
b Chatterjee				
Aamir Nazir	not out	0		
Extras: (lb-7, nb-4, w-5)		16		
Total: (47 overs)		120		
Fall of wickets: 1-9; 2-18; 3-29; 4-61; 5-69; 6-70; 7-99; 8-110; 9-118.				
Bowling				
	O	M	R	W
Prasad	9	2	13	0
Ankola	10	2	25	2
Vaidya	9	2	23	3
Chatterjee	9	0	27	3
Chauhan	10	1	25	1

INDIA:				
Rathore	b Nadeem Khan	38		
Arun Kumar	c Rifaqat	7		
b Aamir Nazir				
David lbw Mushtaq		16		
Amre	c Sajid Ali b Ashraf	5		
Bedade	run out	1		
Yadav	not out	31		
Chauhan	lbw Kamal	0		
Chatterjee	not out	0		
Extras: (lb-12, lb-2, nb-9, w-7)		30		
Total: (for six wickets 33 overs) 123				
Fall of wickets: 1-37; 2-61; 3-77; 4-78; 5-108; 6-109.				
Bowling				
	O	M	R	W
Aamir Nazir	9	0	29	1
Moshin Kamal	4	0	15	1
Naem Ashraf	10	0	30	1
Nadeem Khan	6	2	14	1
Saqlain Mushtaq	4	1	21	1

Result: India won by four wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Vijay Yadav (India).

TODAY'S MATCH

Bangladesh vs India

Culprit trio comes clean

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 25: Three of 51 soccer players detained in a huge corruption investigation have confessed to fixing matches in Malaysia's professional league, the Sun Newspaper reported today, reports Reuters.

The Sun quoted a senior police officer as saying the trio, from the Selangor team, made the confession on Thursday.

But the police officer said investigations are continuing as the confession might not be enough to charge the soccer players in court.

They are among five Selangor team players detained after the side was bundled out in the semifinals of the Malaysia Cup tournament three weeks ago.

The Sunday Star newspaper said police were now extending their investigations abroad as several foreign players in the 16-team league could be involved in match-fixing.

The Sunday Star said police were investigating the Pahang side in the match-fixing allegations.

Police picked up two Pahang players after the team lost 4-0 to Singapore in the Malaysia Cup tournament final last weekend. Police sources said several more are expected to be detained by the end of this year.

Football officials were not available for comment.

Police accelerated their crackdown on match-fixing towards the close of the Malaysia Cup tournament and made almost daily arrests of players throughout the country.

They also arrested a third bookmaker, nicknamed the Southern King, last Wednesday and are investigating his connections with betting syndicates outside Malaysia.

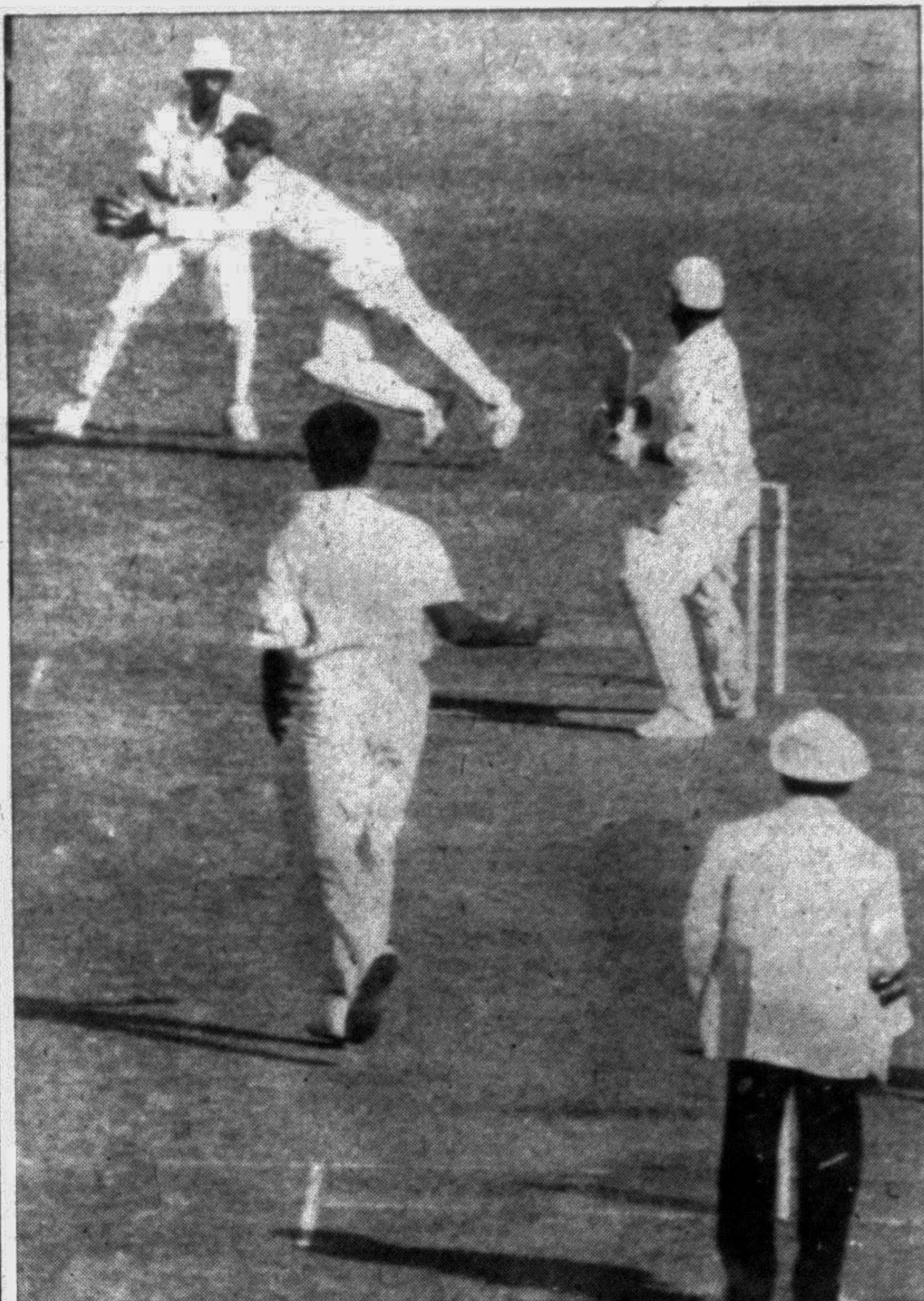
Another two bookmakers arrested in October were banished to remote districts for two years under Malaysia's emergency laws.

Police sources said previously that close to 100 players may be arrested and detained for questioning by the end of the investigations.

The Bribery scandal in Malaysia and Singapore blew up after Singapore anti-corruption officials arrested Czech striker Michael Vana and a Singaporean referee in August on charges of fixing six matches in Malaysia's 16-team professional league. Vana returned to his home country while on bail.

Title retained

BANGKOK, Dec 25: Thailand's Saen Sor Polenchit stopped Danny Nunez of the Dominican Republic in the 11th round Sunday and retained his World Boxing Association flyweight title, reports AP.



CATCH OF THE MATCH: Man of the match Vijay Yadav, the Indian wicketkeeper is about to fling himself across the turf to snap the snick provided by Pakistani batsman Ghulam Ali off the bowling of Saqlain Mushtaq during the top billing of the SAARC tournament, which turned out to be an expectational fiasco at the Dhaka Stadium. India maintained a clean slate in the clash of the subcontinental titans here with a four-wicket win. — Star photo by A K M Mohsin

Rise of Sarsfield, fall of Milan



1994, and Velez Sarsfield dominated 1994's premier club competitions in Europe and South America, writes AP.

Velez Sarsfield beat Sao Paulo on penalties to win the Libertadores Cup, but it was a low-key affair compared with Milan's stunning 4-0 win over Barcelona in the European Champions' Cup.

Milan overturned most pundits' predictions that Barcelona's maverick attacking flair would be too much for Milan's defensive solidarity and discipline.

Goals from an inspired Dejan Savicevic, rejuvenated Daniel Massaro, who hit two, and surprise package Marcel Desailly shocked Barcelona's future World Cup stars Hristo Stoichkov and Romario.

Unfortunately Milan were not to know the heights they had scaled that fateful night in Athens on May 18 would only tee them up for a dramatic plunge to earth with a series of disasters the following season.

Montenegrin Savicevic, who scored the best goal and created the other three, would have been let go had Milan coach Fabio Capello had his way.

But the confidence of club president Silvio Berlusconi in his favourite player was fully vindicated in front of Milan's 30,000 out of 40,000 total crowd that night.

Suspensions to central defenders Franco Baresi and Alessandro Costacurta looked set to give Barcelona a free

path to goal. But Milan's mid-field hardly ever let them get that far and then used the ball intelligently to create scoring chances.

At the end, "Barca" coach Johann Cruyff conceded his side had lost to a better team. "Milan deserved to win. They moved the ball around better than we did, won all the important tackles, stretched us at the back and got their players in behind our defence."

Capello said his team played an extraordinary match. "We knew Barcelona's strengths and went out to play on their weaknesses. Our tactics and approach were dictated to some extent by the players we had available, but I couldn't have asked any more in the circumstances."

Velez Sarsfield won a poor two-leg final over Sao Paulo, champions for the past two seasons, and won the event for Argentina for the first time in eight years.

Both teams won their home legs 1-0 before Velez went on to win the penalty shoot-out 5-3.

Sao Paulo, who had shortly beforehand sold many key players, were unrecognisable from the Tele Santana side which dominated the competition the two years before. Perhaps the 100 or so matches in various domestic competitions took its toll.

But Velez Sarsfield went on to win the Intercontinental Championship with a 2-0 win over AC Milan in Tokyo to further justify their status as South America's best.

But Milan's demise merely mirrored their terrible 1994/95 season up to late November. They only lost three league matches last sea-

son. But by October 26, their aggregate loss to rivals Inter Milan in the Italian Cup was their sixth defeat this season.

Also, it was the same day European governing body UEFA confirmed their punishment for an incident in which Casino Salzburg keeper Otto Konrad was hit on the head by a half-full plastic bottle in a European Champions' League match Milan won 3-0 at the San Siro.

UEFA upheld a two-point deduction from Milan and ordered them to play their next two home matches at least 300km away from the San Siro.

Milan's superiority of the last decade, summed up by their 58-match unbeaten Italian league run eventually broken by Parma's Faustino Asprilla in March 1993, looked light years away.

However, AC Milan managed to claim a quarter-final spot with a win over Casino Salzburg in their sixth and last Champions' League match on December 7.

In the top half of March's quarter-finals, Bayern Munich face IFK Gothenburg and Hajduk Split play Ajax Amsterdam.

A repeat of last year's final is impossible as both AC Milan and Barcelona are in the bottom half of the draw. Milan play Benfica and Barcelona face Paris Saint Germain, who won all six Champions' League matches.

In the 1993/94 UEFA Cup, Inter Milan gave the San Siro a European double as they beat Casino Salzburg 2-0 on aggregate. But like their neighbours AC Milan, European success brought dismal domestic form.

Romario best in Brazil

SAO PAULO, Dec 25: Romario, who played a key role in Brazil's World Cup victory, has been voted the country's footballer-of-the-year, reports AFP.

More than 200 Brazilian journalists cast their vote for the Barcelona-based striker. The late Formula One Grand Prix star Ayrton Senna, killed when his Williams crashed during the Italian Grand Prix last May, was named sports personality-of-the-year. Brazilian league champions Palmeiras was voted team-of-the-year.

BEXIMCO football

Tangail beat Gazipur district 2-0 in the BEXIMCO national school football tournament yesterday, reports UNB.

At Tangail, Aziz put the host side ahead in the 22nd minute of the first half while Zeaul Hasan settled the issue in the 16th minute of the second.

At Jessore, Bagerhat defeated Jhalakati 2-0. Tutu scored both the goals.

At Natore, Rajshahi edged Rangpur district 4-2.

Sylhet overcame Sunamganj 4-2 in the tie-breaker at Comilla. The match ended in a one-all draw in normal time.

Coates' distinction

CHICAGO, Dec 25: New England's Ben Coates on Saturday set an National Football League record for most receptions by a tight end in a season, reports AP.

Coates' 96th catch, early in the fourth quarter of the Patriots' game against the Chicago Bears, moved him past Todd Christensen, who had 95 receptions for the Los Angeles Raiders in 1986.

Coates entered the season's final weekend as the AFC's top receiver.

The Patriots beat the Bears 13-3 for their seventh straight victory. They also secured a spot in the playoffs for the first time since 1986.

SA-NZ 2nd Test begins today



DURBAN, South Africa, Dec 25: South Africa, minus retired skipper Kepler Wessels, meet a New Zealand side bereft of any significant match practice recently in the second Test starting at Kingsmead on Monday, reports Reuters.

The tourists recorded a memorable 137-run win in the first match of a three-test series in Johannesburg last month but have since suffered five losses and a no-result in the Mandela Trophy one-day series.

Their preparations were further disrupted in Paarl against Boland last week when both teams were bowled out on the first day on a sub-standard pitch and the match was called off after just one over on the second day.

"I was pretty annoyed at that," said New Zealand captain Ken Rutherford. "After the debacle of the one-day series we needed a nice three-day match to let the batsmen get in and make some runs and the bowlers to have a good long work-out as well. It's very disappointing but I hope it won't affect our preparations."

South Africa, meanwhile, will be without Wessels who

captained his country in 16 Tests after their return to the international fold. Wessels, 37, who also represented Australia 24 times, has suffered from recurring knee injuries



D MORRISON

New Zealand will be without all-rounder Dion Nash, who strained his side during the first Test, but as compensation their most experienced and successful strike bowler Danny Morrison returns after an injury-disrupted year.

They must now decide whether Chris Pringle, who

was ruled out of the first Test with a broken finger, takes over the third seamer's duties from Richard de Groen.

"Richard did a fine support job at the Wanderers but Chris is a gregarious character and a handful for the opposition on the field which might make him worth his place," Rutherford said.

South Africa have dropped seamer Richard Snell from the side who lost at the Wanderers and included two uncapped players in Boland batsman John Commins and the young Transvaal quick bowler Steven Jack as well as veteran off-spinner Pat Symcox in a preliminary 13.

TEAMS

SOUTH AFRICA: (from) Andrew Hudson, Gary Kirsten, Hansie Cronje (captain), Daryll Cullinan, Jonty Rhodes, John Commins, Brian McMillan, Dave Richardson, Craig Matthews, Farie de Villiers, Steven Jack, Clive Eksteen, Pat Symcox.

NEW ZEALAND: Bryan Young, Darrin Murray, Stephen Fleming, Martin Crowe, Ken Rutherford (captain), Shane Thomson, Adam Parore, Matthew Hart, Simon Doull, Chris Pringle or Richard de Groen, Danny Morrison.



Indian wicketkeeper Vijay Yadav goes on his knees to run Pakistani Saqlain Mushtaq out during the crucial SAARC cricket tournament match at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday. — Star photo by A K M Mohsin

Spain's fourth consecutive league title in the 1993/94 season, was gifted to Barcelona when all seemed lost. This year, Deportivo la Coruna threw away their chance of first league championship.

The two previous years Tenerife upsets over Real Madrid handed Barcelona the title as the Catalonians kept their nerve on the last day.

But Deportivo la Coruna's slip must surely go down as one of the greatest Spanish mishaps of all time.

Miroslav Djukic only needed to convert a last-minute penalty to win the league, but his tame kick was easily saved. Barcelona, who beat Sevilla 5-2 on the last day, deprived their north western rivals on the last day.

Real Madrid finished fourth after being crushed 4-1 by Real Zaragoza in their last match.

Bayern Munich won their 14th championship since 1970, but it was overshadowed by their controversial match against Nuremberg. Munich, pipped at the post by Werder Bremen after leading for virtually the whole 1992/93 season, wiped out that painful memory as the trophy went back to Bavaria.

Munich beat Nuremberg 2-1, but television evidence proved Thomas Helmer's goal should not have been given because it clearly went wide of the post.

However, Munich won the replay 5-0 and went on to win the title days later by a point from Kaiserslautern.