

Sher-e-Bangla Cup soccer

The two remaining zonal semifinal matches of the 19th Sher-e-Bangla Cup national football championship will be held today at Kishoreganj, reports UNB.

Host Kishoreganj will take on Netrokona in the first match while Mymensingh will meet Tangail in the other game.

The zonal final match will be played on Saturday at the same venue to decide which team will play in the 12-team final round, likely to begin on March 16 at Naogaon.

The Zone-Two matches were suspended on February 25 following violence in the Kishoreganj and Netrokona semifinal encounter.

De Silva's optimism

NAPIER, New Zealand, Mar 9: Star Sri Lankan batsman Aravinda de Silva is not perturbed by his poor form leading up to Saturday's first cricket Test against New Zealand at McLean Park, reports AP.

De Silva, the tourists' leading batting weapon for the two-Test series, has been out of touch since Sri Lanka arrived in New Zealand more than two weeks ago.

Four visits to the crease have returned him just 56 runs and his last outing before the Test produced a first-ball duck against the New Zealand Academy XI in Palmerston North.

"It doesn't really worry me. I've always made big runs after I've failed before the Tests," de Silva said Thursday.

"I just trust it happens this time as well."

De Silva, the veteran of 42 Tests with a career-best 267 against New Zealand scored at the Basin Reserve in Wellington in 1991, said he was not concerned about his confidence.

"You only need to get a few runs under your belt and once you're in a rhythm there shouldn't be a problem," he said.

"I prefer not to worry about it. The worst thing you can do when things are not going your way is to worry about it."

Tour captain Arjuna Ranatunga echoed de Silva's sentiments.

"I'm not concerned about him at all," he said. "Aravinda can score a hundred at any time."

Sri Lanka enjoyed an intensive net session Thursday in which de Silva took a full part after missing training Wednesday with a headache.

A greenish tinge on top of the McLean Park pitch is likely to see fast-medium bowler Ravindra Pushpakumara included ahead of slow left-arm Javantha Silva for the one position which remains unresolved.

Auckland last bowler Kerry Wathousley, 21, who was included in the New Zealand squad of 12 after just three first-class matches, met his teammates Thursday — most of them for the first time.

Sainz leads rally of Portugal

The first day of the rally of Portugal developed into a familiar fight for precious seconds between four of the world's best rally drivers. But

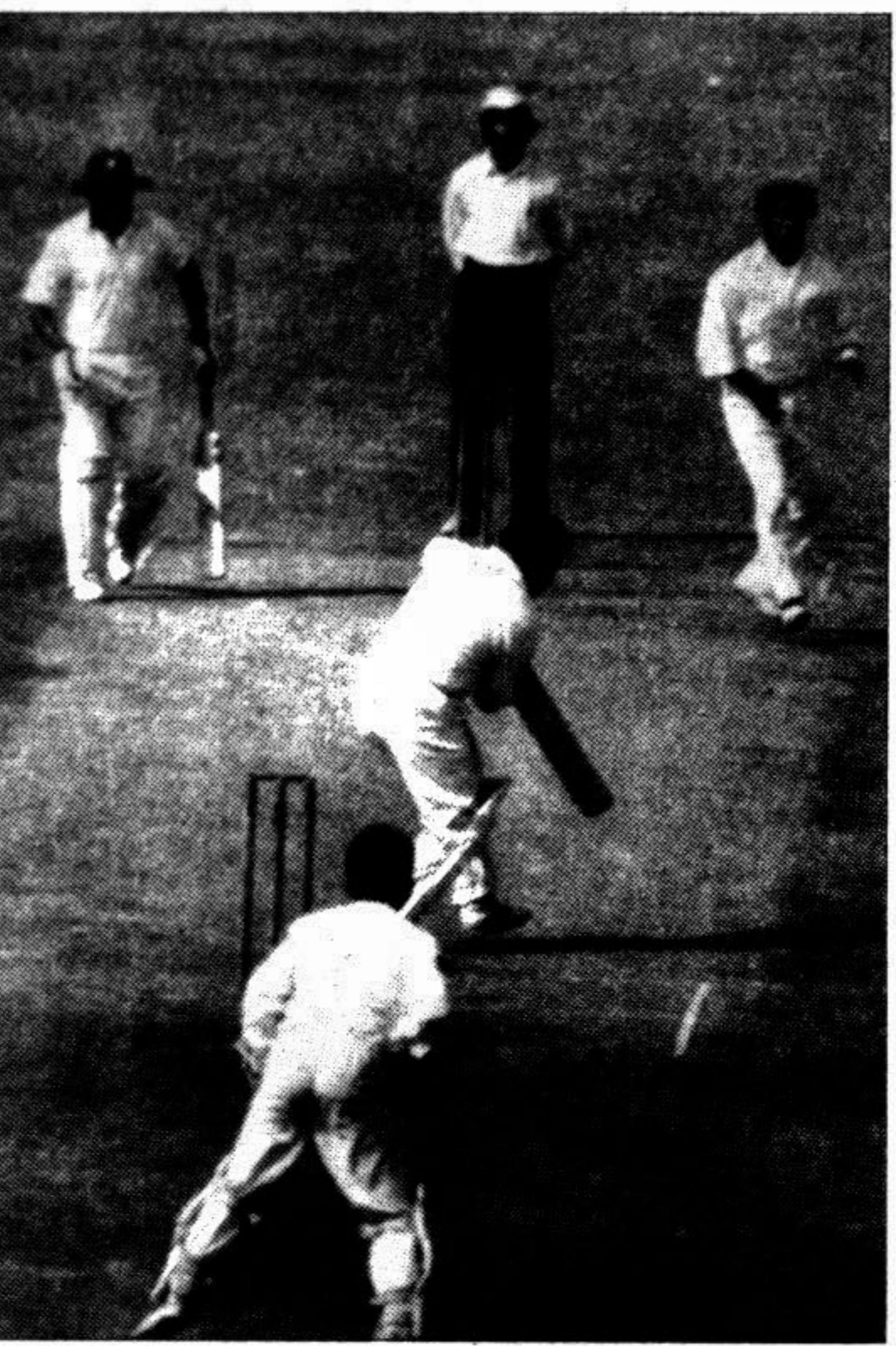
Kalabagan alone at the top

Sports Reporter



Athar Ali Khan stole Sri Lankan batsman Mapatuna's thunder as Kalabagan Krira Chakra squeezed out a narrow two-wicket win over Wari Club at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday to extend their winning streak to nine matches.

The tall Bangladeshi national took four wickets to restrict



Zakaria Intiaz of Kalabagan plays forward defensive against Sri Lankan batsman Mapatuna during yesterday's Navana Premier Division cricket league match against Wari Club at the Dhaka Stadium. Intiaz made 40 to help his side record its ninth victory in a row. — Star photo

Wari to a fighting but manageable 192 for seven in the stipulated 45 overs and then, opening the Kalabagan innings made a polished 41 to set his side on course for victory.

Although Mapatuna produced a statistically superior all-round performance, at the end of the day it proved inconsequential.

The win gives Kalabagan solo lead in the points table —

at least for a couple of days. Sent in to bat first by former national skipper Faruque Ahmed, the old towners were off to a solid start with the opening pair contributing 42 runs in 10.5 overs.

Although two wickets fell in the span of only eight runs, Mapatuna and his skipper Halim Shah not only steadied but also set the Wari innings up for an impressive total with

75-ball 45. Fifteen runs later Pakistani Amir Wasim became the tall allrounder's third victim, clean bowled for 31.

When Arif followed Amir's tracks at 184 undone by the combined efforts of Athar and wicketkeeper Farid Hossain, hopes of a big Wari total simply evaporated.

In reply, Kalabagan suffered a dramatic middle-order slump after Athar Ali Khan departed in the 20th over with the scoreboard reading 81 for three.

Kalabagan lost two more wickets with the addition of only 25 runs in the next ten overs before Zakaria Intiaz, the promising national middle-order bat, took control. The obese right-hander scored a timely 59-ball 40 to hold the innings together.

Nasir Ahmed and Pakistani Sajjad Akbar with 23 and 15 not out respectively were the other notable run-getters for Kalabagan.

Mapatuna, who spearheaded the Wari attack, did most of damage with fantastic figures of four for 32 in his quota of nine overs while Amir Wasim took two for 25.

Meanwhile, in the other match of the day at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, Surja Tarun Club put behind the premature death of young spinner Asif Omar Belim to record a facile seven wicket win over Gulshan Youth.

Chasing 157 for an outright victory in the allotted 45 overs, Surja Tarun posted 160 for three in 36.3 overs, thanks to a useful knock from Suman Biswas.

Suman, who shared 78 runs for the second wicket with opener Mamun, clubbed five fours and one huge sixer in his 97-ball 62.

Munna made a 47-ball 41 embellished with four fours while Emdadul, who had earlier shone with the cherry, remained unbeaten on 36.

Earlier, winning the toss, Gulshan Youth could muster only 156 before being all out in 41.5 overs in the face of a devastating spell from Emdadul, who finished with four for 21.

Ujjal with 41 was the top-scorer for the Gulshan outfit followed by opener Shafayat and Abul Hassan who chipped in with 33 and 27 respectively.

TODAY'S MATCHES

Brothers Union vs Victoria (Dhaka Stadium)
Biman vs S Bima (DCS)

Hosts in Masters' Cup final



BOMBAY, Mar 9: India put up a splendid all-round display to carve out an impressive 40-run win over England with 20 balls to spare and entered the final of the 90,000 pound sterling World Masters Cup cricket tournament at the Brabourne Stadium here today, reports PTI.

India, opting to bat first, recovered from a shaky 81 for five to pile up 236 for seven in the allotted 45 overs and then bowled out their rivals for 196 in 41.4 overs to emerge convincing victors in the absorbing semifinal.

Left-arm spinner Karsan Ghavri claimed two wickets in as many balls when the tie was

on a razor's edge with England needing 65 runs with four wickets in hand to swing the match irrevocably in India's favour.

Ghavri bowled superbly to end up with three for 22 while Mohinder Amarnath bowled his slow-medium cutters effectively to claim three for 34. For England, Tim Robinson top-scored with 39 but the Indians conceded as many as 41 extras.

India will meet the winners of tomorrow's second semifinal between West Indies and South Africa in the final scheduled for March 12.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the Masters Cup semifinal match between India and England here Thursday:

INDIA:

Srikkanth c Lever b Underwood	44
Gavaskar c and b Radford	11
Vengsarkar b Radford	2
Sharma c Larkins b Radford	0
Amarnath lbw Athey	10
Kapil c Radford b Cowdrey	50
Kirmani run out	52
Madan Lal not out	49
Binny not out	1
Extras (lb-6, w-8, nb-3)	17
Total (for seven wickets in 45 overs)	236

Fall of wickets: 1-29; 2-39; 3-49; 4-74; 5-81; 6-156; 7-221.

Bowling:	O	M	R	W
Pringle	9	1	41	0
Radford	8	1	26	3
Athey	6	0	30	1
Underwood	9	0	40	1
Emburey	9	0	65	0
Cowdrey	4	0	28	1

ENGLAND:
Larkins b Binny 1
Athey st Kirmani b Ghavri 23
Robinson b Amarnath 39
Gatting b Amarnath 13

Graf rolls on

DELRAY BEACH, Florida, Mar 9: Steffi Graf, struggling at the start but overpowering at the end, beat Nicole Bradtko 6-4, 6-1 Wednesday night to reach the quarterfinals of the Delray Beach Winter Championships, reports AP.

Bradtko, an Australian who in three months has risen 98 spots in the rankings to No 54, led 3-1 before the German star reeled off 10 of the next 11 games.

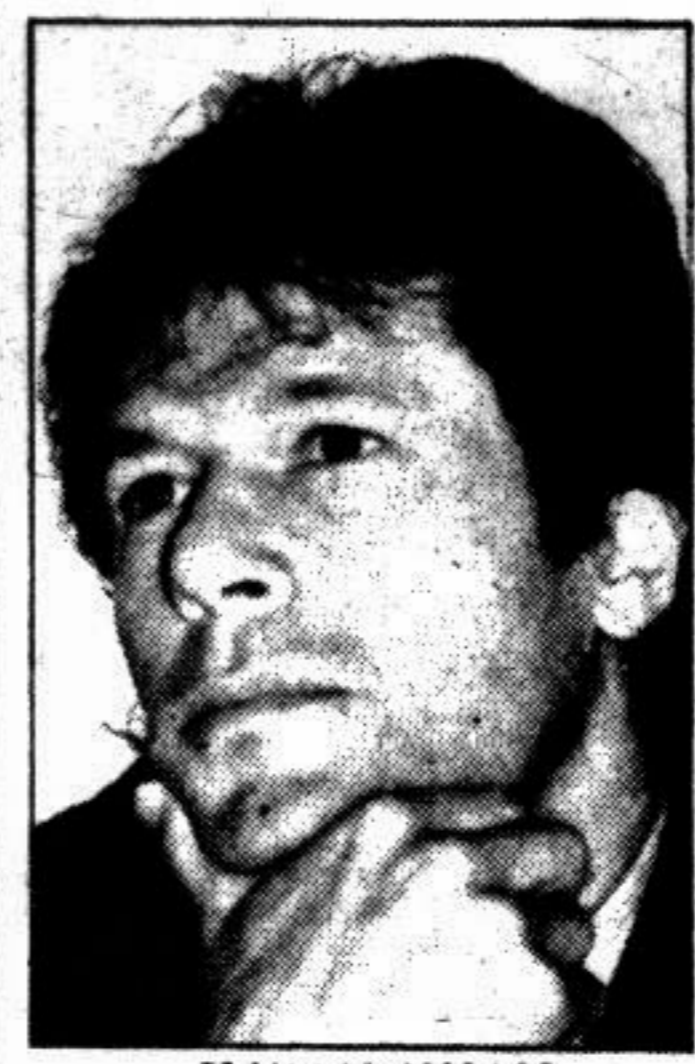
In a match delayed because of rain for four hours, Spain's Conchita Martinez, the No 2 seed, defeated Catalina Cristea of Romania 6-0, 6-2.

Mary Joe Fernandez of Miami withdrew from singles because of flu symptoms.

Hang 'em, says Imran

SYDNEY, Mar 9: Former Pakistan cricket captain Imran Khan wants any of his countrymen found guilty of taking bribes to be hanged, reports AFP.

Under the headline in today's Sydney Morning Herald "Salim should hang if he's guilty," Imran was quoted in an article, datelined Karachi, as saying: "If anyone is guilty he should be kicked out from the



IMRAN KHAN

team." "The culprits should be sent to jail and should be given due punishment because whose-ever disgraces the country has no right to represent it at the international level."

"They should be hanged for disgracing the country." Imran's comments follow this week's sacking of Pakistani captain Salim Malik on his return from the national team's tour of Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Malik seeking legal advice

ISLAMABAD, Mar 9: Former Pakistan captain Salim Malik said on Wednesday he was consulting his lawyer over his sacking by the country's cricket authorities following allegations that he offered bribes to two Australian players, reports Reuter.

He declined to comment on Tuesday's sacking by a three-man ad-hoc committee running the Board of Control for Cricket in Pakistan (BCCP).

"Right now I am speaking to my lawyer," he said in his home town of Rawalpindi. "I am not going to comment until I have discussed (the matter) with him."

Malik has already denied the charges that he offered bribes to Shane Warne and Tim May for losing the first test in Karachi last year.

Agassi amerces Wilander

INDIAN WELLS, Mar 9: Andre Agassi, bidding to become the world's No 1 player, routed Mats Wilander 6-0, 6-2 Wednesday in the second of the Newsweek Champions Cup, reports AP.

Agassi, ranked No 2 and seeded second in this tournament behind top-ranked Pete Sampras, needed only 58 minutes to dispose of Wilander, himself a former No 1 player.

If Agassi wins this tournament and Sampras is eliminated early, Agassi would ascend to No 1.

First one-dayer against Aussies Windies win a cliffhanger



BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, Mar 9: West Indies beat Australia by six runs in dramatic fashion in their first one-day cricket international here on Wednesday, reports AFP.

West Indies set the tourists a 258 run victory target and Australia needed 13 runs off the last over of the game.

Bowler Curtley Ambrose ensured that the total was beyond them, giving away only six, leaving Australia on 251 for six wickets.

Man-of-the-match Carl Hooper scored 84 and Brian Lara 55 as the West Indies hit 257 all-out in 49.4 overs.

Hooper hit eight fours and one six before he was caught off paceman Craig McDermott by Tim May at long-off.

Australia were always behind in the chase but the match was set for a grandstand finish at the Kensington Oval as David Boon launched a late charge.

But two quick wickets sapped the Australian drive, though defiant Boon ended unbeaten on 85, the top score of the day.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the first one-day international between West

Indies and Australia here on Wednesday:

WEST INDIES
P Simmons c Taylor b Warne 37
S Williams c Healy b Reffel 11
B Lara c Taylor b Blewett 55
R Richardson run out 9
C Hooper c May b McDermott 84
J Adams c M Waugh 2
b McDermott 2
J Murray c Healy b M Waugh 12

Australia
M Taylor c Simmons b Walsh 41
M Slater c Adams b Benjamin 21
M Waugh c Murray b Walsh 29
D Boon not out 85
S Waugh b Drakes 26
G Blewett c Walsh b Ambrose 33
I Healy run out 0
P Reffel not out 10
Extras: (lb-1, w-5) 6
Total: (six wks, 50 overs) 251

Fall of wickets: 1-50, 2-94, 3-94; 4-156; 5-235; 6-236
Did not bat: S Warne, C McDermott, T May

Bowling: O M R W
McDermott 10 0 25 3
Reffel 10 1 50 1
M Waugh 6.4 0 42 3
Warne 10 0 56 1
Blewett 8 0 44 1
May 5 0 36 0

AUSTRALIA
M Taylor c Simmons b Walsh 41
M Slater c Adams b Benjamin 21
M Waugh c Murray b Walsh 29
D Boon not out 85
S Waugh b Drakes 26
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Fall of wickets: 1-50, 2-94, 3-94; 4-156; 5-235; 6-236
Did not bat: S Warne, C McDermott, T May

Bowling: O M R W
Ambrose 10 1 43 1
Walsh 10 1 52 2
Benjamin 6.1 0 24 1
Drake 9.5 0 39 1
Hooper 5 0 46 0
Simmons 9 0 46 0

West Indies win by six runs.
Man-of-the-match: Carl Hooper.



CARL HOOPER ... m-o-m

Fletcher falls from grace



LONDON, Mar 9: Keith Fletcher was on Wednesday dismissed as England cricket manager following the team's poor showing on the recent tour of Australia, reports Reuter.

The Test and County Cricket Board (TCCB) announced at a news conference that chairman of selectors Ray Illingworth would combine both jobs for the immediate future.

Fletcher, who leaves with a record of only five wins in 26 Tests since he succeeded Micky Stewart, was halfway through a five-year contract and is likely to receive compensation of around 100,000 pounds sterling (160,000 dollars).

Alan Smith, chief executive of the TCCB, said in a statement: "Ray will continue as chairman of selectors and will take full responsibility for the England team. He will be accountable for its performance."

Smith said Illingworth's dual role would be reviewed after the World Cup in Pakistan early next year, which the former England captain was happy to accept.

Smith stressed the board had no intention of reducing the role of England captain Mike Atherton.

"Ray has been asked to form a partnership with the captain in the normal way," he said.

Illingworth and Fred Titmus are joined on England's selection committee by David Graveney, 42-year-old former Gloucestershire, Somerset and Durham spinner. Graveney, chief executive of the cricketers' association, replaces former Test opener Brian Bolus.

Keith Fletcher, for so long

revered in English county cricket circles as the successful and wise old "gnome" of Essex, now has to learn to live with failure.

Sacked on Wednesday halfway through a five-year contract as England manager, Fletcher finds himself cast in the role of scapegoat for the latest troubles of the Test team.

Fifteen defeats in 26 Tests

Fletcher may have had communication problems with some of his players, and there are also whispers of criticism of his abilities as a coach, but no one could accuse him of not knowing the game.

But Illingworth, quizzed on Wednesday, pinpointed the areas where England had to improve.

"Team spirit, motivation and confidence," he declared. "We have to try to get players consistently playing to their ability."

"At the end of last summer, against South Africa, I would have fancied us to give anyone a good game. What we haven't done is taken that on."

Fletcher has lived for cricket, though he would not have wanted to have ever gone without his beloved fishing, shooting and gardening.

His other latter-day passion — skiing — was occupying him even as he heard about his sacking.

He may be a shy person at heart, but there is still too in his character and he has never been one to duck an issue or a challenge.

Honest, dedicated, approachable, tough and — as Bolus confirms — "a man of very considerable integrity," Fletcher will however now be judged as being the wrong man for a high-profile post.

Yet, because of the person he is, those strengths will also be remembered.



KEITH FLETCHER

World Indoor Championships begin in Barcelona today Privalova eyes 400m mark



BARCELONA, Mar 9: Irina Privalova, Europe's leading women's sprinter, enters new territory this weekend with an attempt on the world indoor 400 metres record at a World Indoor Championships already embroiled in controversy before the first competitors take to the boards, reports Reuter.

Russian Privalova, the double European sprint champion, has broken the world 50 metres record and equalled her won world 60 metres mark during a highly successful winter campaign.

Now she sets her sights on the 400 metres, taking on the one American global champion here in world outdoor gold medalist Jeari Miles and Jamaica's world outdoor bronze medalist Sandie Richards.

"I want to break the world record," Privalova said. "The 400 metres will be good for results in the 100 metres."

As now seems inevitable in modern athletics events away from the arena threaten to overshadow the undoubted talent on display here in the three day meeting starting on Friday.

The latest drama to affect the sport took a new twist on Wednesday when International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) officials expressed confidence that Britain's

Olympic and world 100 metres champion Linford Christie would compete here.

Christie said after a meeting in Germany at the weekend that he would not try to add the last major gold medal missing from his collection.

But on Wednesday IAAF chief Primo Nebiolo said he would try to persuade Christie to run and federation general secretary Istvan Gyulati added it was still technically possible for the Briton to take part.

However, British Athletic Federation spokesman Tony Ward said if Christie were to run he could now only be a wild card entry because he had been replaced in the British team by Michael Rosswess.

Christie has broken the world indoor 200 metres

Cyprus, Sweden draw friendly

LIMASSOL, Cyprus, Mar 9: Lightly regarded Cyprus scored two goals in the first five minutes and then had to rally with an equaliser in the 85th minute to hold World Cup semifinalist Sweden to a 3-3 draw Wednesday in an international friendly, reports AP.

Cyprus led 2-0 on goals by Marios Agathocleous in the third and Yiotis Engomitis in the fifth before Sweden, playing without four of their World Cup regulars, rallied to tie it before halftime.

record this year and would clearly give lustre to an event devalued by the absence of several leading Americans, including Michael Johnson who has twice broken the world 400 metres mark this year.

The original US team announced on Sunday has been further weakened by the subsequent withdrawal of 1991 world outdoor 400 metres champion Antonio Pettigrew although Nebiolo, somewhat surprisingly, claimed it was the strongest American team yet to attend a World Indoor Championships.

About 700 athletes from 140 countries will attend the championships including according to the latest entry list 10 Olympic champions and eight outdoor world gold medalists.

Prominent among these will be the peerless Ukrainian pole vaulter Sergei Bubka, Mozambique's formidable 800 metres runner Maria Mutola and veteran Jamaican sprinter Merlene Ottey.

It is now nine years since Christie won his first major title in Spain and Britain.

The 34-year-old Briton took the 1986 European indoor 200 metres title in Madrid and went on to become the most successful European sprinter of all time and only the second man after Carl Lewis to hold both the Olympic and world 100 metres titles.



It was the Subaru Impreza 555 of Carlos Sainz who emerged triumphant, to lead the rally by just 6 seconds, says a press release.

Throughout Wednesday's 11 special stages, Carlos Sainz and Colin McRae in the two top Subaru Impreza 555s swapped times with their old rivals, Juha Kankkunen and Didier Auriol. Only on the last stage of the day did Sainz deliver the final, telling blow — 14 seconds faster than Kankunen and quick enough to snatch the lead.

While the first two Subarus swept through the stages without any problems the skilled mechanics from the 555 Subaru world rally team worked their magic on the third Impreza, driven by Richard Burns.

The only major retirement of the day was the Ford Escort of Francois Delecour. Having rolled the car on the third special stage, the Frenchman was eventually forced out of the rally after the car lost oil pressure on the fifth stage.

Olympic solidarity course ends

The five-day long Olympic solidarity sports leadership course organised by the Bangladesh Olympic Association ended in Dhaka yesterday, reports BSS.

Chris Evert honoured

NEW YORK, Mar 9: Retired tennis star Chris Evert is still a winner, reports AP.

Evert, who earlier this year was elected to the International Tennis Hall of Fame, Wednesday was designated the "Player Who Makes A Difference."

The award was created by Family Circle Magazine in 1992 to honour the one woman tennis player each year who made the most outstanding contributions of both time and energy to worthy causes. The magazine and Hormel Foods Corp. co-sponsors of the award, each donates \$10,000 to the charity of the winner's choice.

The presentation of the award and the checks will be made April 1 at the Family Circle Magazine Cup in Hilton Head Island, South Carolina.

Asian b'ball

MANILA, Mar 9: China and South Korea were joined by surprise qualifiers Jordan and Thailand in the last four after the quarterfinal round games on Wednesday in the 13th Asian junior men's basketball championship tournament, reports Reuter.

Voeller wants to quit

BONN, Mar 9: Rudi Voeller, capped 90 times by Germany, is ready to retire at the end of the current German football season and return to live in Rome, reports AFP.