

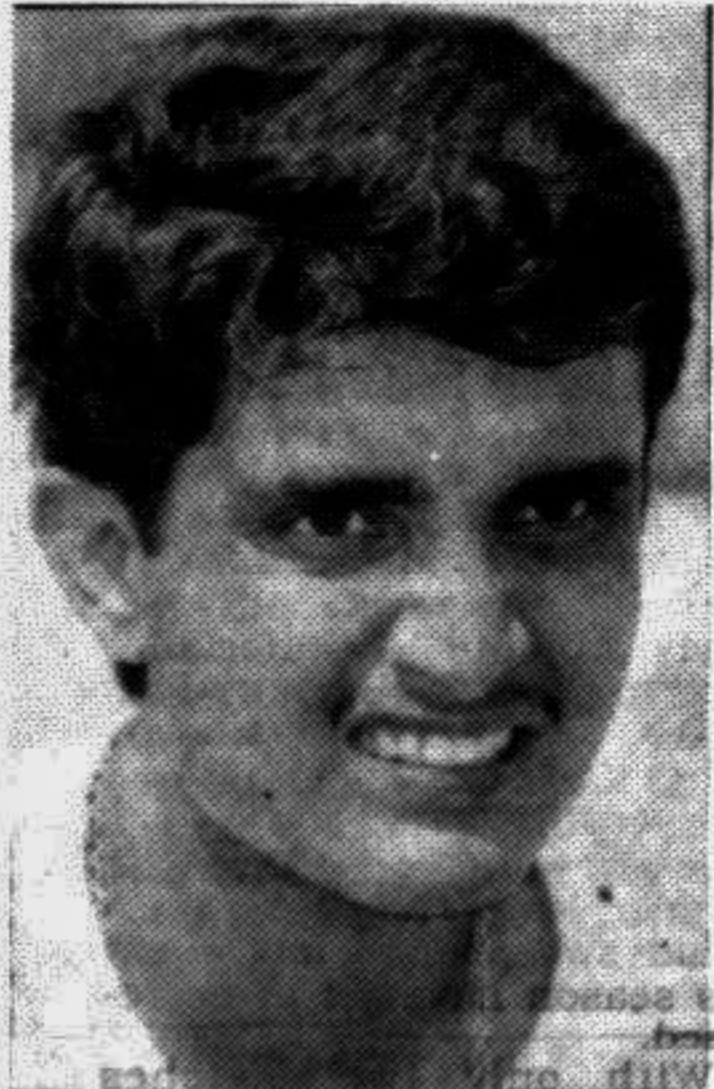


Pakistani leggie Mushtaq Ahmed (L) rejoices after capturing Alec Stewart's wicket on Day 1 of The Oval Test against England on Aug 22.

Sourav's dance of joy

CALCUTTA, Aug 23: Press reports of the marriage of cricketer Sourav Ganguly with his neighbour and an accomplished danseuse Donna Roy has set off you agog with jubilent fans craving for more news...

The item, first appearing in a local Bengali daily on August 22, said the marriage was solemnised on August 11...



Earlier, England middle order bat John Crawley duly reached his maiden Test century. He went on to make 106...

Another daily yesterday said that the 20-year-old bride, a next-door neighbour of Sourav was a noted danseuse and had given performance in India and abroad...

Tendulkar in Azhar's good book

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Mohammad Azharuddin, who lost his captaincy of the Indian cricket team, says his successor Sachin Tendulkar is the right man for the job...

"Sachin is like my younger brother. I really admire the way he carries himself. He is such a nice bloke."

"He has a very good cricketing brain. I hope he carries on and on." Azharuddin said in an interview on ESPN's sports channel.

Without naming his companying Sangeeta Bijlani, Azharuddin said it was "not very right to blame her for everything."

"Whatever I have done is of my own free will," he said pleading that people should judge him only as cricketer.

He said his commitment to the game and country was "total."

The Sidhu 'affair' did not figure in the interview. But, asked what went wrong between him and all-rounder Manoj Prabhakar, Azharuddin replied "I do not know what the trouble with him is."

"We must not give him a lot of importance. I do not like a person who is so inconsistent in his comments," said the former captain, who reportedly was also responsible for dropping the all-rounder from the team for defying his orders by batting slow in a one-dayer against West Indies at Kanpur in 1995.

Azhar's happiest moment as captain? Winning the Hero Cup in late 1993 and the 3-0 Test series win at home against England earlier that year.

Pakistan in driving seat

Sports Reporter

A blazing unbeaten 116 from left-handed opener Saeed Anwar put his side in a strong position against England on the second day of The Oval Test yesterday, according to BBC.

At stumps, the tourists were only 97 runs behind of England's first innings total of 326. After the fall of Aamir Sohail for 46 to debutant off-spinner Robert Croft with the score reading 106, Anwar was joined by Ijaz Ahmed, who is not out on 58.

Earlier, England middle order bat John Crawley duly reached his maiden Test century. He went on to make 106. Waqar Younis grabbed four wickets giving away 95 runs.

On Thursday, John Crawley's highest Test score kept Pakistan at bay as England reached 278 for six. Crawley was unbeaten on 94 at the close after almost four hours of measured strokeplay.

The 24-year-old Lancashire batsman, whose previous best in 12 Tests was 72 against Australia in Sydney in 1994 blossomed after a shaky start and enjoyed a splendid fourth-wicket stand of 89 with Graham Thorpe to lift England to 205 for three at one point in the afternoon.

It took a determined effort from the Pakistan attack to apply the brakes in fast-scoring conditions and the final session yielded a modest 70 runs as Crawley opted to dig in rather than accelerate towards a maiden Test century.

Crawley's first 10 balls scarcely hinted at a great innings to come. He might have been out low, caught at slip and bowled without playing a shot as Waqar Younis, who had already removed Michael Atherton and Nasser Hussain, strove for another victim.

But Crawley, who attended the same school as Atherton and has long been regarded as a test prospect of similar class, settled down impressively with

Thorpe, playing leg spinner Mushtaq Ahmed with an ease most of his teammates struggled to match.

Three times in the same over the leg-spinner was struck clinically through the off-side and the Lancashire man's 50 required 19 fewer deliveries than Thorpe's 89-ball effort.

It was a brave effort considering Atherton was struck a painful blow on the right shoulder in only the third over by Wasim Akram, who also had the arrival captain dropped at leg slip on 15.

The final session honours, though, were mostly Pakistan's after Nick Knight, who hoisted Mushtaq for a six over mid-wicket, was bowled by the same bowler off his pad and arm for 17.

The old ball belatedly began to swing for the faster bowlers and Wasim, who took nine for 103 in the match when Pakistan clinched a 2-1 series victory on their last visit to The Oval in 1992, surged back to remove Chris Lewis for five.



SAEED ANWAR ... 116 n.o

But to England's dismay, Thorpe, who has now passed 50 on 20 occasions for England yet scored only two centuries, was adjudged lbw for 54 to seamer Mohammad Akram, to become the third player guilty of wasting a good start.

Alec Stewart best summed up his side's slightly uneven day, hitting nine fours in a fluent 44 only to be bowled hitting across the line at a quicker ball from Mushtaq.

Hussain went for 12, steering

Waqar to second slip, and England were in danger of squandering a good toss when the paceman bowled Atherton behind his legs for 31 with the score on 116.

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SCOREBOARD Scorecard at the end of England's first innings on the second day of the third and final match between England and Pakistan at the Oval on Friday.

ENGLAND: First Innings (overnight 278-6) M Atherton b Waqar Younis 31 A Stewart b Mushtaq Ahmed 44 N Hussain c Saeed Anwar 12 G Thorpe lbw 17 b Mohammad Akram 54 J Crawley b Waqar Younis 106 N Knight b Mushtaq Ahmed 17 C Lewis b Wasim Akram 5 J Salisbury c Inzamamul Haq 5 b Wasim Akram 5 D Cork c Moin Khan 5 b Waqar Younis 0 R Croft not out 5 A Mullally b Wasim Akram 24 Extras: (lb 12, w 1, nb 10) 23 Total: (99.2 overs) 326 Fall of wickets: 1-64; 2-85; 3-116; 4-205; 5-248; 6-273; 8-284; 9-295

did last week. O'Brien said, "But I'm still competing well."

Still marveling at an exciting 64-stroke rally he won in the last game of his second-round match against Javier Sanchez of Spain on Tuesday, Enqvist joked, "Today against Petr there were about 64 strokes in the whole match. It was mostly short points."

Martin was pleased with his victory over Pioline, his first in five meetings with the 11th-ranked Frenchman. "It's always difficult to win a match when you lose the first set, especially against someone you have never beaten," he said.

I got more aggressive in the second and third sets and the wind picked up and that also affected things because Cedric definitely went off a little bit."

The 26-year-old O'Brien, who won the ATP Tour stop in New Haven last week, has now won 18 of his last 20 matches, dating back to qualifying rounds in Los Angeles in late July. He ranks 76th after being 285th four weeks ago.

I feel I'm hitting the ball well even though I'm having more mental letdowns than I

Medvedev in Hamlet qtrs

COMMACK, New York, Aug 23: Fifth seeded Ukrainian Andrei Medvedev, driving for a better tennis ranking, reached the quarter finals of the Hamlet Cup with a 6-3, 6-2 victory over Jan Kroslak of Slovakia Thursday, reports Reuters.

Thomas Johansson of Sweden, Adrian Panoea of Romania and American Jonathan Stark, three unseeded players, also reached the quarter finals.

Johansson beat Fernon Wibier of the Netherlands 6-3, 6-3. Wibier, who replaced injured Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia, never threatened Johansson's service in the 64-minute match.

Zimbabweans upbeat

COLOMBO, Aug 23: Zimbabwean cricketers, fresh from a two-month training camp, are capable of surprising their formidable rivals in the four-nation Singer World Series beginning here Monday, reports AP.

"We have a very good side," 23-year-old skipper Alistair Campbell said on Friday. "The team has put up a lot of hard work after a disappointing season and inducted some new faces, said Campbell who will be captaining his side for the first time in a major tournament."

Zimbabwe will take on Australia on Monday in the opening match of the two-week championship. World champion Sri Lanka and India are the other contenders for the title.

"Captaining a side for the first time against three top cricket playing nations is going to be a difficult task," he said.

Campbell was all praise for 22-year-old off-spinner Andrew Whittall, who is making his one-day debut after captaining the Cambridge University team, and Craig Wishart, 22, an all-rounder.

Zimbabwe will miss Dave Houghton, but the team has Andy Flower, Heath Streak and Paul Strang for the battle ahead.

"However, cricket is a team game and we have done a lot of work as a team and are working very hard," he said.

Pollock bids English county circuit bye

JOHANNESBURG, Aug 23: Warwickshire all-rounder Shaun Pollock is to return to his native South Africa for an operation on his left ankle and will miss the remainder of the English county championship season, reports Reuters.

Pollock, 23, will fly back to South Africa on Tuesday after Warwickshire's county match against Worcestershire.

United Cricket Board of South Africa managing director Ali Bacher said Pollock would probably need two months to recover.

"He will definitely miss the South African team's short tour to Kenya in September and the early part of the tour of India in October," said Bacher.

"But if everything goes according to plan then he could make his comeback in Natal's four-day game against Border in early November and the fly to India in time for the three Tests."

Martinez reaches semis

CARLSBAD, California, Aug 23: Defending champion and second seed Conchita Martinez of Spain beat Nathalie Tauziat of France 6-3, 6-4 Thursday to advance to the semifinals of the 450,000 dollars Toshiba classic, reports Reuters.

"I played well almost the whole match," said Martinez, the 1994 Wimbledon champion. "I felt pretty confident out there, so I'm pretty happy with the way I played."

Fifth seed Gabriela Sabatini of Argentina turned back Sweden's Asa Carlsson 6-1, 7-5 while Katarina Studenikova surprised Slovakian compatriot and sixth seed Karin Habudova 7-6 (7-4), 6-2, setting up a quarter-final clash with top-seeded Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario of Spain.

Martinez, ranked third in the world, was in control throughout the one hour, 17 minute baseline battle, relying on her heavy topspin ground attack to defeat her 26th-ranked opponent for the seventh time in nine career meetings.

"I was much more aggressive than the other match," said Martinez, referring to a three-set tussle against Naoko Sawamatsu. "She likes to come to the net, so I was trying to move her around with my forehand and keep it deep. It worked quite well today."



Shiela O'Neal of the United States exults after winning her 200m race in the Paralympic Games in Atlanta on Aug 22.

SL-World XI tie in doubt

COLOMBO, Aug 23: Heavy rains on Friday ended a six-month drought in Sri Lanka, bringing relief to farmers but leaving thousands of cricket fans rueing their luck, report agencies.

The torrid downpour drenched the venue of Saturday's charity match between World Cup champions Sri Lanka and a World XI, which precedes the four-nation Singer limited overs tournament starting on Monday.

As rain continued to lash Colombo through the day, tournament organisers and the cricketers joined the fans in wondering whether they will get much play over the next two weeks.

Australia, making their first tour of the island since boycotting their World Cup tie here in March for security reasons, play India, Zimbabwe and the hosts in the 500,000 dollar tournament which runs till September 7.

"I know the rain is good for the country, but it came at the wrong time," a spokesman for the sponsors said. "Hope we get some cricket in."

Ground staff at the water-

Squeaky win for Aussies

COLOMBO, Aug 23: Armed police commandos patrolled the ground when Australia opened their short tour of Sri Lanka with a five run win over the country's youth team on Thursday, reports Reuters.

Australia, have been promised the presence of commandos, sniffer dogs and plain clothes policemen to ensure the tournament is trouble-free.

Australia, batting first in Thursday's warm up match, scored 251 for seven from their 50 overs.

Ricky Ponting led the way with 100 off 119 balls with two sixes and nine fours before retiring.

The youth side replied with 246 for seven.

Australian coach Geoff Marsh said he was impressed with the competitiveness of the opposition.

"We were made to sweat to win," he said.

"If it stays like this, I don't think we can have any play on Saturday and probably a few days after that," admitted Sri Lankan manager Duleep Mendis.

"It's a pity because the players and everyone else I know were looking forward to the cricket."

An area just north of the capital received some 200 millimetres (eight inches) of rain overnight.

The inclement weather would hardly have surprised the Australian and Indian teams, who experienced similar conditions when the inaugural four-nations cup was held in September 1994.

"That year, the showpiece game between arch-rivals India and Pakistan had to be abandoned without a ball being bowled and the final between eventual winners India and Sri Lanka was reduced to 25-over-a-side."

But this time around this year, organisers have earmarked a reserve day for each of the eight matches.

International cricket in Sri Lanka is confined to July, August and September since it is either too hot or too wet at other times.

Three men in same boat

NEW YORK, Aug 23 (Reuters): A trio of Americans — one seeking to avoid a rare Grand Slam shutout, another aiming to end a seven-year major title drought, and a third basking in the golden glow of Olympic glory — appear poised for a strong run at the US open title.

But after a Wimbledon fortnight that seemed to have been planned by Lewis Carroll and the mad hatter — a Richard Krajicek Malival Washington final? — anything is possible

pace for himself in grabbing two of the four major titles in each of the past three years.

But this year he lost to Australian Mark Philippoussis in third round of the Australian Open, fell to eventual champion Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia in the semifinals of the French and had his three year Wimbledon reign halted by Krajicek in the quarter finals.

Sampras missed the Olympics due to injury, but finally appeared to emerge from the emotional black cloud caused by the tragic death of a close friend and mentor Tim

champion at four of the last five US Opens.

Agassi's career appeared to be in freefall earlier this year with a slew of early exits, including a second-round loss at the French Open and a first-round departure from upset-mad Wimbledon.

But the 1994 US Open champion and 1995 runner-up finally appears to have his balding head back on straight.

Agassi, who also has Wimbledon and Australian Open crowns on his resume, turned his year around with a gold medal performance in



PETE SAMPRAS

during the toughest two weeks in tennis.

World number one Pete Sampras, third-ranked Michael Chang and Olympic champion Andre Agassi all take summer hardcourt titles into the Open.

With Goran Ivanisevic's history of New York misery and Thomas Muster's lack of hard-court success, Dutchman Krajicek, who picked off Sampras en route to his historic Wimbledon win, may be the one player with the confidence to keep an American from claiming the national title — and he's picking Sampras.

"Sampras is still the favourite, he's on a different level," said Krajicek, who had enjoyed little Grand Slam joy before this year's topsy-turvy Wimbledon.

"I remember last year, he had a terrible summer coming into the Open and he just came here on a win. He hasn't won a Grand Slam title this year so... I think he will be very eager."

Despite a rocky year marked by injury and tragedy, Sampras remains the best tennis player in the world when on top of his game as he eyes his fourth US Open title of the decade.

Sampras set a remarkable



MICHAEL CHANG

Gullikson with his victory at last week's Indianapolis tournament.

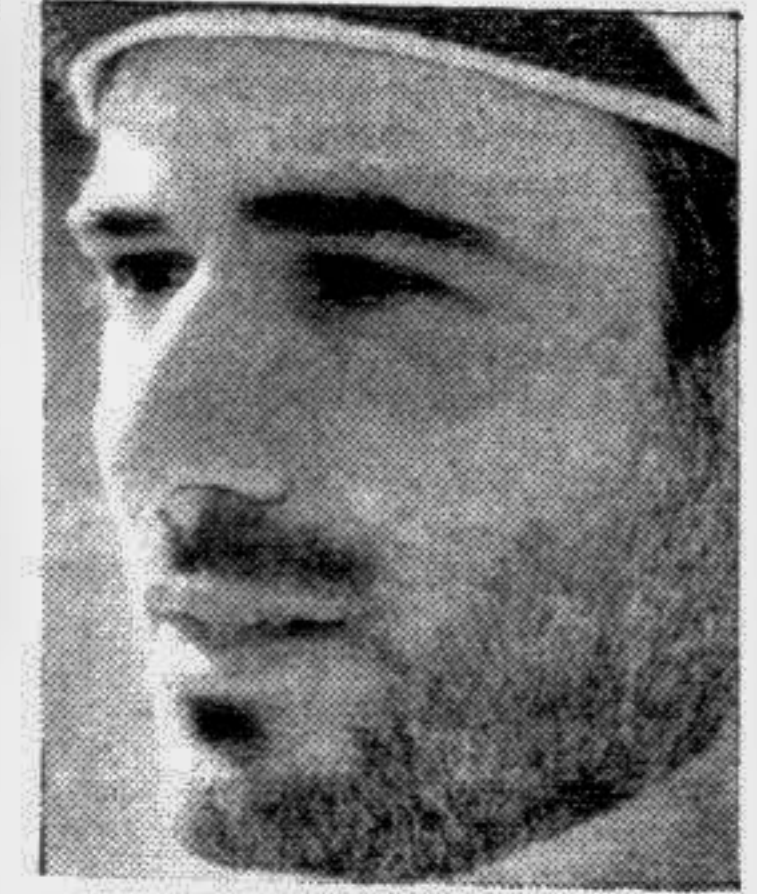
That win could signal Sampras is back on course in his quest to equal his idol Rod Laver's total of 11 major singles titles by scooping up career number eight.

The first of his generation of American players to make a Grand Slam breakthrough at 17, 1989 French Open winner Chang is still waiting for his second major title.

But Chang is finally knocking at the Grand Slam door again. After finishing runner-up at last year's French Open and this year's Australian, Chang comes into the US Open as the hottest player on the ATP Tour.

Ranked a career-high third in the world and seeded second at the open, Chang won in Washington, and Los Angeles and was runner-up in Cincinnati to take a 14-1 summer hardcourt record into this week's Hamlet Cup.

"I like to play in New York. The US Open surface suits me even though I've not been able to crack through. However, every year is a new year," said Chang, who has fallen to the eventual



ANDRE AGASSI

"Atlanta that he called 'the greatest accomplishment I've ever had in the sport.'"

He cemented his return to form by beating red-hot Chang in the Cincinnati final and further fine turned his New York.

Attitude by doing a John McEnroe impression in getting tossed out of Indianapolis for an extremely audible obscenity. Unless Krajicek can somehow pull off his second successive major title coup, this will almost surely mark the first year since 1991 that the Grand Slams go to four different players.

Australian Open winner Boris Becker pulled out with a wrist injury and Kafelnikov is nursing sore ribs that could hamper his strokes and movement.

One player known for his graceful, fluid movement will be making the farewell appearance of a most distinguished Grand Slam career at the 1996 Open.

Thirty-year-old Stefan Edberg has decided to call it a day and while the 1991 and 1992 champion is no longer considered a legitimate contender, the classy Swede remains a fan-favourite.

USTA eats humble pie

NEW YORK, Aug 23: Despite the unprecedented embarrassment of having to re-do the entire men's singles draw for the US Open, tournament officials may have gotten what they wanted all along — a possibly Pete Sampras-Andre Agassi final, reports Reuters.

Bowling to pressure and harsh criticism from irate players on the ATP Tour, and worried about the perception that the draw could have been manipulated to help popular American players, the US Tennis Association on Thursday erased Wednesday's men's draw and did it all over again.

"We responded mostly to the players. We listened to them and we have responded," said USTA president and tournament chairman Les Snyder.

The USTA was within the rules in departing from the ATP Tour rankings in choosing the 16 seeded men, and in the revised draw still did not bow to pressure to stick to the rankings.

But by placing the 112 non-seeded players in their slots before announcing the 16 seeds Wednesday, the tournament left itself open to charges of cheating, which came from outpocketed world number two Thomas Muster and an outraged Andrei Medvedev.

"They abused the rules. It would be like fixing a football, basketball or NHL game," said Medvedev, who had suggested the players not play unless the draw was re-done.

Muster, who along with French Open champion Yevgeny Kafelnikov was seeded below his ranking, also charged that the eighth-ranked Agassi was seeded sixth so he could not run into Sampras as early as the quarter-finals.

The original draw put Agassi on a semifinal collision course with the world number one, but the new draw should make CBS television and tournament officials even happier with the possibility of a rematch of the two American superstars in the final.

Sampras now begins defence of his title against Romanian Adrian Panoea, which is good news for Czech David Rikl, the top seed's original first-round victim.

Sampras still has fourth-ranked Kafelnikov in his quarter of the draw. But a likely third-round Grand Slam rubber match with recent nemesis Mark Philippoussis, who beat Sampras at the Australian Open and lost to him at Wimbledon, will have to wait.

Millns Boland bound

CAPE TOWN, Aug 23: South African provincial side Boland said on Thursday they had signed Leicestershire fast bowler David Millns on a one-year contract, reports Reuters.

Millns, who toured Australia with England A in 1992/93, replaces former England all-rounder Phillip DeFreitas as Boland's overseas professional.

until the fourth round.

Agassi, the 1994 champion who may now have second seed Michael Chang in his semifinal future, landed fifth-seeded Colombian Mauricio Hadad, while Chang gets a qualifier in Round One.

Third seed Muster looks to be one of the winners of the revised draw. Instead of taking on accomplished hard court player Richey Reneberg in the first round, the Austrian clay court star faces another clay specialist in Argentine Javier Frana.

Muster is now drawn for a likely fourth-round meeting with 13th-seeded Swede Thomas Enqvist before a possible quarter-final against Agassi, who now has Wimbledon runner-up Malival Washington, seeded 11th, in his path.

But for retiring Swedish star Stefan Edberg, if he didn't have bad luck, he wouldn't have any luck at all.

The popular Swede, playing his Grand Slam finale, had the misfortune to draw eighth seed Jim Courier as his original first-round opponent.

Given a second chance at a new lease on life, Edberg, who could have ended up against any of the other 127 players in the field, landed fifth-seeded Wimbledon champion Richey Krajicek as his new opening-round opponent.

"Sure none of us wish it had occurred," Snyder said of the decision to re-do the draw. "But we are hopeful we are getting across a strong message — the main thing is we must do what is best for the sport and for the US Open."