

SL media sings Sachin's praises

COLOMBO, Aug 29: Sri Lankan newspapers on Thursday showered praise on India's new captain Sachin Tendulkar despite his humiliating nine wickets defeat at the hands of the Sri Lankans in the 4-nation cricket championship, reports AFP.

"As captain Tendulkar played a historic innings in his debut," said the Daily News, referring to the 23-year-old cricketer's 110 that brought some respectability to the Indian total of 226 for five in 50 overs. Sri Lanka won the match by scoring 230 for one in 44.2 overs.

"Now that was a wonderful gesture and a very nice sentiment expressed and this seemed to have spurred Tendulkar who obliged with a very correctly made 110," Daily News said referring to a banner at the stadium yesterday that wished Tendulkar luck. The banner was put up by a group of Sri Lankan teen-agers.

The Indian innings was built on Tendulkar's 9th century and his first on debut, as captain," said the English language newspaper.

Tendulkar rang the bowling changes running up to each bowler after almost every delivery giving them encouragement, but none could stop the flow," the Daily News said.

The Daily News, however, said the load of captainship has changed Tendulkar's batting style.

"It was apparent that the burden of captaincy has somewhat changed Tendulkar's approach to the game especially his batting. Tendulkar in the past has been very aggressive when opening. But in this game he showed great responsibility carrying the bat on his shoulder and by example he took the side's score to respectability," the paper said.

Tendulkar's 110 came off 138 balls and had one six and only five fours.

Tendulkar, who in his 16th year was the youngest Indian to play Test cricket and the youngest to make a century on his debut, did everything right in his first match as captain on Wednesday.

Diego to decide in two months

VAUGHAN, Ontario, Aug 29: Diego Maradona says he is giving himself two months to decide whether he will play soccer again, reports AFP.

Maradona is in Toronto playing alongside his brother Lalo for Toronto Italia against the Canadian National Soccer League all-stars on Monday.

The 35-year-old completed a drug rehab last week in a clinic in Switzerland.

Maradona refused to answer questions about his 'personal problems' on Wednesday at a news conference just north of Toronto to promote Monday's game.

He is under contract to Boca Juniors in South America but says that deal will not have any influence on his decision.

Robbie, Steve out of Hoddle's plan

LONDON, Aug 29: Liverpool stars Robbie Fowler and Steve McManaman were ruled out of England's World Cup qualifying opener in Moldova on Wednesday, reports AFP.

But new coach Glenn Hoddle, reduced to just 20 players and still sweating on the fitness of Paul Gascoigne, David Batty and Les Ferdinand, is still resisting calling for further reinforcements.

The young Liverpool strikers, both suffering from back injuries, arrived to meet their new boss but it was immediately apparent they had no chance of making the flight to Kishinev for Sunday's clash.

"They had some scans and X-rays yesterday and they're out. The more important thing for me was to get them down here and have a chat. To go another five weeks without that chance would have been foolish," said Hoddle.

Gascoigne, who underwent a scan on his troublesome achilles on Tuesday, played in Hoddle's first practice match against England's under-21s on Wednesday, leaving the England camp nervously awaiting any reaction.

Batty (ankle) and Ferdinand (foot) undertook a light training session later — their first spell of the week — and Hoddle said: "The injuries are improving, which is a good sign for us."

Aussie-Lanka war today

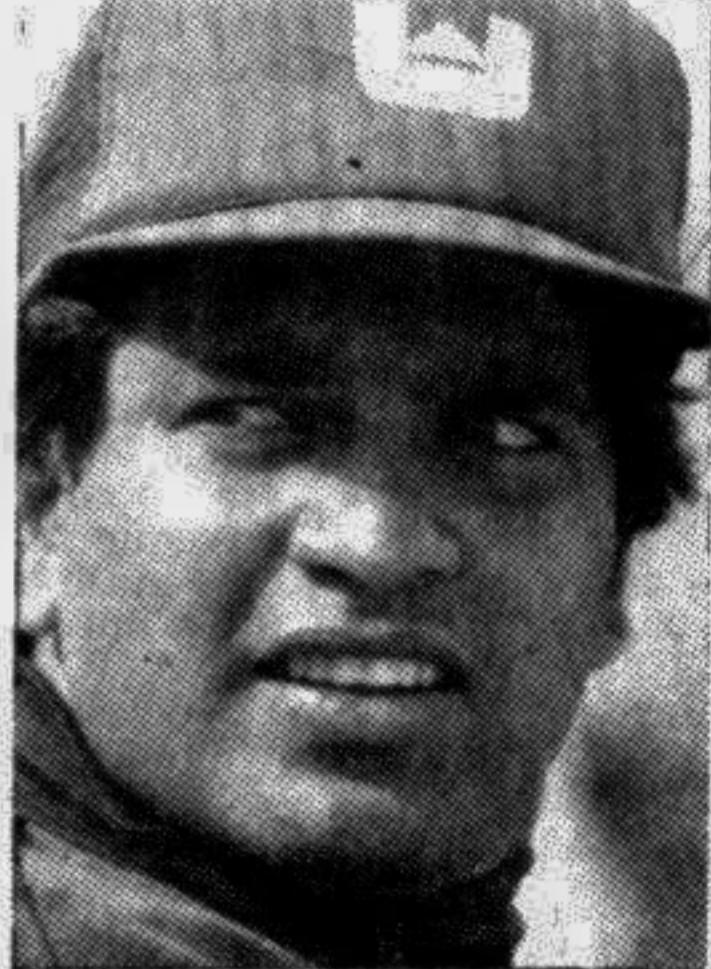


COLOMBO, Aug 29: Rival captains Arjuna Ranatunga and Ian Healy appealed for calm ahead of Sri Lanka's showdown with Australia Friday in the Singer Cup, reports AFP.

"It's like any other game," Sri Lankan captain Ranatunga said of the first meeting between the bitter rivals since the World Cup final in Pakistan in March.

"I see no problems during the match. We get along well with the Australians," he said.

Healy, leading Australia in the absence of the injured Mark



ARJUNA RANATUNGA

Taylor, said his team should be judged by the cricket they play and not by what happened in the past.

"It should be a very interesting match between two very competitive sides," he said. "We will give fans their money's worth."

Relations between the two became strained during Sri

Lanka's acrimonious tour of Australia last year when Australian umpires accused the Sri Lankans of ball-tampering and no-balled spinner Muttiah Muralitharan for throwing.

The Australians then refused to play their World Cup opener in Colombo in February for security reasons and prevaricated until the end before embarking on the present tour.

The controversial past and the prospect of watching two of one-day cricket's most exciting teams have ensured a full house for the day-night international at the 25,000-seater Premadasa Stadium.

Organisers said they were unable to meet the unprecedented demand for tickets which were sold out weeks ago.

"I can't cope with the rush," a spokesman for the sponsors said. "Every uncle and aunt wants to watch the match."

Both teams warmed up for the crucial game with emphatic wins in their opening matches in the four nation event.

Australia drubbed Zimbabwe by 125 runs on Monday and world champions Sri Lanka brushed aside Sachin Tendulkar's India by nine wickets on Wednesday night.

The top two teams in the round robin series will play off in the final on September 7, worth 50,000 dollars for the champions and 25,000 dollars for the runners-up.

"The win over India helped us get into the right groove," Ranatunga said. "You've got to be on your toes against the Australians, they are so experienced."

"We may be the favourites, because we beat them in the World Cup final and are now playing at home, but it's a new day and a new game. The past doesn't count on the field."

Healy said his team was ca-

pable of containing the free stroking Sri Lankan openers Sanath Jayasuriya and Romesh Kaluwitharana, who hammered a 129-run stand against India.

The Sri Lankan batting runs deep, but we are ready for them," the Australian captain said. "We obviously have to bat and bowl better than the Indians did."

SQUADS

Sri Lanka (from left): Arjuna Ranatunga (capt), Romesh Kaluwitharana, Sanath Jayasuriya, Asanka Gurusingha, Aravinda de Silva, Hashan Tillakearathne, Roshan Mahanama, Kumara Dharmasena, Pramodasaya Wi-

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The Australia team is in Sri Lanka for the ongoing four-nation cricket tournament.

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Dharmasiri tried to visit Healy at his hotel room around midnight earlier this week, but when she was leaving and hotel she was stopped by police and questioned.

Australian tour manager, Cam Batterby, denied reports Dharmasiri visited Healy.

"I am aware of the report, which is quite untrue," Batterby said. "A woman was escorted from the public area on the ground floor of the hotel. She did not gain access to our floor, or was nowhere near Healy or his room."

Dharmasiri, who says she is a friend of Healy's, tells a different story.

"I am not sure why they are making such a fuss now," she said.

"I have known Ian for some time and we had agreed that I will come to show him some photographs of the Miss World pageant," Dharmasiri told The Association Press.

Healy has not commented on the incident.

The beauty queen episode is the latest in a string of controversies that have erupted when the Australian and Sri Lankan teams have met.

Botham Jr steals the show

PORTSMOUTH, England, Aug 29: It could have been an English county match of the 1980's, former England captain Mike Gatting dismissed by Botham, who finishes the day with five wickets.

Despite his batting dexterity, Jayasuriya is not from the traditional Sri Lankan cricketing crucible of Colombo but from a fishing village near Matara in southern Sri Lanka.

His father is a government health inspector who earns 10,000 rupees (200 dollar) a month in Matara, 172 miles south of Colombo.

He didn't go to university after finishing high school and instead came to Colombo in 1989 to work as an insurance agent for 3,000 rupees (60 dollar) a month.

Botham junior's first appearance for Hampshire came in bizarre circumstances.

The son of one of the world's greatest all-rounders arrived at Portsmouth only to be told his services would not be required and that he should travel 25 miles back to Southampton and carry on playing for the Second XI.

But on his arrival there he was informed that he was in fact needed because a shoulder injury to one of the First XI players had left the team one short.

By the time he made it back, his team was already fielding. Botham didn't make it onto the field until the third over, but when he came on to bowl in the 23rd over, he made his presence felt almost immediately, having Gatting caught out at square leg on the first ball of his second over.

He took his second wicket on the last ball of his third over, and then returned later to clean up the Middlesex tail.

Botham's performance prompted the Coral betting agency to offer odds of 25-1 that he would play for England before the end of 1997.

"There was an element of good fortune about some of those wickets, so I suppose people will say it's typical Botham luck," said Botham.

Gatting said: "Liam seems to have a bit of Ian's flare, but he is his own man and determined to make his own way."

His father Ian Botham began his Test career in 1977 by dismissing Australian captain Greg Chappell with a long hop and went on to become his England's most successful all-rounder ever with 5,200 runs, 383 wickets plus 120 catches in 102 Tests.

In the other county championship match which began on Wednesday, Glamorgan reached 73 for three against Durham in a rain-restricted day.

The German media have reported every supposed twist and turn in the case, and reduced the tennis star to tears with their questioning on several occasions.

But most of the time she has managed to put her private troubles to one side when she may be asked to testify in court.

During recent weeks in the US the upcoming trial "bothered me and I didn't want to come to New York at all," she said in the interview, conducted in New York.

"I fear four sixes, one four and a single. The previous record was held by Pakistan's Salim Malik and Asif Majeed, who hit 27 off Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan in 1994. The same number of runs were made last year in Sharjah by another Pakistani, Moin Khan, against West Indian Ian Bishop.

He also has cleared the fence 11 times, the highest number of sixes hit by a batsman in any one-day innings. The previous record was held by West Indian Gordon Greenidge, who hit eight sixes against India in 1989.

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