

Kiwis may tour Zimbabwe in Sept

WELLINGTON, Mar 28: New Zealand are negotiating to tour Zimbabwe later this year before embarking on a lengthy visit to Australia, reports AP.

New Zealand coach Steve Rixon said Friday that two Tests and three one-day internationals are planned in Zimbabwe for September and early October.

Rixon said administrators from the two countries still have to finalise details of the tour.

"It would provide the perfect preparation before this Australian tour," Rixon said. "We could come home from Zimbabwe for 10 days rest before heading across the Tasman."

The Kiwis begin their tour of Australia in late October and play three Tests as well as contesting the World Series limited-overs tournament against the host nation and South Africa.

New Zealand all-rounder Chris Cairns, meanwhile, said he will postpone an operation on an ankle injury until after the Independence Cup quadrangular one-day tournament in India in May.

Cairns played against Sri Lanka in the Test and one-day series purely as a batsman after chipping a bone in his ankle shortly before the second Test against England in Wellington in early February.

He has been unable to bowl and won't be in a position to resume his bowling duties until he recuperates — which is expected to take up to six weeks.

King Hassan II tennis

CASABLANCA, Mar 28: Top-seeded Karim Alami won his second-round match at the King Hassan II tennis tournament Thursday to join two other Moroccans in the quarterfinals, reports AP.

Alami defeated Marcello Craca of Germany 7-5, 7-6, (7-1) in a match that lasted nearly two hours. Alami and Craca play for the same club in Mannheim, Germany.

Yunes El Aynaoui was another Moroccan that won, upsetting fifth-seeded Richard Fromberg of Australia, 7-6, (7-1), 6-0.

Wednesday second-seeded Hicham Arazi won to make it three Moroccans in the final eight.

Also Thursday, fourth-seeded Gilbert Schaller of Austria, the 1995 winner here, beat Alberto Marin of Spain, 6-3, 6-1 and sixth-seeded Tomas Carbonell, the defending champion, topped Bernardo Mota of Portugal, 6-2, 6-0.

Chanderpaul's first ton



BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, Mar 28: Shivnarine Chanderpaul hit his maiden Test century to keep the West Indies alive on the first day of the third Test match against India on Thursday, reports Reuters.

Chanderpaul's disciplined innings helped the West Indies survive the first day after the Indian bowlers had them on the ropes, with paceman Venkatesh Prasad and Dadda Ganesh reducing them 144 for five by tea.

Prasad, who bowled an immaculate off-stump line and got the ball to bounce and wing, was the pick of the bowlers. Capturing four for 56 of 25 overs during the day, Ganesh took two for 70 off 21 overs in his first game of the series.

Chanderpaul, who at one stage looked like being deprived of his century by a lack of batting partners, calmly soldiered on as the wickets fell around him. Helping the home side reach a more respectable 240 for seven at the close.

"It is a big relief and I am happy, too, it's been a long wait and a heavy load on my shoulders," said Chanderpaul, who was mobbed by around 300 fans who ran on to the pitch when he passed the 100 mark.

At the close, Chanderpaul was 102 not out, with Curly Ambrose unbeaten on 28.

Chanderpaul, playing his 19th Test and batting his 30th innings, entered the fray in the third over after opener Sherwin Campbell was removed by Prasad for six with the score on 10.

Despite starting uncertainly and having a slice of luck at 22, when he was dropped by wicketkeeper Nayan Mongia off leg-spinner Anil Kumble, Chanderpaul, who has 13 Test half-centuries, battled with dedication and determination.

His teammates struggled to

come to terms with a bouncy pitch and Chanderpaul was the only batsman to pass 50.



CHANDERPAIL ... 102 n.o

Chanderpaul lost his first partner when opener Stuart Williams was bowled by Ganesh for 24 as the West Indies reached 68 for two by lunch.

Prasad captured the prized wicket of stand-in-captain Brian Lara with a beautiful out-swing which the batsman edged to captain Sachin Tendulkar at first slip for 19.

Carl Hooper was next to go, also for 19, he flashed at a wide delivery from Ganesh and edged a catch to Mongia.

Roland Holder, playing his first Test before his home fans did not last long. He was caught at third slip by Mohammad Azharuddin off Prasad for five.

In the final session, Chanderpaul and wicketkeeper

Courtney Browne added 56 runs for the sixth wicket before Anil Kumble, the series leading wicket-taker with 15 scalps in the first two Tests, separated them.

Browne skied a catch to Tendulkar, running back from a short mid-wicket and was out for 24. Six runs later, Ian Bishop was bowled by Prasad for four.

He was replaced by Ambrose who gave Chanderpaul admirable support as he inched towards his century which finally came when he drove Ganesh through the vacant mid-on for three.

Chanderpaul faced 231 balls and hit eight fours in his innings.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the first day of the third Test between the West Indies and India at the Kensington Oval on Thursday:

WEST INDIES: First innings				
Campbell b Prasad	6			
Williams b Ganesh	24			
Chanderpaul not out	102			
Lara c Tendulkar b Prasad	19			
Hooper c Mongia b Ganesh	19			
Holder c Azharuddin b Prasad	5			
Brown b Tendulkar b Kumble	24			
Bishop b Prasad	4			
Ambrose not out	28			
Extras (lb-2, nb-7)	9			
Total (for seven wickets)	240			
Fall of wickets: 1-10; 2-68; 3-88; 4-118; 5-144; 6-200; 7-206				
To bat: Franklyn Rose, Marvin Dillon.				

Bowling				
	O	M	R	W
Prasad	25	8	58	4
Kuruvilla	23.4	4	64	0
Ganesh	21	2	70	2
Kumble	14	1	37	1
Ganguly	2	1	9	0

INDIA: Sachin Tendulkar (captain), Venkata Laxman, Navjot Singh Sidhu, Rahul Dravid, Saurav Ganguly, Mohammad Azharuddin, Nayan Mongia, Anil Kumble, Ayaz Kuruvilla, Venkatesh Prasad, Dadda Ganesh.

Sharjah Cup begins April 3

No room for Gurusingha



COLOMBO, Mar 28: Sri Lanka's longtime one-day batsman Asanka Gurusingha has been left out of the team for the Sharjah Cup tournament in Sharjah, despite problems in replacing him, reports AP.

Arjuna Ranatunga, the veteran captain who won the last World Cup, has been retained with star batsman Aravinda de Silva as his deputy, the Board of Control for Cricket in Sri Lanka said in a statement Friday.

Gurusingha's absence was felt during this week's drawn series in New Zealand, with regular number six batsman Roshan Mahanama averaging seven in two matches, after being promoted as a one-day batsman.

The world champions' loss to the Kiwis by 69 runs in the second one-day international on Thursday, after winning the previous match by six wickets.

Stylish young batsman Marvan Atapattu, who was in the squad for the New Zealand tour as a possible replacement, but was not played in the one-dayers, could be given Gurusingha's spot.

Sri Lanka have lost three one-day series, won two and drawn another since they swept to victory in the 1996 World Cup.

Relations between Gurusingha and the board plummeted after the last tour to Sharjah in November, where he was dropped for two matches, leading to an outcry in the Sri Lankan media.

The board then fined him fifty per cent of his earnings from the tour, after he spoke to journalists. Sri Lanka's cricket

board requires all players, and even the manager and coach, to ask the board president's permission before speaking to the media.

Gurusingha ran into more trouble after going to Australia to play for North Melbourne. The board wanted him back home by late January, to practice for the New Zealand tour.

but instead Gurusingha pulled out, accusing the board of a lack of professionalism.

Gurusingha, 30, made his international debut in 1985, and was the fourth most senior player in the side, behind Ranatunga, De Silva, and Mahanama. He has played 41 Tests with a batting average of 38.4 with eight centuries to his credit, and 144 one-day internationals.

He played a vital role in the World Cup last March, steadying the innings when early wickets fell, especially when swashbuckling openers Sanath Jayasuriya and Ramesh Kaluwitharane got out cheaply. He scored three half centuries in the tournament, including 65 in the final, against Australia.

Sri Lanka's squad includes three fast bowlers, Chaminda Vaas and promising youngsters Sajeeva de Silva and Nuwan Zoysa, and no less than six spinners. Muthiah Muralitharan, Kumar Dharmasena, Upul Chandana, Jayasuriya, Ruwan Kalpage and Aravinda de Silva.

Sri Lanka met Zimbabwe in the opening game next Thursday. Pakistan is the other team taking part in the tournament, which ends on April 11.

Arjuna Ranatunga (Capt), Aravinda de Silva (V Capt), Roshan Mahanama, Hashan Tillekeratne, Sanath Jayasuriya, Ramesh Kaluwitharane, Kumar Dharmasena, Muthiah Muralitharan, Chaminda Vaas, Ruwan Kalpage, Upul Chandana, Marvan Atapattu, Sajeeva de Silva, and Nuwan Zoysa.

SQUAD

Arjuna Ranatunga (Capt), Aravinda de Silva (V Capt), Roshan Mahanama, Hashan Tillekeratne, Sanath Jayasuriya, Ramesh Kaluwitharane, Kumar Dharmasena, Muthiah Muralitharan, Chaminda Vaas, Ruwan Kalpage, Upul Chandana, Marvan Atapattu, Sajeeva de Silva, and Nuwan Zoysa.

Independence Day water polo

Sports Reporter

The Independence Day international water polo, organised by Bangladesh Swimming Federation, will begin at the National Swimming Pool in Mirpur this afternoon.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to inaugurate the meeting at 3:30 pm.

A total of six teams including outfits from Sri Lanka and Calcutta, India, are to take part in the tourney. The local participants in the meet are the three Armed Services' sides.

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WC qualifiers

Saudis blank Bangladesh

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia, Mar 28: Asian champions Saudi Arabia blanked Bangladesh 3-0 on Thursday to climb atop the Asian World Cup qualifying Zone One, reports AP.

The other match between Malaysia and Chinese Taipei ended in a goalless draw.

In the first round second leg engagement, the hosts bolstered their victory in the Asian Cup finals last year, easily beat the inexperienced Bangladesh side, which they had defeated 4-1 in Malaysia in the first leg last week.

The Saudis took the initiative in the 2nd minute with Ibrahim Al-Suwayed firing home a loose ball.

Bangladesh's goalkeeper Ponir denied veteran midfielder Khaled Al-Timawy from the penalty spot, tipping the ball just out of goal to keep his team in the game.

However, the Saudis kept up the pressure and Obaid Al-Dousary capitalised with a volley just before the end of the first half.

At the 40th minute, Bangladesh was reduced to 10 men after Mohammad Ahmed was sent off for a foul on Sami Al-Jaber.

Abdullah Al-Jamaan scored 11 minutes before the end off a pass from right-back Abdullah Shelia.

In the other game, the draw dealt a blow to Malaysia's chance of advancing to the second round, leaving the team with eight points.

Coming into the match, Malaysia were tied with the Saudis at the top of the table with a 2-1-1 record.

It was all Chinese Taipei in the first half but the team missed several scoring chances.

In the second half, Chinese Taipei retreated, allowing the Malaysians to launch their own attack. But they were met with stiff resistance by the Taipei defence.

Saudi Arabia will meet Malaysia on Saturday and a Saudi win will secure them place in the second round.

Lazio Ronaldo's destination?

ROME, Mar 28: Barcelona's world-player-of-the-year, Ronaldo, looks to be heading to Rome, according to Italian newspaper reports on Thursday, reports Reuters.

The Brazilian, who has already scored 23 goals in the Spanish league this season, has been given permission to meet Sergio Cragnotti, the owner of Serie A club Lazio, the day after Barcelona's European Cup Winners' Cup semifinal against Fiorentina on April 24.

The possible move has been given the blessing of the Italian media and, it would appear, Ronaldo's sponsors.

"Ronaldo-Lazio, another yes," declared the Corriere dello Sport newspaper in a front page headline, reporting that his main sponsor Nike had said it would not object to him moving to the mid-table club.

"All roads lead to Lazio..." read a photo caption.

The headline was "Ronaldo, we're here."

Tuttosport meanwhile printed a photo-montage of the player wearing a Lazio strip next to a team line-up showing the Brazilian along with Sampdoria veteran Roberto Mancini, another player who has been linked with a move to Rome.

However, newspaper have also pointed out that the terms of Lazio's current sponsorship deal with Umbro, rivals of Nike, could scupper any deal.

The speculation has been growing since Ronaldo declared on Monday that the "door is open" for him to leave Barcelona at the end of the season.

"I would like to stay here but I'm a professional and I must choose what is best for me. Circumstances could make me go," said Ronaldo whose representatives are pushing Barcelona further improvements to an already lucrative contract.

Ronaldo, signed from Dutch side PSV Eindhoven for a then world-record fee of 17.4 million dollars in the close season, said he felt he had a right to negotiate with other clubs.

Juventus and Milan, the two wealthiest clubs in Italy, have reportedly balked at the cost of bringing Ronaldo to Italy but Lazio, who last won the Italian league in 1974, seem more open to the idea.

Ivanisevic was looking to return to the final here after last year's disappointment, when he had to quit three games into the final with Andre Agassi due to a neck injury.

He started out well enough, taking a 2-0 lead over Courier. But the American, showing flashes of the form that brought him four Grand Slam titles earlier in the decade, reeled off the next six games to take the first set.

The 26th-ranked Courier, who won this title in 1991, bounced the big-serving Croatian 6-2, 7-6, to reach the final four here for the fourth time in his career.

Courier, a local favourite in southern Florida, will face second-seeded Austrian Thomas Muster in the semifinals.

Muster, considered the world's premier clay court player, continued to prove he can win on hard courts with a convincing 7-5, 6-2 victory over 29th-ranked Swede Jonas Bjorkman.

Muster, who has only played hard court events this year, ran his 1997 match record to an impressive 19-3.

The other men's semifinal pits top-seeded world number one Pete Sampras against 35th-ranked Sergi Bruguera of Spain.



Monica Seles of the United States plays a forehand return against Barbara Paulous of Austria during their semifinal engagement at the Lipton Championships in Florida on Mar 27. Seles won 6-2, 6-0.

Martina-Monica finale



KEY BISCAYNE, Florida, Mar 28: Martina Hingis, the past and future empresses of tennis, meet here Saturday for the WTA Lipton Championships title in their first showdown with both in good health, reports AP.

Top Hingis, defeated third seed Czech Jana Novotna 6-3, 2-6, 6-4, while Seles ousted 11th-seeded Austrian Barbara Paulous 6-1, 6-0, in Thursday semifinals at the 1.76 million dollar event.

Hingis beat Seles 6-2, 6-0, last November in the Oakland final in their only prior meeting. But a nagging shoulder injury slowed Seles and led to her dropping out of the WTA Championships two weeks later.

Seles said she sees the same championship glow around Hingis that she and injured German star Steffi Graf have enjoyed.

"She does have an aura," Seles said. "When you win so many matches in a row, you get that. Steffi has it and I had it and Martina has it."

Hingis is 28-0 overall this year, 25-0 in WTA and Fed Cup competition, and seeks her fifth title of 1997. The Swiss prodigy took her first Grand Slam crown at the Australian Open and also won tournaments in

Sydney, Tokyo and Paris. The champion here takes home 215,000 dollars and bragging rights even though Hingis will replace Seles as the youngest world number one in tennis history on Monday no matter how the match turns out.

Hingis will move past Graf to become number one at 16 years, six months and one day — nine months and 18 days younger than when Seles set the standard in 1991.

But Novotna made 49 unforced errors and gave away the ninth game of the final set, double faulting and netting a drop volley to surrender the final break. Hingis completed the victory with the match's only ace.

Hingis hurled her racket under her bench from midcourt after hitting a wide forehand to drop the first game of the last set.

Hingis and Novotna took a break before the third set under WTA extreme heat rules as temperatures reach 107 degrees (F42 C) under the mid-day sun.

Seles overpowered Paulous in 51 minutes, winning the final 11 games. The second set lasted only 24 minutes.

Paulous held in her first service game and no other, going down like an appetizer for Seles on her way to a main course feast against Hingis.

MARTINA HINGIS

Courier in final four



KEY BISCAYNE, Florida, Mar 28: Jim Courier took another step toward recapturing the form that once made him the world's best tennis player by upsetting fourth seed Goran Ivanisevic Thursday to reach the semifinals of the Lipton Championships, reports Reuters.

The 26th-ranked Courier, who won this title in 1991, bounced the big-serving Croatian 6-2, 7-6, to reach the final four here for the fourth time in his career.

Courier, a local favourite in southern Florida, will face second-seeded Austrian Thomas Muster in the semifinals.

Muster, considered the world's premier clay court player, continued to prove he can win on hard courts with a convincing 7-5, 6-2 victory over 29th-ranked Swede Jonas Bjorkman.

Muster, who has only played hard court events this year, ran his 1997 match record to an impressive 19-3.

The other men's semifinal pits top-seeded world number one Pete Sampras against 35th-ranked Sergi Bruguera of Spain.

"It's always a tough one against Jim because we had tough battles in the past," said Muster, who beat Courier in their last two meetings.

He's playing good tennis. I'm playing good tennis. He's trying to get back in the rankings. He's going to be motivated to be in the finals here," Muster said of Courier.

Ivanisevic was looking to return to the final here after last year's disappointment, when he had to quit three games into the final with Andre Agassi due to a neck injury.

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