

Gloucester go atop

LONDON, Aug 19: Spinners Martyn Ball and Richard Davis bowled Gloucestershire to first place in the English county championship on Monday, reports Reuter.

They shared nine second-innings wickets as Gloucestershire overcame Sussex at Hove by 166 runs.

Although opener Toby Pierce and Neil Taylor shared a second-wicket stand of 107, Sussex then folded for 161 in the chase for 328 to win.

Ball took five for 66 and Davis four for 35 as Gloucestershire moved 10 points ahead of second-placed Kent.

Pace bowling prospect Maheer Mirza helped Worcestershire into fourth place by taking the last two Glamorgan wickets in seven balls in a 54-run victory. The defeat at Worcester cost Glamorgan the chance to go top.

Glamorgan, set a target of 374, were dismissed for 319 despite a fifth century of the season by Steve James.

A career-best 145 from Giles White and another century from John Stephenson denied Yorkshire victory at Ports-mouth after Hampshire had followed on.

Hampshire began the final day on 173 for three, still needing another 47 to make Yorkshire bat again.

But White, whose previous top score for Hampshire was a modest 73, forced an unlikely draw.

Nottinghamshire wasted a great victory chance against Somerset at Trent Bridge and finished up needing to survive the final over to avoid defeat.

Matthew Dowman cracked his third championship century of the season and Notts appeared to be well on course as they chased a victory target of 320.

But the departures of skipper Paul Johnson and Dowman in quick succession sparked a dramatic slide that ended with wicketkeeper Wayne Noon having to play out Moustaq Ahmed's final over to secure a draw.

The Pakistan leg-spinner had been chiefly responsible for the collapse with three for eight in 23 deliveries.

Karim named AFC's best for July

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 19: Iran's Karim Bagheri was today named Asian Football Confederation (AFC) player-of-the-month for July for leading the AFC's All Stars team to victory over FIFA select, reports AFP.

Scoring two of the AFC's three goals, Bagheri's performance capped a golden period for the midfielder in their match in Hong Kong at the start of the month, AFC said in a statement.

Bagheri now plays for Germany's First Division Arminia Bielefeld.

Meanwhile, Dalian, the defending champions in the China league, won the AFC's team-of-the-month award.

Dalian took the league champions' title from Shanghai last season and had gone 45 consecutive league matches without a loss by the end of the month.

The coach-of-the-month award went to Vincent Subramaniam, who guided Singapore armed forces to emerge as the island state's new S-League champions in mid-July.

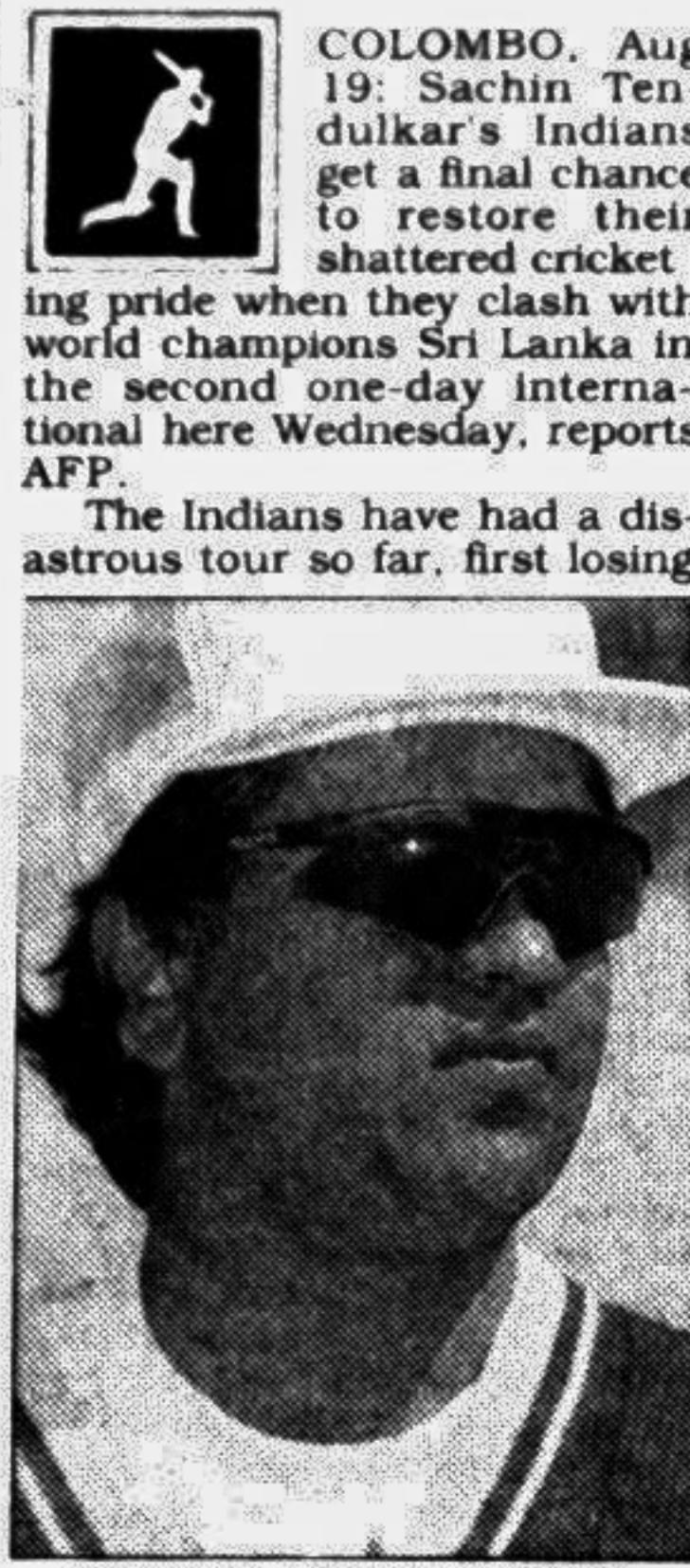
Bolton buy Beardsley

LONDON, Aug 19: Former England striker Peter Beardsley finally left Newcastle for Bolton on Monday in a 450,000 pounds (724,000 dollars) deal, reports Reuter.

The 36-year-old was due to move two weeks ago but the transfer was put on hold after Alan Shearer suffered a serious ankle injury.

The setback came after the sale of Les Ferdinand to Tottenham and left Newcastle short of firepower.

Second one-dayer today



ARJUNA RANATUNGA holds on to the Asia Cup before seeing the free-stroking Sri Lankans batter their bowlers in the drawn two-Test series.

Mohammad Azharuddin and Ajay Jadeja's defiant centuries during a world record stand of 223 for the fifth wicket in the first one-dayer provided little consolation in the narrow two-run defeat.

"Close finishes do not count, the bottom line is we lost again," a senior team member said.

"We made 300 but could not get those three extra runs."

It was India's sixth defeat in their last seven meetings against Arjuna Ranatunga's Sri Lankans.

The Indians, who have won just four of their 18 one-dayers this year, must win Wednesday's day-night game at the Premadasa Stadium to stay alive in the three-match series.

It's a match that could also determine the future of many players, especially frontline bowlers Anil Kumble, Venka-

tesh Prasad and Abey Kuruvilla. Leg-spinner Kumble, the team's vice-captain, has taken just six wickets in seven international innings on the tour so far, including four in the second Test.

Prasad has seven wickets and new ball partner Kuruvilla five, but the absence of pace spearhead Javagal Srinath through injury and the lack of adequate replacements back home may force the selectors to persist with them.

Srinath, who injured his bowling shoulder on the South African tour earlier this year, is not expected to be back till December, thereby missing eight one-dayers against Pakistan in September and the home series against Sri Lanka in November. Sri Lanka's impressive run on the tour so far, including a world record total of 952 for seven in the first Test, has left the Indians dejected.

"Our bowling and fielding is so poor, we may be chasing 300 every time," one of the team's leading batsmen said.

Captain Tendulkar, however, backed his bowlers, saying the lifeless wicket at the Premadasa Stadium gave them little support.

There was no hope for the bowlers in the first Test and again in the first one-dayer in which 602 runs were scored. But I must concede the fielding needs to improve."

Tendulkar's 464 runs from

seven innings, including centuries in both Tests, may have saved his job despite the team's poor run.

Ironically Azharuddin, the man who was dropped for the Independence Cup at home in May because of poor form, has proved to be the star of the tour.

The selectors, who had reportedly toyed with the idea of giving the job back to Azharuddin, may finally be convinced

to persist with them.

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travelling outside Colombo was for a 25-minute drive to suburban Moratuwa for a one-day practice match on August 15, India's Independence Day.

A three-day tour game ahead of the Test series, originally scheduled to be played in the southern coastal town of Matara, was also shifted back to Colombo because of bad weather.

Sri Lankan officials today defended the itinerary, saying security and weather considerations forced them to play all matches in Colombo.

"Kandy was not allotted any game because of the rainy season while Kurunegala does not have a local cricket association to organise international games," an official said.

"Besides, security is of prime importance and we believe Colombo can provide the best security."

Australia and the West Indies refused to play their World Cup matches in Sri Lanka last year because of security reasons.

India and their 45-day tour later this week will play the remaining two one-day internationals on Wednesday and Saturday.

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