

Steve keeps a straight face

MELBOURNE, Jan 22: Australian limited-over cricket captain Steve Waugh says South Africa is vulnerable in the best-of-three T-series finals starting Friday at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, reports AP.

South Africa won one of four preliminary round one-dayers against Australia, who scraped into the finals courtesy of three wins against New Zealand. But Waugh said the Proteas' recent history suggests they do not perform as well in finals.

"They've got a good record in one-day cricket and I consider them the No 1 one-day side in the world but I guess they haven't done justice to their performances over the years," Waugh said Thursday.

South African skipper Hansie Cronje was clearly annoyed by Waugh's suggestion his side did not perform in important one-day games.

"We've played in five (one-day competition) finals and won four," was Cronje's reply when told of Waugh's comments.

"It doesn't offend me — he has just got his states wrong," Cronje said his team took great pride in its discipline in one-day cricket and, like Australia in Test cricket, expected to win each time it took the field.

TEAMS

AUSTRALIA (from): Steve Waugh (captain), Michael Bevan, Adam Gilchrist, Ian Harvey, Stuart Law, Damien Martyn, Paul Reiffel, Darren Lehmann, Tom Moody, Ricky Ponting, Shane Warne, Mark Waugh, Paul Wilson.

SOUTH AFRICA (from): Hansie Cronje (captain), Darryl Cullinan, Allan Donald, Herschelle Gibbs, Jacques Kallis, Gary Kirsten, Lance Klusener, Brian McMillan, Shaun Pollock, Dave Richardson, Jonty Rhodes, Pat Symcox.

Anand rebounds

WIJK AN ZEE, The Netherlands, Jan 22: Viswanathan Anand of India crushed Bulgarian Vesselin Topalov to share the lead for the first time with Russian Vladimir Kramnik who suffered a shock defeat at the hands of Alexy Shirov in the fifth round of the Hoo-govens Grand Masters tournament yesterday, reports PTI.

The world number three, coming back from a surprise draw against lowly rated Jeroen Pickett of the Netherlands, was at his attacking best when he played with white using the Spanish opening.

With a brilliant attack on black's queenside, knight, Anand gained good advantage and from there he continued to maintain his superior position against the Bulgarian. The Indian had the highly rated and talented Topalov struggling who made quite a few mistakes as the game progressed till he was forced to resign after 29 moves.

Anand with his third win in five games has four points to his credit now.

Barca players favoured by Clemente

MADRID, Jan 22: Coach Javier Clemente has placed seven Barcelona players on his 18-man squad for Spain's friendly with France next week, the game that will inaugurate the Tade France, reports AP.

Clemente announced the team Thursday, saying he was taking seven players from Barcelona, three each from defending league champion Real Madrid, Atletico Madrid and Athletic Bilbao and one from both Valencia and Betis.

The side is to travel to Paris on Jan 26, two days before the game at Saint Denis.

ROSTER: Andoni Zubizarreta (Valencia); Alfonso Perez (Betis); Rafael Alkorta, Imanol Esteberrria, Roberto Rios (Athletic Bilbao); Carlos Aguilera, Kiko Narvaez, Jordi Lardin (Atletico Madrid); Santiago Canizares, Fernando Hierro, Raul Gonzalez (Real Madrid); Abelardo Fernandez, Guillermo Amor, Albert Ferrer, Luis Enrique Martinez, Miguel Angel Nadal, Juan Pizzi Sergi Barjuan (Barcelona).

Rafter crawls, Chang crashes



MELBOURNE, Jan 22 (AP/AF): Once again a stubborn American tried to bring down US Open champion Patrick Rafter. Once again the energetic Aussie scraped through in his own country's biggest tennis tournament.

The second-seeded Rafter reached the third round of the Australian Open with a 2-6, 7-6, 6-7, 6-4, 6-3 victory Thursday over Todd Martin, a former top 10 player who missed most of 1997 with injuries.

No 3 Michael Chang, meanwhile, couldn't pull off one of his trademark comebacks and became the highest seed to lose so far. He fell 6-4, 7-6, 7-6 to Guillaume Raoux, one of six Frenchmen to reach the third round.

But one big name that survived was Andre Agassi, whose campaign to return to the top of men's tennis took a dramatic leap when he beat 16th seed Albert Costa 6-4, 6-4, 2-6, 7-5 in a two-hour 26 minute battle that offered flashes of the American back at his best.

"It was good win for me because I haven't established myself against really good baseliners, but it also reminded me what makes it better for me," said Agassi.

"It feels good to kick some butt again — that's nice," added Agassi, now ranked at 87 after bottoming out at 141 in his horror year last year.

The latest French winners also included Nicolas Escude, who ousted French Open champion and No 12 seed Gustavo Kuerten 5-7, 6-3, 6-1, 7-5 qualifier Jerome Golmard, who beat Dutchman Jan Siemink 7-6, 7-5, 6-7, 3-6, 6-1 in his second consecutive five-setter and Li-onel Roux, who beat Sweden's Jan Apell 6-3, 6-7, 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, Cedric Pioline and Fabrice Santoro already had advanced to the third round.

With two rounds nearly completed, half of the 16 men's seeds are out.

Thirteen of the women's seeds remain in contention, and No 7 Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario had the easiest path into the third round, beating Elena Makarova 6-0, 6-0 in 48 minutes. She allowed the Russian only 27 points.

Rafter next plays No 25 Alberto Berasategui of Spain a 6-4, 7-6, 6-4 winner over Ukraine's Andrei Medvedev.

Aching from a deep bruise under a big callous, Rafter said that halfway through the second set "I was hating life. I was hating the sun. I was just hating the whole situation, hating to get my butt kicked, and it was just good to get through that."

Besides the foot, he mentioned the body, the cramps and things, and a bit of stress in my lower back. But I think that will all go in the next couple of days."

Martip said his feet also were bleeding a bit. "It's inhumane what these courts do to our feet," he said.

Martin out-aced Rafter 18-13

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— AP/UNB photo

in aces and had more winning shots (68-48), but suffered 40 unforced errors while Rafter had 28.

Chang, who pulled out of a tunic last week because of a strained stomach muscle, had problems with the No 46-ranked Raoux pouncing on his second serve.

"It's fair to say in the past few months, tennis-wise, I've been struggling," Chang said. "I feel in my heart that the hunger is still there. The fire is not just a spark, it's still burning."

Roux said, "I know he hasn't got the confidence he used to have, but still he's a guy who has been in the top three in the world for some time. I know he

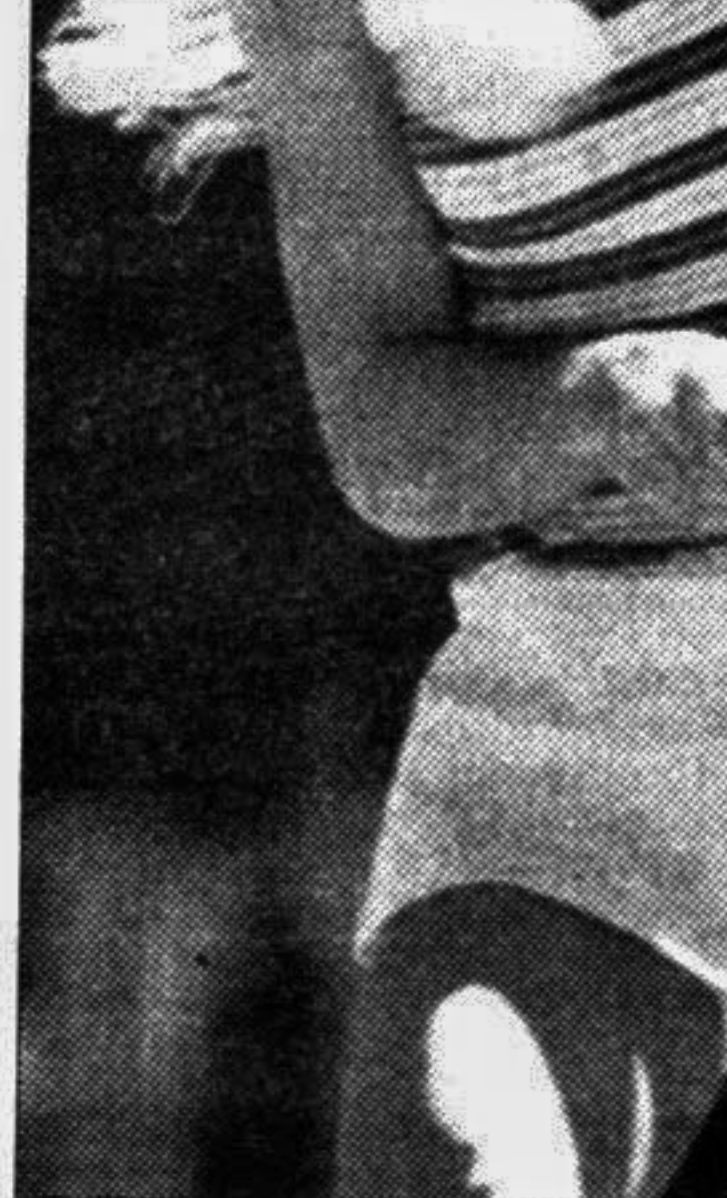
Under the closed roof, No 9 Marcelo Rios beat Sweden's Thomas Enqvist 6-4, 7-6, 4-6, 6-4.

Women's defending champion Martina Hingis suffered a five-game lapse — "I was, like, going crazy" — going from 5-0 to 5-5 before beating German Barbara Rittner 7-5, 6-1.

"I thought 5-0 was a pretty good match, and then after 5-0 again. In between it was just something that never happened to me before," Hingis said.

Rittner, however, thought she saw signs of weakness, and "hotter would have nicer" to help her against Hingis.

"That's what makes her beatable. Sometimes she just



Anna Kournikova of Russia plays backhand against American Corina Morariu during their second round clash at the Australian Open in Melbourne on Jan 22. The teenage Russian won 7-5, 6-2.

wasn't going to give me anything and he would fight like a dog to the end."

Shortly after their match, the heat broke when thunder clouds suddenly appeared and rain drenched Melbourne Park, halting play briefly until the retractable roof was closed on Centre Court. Before that, more than 100 fans had gone to first aid stations for treatment of heat exhaustion.

No 5 Greg Rusedski, the US Open runner-up to Rafter, got out of the heat in slightly more than an hour when American Jonathan Stark had to quit with a knee injury. Rusedski was leading 6-4, 6-4, 1-0.

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In other women's matches, No 3 Amanda Coetzer downed Latvia's Larisa Neiland 2-6, 6-1, 6-0; No 5 Mary Pierce breezed past Cristina Torrens-Valero 6-1, 6-0; No 10 Anke Huber beat Anne Miller, United States, 6-4, 6-0; Henrieta Nagyova beat No 11 Brenda Schultz-McCarthy 6-1, 6-4; No 16 Ai Sugiyama beat Miho Saeki 6-7, 7-5, 6-1.

Stat of the Day: 7 hours — the time needed by Pat Rafter to win his first and second round matches at the Australian Open.

Quote of the Day: "I just took off my socks, and it's inhumane what these courts do to our feet," Todd Martin after his 3-1/2-hour match against Pat Rafter in sweltering conditions.

Amazing!

DERBY, England, Jan 22: In what is believed to be a world record, it took 66 penalty kicks to decide the outcome of a soccer match between two teams of 9- and 10-year-olds in this central England city, reports AP.

The shootout lasted 90 minutes, as long as the match itself. With the game tied 1-1 after regulation time in competition for Derby's Community Cup, the Mickelover Lightning Blue Sox and Chellaston Boys B went into a less-than deadly penalty shootout.

Both teams began firing blanks as the first 60 kicks missed the goal altogether or were saved.

"After the first 56 penalties, the referee suggested moving the spot a bit closer," said Blue Sox coach Neal Blatherwick.

Finally, Chellaston's Richard "Deadeye" Smith broke through.

Unfortunately, he then had to watch as the Blue Sox's John Blatherwick and Sam Gadsby began to shoot straight, netting the team's 32nd and 33rd penalty tries. Chellaston missed its 33rd and the game was finally over with the Blue Sox winning 2-1 on penalties.

Team coaches suggested that Chellaston's 9-year-old losing goalkeeper, Ben Hodder, now holds the world record for the most penalty saves in a match.

British newspapers said the world record for a shootout was held by Argentine teams Juniors and Racing Club, which played out a 20-19 thriller in 1968.

The previous British record shoot-out was a 28-penalty marathon between Aldershot and Fulham in the 1987 Freight Rover Trophy.

Last year players complained bitterly about the courts as air temperatures soared and the court surface temperature rose to more than 60 degrees.

The Rebound Ace surface consists of a thin rubber compound spread over a concrete base.

It is similar to other hard-court surfaces such as that used at the US Open.

But on a hot day the rubber coating can become slightly tacky and players moving at high speed and then stopping sharply risk injury when their shoes stick.

They also suffer severe blistering because their feet move inside their shoes when the sole sticks to the court.

Earlier in the tournament other players said their shoes were sticking to the surface, with Frenchman Guillaume Raoux suffering severe blistering.

Rafter said, "That court was bloody hot today. I was feeling the bottom of my sole halfway through the match and I thought 'I'm on fire.'"

DRUG TESTING: Tennis is one of the cleanest sports in the world when it comes to drug abuse by players, despite the temptation of vast amounts of money, an International Tennis Federation official says.

Tarango's most notable spat

AUSSIE OPEN AT A GLANCE

MELBOURNE, Jan 22 (AP): Highlights of Thursday's fourth day of the 6.7 million dollars Australian Open:

Weather: Hot. Afternoon temperature was 95 degrees (35.2 C).

Results: Men's Singles, Second Round: No. 2 Patrick Rafter beat Todd Martin 2-6, 7-6, 6-7, 6-4, 6-3; Guillaume Raoux beat No. 3 Michael Chang 6-4, 7-6, 7-6, 6-0; No 5 Greg Rusedski beat Jonathan Stark 6-4, 6-4, 1-0 retired.

Women's Singles: Second Round: No. 1 Martina Hingis beat Barbara Rittner 7-5, 6-1; No 3 Amanda Coetzer beat Larisa Neiland, Latvia, 2-6, 6-1, 6-0; No. 5 Mary Pierce beat Cristina Torrens-Valero 6-1, 6-2; No 10 Anke Huber beat Anne Miller, United States, 6-4, 6-0; Henrieta Nagyova beat No 11 Brenda Schultz-McCarthy 6-1, 6-4; No 16 Ai Sugiyama beat Miho Saeki 6-7, 7-5, 6-1.

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Guy named for greatness



KINGSTON, Jan 22 (Reuters): If ever a young man was named for greatness, it is West Indies pacesman Nixon McLean.

Nixon Alexei McNamara McLean to the precise, son of Vincent Truman McArthur McLean, a fast bowler who was incensed when Kissinger tried to bowl spin.

McLean and his family sound more like a chapter from modern American history than a West Indies sporting clan but, at the insistence of their father, they all have names which "pay tribute to great men."

Father began life as plain Vincent but he added the names of former President Harry Truman and general Douglas McArthur.

After Nixon was given the names of Russian Premier Alexei Kosygin and Robert McNamara, the American defence secretary, along came a sister, Golda Meir McLean, to honour the first woman to be Israeli prime minister.

The next boy is Kissinger, after Henry the top US diplomat, and the last child is Reagan, to celebrate former President Ronald Reagan.

"I was a fast bowler and he wanted us all — including Golda — to be fast bowler as well. I think it is fair to say he hated spinners and when Kissinger tried to bowl spin dad got very annoyed."

"Golda would have been a fine quick bowler but she has turned to track and field and netball."

"I've always been a quick bowler, but both the other lads had moments when they tried to bowl something else and they were soon given orders to change their style."

Nixon began life on the streets of St. Vincent, the St Vincent seaside village where he was born, as a right-handed batsman, "but the windows on the

right hand side of the street kept getting broken and so I decided to bat the other way round to keep more control."

The 6ft 5in quick has drawn on advice from every coach in the Caribbean to improve on the pace that former pacesman Colin Croft has described as "among the quickest I have seen."

New captain Brian Lara believes McLean is the most promising young fast bowler in the Caribbean.

McLean went to West Indies coach Malcolm Marshall and Curtly Ambrose and, before he toured Australia with West Indies a year ago, received a note from Joel Garner advising him to jump higher in his delivery stride to get even more pace.

Now, according to Lara, he has the chance to learn even more.

It is time to get these young guys — Nixon, Mervyn Dillon and Fraklyn Rose — into the Test team so that they can learn while Courtney Walsh and Curtly Ambrose are still around to teach them," Lara said.

with officials was at Wimbledon in 1995 when he walked off during a third round match and was subsequently fined and banned from playing there for one year.

Croatian Goran Ivanisevic, meanwhile, went into red at the championships when he collected second fine.

Ivanisevic was fined 5,000 US dollars for failing to conduct a post-match press conference after his first round loss.

He was given another fine Thursday for 4,000 US dollars for unsportsmanlike behaviour during the match.

Ivanisevic only earned 6,000 US dollars for his first-round loss.

Another Croatian, Mirjana Lucic, who is making her Australian open debut, was fined 1,000 US dollars for receiving coaching during her second round loss to fourth seed Iva Majoli.

RIVERBOAT PETE: After winning his first two matches comfortably, Pete Sampras wouldn't comment on the odds of his winning the Australian Open. But that doesn't mean he's not a betting man.

"I've been gambling every night," Sampras said, adding that he plays blackjack in the local casinos. "I've got to do something on my free time."

And, he said, he's currently in the black. "It's been a good week."

Asked if the stakes might reach half the prize money in this tournament, where the men's singles champion receives 412,000 US dollars, Sampras replied.

"Oh, no, no... I'm trying to make a living, you know, I just have some fun."

His career earnings already exceed 32 million US dollars. "A thousand dollars a hand?" "It depends," he said.

TARANGO IN TROUBLE AGAIN: Outspoken Jeff Tarango is in trouble with officials again over his behavior during his first-round match with Patrick Rafter.

Tarango was fined 3,000 US dollars for unsportsmanlike behaviour during the compelling four-set loss on Centre Court Tuesday.

The American questioned several calls and was given a warning for unsportsmanlike behaviour by the umpire. Tarango then called tournament referee Peter Bellenager onto the court for a futile attempt to have the warning revoked.

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