

Laver suffers a stroke

LOS ANGELES, July 28: Tennis Hall of Famer Rod Laver was in critical condition Monday night after suffering a stroke during an interview with ESPN, reports AP.

Laver, 59, was taken to UCLA Medical Center. "His family is with him and he's resting comfortably," nursing supervisor Denny Rubianes said.

Laver was stricken while being interviewed for an upcoming ESPN series about the greatest athletes of the 20th century, network spokesman Rob Tobias said.

Tobias said he didn't know exactly where or when the interview took place.



Laver won 11 Grand Slam singles titles, one fewer than all-time leader Roy Emerson, and he is the only player in history to sweep the four Grand Slam events in two different years. The Australian left-hander did it as an amateur in 1962 and as a pro in 1969.

Laver, nicknamed "Rocket" for his powerful groundstrokes, won four Wimbledon, three Australian titles, two US championships and two French titles in singles. He also won nine Grand Slam doubles titles. During his 23-year career, he won 47 pro singles titles and was runner-up 21 times. He also starred for Australia in Davis Cup competition, compiling a 16-4 record in singles and a 4-0 mark in doubles.

Laver, who lives in Newport Beach, California, was the world's top-ranked player in 1961, 1962, 1968 and 1969 and earned 1.5 million dollars during his career. He was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 1981.

Test series in England still eludes Lankans



LONDON, July 28 (India Abroad News Service): It may have won the last World Cup but the Sri Lankan cricket team has to wait for at least four more years before it can hope to play a proper Test series in England.

The Sri Lankan team is currently touring England, but the World Cup champions have been confined to just one Test match and a one-day match. As the England Cricket Control Board appears yet to take them seriously, Sri Lankan players will have to wait until at least 2002 for anything more than this.

"England will be playing a split series against India and Sri Lanka in England in the year 2002," a spokesman for the England Cricket Board told IANS.

But details for that tour are still being worked out, he said. It is still not certain if Sri Lanka will get more than a single Test in England then, though three would appear likely.

According to "provisional plans", however, England will play a three-Test series in Sri Lanka in the winter of 2000-2001, the spokesman said.

The present series has left the excited cricket fans of Sri Lanka disappointed on many counts. They had expected to be given more than a single Test in a series after their World Cup success. They were told this was not possible because the Test itinerary is fixed well in advance.

Nor have they been given the one Test they will play at Lord's as scheduled earlier. The Test has been moved to the Oval and only the one-day match will be played at Lord's.

The English board was strongly criticised for its treatment of Sri Lanka in an editorial in The Times following the World Cup victory. But the Board has not finally been convinced to give Sri Lanka full status even by the year 2002.

"It is nonsensical that we should come all the way from Sri Lanka to play just one Test

in a series," spokesman from Sri Lanka High Commission S. Diswanayake told IANS. "But we will try to make the best of it that we can."

But here lies the further disappointment of Sri Lankan fans. Their team has been doing little so far to show its world class talents. The Sri Lankans have played badly against teams such as Wales, Glamorgan and Somerset, once compiling as little as 54.

The famed Sri Lankan stars have disappointed a determined band of supporters following the team around before their Test from August 27. The Sri Lankans hope the team will find its talents in time for the one-day match on August 20 and the Test match.

The English board's claims that it had decided matches too far in advance to give Sri Lanka more Tests has not convinced many supporters. The Board has packed in series after series with South Africa, which returned to the international Test scene only in recent years.



HELP, I'M UNDER AIR ATTACK! Robin Weston of Derbyshire takes a tumbling catch as some pigeons take off for cover during a county championship match against Surrey at the Oval on July 28.

Thorpe requires surgery

LONDON, July 28: England star Graham Thorpe will be out of action for another two months after confirming today that he is to undergo an operation to try to cure his recurrent back problem, reports AFP.

Left-hander Thorpe, who has played since bagging a pair during the third Test at Old Trafford, will undergo a spinal operation today to remove a small cyst on his facet joint in the lower back.

England officials want Thorpe fully fit for this winter's Ashes tour of Australia and his county Surrey hope he will be able to play in the club's last county championship fixture in mid-September.

Surrey, his principal employers, pour praise from England's hierarchy for the way they have handled the delicate question of whether the batsman should try to play on or not.

Wayne Morton, the England physio, said: "We are hugely grateful for the cooperation of Surrey on this matter as they could have insisted on Graham continuing to play for the rest of the season before having the operation in the winter."

Thorpe, who was in agony during the third Test after suffering the latest of a string of worrying muscle spasms following two days in the field, said: "It's huge relief to know that the problem is and that I shouldn't be out for too long."

Following the operation Thorpe, who is 29 on Saturday, will undertake exercises to increase his spinal strength and mobility, as well as working on his general fitness.

Valderrama a bit vexed

MIAMI, July 28: It's up to the Miami Fusion's new coach to decide whether Carlos Valderrama will play in Wednesday night's game against the Columbus Crew, reports AP.

"At this point he has not been suspended and he has not been fined," said team spokesman Gabe Gabor. "He continues to be a member of the Miami Fusion."

The wild-manned midfielder refused to practice Friday and was left home when the Fusion travelled to New England to play the Revolution.

Team members said they believed Valderrama was angry that Carlos Cordoba was fired and his replacement announced.

New coach Ivo Wortmann said he would not show favoritism to any player. With almost half the season still to play and with an eye on a playoff spot, the second worst team in Major League Soccer's Eastern Conference is focusing on improving their anemic offense.

The 36-year-old Colombian playmaker who was captain of his national team in the World Cup in France also had been selected to play in the MLS All-Star game on Sunday in Orlando.

Johnson stay at home

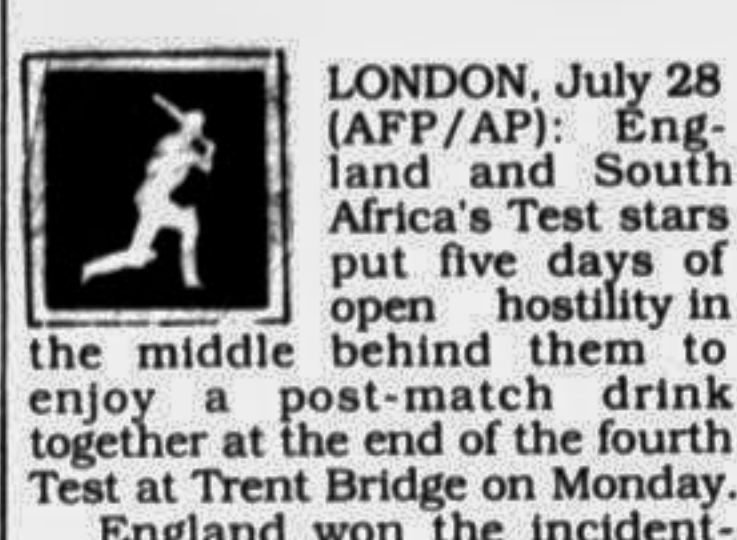
PARIS, July 28: Dual Olympic gold medalist Michael Johnson has pulled out of Wednesday's Gaz de France athletics meeting in Charley, reports AFP.

The American is following the advice of his coach and delaying his arrival in Europe by a week to put in some extra training back home in the United States.

Morocco's running phenomenon Hicham el Gerrouj has announced he will run in the mile and not the 1,500 metres at Charley.

El Gerrouj, who sliced almost two seconds off Noureddine Morcello's 1,500m record in Rome this month, is gunning for the Algerians' world record at a mile.

No hard feelings



LONDON, July 28 (AFP/AP): England and South Africa's Test stars put five days of open hostility in the middle behind them to enjoy a post-match drink together at the end of the fourth Test at Trent Bridge on Monday.

England won the incident-packed match by eight wickets to level the series 1-1 with just one Test to go after Mike Atherton, unbeaten on 98, steered them to their target of 247 on a tense final day.

Atherton's personal battle with South African pacesman Allan Donald often spilled over into verbal exchanges at the



ALEC STEWART wicket - but the former England captain insisted that the hostilities ended at the pavilion gate.

Atherton said: "A lot has been written about what has gone on but all the South Africans have been up to our dressing room to congratulate us and have a drink."

"We both play the game hard but fair, but we would be the first to have a drink with them afterwards."

"Allan is a great fast bowler and it is always a challenge to face them. It is always a battle, not just against Donald but also Shaun Pollock, and I was

pleased to get through last night. "I was very tired because batting is more a mental than a physical effort and I was obviously keen to see the job through."

However, Stewart and Cronje refused to speculate on the controversial umpiring which overshadowed England's victory.

The excitement of one of the most absorbing matches in recent Test history was fuelled by a series of controversial decisions by Mervie Kitchen and Steve Dunne.

Improved television replays, often using a magnifying-glass style camera, highlighted a handful of errors by the officials during the match.

The umpiring controversies merely added to an increase in ill-feeling between the two sides, underlined by South Africa's refusal to applaud Mike Atherton when he reached fifty.

The victory gave England hopes of winning their first five Test series since Mike Gatting's team won the Ashes 2-1 in Australia in 1986-87.

"I said for us to win the series, we had to win here and in the final Test, so we are half way there," Stewart said Monday after winning his first Test as England captain.

The luck had gone distinctly in England's favour at Trent Bridge but Stewart said his side deserved to win.

"In your eyes you play the game fair. You accept good decisions as well as bad ones... that's cricket," Stewart said in reference to several umpiring decisions which could have turned the outcome of the game.

Cronje, the South African captain, was diplomatic about the result, saying he did not think his team was robbed of a Test.

"When you win, the game has gone your way, and when you have lost, it hasn't - sometimes I think you make your own luck," he said.

Cronje, who scored 126 and 67 in his two innings, said his side lost because his batsmen did not score enough runs in the

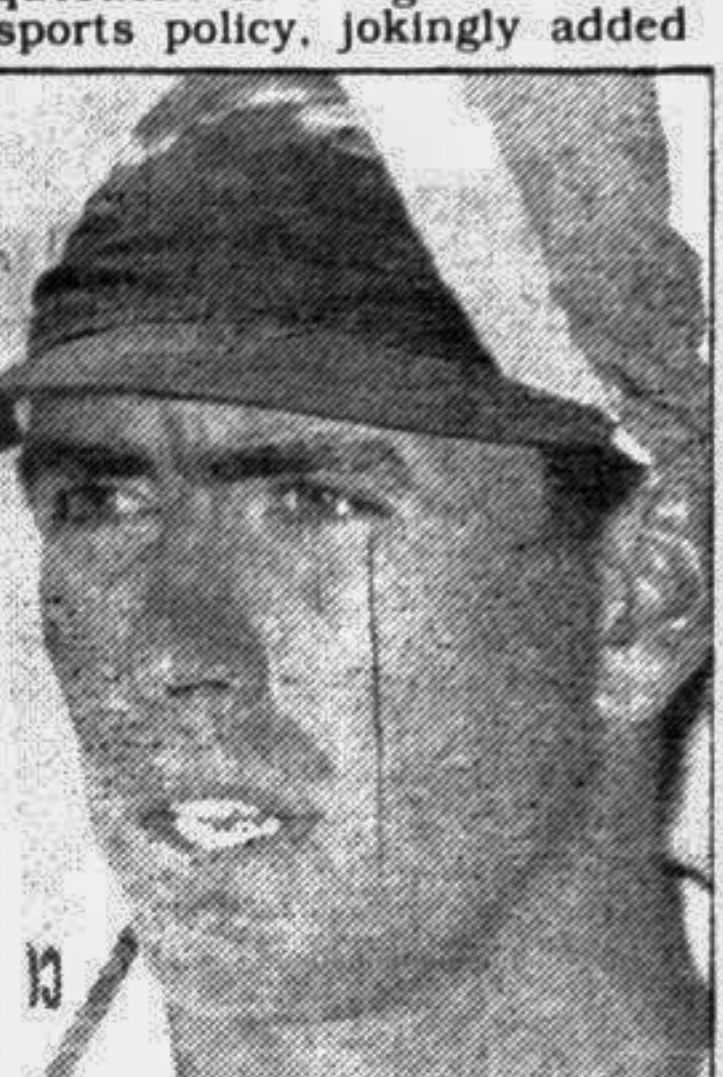
third innings for the bowlers to defend.

Meanwhile, the news of England's emphatic series-leveling victory was greeted by loud cheers by MPs in the House of Commons Monday.

Culture, media and sport minister Chris Smith congratulated England on their eight-wicket victory.

At question time in the Commons just minutes after the win, Smith said: "Can I be the first to congratulate our English cricketers on winning the Test match this afternoon."

MPs from all parties cheered the victory. Smith, answering questions on the government's sports policy, jokingly added



HANSIE CRONJE

that the win was "not entirely due to the government's activities."

In the Commons, Tory MP Nick Hawkins also rose to offer his congratulations to a team which has grown used to heavy criticism after years of relative under-achievement.

He said: "It was particularly appropriate that England should have a magnificent fight back under Alec Stewart's leadership, given that the normal propagation of doom and gloom in the media, writing off the Test team, was continuing right up until the third day of this match."

Rifles schools kabadi champs

Sports Reporter

Bangladesh Rifles School emerged champions in the Orient Bread girls' school kabadi tournament with a hard-fought 39-35 point win over Vi-quarunnissa Noon School in the final at the Sultana Kamal Women Sports Complex in Dharmidol yesterday.

In the day's other match, Bangladesh Govt. Girls' High clinched the third spot trashing Azampur Girls' High by 33-19 points.

Bangladesh Women Sports Federation president Rafia Akhter Doly witnessed the final and distributed prizes.

Was Australia's smoking gun the first bodyliner?

SYDNEY, July 28: (Sydney Morning Herald/Internet): Bodyline was an unsporting, malicious style of bowling invented by Englishmen intent on beating Australia by fair means or foul. Or was it?

Edward Docker, an Oxford-trained historian best known in cricket circles as the author of the 1978 book Bradman And The Bodyline Series, has been investigating other possibilities.

For instance, was bodyline an Australian creation first introduced by a South Australian in a Shield match eight years before the infamous series between Australian and England? If so, do some old bodyline myths need to be dispelled?

Docker is an expert on myths. His latest book, published last year under the title Fabulous Furbies, is about 10 great myths (none of them has anything to do with sport) from Australia's past. He and the book's co-author, Lynette Silver, are working on a follow-up book, which is how he comes to be delving again into bodyline.

The focus of his attention is Lancelot Gun, a batsman and medium-fast bowler who played a handful of matches for South Australia in the mid-1920s and ordinarily would have been forgotten as a cricketer long ago.

In a match against NSW at the Adelaide Oval in January 1925, however, Gun did something which is causing him now to be remembered. He was just 21, it was his debut match for South Australia and he was no more than an occasional bowler.

Yet when brought into the attack this "athletic young colt", as a newspaper described him, proceeded at once to bowl short - apparently in the direction of the batsmen - with a bodyline-style field.

This was, remember, eight years before the term bodyline was heard of.

Nobody had seen anything like it.

The Adelaide Advertiser was so surprised it reproduced a diagram of Gun's field - with seven men on the leg side, five of them behind the wicket.

His reporter wrote of Gun's "diagonal" bowling, of balls flying past on the leg side, of the batsmen swishing. "It is something new in big cricket," the reporter wrote.

Among the NSW players that day was Jack Scott, then in his mid-30s but still a genuinely fast bowler. Scott must have seen some potential in Gun's unusual tactics because back in Sydney two weeks later he used them himself against Victoria, with mixed results.

Unlike Gun, Scott was fast and hostile enough to be intimidatory. This was why the English writer Laurence Le Queuse, an authority on the bodyline affair, identified Scott's bowling in Sydney in 1925 as the only known example of its type before Douglas Jardine's Englishmen inflicted bodyline on the Australians in 1932-33.

But what about Gun, whose involvement in the affair has been almost entirely overlooked until now? How did such an unlikely player come up with such a radical bowling plan? Did he do it off his own bat? Or did his red-blooded captain, Vic Richardson, grandfather of the Chappell brothers, put him up to it?

It does not seem Gun ever bowled that way again, and he died 40 years ago without throwing any light on the subject. His sons John (an Adelaide judge) and Tony often spoke to their father about his cricket, but neither can remember him mentioning his one-off experiment.

They knew nothing of it until long after his death. John Gun wonders whether it was just something his father preferred not to speak about.

Cec Starr, South Australia's oldest representative cricketer (he is a year older than Sir Donald Bradman), knew Gun well but cannot explain how he came to bowl as he did, seemingly out of the blue.

Marion: Made for America

NEW YORK, July 28: Reuters: Timing, Marion Jones concedes, can be as important as

Last year Jones made her debut on the international athletics circuit as Carl Lewis made his valedictory lap of the great European stadiums.

This month she takes over from Jackie Joyner-Kersey as the leading woman track and field athlete in the United States when the twice Olympic heptathlon champion competes for the final time today.

Then in September the 22-year-old American has the chance to become the first athlete to win a million dollar bonus if she is only athlete to win each of her events in the new Golden League series.

Raw talent and an attractive personality and tough-minded ambition have made Jones a hot sporting and commercial property at a time when the sport in the United States desperately needs new heroes.

She was quickly snapped up by Nike and has now joined a number of other elite athletes in a multi-million dollar advertising campaign launched by sports watch manufacturer Tag Heuer.

"I just thank my parents I was born when I was," Jones said in an interview this week. "My goal is to be one of the greatest female athletes there has ever been in the sport and I know that's going to take more than a couple of World Championships or maybe more than a couple of Olympics."

Parallels with Lewis have been predictable. Although

Jones confesses she is getting just a little tired of being constantly compared with the nine-time Olympic champion, Lewis won gold medals over 100, 200, the 4x100 relay and the long jump at the 1984 Olympics.

Jones aims to go one better at the 2000 Sydney Games, emulating 1988 double sprint champion Florence Griffith Joyner and running the 4x400 team to more than a silver medal.

Jones does not like the 400, but she has clocked the second fastest time in the United States this year and says she needs only run one in 2000 to convince the coaches she should be on the relay team.

"I just wanted to open the eyes of the US coaches, to show I'm available," she said.

Griffith Joyner may not have anchored the American 4x400 team to gold but her 100 and 200 metres world records set in the summer of 1988 have not been seriously challenged until this year when Jones announced she had them both in her sights.

Jones said she thought Galina Chistyakova's world record long jump, also set in 1988, would be the first to fall.

"I have jumped 7.31, the world record is 7.52," she said. "If I get a good jump the world record is gone. It's difficult to say when the 100 and 200 records will fall. I'm hoping before my career is over. That will kind of be the pinnacle."

Jones freely admits her long jump, based on pure speed and minimal technique, is not yet a thing of beauty.

More surprisingly, she still

sees a number of faults in her sprinting which will hardly lift her opponents' spirits.

Jones said she had not consciously thought of Lewis when she decided last February to aim for five gold medals at the millennium Olympics, although the prospect of going one better must have crossed her mind.

Lewis was the first athlete to grasp the possibilities of the new professional era, although to his constant frustration he never achieved the recognition in the United States he felt was his due.

"I don't think it was totally his fault," Jones said. "He used to be the Michael Jordan of Europe, track and field is not as big in the United States. I would not put all the blame on Carl, he did all he could."

Griffith Joyner, who transformed herself in the space of a year from perennial silver medalist to the fastest woman in the history of the sport, relied mainly on sheer power to set her world marks of 10.49 and 21.34 seconds.

Jones is taller, slimmer and reminds older track observers of the extremely elegant Wilma Rudolph. 20th of 22 children, who overcame serious childhood illnesses to win the 100-200 double at the 1960 Rome Olympics.

"Marion is not quite as tall," recalled former US track coach Leroy Walker. "But she has a lovely build, great stride length and unbelievably excellent leg speed."

"They're both very good and very nice. Wilma lasted for a long time, Marion will also."

The Daily Star TV Guide. A comprehensive grid listing TV programs for Wednesday, July 29th, 1998. It includes sections for BTU, BBC, CHANNEL V, STAR PLUS, STAR MOVIES, PTV, ZEE INDIA TV, MUSIC ASIA, ZEE CINEMA, TNT CARTOON, ZEE TV, and ESPN. Each section lists various shows and their start times.