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Column One

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5-1 / 6-3 / 4-3
- Who is the first woman referee to officiate a First Division soccer match?
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- Who won the boys' singles title in the ITF tourney in Rajshahi?
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SPORTS TALK



Javagal Srinath

(Indian fast bowler)
"I don't set any goals now. I have ambitions but I don't set goals. I take it one match at a time and once I step on to the field I take it one over at a time."

ACC officials arrive

Ramaswami will be the third eye

The Asian Cricket Council (ACC) appointed Indian umpire VK Ramaswami as third umpire for the final of the Asian Test Championship to be held between Pakistan and Sri Lanka at the Bangabandhu National Stadium from next Friday.

This was revealed by Bangladesh Cricket Board general secretary yesterday.

Although the ACC designated all the match officials before the championship started in Calcutta on February 16th, the only name missing in that list was that of the third umpire for the Dhaka match.

According to the rules of ACC, the third umpire would be appointed from the country not playing in the three-nation tournament final.

Meanwhile, two umpires designated for the final—David Shepherd of England and Doug Cowie of New Zealand—arrived in the city yesterday along with match referee Cammie Smith of West Indies.

Davis Cup tennis starts today

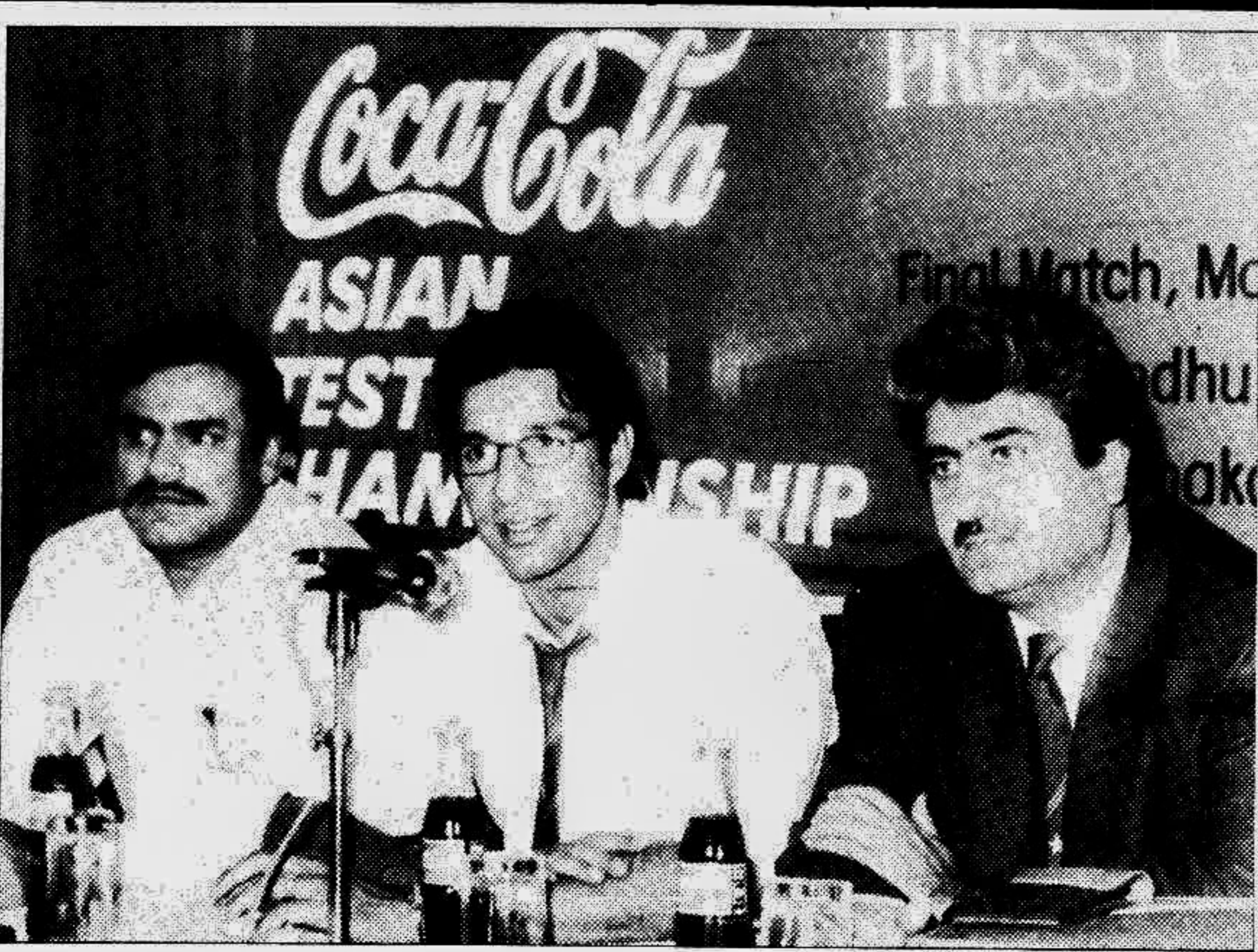
The Group-3 matches of the Davis Cup Asia/Oceania zone begins at the Ramna National Tennis Complex at 9 am this morning, reports UNB.

Post-Telecommunication, Housing and Public Works Minister Mohammed Nasim will inaugurate the five-day meet organised by the Bangladesh Tennis Federation (BTF) under the auspices of International Tennis Federation (ITF).

Twenty-eight players from seven countries, including hosts Bangladesh, will take part in the ITF team event of two singles and one doubles matches.

On the opening day, Bangladesh will take on Syria and Hong Kong face Malaysia in Group A matches while Saudi Arabia meet Pacific Oceania in a lone Group B tie.

All the three matches will start simultaneously in three courts soon after the inaugural function.



Pakistan captain Wasim Akram (C) speaking at a press conference at Hotel Sonargaon after his team's arrival in the city yesterday. Pakistan manager Mohammad Munir (R) and Bangladesh Cricket Board member Jalal Younus were present.

Pakistan arrive for Asian Test final

Akram full of confidence

Hasan Masood

Pakistan captain Wasim Akram asserted there was nothing planned to let Sri Lanka earn seven bonus points in the drawn Lahore Test at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium to allow the islanders in and keep the Indians out of the Dhaka final.

The bespectacled tall Pakistan skipper was talking to a host of reporters upon his team's arrival in the city yesterday morning to play the final of the inaugural Asian Test Championship against Sri Lanka.

"The Test match is scheduled for a March 12 start at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, Pakistan team manager Miah Mohammad Munir was also present at the short press briefing that took place while other team members were rushing to their hotel rooms to catch as much sleep as possible after a hectic journey from mid-Monday night.

"It's a wrong concept here—everywhere—in India specially. We just went there and planned to play positive cricket. We wanted to get our four points in 100 overs and that's what we did with our bowling. And the reason I didn't bowl during the game so much was because I had a very strenuous three-month. And Saqlain was also not well at that time," said Akram.

"I bowled a lot of overs in the Indian series so I needed a bit of break. I needed my two young fast bowlers to bowl and they did bowl. And this was the game where I could have been rested—sort of just relax—and I did relax—and that was it. There was nothing planned to give the points away like this at all," he said.

"We all are very excited to be here to play the final. We, I think, the Pakistan team did very well in the Asian Test Championship and I think they deserve to be in the final," said the tired Pakistan captain.

"I think the Sri Lankans are a real talented side and you can't predict that Pakistan will win easily—not at all. Aravinda is one of the best batsmen in the world and Chaminda Vaas is a very good bowler. I think in the final you have to be very careful against Sri Lanka. They can be a dangerous side. So, Pakistan is looking forward to the final and they are ready to work hard like they did on the India tour," said Akram while giving his reaction on the inclusion of the two Sri Lankans in the squad.

About his expectation from the Dhaka wicket, Akram said that his team would like to have a good Test wicket and he was aware that the wickets in Dhaka were quite good.

"We played Wills Cup about four months ago and the wicket looked quite good. Hopefully there will be a little more grass, a bit more hard this time, then it will be a good wicket," Akram added.

Akram was not at all influenced by the superstition that Dhaka had never been a lucky ground for Pakistan.

"As far as myself is concerned, I thought Lahore was never a lucky ground for me. But that proved wrong and hopefully Dhaka too will become a lucky ground for Pakistan," said a confident Akram.

About his own hat trick against Sri Lanka, Akram said he was very proud and honoured to become the first Pakistani to earn a hat trick in Test cricket.

"Yes, he will definitely play in this game. He is rating to go—he is the fastest bowler in the world. And we have Saied Anwar, the best opener in the world. We have Izzatullah Haq who is the best player in the world against fast bowling. Then we have Afridi who is the most exciting player in the world and then we have the best off-spinner in the world in Saqlain Mushtaq. So Pakistan team is full of youth and experienced players and I think we can do good in the future apart from this Test match," Akram concluded.

"I am happy with the team. We put youth in the side and that's all. It's a good sign. We are looking for the future of cricket in Pakistan and that's very important," said Akram, who is now the sixth highest wicket taker in the world in Test cricket with 373 wickets from 87 matches.

"Now I am around 61 wickets behind Kapil Dev's world record of 343 wickets. So, I will definitely look forward to go for those wickets and set a new record," said Akram when asked about his ambition.

About his team, specially the new bowling sensation Shoaib Akhtar, Akram praised him highly.

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World Cup cricket

Thanveer Mazhar Bangladesh team manager

Thanveer Mazhar Islam, senior vice-president of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), has been named manager of the Bangladesh cricket team for the 1999 World Cup to be held in England in May and June, reports UNB.

BCB joint secretary Dewan Shaiful Arefin will act as coordinator during the national team's preparation as were as the England tour. BCB general secretary Syed Ashraf Haq told newsmen yesterday evening.

A 15-member final Bangladesh squad for the World Cup will be announced later this month. A vice-captain will also be named then.

ESPN-Star Sports focus on the final

Sports Reporter

Six TV commentators—Geoffrey Boycott, Tony Greig, Sunil Gavaskar, Ravi Shastri, Ramji Raja and Sikander Bakht—will cover the first Asian Test Championship final between Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Besides, Charu Sharma will host the live coverage of the match.

This was revealed by Joanna Lewis, manager of ESPN Star Sports production team, yesterday evening.

Talking to The Daily Star, the Welsh woman said that they also wanted to have Saliya Ahangama of Sri Lanka in the commentary team but failed to do so because of his reluctance.

"We are now planning to bring Sri Lankan manager Ranjith Fernando in the commentary box at times to his expert comment," said Joanna who also revealed that this Asian Test Championship was their first operation as an independent TV production team. Earlier they used to hire either WorldTel or TWI.

Meanwhile, the advance party of the ESPN-Star Sports production team, which will provide live coverage of the match, arrived in the city yesterday.

According to Joanna, the main body will arrive today. The team will install 13 cameras including one at the roof of the Shilpa Bank Bhaban and two stump vision cameras.

SL name 14 with Aravinda, Vaas

Sports Reporter

The Board of Control for Cricket in Sri Lanka yesterday named a 14-man squad for the Asian Test Championship final against Pakistan to be held at the Bangabandhu National Stadium from March 12 to 16.

As revealed earlier on this page, Aravinda de Silva has been named captain of the team in the absence of skipper Arjuna Ranatunga, who is going through a hamstring injury.

Besides, left-arm pacer Chaminda Vaas is also back in the side.

Aravinda and Vaas will replace Sajeewa de Silva and Niroshan Bandratilake from the 14-man team that played against Pakistan in the Lahore Test.

The squad: Aravinda de Silva (captain), Romesh Kaluwitharana, Marvan Atapattu, Chaminda Vaas, Upul Chandana, Pramodya Wickremasinghe, Suresh Perera, Avishka Gunawardena, Mahela Jayawardena, Ruwan Kalpage, Chandika Hathurusinghe, Ruchira Perera, Hashan Tillekeratne and Russel Arnold.

Ranjith Fernando and Roy Dias will act as manager and coach of the team.

Faridpur become zonal champs

FARIDPUR, Mar 9: Faridpur became Dhaka Divisional zonal champions of the National Cricket Championship beating Dhaka by an innings and 110 runs in the three-day final at the local stadium today, reports BSS.

Dhaka, batting first, were bundled out for only 90 runs in the first innings.

In reply Faridpur made a massive score of 375 runs.

In the second innings, Dhaka managed only 175 runs, and conceded an innings and 110-run defeat. Efficc grabbed 13 wickets in both innings at the cost of only 67 runs. He also scored 35. He was adjudged man-of-the-match. Nasir of Faridpur scored highest 84 runs.

Mukul of Faridpur took 5 wickets for 55 runs.

Villa trying out Bhutia?

LONDON, Mar 9 (Reuters/Internet): Aston Villa are giving top Indian striker Bhichaugh Bhutia a trial which could lead to the first signing of an Indian player in the English premier league.

Dubbed 'the boyish soccer star from Sikkim' by the Times of India, the 21-year-old East Bengal striker has scored 21 goals in 31 internationals.

Miandad hints big of a comeback

Sports Reporter

Pakistan coach Javed Miandad is very happy and pleased with his team's performance in the Asian Test Championship so far.

The former Pakistan great, who scored 8,832 runs in 124 Test matches, was talking to a group of reporters at the Sonargaon Hotel yesterday morning.

"This is a new concept in cricket and I'm quite happy to take my team to the final," said Miandad.

When asked about Sri Lanka's strength after the inclusion of Aravinda de Silva and Chaminda Vaas, Miandad said, "I don't know because I have played cricket and I know it doesn't make any difference because you have to go and play. I tell my team you just go and try your best, doesn't matter who is going to play against us. We have to look after our side on our part."

About his team's relaxed performance against Sri Lanka, which helped the islanders to collect the required bonus points to qualify for the final, Javed said no team wants to throw anything to their opponents.

"You must give credit to the other team as well. The same team (Sri Lanka) played against India and they played quite well. Ranatunga did not score in that match and Aravinda also did not do well. These youngsters in the Sri Lankan team are really good," he added.

When asked to comment on two youngsters Wajahatullah Wasti and Imran Nazir, Miandad termed them as the future prospects of Pakistan cricket.

"They are not the replacements of Malik and Sohail, they are just upcoming cricketers. We gave them chances and they have proved their worth," said Miandad.

About the bonus point system introduced in the Asian Test Championship, Miandad was quite happy.

"Whenever you try anything new, people will always talk because they are not used to it. When they will be acquainted with the system they will stop talking and there will be no more complaints," said Miandad.

"We played in England with the same rules in the County Championship. Besides, we practise the same in our domestic cricket. I remember my days in County cricket. We used to follow the same points system," Miandad added.

Finally, when asked about his recent comment in an interview that if Pakistan wanted he was ready to play again, Miandad said that no one can say 'no' to his country when it was required or asked.

"I'm always available for my country. If they require my service, I'm there. They wanted my service as a coach after I retired and I'm doing that. And if they want me as a player I will also do that. Why not?" added Miandad, saying that he was pretty happy with his job as coach of Pakistan.

'Losedies' hit new low

PORT-OF-SPAIN, Trinidad, Mar 9: West Indies collapsed to their lowest Test match total of 51 and lost the first Test against Australia by 312 runs on Monday, reports Reuters.

West Indies had crumbled to 16 for five at lunch and were all out in less than an hour after the break. The innings lasted only 19.1 overs with all 10 wickets falling in the last 11 of them.

Pacemen Glenn McGrath and Jason Gillespie did the damage but several of the wickets fell to inept shots.

Man-of-the-match McGrath took five for 28 for his first 10-wicket Test match haul. Gillespie uprooted Pedro Collins' middle stump to end the slaughter and finish with four for 13.

West Indies, who came into the series on the back of a 5-0 rout in South Africa, recorded their previous lowest total of 53 against Pakistan in Faisalabad in 1986.

Monday's 102 minute mauling also erased the old record for their lowest score against Australia—78 in Sydney during 1951-52—and their lowest score at home which was 102 against England at Bridgetown in 1934-35.

Skipper Brian Lara, who was appointed captain for only the first two of the four Tests in the series said, "Our batting is struggling at the moment. We, as a team, need to look at that immediately and see how we can get out of it."

"Fride-wise all our opponents know that they can beat us, we have to get rid of those negative thoughts and come out positively."

Lara top-scored with 62 in the first innings but fell second ball for three on Monday. Only wicketkeeper Ridley Jacobs reached double figures, scoring 19. The next highest was Curtly Ambrose with six.

"Getting 50 and 60s is not enough," said Lara. "I need to get 100s, especially with so many inexperienced guys in the team."

It was perfect way for Steve Waugh to begin his spell as captain following the retirement of Mark Taylor.

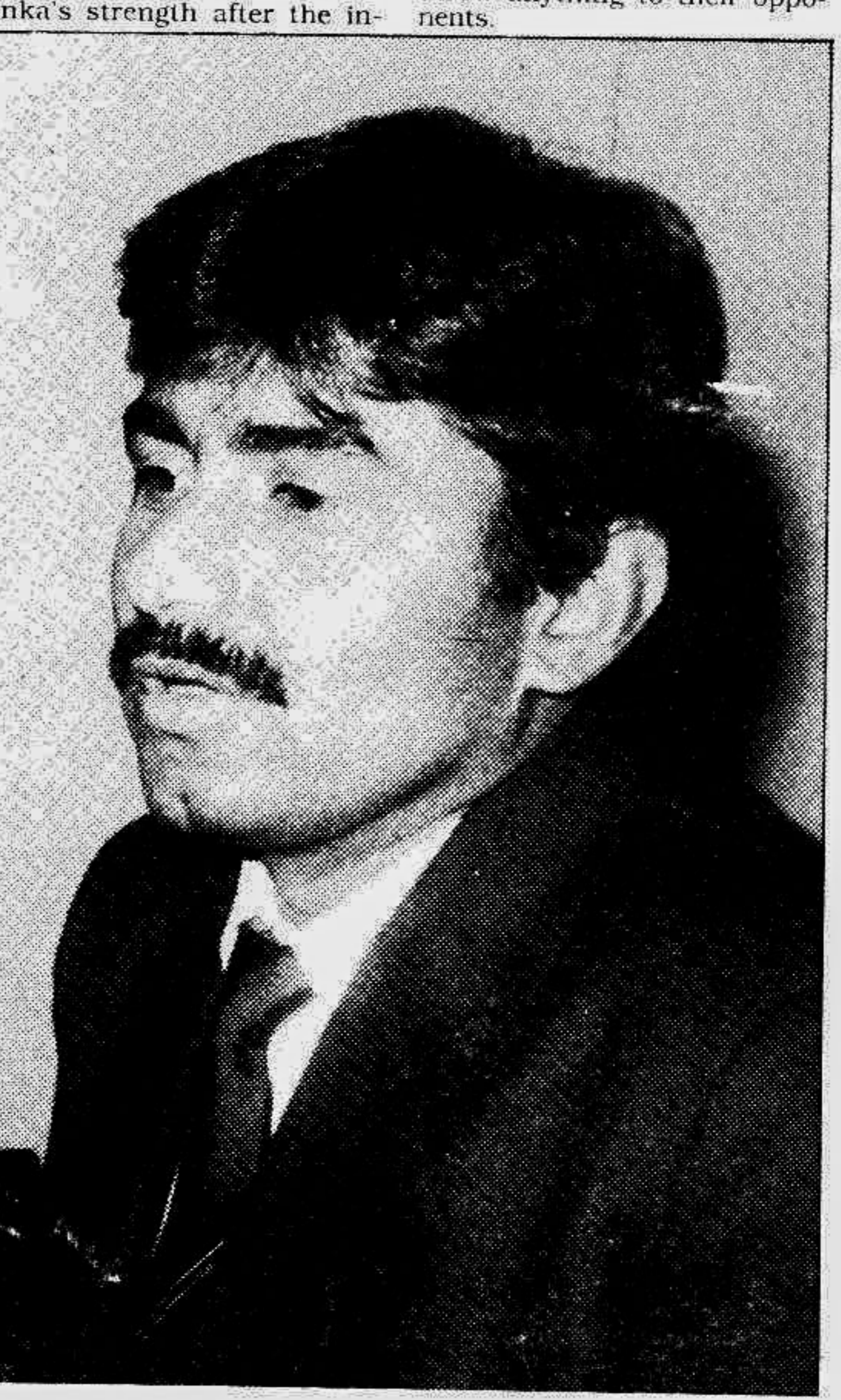
"It was a great feeling. I was proud to lead the guys out there today," he said. "The bowling was fantastic."

He felt Australia's first innings of 269 laid the foundation for what became an easy victory.

"I thought it was a great team effort but the first day really set it up for us nicely," said Waugh. Monday had begun well for West Indies with the last three Australian second innings wickets falling for 34. They were all out for 261.



Asian Test Championship so far.



JAVED MIANDAD, The Pakistan team coach

SA's strength may tell in Christchurch

Fleming pulls out finally

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand, Mar 9 (AFP/Reuters/Internet): South Africa's strong overall superiority in both batting and bowling is likely to emerge in the second Test against New Zealand starting Thursday.

Although New Zealand escaped with a draw in the first Test in Auckland, the Kiwis were forced to follow on 369 runs behind and only the lack of a class spinner on the benign Eden Park wicket prevented the Proteas from winning.

The Jade Stadium wicket in Christchurch will have more bounce than at Eden Park and while that is likely to assist New Zealand's attack it will probably be of even greater assistance to the likes of Allan Donald, Shaun Pollock, Lance Klusener and Jacques Kallis.

South Africa's batting lineup has looked very secure on this tour with few sides able to bowl the tourists out.

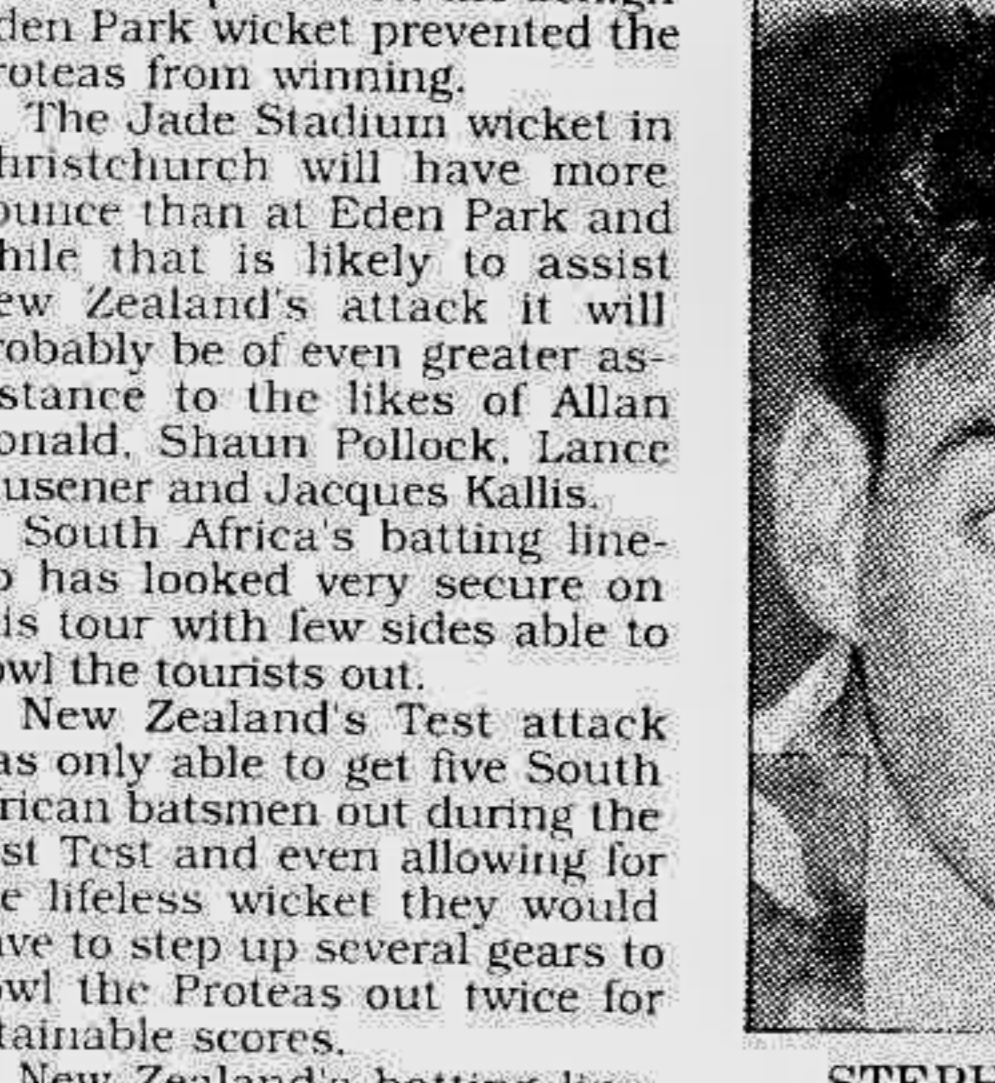
New Zealand's Test attack was only able to get five South African batsmen out during the first Test and even allowing for the lifeless wicket they would have to step up several gears to bowl the Proteas out twice for attainable scores.

New Zealand's batting lineup on the other hand looks anything but secure.

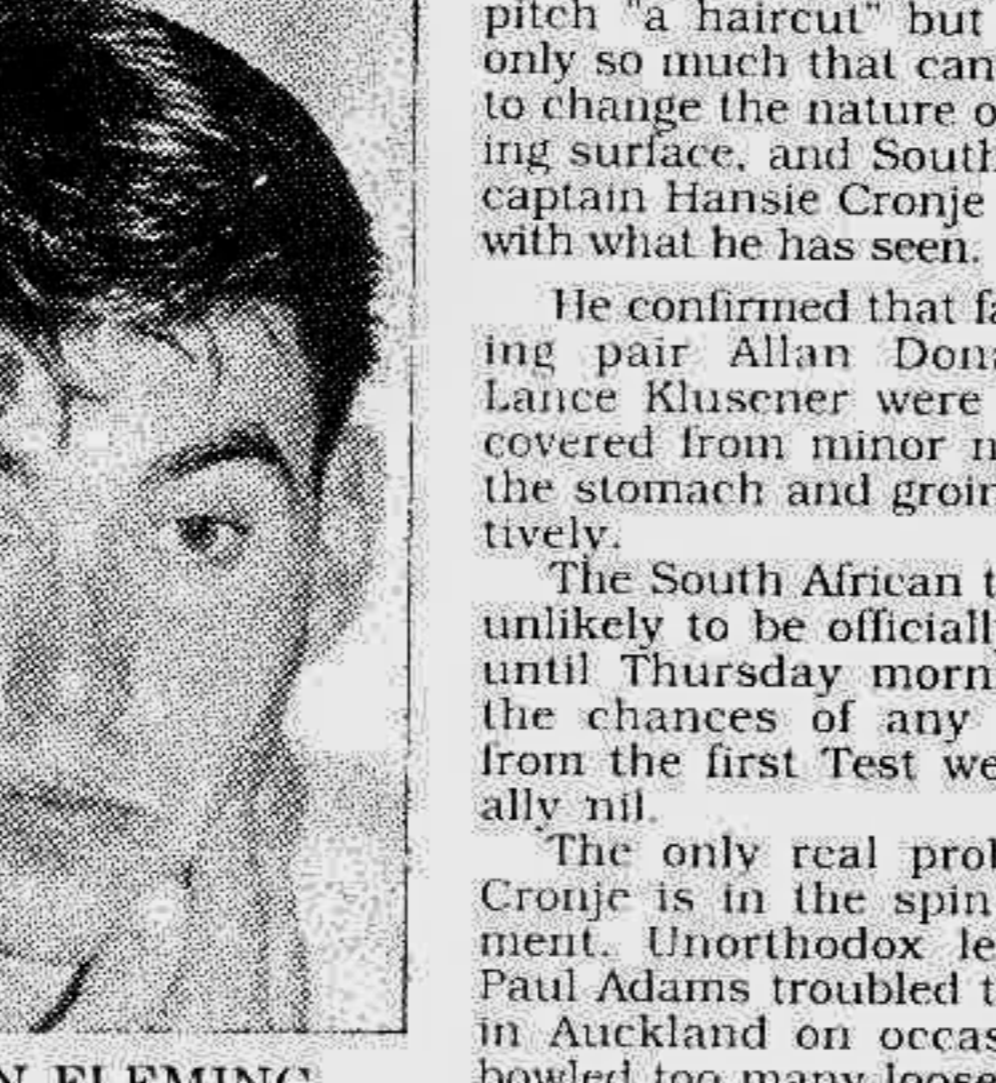
It was a sign of desperation at the lack of depth of batting in this country that Stephen Fleming was named in the Test squad in place of injured Craig McMillan despite not having fully recovered from a groin injury or having played since January when he sustained the injury.

However, Fleming ruled himself out on Tuesday before even completing his fitness Test and Gary Stead, a 27-year-old journeyman will play in his place.

New Zealand coach Steve Rixon said on Tuesday. "It would have been very, very useful to have Stephen back in the side but it's not to be; he's not 100 per cent and unit players just don't play Test cricket."



STEPHEN FLEMING



STEVE RIXON

New Zealand made other changes in their squad, bringing in left-arm swing bowler Shayne O'Connor in place of slow left-armer Matthew Hart, and replacing the ill Matthew Bell with experienced opener Bryan Young.

O'Connor has been in fine form and playing for New Zealand A rocked South Africa in their second innings when he ripped through the top of the order.

TEAMS

New Zealand (from): Matthew Horne, Bryan Young, Roger Twose, Nathan Astle, Gary Stead, Chris Harris, Adam Parore, Dion Nash (captain), Daniel Vettori, Simon Doull, Geoff Allott and Shayne O'Connor.

South Africa (from): Gary Kirsten, Herschelle Gibbs, Jacques Kallis, Daryll Cullinan, Hansie Cronje (captain), Jonty Rhodes, Shaun Pollock, Mark Boucher, Lance Klusener, Allan Donald and Paul Adams.