

Rain hampers WA progress

BRISBANE, Mar 20: Former Test batsman Damien Martyn led a Western Australia fight-back before rain interrupted day two of the Sheffield Shield cricket final against Queensland on Saturday, reports AP.

Martyn reached 70 and Simon Katich was 54 as WA made 147 for two in reply to Queensland's 265.

With WA needing to win the match to claim the Shield and Queensland only requiring a draw, it was a frustrating afternoon for the visitors at the Gabba.

Rain washed out the two sessions after lunch but WA still has time to force a result in the five-day game, with extra time added on the cover for the loss of play.

"There's still a lot of cricket to be played and with these extended days now they are quite deceptive," WA skipper Tom Moody said.

"We are in no rush or panic over the time lost today, we just need to build on an excellent partnership."

Marylebone's historic 10

LONDON, Mar 20 (AP): The Lord's-based Marylebone Cricket Club, a bastion of male exclusivity for 212 years, last week announced its first 10 honorary female members.

Former England women's captain Rachael Heyhoe Flint, an active campaigner for the admission of women to the MCC since 1991, was on the ground-breaking list made public on March 16.

Heyhoe Flint, who won 45 caps for England between 1960 and 1979, was aware she was making cricket history.

"I might be referred to as the catalyst, who in 1991 had the temerity to apply to become a member," she said.

The world's oldest cricket club, which until 30 years ago was the governing body for the sport, voted in favour of admitting women in a ballot of members in September last year.

An original ballot in February last year failed to win a two-

from lobby groups and the government forced a second vote, where a 70 per cent majority overturned the rule.

Not only had women been barred from membership, but with the exception of Queen Elizabeth II — the club's official patron — women also were not allowed to enter the club's pavilion during play.

Eight of the women attended the inauguration at the MCC's famous Long Room, where MCC president Tony Lewis said the club needed the experience of the women "as the culture of this great club changes."

"I can assure our 10 ladies that they have not been pawns in the popular game of social for political correctness," he said.

The unanimous thinking of the committee was simply this ... we could not claim to be a great cricket club unless we had a women's team and women members. A simple equation."

The first MCC women's team will play at Surrey on May 11.

The nine other women on the list all contributed to the development of women's cricket in England.

Betty Archdale, a former England captain and tourist Edna Barker played for England over 12 years.

Audrey Collins has had a 40-year association with the game and was president of the Women's Cricket Association for 12 years.

Carole Cornthwaite won 65 caps for England from 1985-93. Jackie Court played 40 matches for England.

Sheila Hill played for Oxford University and umpired the first Women's World Cup final between England and Australia at Edgbaston.

Norma Izard was a former president of the WCA and is the longest serving manager after managing 12 international before resigning in 1993.

Diana Rail Kent was curator of the MCC museum from 1945-68 and Nettie Rheinberg was secretary of the WCA for 11 years and was editor of the WCA magazine.

U-19 cricket

FARIDPUR, Mar 20: Faridpur became regional champions in the 19th under-19 national cricket tournament defeating Rajbari by seven wickets at the local stadium today, reports UNB.

Set to score 63 runs to win the match, the hosts easily reached their target losing three wickets on the final day of the three-day match.

Earlier, Rajbari were shot out 47 in their first innings and 176 in the second innings.

Faridpur made 160 in their first innings.

Ronaldo not going to Sampdoria

MILAN, Mar 20: Ronaldo will not play in Inter Milan's league match at Sampdoria on Sunday. Inter coach Mircea Lucescu said on Friday, reports Reuters.

Ronaldo had said he wanted to play but Lucescu decided to rest the former world footballer of the year after consulting Inter officials. Ronaldo has been dogged by injuries to both knees all season.

Lucescu gambled in playing Ronaldo in Wednesday's Euro-Asian Cup quarter-final second leg against Manchester United.

The 22-year-old Brazilian has played only six full matches all year. Wednesday's match marked only his third appearance since January 17.

Shane says he's okay



ST JOHN'S, Antigua, Mar 20: Shane Warne has played down concerns about his bowling expressed by his long-time coach Terry Jenner, reports Reuters.

The Australian leg-spinner has taken just three wickets costing almost 80 runs apiece in the three Test he has played since returning from serious shoulder surgery.

Speaking in Australia, Jenner suggested Warne's form had been so modest that fellow wrist-spinner MacGill and off-spinner Colin Miller might be better choices for the third Test against West Indies starting in Bridgetown, Barbados, on March 27.

"I think it's fairly obvious that he's struggling," Jenner said. "A bowler has to have wickets against his name or he starts to question and he starts to say 'why?' and he says 'gee, I'm down on my luck.'

Asked if MacGill and Miller would be the best combination, Jenner, who is bringing an Australian supporters' tour party to Barbados and Antigua for the last two Tests, replied: "I can't see why you wouldn't do that."

In the same three Tests that Warne has played since his comeback, one against England and two in West Indies, MacGill has taken 18 wickets at less than 13 runs each.

Despite the figures Warne believes he is bowling well. "I created a few little half chances in the last game (second Test) but it just wasn't to be," he said.

Coach Geoff Marsh said Warne was trying too hard. "He's just back from injury and he's bowling okay but he hasn't looked as dangerous as normal," said Marsh.

He's competing instead of just being Shane Warne and relaxing, getting set in his action and getting energy through the crease. He's working very hard in the nets.

He's a world-class bowler. Look at his career, he's got an outstanding record. It comes back to a confidence thing just as it does in batting."

Warne and MacGill will both play in the four-day match

as West Indies A team starting in St John's today, the Australians' only fixture between the first two Tests and the last two of the series.

Fast bowler Glenn McGrath and Jason Gillespie will be

rested. McGrath, who had food poisoning, and seamer Adam

which prompted a delay in naming the team.

Carl Hooper, named captain of the West Indies A team after missing the first two Tests, failed to appear at training with the side on Friday.

The former West Indian vice-captain has been in Australia with his wife and young child, who has an undisclosed illness, but has made himself available for the third Test.

The selectors have made it clear Hooper must first prove his form and fitness in the A team match before being considered for the Test.

One of the three Test selectors, Joel Garner, is also manager of the A side. He was unclear what had happened to Hooper.

"I think there was some sort of mix-up with flight details," Garner said. "That's as much as I can tell you. As far as I know he got left somewhere in London dealing with luggage."

Dale, who was suffering from a virus, did not train on Friday.

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"The board has no hesitation in endorsing the selection committee's recommendation, which followed a positive appraisal of Lara's leadership in the first and second Tests matches," the board said in a press release.

Lara's magnificent 213 in the second Test in Jamaica on Sunday was largely responsible for his team's series-tying 10-wicket victory. That victory brought an end to the West Indies' worst-ever run of form in which they lost six consecutive matches — the 5-0 humiliation in South Africa and the opening Test defeat to Australia in Trinidad.

Lara was originally chosen to lead the team for the first two Tests on a probationary basis, with certain targets set by the Board. Now, the 29-year-old superstar has been given a vote of confidence and the job for the

remaining two tests and seven one-day internationals.

Chairman of selectors Mike Findlay said the appraisal team and selection committee were very satisfied that Lara had shown "marked improvement in his relationship with the management and members of the team both on and off the field."

He added that "there was much greater consultation between himself, the management and the players, and that there was evidence that he was doing more to inspire the team."

The third Test starts in Bridgetown on March 27.

Lara's appointment for the rest of the series came after it was announced he would be unable to play for Trinidad and Tobago against Barbados in the final of the Busta Cup first-class competition starting in Bridgetown on Saturday.

The in-form Windies captain will miss the final on his doctor's advice. The left-hander will rest his right wrist, which he injured during the one-day internationals of the South African tour.

The WICB said that his absence is to ensure he will be fully fit for the third Test.

WICB keeps faith in Lara



ST JOHN'S, Antigua, Mar 20 (Reuters/AP): Brian Lara is to lead West Indies in the last two Tests against Australia and the one-day series that follows, having been on probation as captain for the first two Tests.

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Thorpe misses world record



BRISBANE, Mar 20 (Reuters/Internet): Sydney teenager Ian Thorpe swam the second fastest time in history to win the men's 400 metres freestyle title at the Australian championships on Saturday.

Thorpe, 16, stopped the clock at three minutes 43.85 seconds to miss Kieren Perkins world record by five-hundredths of a second.

"Swimming beside Thorpe tonight was like swimming in the surf," said Daniel Kowalski, a former Olympic and world championship silver medalist who finished third.

The Real Madrid midfielder, troubled by a knee injury this season, was included in the squad for an away friend against the Netherlands — Argentina's World Cup conquerors — at the end of the month.

If Redondo plays, it will be his first appearance since the 1994 World Cup.

He refused to play under tough disciplinarian Daniel Passarella, coach from 1994 until last year. First he ignored demands to have his hair cut and then said he could not play in the position Passarella wanted him for.

Passarella's successor Marcelo Bielsa also included Fiorentina striker Gabriel Batistuta.

But he overlooked Boca Juniors striker Martin Palermo, who scored 20 goals in 19 games in last year's Apertura championship and has started this event.

"I think my 200 metres will be pretty strong," Thorpe said. "Hopefully, it will be faster than the Commonwealth Games."

The eight-day Australian championships are doubling as the trials for this year's Pan Pacific championships at the Sydney Olympic pool.

The meeting is also the first major championship to use the new semifinals system which has been reintroduced for the Sydney Games.

Perhaps an even larger question is will there be basketball after Jordan? His retirement means die-hard fans will never see him again soar on TV, never witness his gravity-defying moves carry the Bulls to a new championship ring. His last two points have become scripture.

Fans aren't the only ones concerned about Jordan's departure. Nike's sales are likely to plunge. When he first retired in 1993, basketball footwear sales in the market declined by 30 per cent, and Nike which had half of the market pie was the hardest hit.

Sales of Jordan's signature sportswear accounted for four per cent of Nike's 1996 revenue of \$9.2 billion, down from eight per cent the previous year.

Michael "millionAir" Jordan also helped sky-rocket sales of other companies he endorsed, such as Gatorade (sports drinks), whose revenue rose from \$681 million in 1990 to \$1.5 billion in 1997, and Rayovac (batteries), which jumped by about 5 per cent since 1995 to \$4 billion, says AFP.

With no heir apparent in sight companies hope to continue to cash on Jordan's popularity. As one analyst says: "His brand power will extend beyond his time on this planet."

— Gemini News

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He's not the only one to be worried about Jordan's absence.

France's national team doctor will also examine Zidane before officially ruling him out of his country's Euro 2000 qualifiers against Ukraine on March 27 and against Armenia on March 31.

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