

Gillespie in doubt

BRIDGETOWN, Apr 1: Fast bowler Jason Gillespie, one of the Australian heroes in their one-wicket loss to the West Indies in the third Test Tuesday, is expected to miss the fourth and final match in Antigua because of a back injury, reports AP.

The West Indies have a 2-1 lead in the four-match series, meaning Australia must win in Antigua to draw level and retain the Frank Worrell Trophy.

The 24-year-old Gillespie bowled 15.1 overs during the West Indies' successful chase of 308 on the last day, picking up three wickets. But the South Australian left the field 35 minutes before lunch for massage treatment and bowled with serious pain after his return.

"It seems a serious back injury," manager Steve Bernard said Wednesday. "He is very doubtful for the last Test."

"It was a miracle he went back out there and bowled. When he came into the pavilion before lunch, he could not even bend down to remove his boots and socks. We had to lie him down and let someone do that for him."

Captain Steve Waugh was full of praise for Gillespie's effort, and that of his new ball partner Glenn McGrath.

"I thought our quick bowlers were magnificent," Waugh said. "Gillespie was struggling with a back spasm. His was a heroic performance and McGrath was magnificent as always."

An unforgettable afternoon



BRIDGETOWN, Apr 1 (Internet): Hearts could not have beaten faster, fingernails could not have been bitten lower and more prayers could not have been uttered for West Indies cricket than they were yesterday at Kensington Oval.

Still smarting from their recent annihilation in South Africa but buoyed by a win at Sabina Park two weeks ago, the regional side - spurred by thousands of inspirational fans - scraped to a one-wicket win in the third Test against Australia.

Cricket World Cup Bridgetown win shortens WI odds

LONDON, Apr 1 (Reuters/Internet): A British bookmaker has shortened the odds on the West Indies winning this year's World Cup in the wake of their remarkable Test victory over Australia in Barbados on Tuesday.

William Hill have cut the odds on a West Indies World Cup triumph from 12/1 to 8/1, while still making Australia joint favourites with South Africa at 3/1.

England and Pakistan are joint third favourites at 5/1.

Captain Brian Lara's 19th over screamed to the cover boundary at 4:27 p.m. as the West Indies surpassed the victory target of 308 runs and seized a 2-1 lead in the series, leaving one Test to go.

That nostalgic shot triggered scenes of which priceless video footage, photographs and memoirs are made and sparked all-night partying in local nightclubs.

West Indies fans crashed metal barriers that restrained them for four days of the Test to invade the pitch in wild celebration.

Some of them kissed the wicket, rolled on it and, along with supporters of the vanquished Aussies, stood in the southern-end crease from which Lara secured success for personal Kodak moments.

There was also the unforgettable image of the Trinidadian hero - 153 not out - being swept up in joyous, tear-inducing embraces by team-mates and legions of supporters.

For the hundreds in collar-and-tie, both managers and subordinates, who skipped work to watch the tense, sea-saw action, it was worth whatever reprimand they might have faced.

What an "I was there" moment, with patrons still streaming into the Oval well after tea-time to glimpse the final, decisive rites of arguably one of the most electrifying Tests.

One Barbadian, now resident

in New York, changed his return flight from Monday to absorb the final day's play. It was also his birthday and, as far as Rodrick Barker was concerned, there couldn't have been sweeter icing on the cake.

"And miss this?" he declared when asked why he was still in Barbados.

Some, too faint-hearted to endure until the end, fled when the West Indies slumped to 248 for eight, only the beanpole bowling duo of Curtly Ambrose and Courtney Walsh left to bat with their invincible leader.

"I can't handle this, I can't handle this," said one man, scurrying up Fontabelle away from the bat-and-ball battle.

Thankfully, however, Lara and company could.

Courtesy: Barbados Nation

Barisal cricket

BARISAL, Apr 1: An all-round performance by Bashir gave Jordan Road XI a one-wicket victory over Brown Compound XI in the First Division cricket league at the local stadium today, reports UNB.

Opting to bat first, Jordan Road Eleven scored 200 for seven wickets in 37 overs.

Bashir hammered 69 off 71 balls and claimed three wickets. He was adjudged man-of-the-match.

In reply, Brown Compound XI were all out for 199 in 33 overs with Rajib scoring 28 runs off 49 balls.

Martina, Monica advance

HILTON HEAD, South Carolina, Apr 1: World number one Martina Hingis and former number one Monica Seles advanced to the third round of the 1.05 million-dollar WTA Family Circle Cup with straight-set triumphs here Wednesday, reports AFP.

In their first clay-court tuneup for the French Open, Swiss 18-year-old Hingis beat Austria's Sylvia Plischke 6-3, 7-5, while American Seles ousted Olga Barabanchikova of Belarus 6-3, 6-0.

Seles next faces Russia's Elena Likhovtseva while Hingis, here for the first time since winning the event in 1997, will face Spain's Conchita Martinez in the round of 16.

Since falling to Venus Williams in the second round at the Sydney international in January of 1998, Hingis has not lost before the quarterfinals over 24 events, although she was eliminated in her past three quarter-final matches.

After losing the first three games of the second set, Hingis rebounded to win the next five games to regain control of the match.

Hingis has not claimed a WTA crown since beating Amanda Coetzer February 7 at the Pan Pacific Open final the week after capturing her third consecutive Australian Open crown.

Seles, who is without a title this year, has won eight of 10 matches in Hilton Head. In addition to a 1997 final loss to Hingis, Seles reached the semifinals last season, saving five match points against Swiss stand-out Patty Schnyder in the quarterfinals.

"It's always a tough match the first time you play on clay every year," Seles said. "Still have to make some adjustments, but I think by the second set I started playing a lot better."

Seles is expected to partner David Prinosil in the doubles against a Russian doubles team which will include Yevgeny Kafelnikov and Marat Safin or Andrei Olhovskiy.

Germany's Tommy Haas and Nicolas Pietrangeli will play in the singles against Russia's Kafelnikov and Safin.

Becker said that there is a slight chance that if he is needed and is in form he may play in the Davis Cup second-round match from July 16-18.

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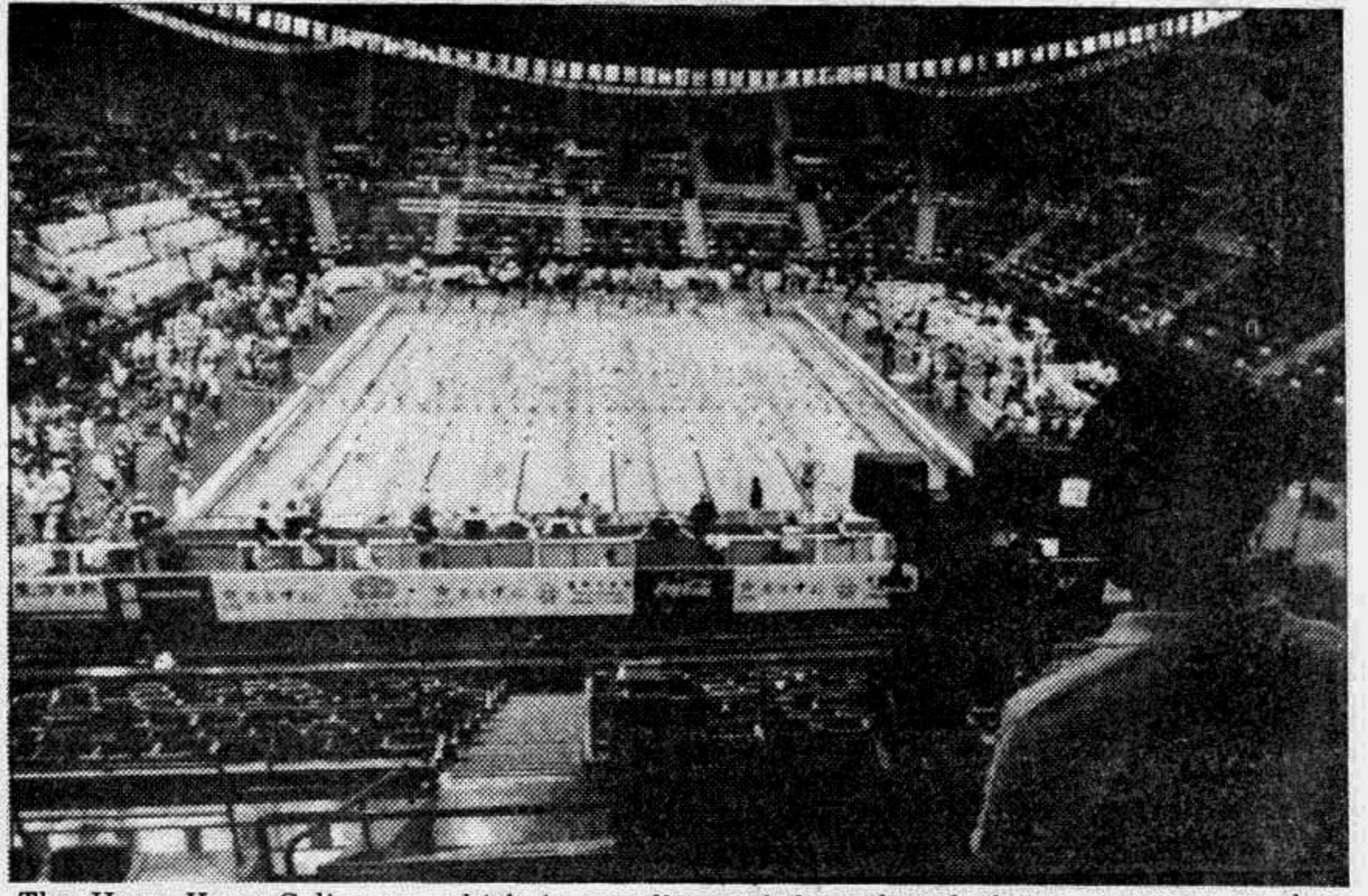
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The Hong Kong Coliseum, which is usually used for cultural shows, concerts etc, has become the venue for the World Swimming Championships. This picture was taken yesterday.

FINA's way of fighting drugs



HONG KONG, Apr 1: The International Swimming Federation (FINA) established a special task force on Wednesday to tackle doping, underlining its resolve to stamp out the problem, reports Reuters.

Speaking on the eve of the World Short Course Championships, FINA president Mustapha Larfaoui said an extraordinary congress had approved the setting up of the doping control review board.

He said eight medical experts and chemists would be appointed to the board over the next two months and would advise FINA whether to pursue cases where swimmers tested positive for banned drugs.

The board would also rule on individual cases if swimmers could take for medication purposes drugs otherwise banned.

But Larfaoui warned that the doping problem was one which will probably stay with competitive sports forever.

"We'll never finish with this problem because cheaters together with their friends will always find ways of cheating," he told a news conference.

During the four-day championships which start today, a research group funded by the IOC would approach swimmers to take blood tests for growth hormones.

But Larfaoui said swimmers would undergo the tests - which are separate from the standard FINA urine tests - on a voluntary basis.

"It is only for research purposes," he said, adding that the confidential results will have no bearing on the urine tests.

Human growth hormone was banned from competitive swimming four years ago but there are not yet any official tests for it.

The research group GH (growth hormone) 2000 was set up three years ago to create a methodology to detect the substance in time to be implemented at the Sydney Olympics in 2000. GH 2000 project manager Claire Pentecost told Reuters.

"We have seen substantial muscle growth and reduction in body fat when growth hormones are given to normal people," she said, adding the same conclusion could be drawn for sportsmen.

The group has taken 1,000 samples over the last three years and presented its findings to the IOC in February.

"We are still hoping to conduct the tests in Sydney, but it's up to the IOC to implement it," she said.

Earlier, the international swimming community toned down its rhetoric against China's record of doping scandals, saying the Chinese may at last be mending their ways.

Coaches and anti-doping experts said Beijing appeared to be clamping down on use of performance-enhancing drugs by their competitors and calls to ban the Chinese team from events have waned.

It appears that the Chinese government has involved itself very strongly in the last 12 months or longer to solve the problem. I think far better off now," said John Leonard, director of the American Swimming Coaches Association and a well-known Chain critic.

Leonard said Chain's stance toward drug use was worlds apart from 1994 when he started a campaign to block Chinese swimmers from international meets.

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China's Zeng Qiliang in action during the 50-metre breaststroke heats at the 4th World Swimming Championships at Hong Kong yesterday.

Windies include rookie Hinds

ST JOHN'S, Antigua, Apr 1 (Reuters/Internet): West Indies have named uncapped batsman Wavell Hinds from Jamaica in their squad for the fourth and final Test against Australia starting here on Saturday.

Hinds has been added to the squad from which West Indies ultimately chose their side for the third Test, which they won by one wicket in Bridgetown on Tuesday to take a 2-1 lead in the series.

Shivnarine Chandepaul, who was initially named in the party for Bridgetown but subsequently had to be omitted because his right shoulder injury had not cleared up, was not considered this time.

West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) executive secretary Andrew Sealy said that following scans and examination at a New York hospital earlier this week, orthopaedic surgeon Ainsworth Allen recommended further rehabilitation for left-hander Chandepaul over the next 10 days.

Sherwin Campbell, Adrian Griffith, Dave Joseph, Brian Lara (captain), Carl Hooper, Jimmy Adams, Ridley Jacobs, Nehemiah Perry, Pedro Collins, Curtly Ambrose.

Courtney Walsh, Corey Collymore, Wavell Hinds.

Toshack angry

MADRID, Apr 1 (Reuters/Internet): John Toshack strongly criticised his Real Madrid stars for a lack of commitment after they suffered an embarrassing defeat in training.

Toshack watched in disbelief as his first team, minus a handful of internationals but still boasting the likes of Predrag Mijatovic, Davor Suker and Fernando Morientes, were beaten 4-3 by the Real youth team.

"If some of these players don't want to play seriously then problems are going to arise," warned Toshack, who took over as coach in February. "I make a note of everything I see."

"This is the first day I've seen things I don't like. There was a lot of individual play but no teamwork and also an air of complacency among some of the players."

"The youth team played with a lot of desire to win the ball, whereas some of those in white shirts wanted to argue with the referee. They looked like a bunch of untouchables."

Real, who get back into Spanish league action against Alaves on Sunday, still have a lot to do if they are to qualify for the Champions' League.

Walker's lawyer warns UKSC



LONDON, Apr 1: The solicitor representing Dougie Walker, the Scottish sprinter suspended on Wednesday after a positive drugs test, has threatened to take the UK Sports Council (UKSC) to court over their handling of the case, reports AFP.

Walker, the European 200 metres champion, was suspended pending a disciplinary hearing at British Athletics' ruling body UK Athletics after traces of the banned substance nandrolone were found in his urine samples last year.

Walker, who has protested his innocence throughout the ordeal, is furious he was made to wait four months for a decision by the doping panel and has blamed the sports council, which conducted the tests, for the delay.

"We will take it as far as we can to prove Dougie's innocence and if necessary we will have to think about legal action," Walker's solicitor Nick Bittel confirmed.

"There's also the fact that Dougie has missed competitions since the scandal broke. His name should never have been out in the public domain and then it would have been easier to compete."

Walker said, "It seems that in athletics we give up on our own. Other sports protect their sportsmen all the way but that isn't so with athletics."

"Athletics suffers more than any other sports from this type of incident and I am innocent. My name should have been kept secret and until the decision is made."

Walker failed the drugs test in December but it took until Wednesday for a decision to be made.

According to the 25-year-old, he and his solicitor were not given any viewing of the proof gathered against him and neither were they allowed to appear before the advisory panel.

Walker said: "I'm angry but it's not just the delay, it is also the fact that we've been without access to any of the evidence they have had."

"We can't talk about any of the reasons for their decision because we simply don't know."

"It has been a nightmare and although UK Athletics have done as much as they can they have been in a very difficult situation because they haven't been given any information either."

UK Athletics confirmed on Tuesday that the first time they were able to convene the advisory committee was just eight days ago even though they announced a positive drug test had been discovered in December.

"We have worked as fast as we can," insisted spokeswoman Jynne Pearce.

"There have been a large number of factors outside our control which have meant that the process has been somewhat slower than we hoped."

"We've been in constant dialogue with Dougie and Nick and the relationship between us has been good but we've not been able to go at the pace we had wanted to."

Becker to play against Russia

FRANKFURT, Germany, Apr 1: Former world number one Boris Becker announced on Wednesday that he will play in the doubles of the World Cup first-round match against Russia on Saturday, reports AFP.

The 31-year-old semi-retired player, who captains the German team, has already indicated that he will retire from tennis in July, one month before the birth of his second child.

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