

America Cup cricket

Australia A
win series

LOS ANGELES, Sept 20: Skipper Adam Gilchrist led by an example while fellow opener Ryan Campbell played a stellar role as Australia A. Outplayed their Indian counterparts, thrashing them by nine wickets, to win the America Challenge Cup cricket series here, reports PTI.

After Lee brothers — Shane and Brett — had wrecked India A's batting lineup, dismissing the VVS Laxman-led side for a paltry 128 in 38.1 overs, Australian batsmen thrashed them to take an invincible 3-1 lead in the five-match series.

The fifth and final match of the tournament will be played here tomorrow.

BRIEF SCORES

INDIA A: 128 all out in 38.1 overs (VVS Laxman 45; B Lee 4/32, S Lee 3/26, Creevey 2/13, Lea Hansen 1/27)

AUSTRALIA A: 131 for 1 in 19.3 overs (R Campbell 61 n.o., A Gilchrist 40, C Richards 21 n.o., S Srinivas 1/26).



Jubilant Cameroon players and officials celebrate their victory over Zambia in the soccer final of the All Africa Games at Johannesburg on September 19. —AFP photo

Russia looking to Kafelnikov

BRISBANE, Sept 20: Yevgeny Kafelnikov admitted Monday he will carry most of Russia's hopes in the Davis Cup semifinal against Australia, but the world's second-ranked player likes his country's chances, reports AP.

Kafelnikov arrived with his Russian teammates early Monday before shaking off the jetlag to push through a practice session on the ANZ Stadium grass courts, where he will play two singles matches and a doubles match.

The Australian Open champion, who has played more matches on the ATP tour than any other player in the last five years, said he could handle the workload after receiving a rare few days off since being an early casualty in last week's President's Cup in Uzbekistan.

"It's always a big weight on my shoulders carrying the team with two singles and the doubles matches, especially when they're five-setters, but I've been in this situation before and I feel I can handle it," the 25-year-old said.

"I feel that if I can take both points in the singles then perhaps our chances will increase. All I can do is win those matches."

"I had a nice and easy week last week so I'm fresh and ready to go."

Kafelnikov wasn't looking to rest before Friday's first match, arranging a game of golf Monday before he hit his first ball at practice.

The priority for the tall righthander will be adjusting to the grass surface after completing the hard-court season in North America, where he reached the US Open semifinals.

"It's been a great run for me on the North American hard-court season but this is a new event and perhaps as important as the US Open," Kafelnikov said.

"I wouldn't mind playing on any surface. I've won many titles on this surface and I've had great success on it, but I'll be needing more than three or four hours to get used to the surface."

"I'm sure I won't have any trouble adjusting and perhaps my teammate Marat (Safin) will have a more difficult time than me but I'm sure he'll be all right."

Safin has already been touted by the Australians as a possible weakness in the Russian team despite his world ranking of 35.

More trouble for Sydney

SYDNEY, Sept 20: Divisions over how to handle drug cheats at next year's Sydney Olympics appeared to widen further Sunday as Australia's sports minister resisted pressure to get tough on athletes using performance enhancing drugs, a "tracksuit crime," reports AP.

John Coates, the powerful head of the Australian Olympic Committee, has been pushing for athletes caught using or distributing performance enhancing drugs to be handled in the same way as narcotics traffickers.

But Sports Minister Jackie Kelly Sunday said athletes caught using performing enhancing drugs during the Sydney Olympics should not be jailed for what was essentially a fraud offence.

Kelly said the unintended consequences of Coates' get-tough plan would see Olympic athletes thrown in jail if common narcotics users if they were caught using performance enhancing drugs.

"Is that where we want to see in Australia go, athletes being jailed for this type of cheating in sport?"

Kelly said Australian state and federal attorneys-general would be meeting later this year to discuss a model criminal code which could deal with the issue of performance enhancing drugs.

But she said she opposed jail terms for Olympic drug cheats.

"I don't think we should get to that stage just yet," she said in a television interview Sunday. "I think that there are a lot of pressures brought to bear on athletes."

"My view however is that it is fraud, that we are looking at ... sort of, not white collar crime, but a tracksuit crime. It is about defrauding the Australian public, it is about defrauding your sponsors, it is about defrauding other athletes of their chance at an Olympic gold medal."

All Africa Games football
Gold goes to Cameroon

JOHANNESBURG, Sept 20: The last gold medals of the seventh All Africa Games were won dramatically by the footballers of Cameroon at Johannesburg Stadium here on Sunday, reports AFP.

After 120 boring, goalless minutes before a crowd of 10,000, Cameroon triumphed 4-3 on penalties over Zambia to join Egypt as double winners of a tournament first staged 34 years ago in Congo.

"They were an extremely tough and good team," said Cameroon coach Jean-Paul Akono following the game. "I thank God for our second success in the tournament this decade. It is a wonderful morale boost ahead of the qualifying competition for the 2000 Sydney Olympics," Akono said.

Cameroon are in the same group as South Africa, who beat Uganda 2-0 on Sunday to finish third. The winners qualify for the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

Patrice Abanda converted a spot kick to put the favoured

Cameroonians ahead and Abraham Mwamba turned in horror after watching his attempt rebound off the crossbar with goalkeeper Daniel Bekono beaten.

It was a heart-breaking finish for Zambia, who won the corner count 15-3, created more chances and matched their opponents physically in a repeat of a group match won 2-0 by Cameroon last Sunday.

"To lose on penalties is the most painful form of defeat," said Zambia coach Ben Bamfuchile. "When we led Cameroon twice in the shootout, I dreamt of arriving in Lusaka with the golden trophy."

Both teams seemed more intent on not losing than winning and Cameroon trailed twice in a shootout that saw four shots strike the woodwork and one miss several metres above the crossbar.

So dominant were defences on an increasingly chilly afternoon that Bekono made only one serious save and counter-attacker Davies Phiri none during 120 minutes of largely sterile

action. Bekono did well to tip a Mwamba free kick over after eight minutes and Harry Mianzi and Bernard Makufi headed wide within 60 seconds when they should have found the target at least.

Cameroon could make little headway against fierce-tackling opponents and striker Ze Albert Meyongue winced with pain several times as he crashed to the ground.

Etienne Kibonglam spurned a late chance to snatch victory for Cameroon when he leaned too far back when unmarked inside the penalty area and his shot was too high.

Zambia continued to apply more pressure in extra time with a Dudley Fichite header off target and Mwamba missing a half-chance while the Games organisers began preparing for the closing ceremony later on Sunday.

After receiving the trophy, the Cameron players unfolded a huge national flag and ran to several hundred compatriots, who braved cool conditions to cheer the Indomitable Lions.

The pain has subsided. He feels very little pain now," Joshi said.

The US team of No 2-ranked Lindsay Davenport, the 3-4 combination of sisters Venus and Serena Williams, and No 5 Monica Seles was just too much for the Russians, especially with star Anna Kournikova.

Russia's troika of Elena-Likhovtseva, Elena-Dementieva and Elena-Makarova — didn't present much of an obstacle for the Americans, who comprise four out of the top five women in world.

Russia, a three-time finalist seeking its first Fed Cup title in 22 years of competition, had advanced to the final via a 3-2 win over France in the quarterfinals and the Slovak Republic in the semifinals.

The US lineup was so tough, in fact, that Seles' services were not needed and the nine-time Grand Slam champion was relegated to cheerleading duties.

Tendulkar's reassurance

MUMBAI, Sept 20: Sachin Tendulkar last night denied reports that the Australian Cricket Academy expert Dr. Peter Barnes, who has diagnosed the master batsman's back problem, has warned that the injury could limit his career, reports PTI.

"I was present at the press conference (in Australia where Barnes reported to have made the remarks), and Dr. Barnes didn't say that my career could be restricted," Tendulkar, who returned here last night after undergoing treatment at the Adelaide-based academy, told reporters at the airport.

Tendulkar assured his fans that he was feeling better now and would be fit in a couple of weeks time.

"The injury (to his spinal cord) is certainly not fresh but an old thing. It will not restrict my career," he added.

The Australian doctor has diagnosed Tendulkar's back problem as spondylosis.

"It is a very common injury. About 5-10 per cent of the common man also get subjected to it," the star batsman said and added that he went to Australia to now what exactly had happened and was "happy that it has been diagnosed."

"I am doing the exercises for the past one week and will be fit in another two weeks. I am feeling better now," Tendulkar said.

Tendulkar also consulted two other doctors in Sydney before returning home.

The Mumbai-based Orthopedic Surgeon Dr. Anant Joshi, who accompanied Tendulkar to Australia, said the master batsman has to tune up his muscles.

Suggesting that the injury occurred due to overuse, Joshi said now Tendulkar would have to pick and choose his games. "This can be called micro-trauma, which leads to spondylosis," he added.

"He has to live with it (spondylosis) and play with it as there is no proper cure for it," the doctor said.

The pain has subsided. He feels very little pain now," Joshi said.



Members of the American Fed Cup team pose after receiving the prestigious trophy. —AFP photo

Davenport delivers Fed Cup



PALO ALTO, California, Sept 20: The United States won its first Fed Cup title since 1996 Sunday, beating Russia 4-1 after Lindsay Davenport clinched victory by defeating Russian Elena Likhovtseva 6-4, 6-4, reports Reuters.

Davenport's reverse singles win gave the United States an unbeatable 3-0 lead and its record 16th Fed Cup overall.

"To win for your country and to have a really great team to play just means a lot," said Davenport of the US "Dream Team" captained by Billie Jean King. "It's a shame that it doesn't get as much coverage as other sports, but it's still a great honour to have this title for ourselves and for Billie."

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Davenport was clearly unable to perform to his best, breaking down on several occasions, and his absence was a key factor in Warwickshire being relegated to Division Two of the National League and the Championship.

Amies admitted Warwickshire cannot afford the same scenario to happen next summer.

But Donald has had a cortisone injection — rather than an operation to cure the problem — to give him a chance of being fit for South Africa's home winter Test series with England.

Amies told PA Sport: "We will be sitting down with Allan Donald this week and having a chat with him — but we are concerned about his injury, especially with the heavy programme he has ahead of him."

"There is nothing confirmed about Allan and Warwickshire for next season. If Allan Donald is fit, he will be a nice scenario which Warwickshire would welcome, and we would want him."

"But if there is a question mark again over his fitness then we can't have the same situation as what happened this season."

"Allan hardly played for us and when he did he tended to break down. We can't have that situation again. We need him to give assurances about his fitness."

Donald is now resting up for five weeks and will then resume training before trying to prove his fitness in two matches for Free State before the Tests against Zimbabwe and then England.

Donald was hardly a testing target but Middlesex had their alarms along the way before Keith Dutch hit Wayne Law for a straight boundary to claim victory with their score on 100 with five wickets and five overs to spare.

Middlesex, who included a few unfamiliar names in their line up, lost Andrew Strauss, yorked by Darren Thomas, early in their reply and Paul Weekes edged Owen Parkin to the wicketkeeper.

Keith Croft accounted for Ben Hutton and Ed Joyce in a spell of two for 13 from seven overs but although David Alayne was beaten by Dean Cosker's bounce, Middlesex were never in a position to challenge.

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