

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 batting lineup, dismissing the VV S Laxman-led side for a paltry 128 in 38.1 overs, Australian batsmen thrashed he required runs in just 19.3 overs 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, Craevye 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 Sriam 1/26)

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 cash 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 right-hander 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 have further Sunday as Australia's sports ministry resisted pressure to get tough on athletes using performance enhancing drugs, saying they were guilty of only a "tracksuit crime", reports AFP.

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 performance 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 like common narcotics users if they were caught using performance enhancing drugs.

"Is that where we want to see sport 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."



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

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 Africa.

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 shot 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 beautiful 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 fly several metres above the crossbar.

So dominant were defences on an increasingly chilly afternoon that Bekono made only one serious save and counterpart 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 Mhanzi 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 Kibongani 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 Cameroon players unfolded a huge national flag and ran to several hundred compatriots, who braved cool conditions to cheer the indomitable Cubs.

All Africa Games finish

JOHANNESBURG, Sept 20: South Africa proved themselves the best sporting nation in Africa as they easily topped the medals table from Egypt and Nigeria in the seventh All Africa Games, reports AFP.

The hosts were never really threatened in their supremacy during the 19-sport event, which began on September 9 and concluded Sunday.

There were no world records broken, possibly because the track and field athletes have had an exhausting season and high altitude is of no help to swimmers. One world record was equalled by a Nigerian woman in a weightlifting event.

South Africa, who beat Egypt into second place in the medals race in Harare four years ago, did the same this time. Nigeria won seven gold medals on the last night of athletics but it was not enough to push them up from third spot, the same as in Harare.

The Games were due to come to a close with just four gold medals to be contested on Sunday — in the men's and women's marathon, a cycling road race and the football final — meaning the medal table positions cannot change.

Algeria came fourth in the table, like in Harare four years ago.

The Games confirmed established stars such as South African swimmers Penny Heyns, who won the 100m and 200m breaststroke, and six-gold-medal-winner Mandy Loots, plus Mozambique's 800m runner Maria Mutola. Okkert Brits, one of the few men to have cleared 6m in the pole vault, successfully defended his title.

Ethiopia's Gete Wami won the women's 10,000m to add to the world title she won last month in Seville.

The men's 100m and 800m, however, saw the favourites not able to live up to their billing.

World silver medalist Hezekiel Sepeng of South Africa, hampered by a left hamstring strain, could only claim bronze in the two-lap event.

Kenya's Japhet Kimutai, who was fifth at the World Championships in Seville, took gold ahead of world bronze medalist Djibril Said Guerni of Algeria.

There was doubt that Sepeng would make the final after col-

lapse in pain and clutching his left hamstring when he won his semifinal.

Namibia's Olympic 100m and 200m silver medalist-Fredrick, believed to be still suffering from a lower back problem, could only win bronze in the 100m.

Ghana's Leonard Myles took the gold with 9.99sec, and Francis Obikwelu of Nigeria, the world 200m bronze medalist, earned silver with 10.01.

Fredericks said afterwards: "I'm very happy. Considering my injuries I did well to get away with a medal. I was up against a lot of good athletes and I had a bad lane draw (lane 8), but I hung in there."

Obikwelu finally earned his individual gold in the 200m, winning in 20.06.

South African gymnast Tamaryn Schultz won six medals, but only two of those were gold.

On the security front, hundreds of soldiers and private security guards were drafted in to protect the athletes although any trouble was little publicised.

Gunfire rang out near a bus carrying athletes back to the village and there was a carjacking of an official vehicle, but no one was hurt.

There was controversy, however, surrounding the officials, first with a strike by judo referees and then a threatened strike by their athletics counterparts, both over expenses payments.

The success of these Games will go a long way towards convincing the international community that South Africa is ready and able to host a major world event such as the 2006 soccer World Cup.

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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 under going 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 spondylolysis.

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/three 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 over use, Joshi said now Tendulkar would have to pick and choose his games. "This can be called micro-trauma, which leads to spondylolysis," he added.

"I will have to live with it (spondylolysis) 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.

Amis fitness ultimatum for Donald

LONDON, Sept 20 (Internet report): Warwickshire are to seek assurances over the fitness of their South African paceman Allan Donald before deciding whether to retain him as their overseas player for next season.

Bears chief executive Dennis Amis voiced concern over the left ankle injury which restricted Donald to two County Championship appearances and a half-dozen one-day games on his return from the World Cup.

Donald 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.

Amis 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.

Amis 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 firing on all cylinders then it would 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 then he did get tended to break down. I don't note while 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.

Fletcher signs off with defeat

LONDON, Sept 20 (Internet report): Duncan Fletcher ended his ten years as Glamorgan coach on a losing note while Mark Ramprakash's spell as captain of Middlesex at least gave him the satisfaction of signing off with a victory.

Not that it was a match that had a great deal to recommend it. Glamorgan, batting first after winning the toss in a game reduced to 34 overs per side, could not last even that long and were dismissed for a paltry 99 in 31.2 overs.

It 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.

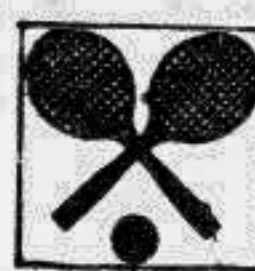
Middlesex, who included a few unfamiliar names in their line up, lost Andrew Strauss, yorked by Darren Thomas, early in their reply and Paul Weekes edged Owen Parkinson to the wicketkeeper.

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



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."

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 without star Anna Kournikova.

Russia's troika of Elenas — 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 pair of 3-2 wins over France in the quarterfinals and the Slovak Republic in the semifinals.

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

Donald 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.

Amis 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.

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Likhovtseva even wondered a loud about how the Russians might be able to acquire some of the American-bred talent. "They are very good," she said. "They can beat anyone, any team 5-1p. We can't borrow players from them, right?"

The United States eased some painful memories of the team's 3-2 semifinal loss in Spain one year ago.

"Well, it's never erased but it certainly softens the blow," said King. "It's good to remember that one because it keeps us hungry and striving forward. It's great that we brought the Fed Cup back to the United States of America, where it belongs."

Davenport and Likhovtseva, two tall, powerful baseliners, exchanged breaks in the first set until Davenport was able to establish some rhythm and take a 3-1 lead to tie the set.

The 24-year-old Likhovtseva managed to pull within 5-3 in the first by moving the defending Wimbledon champ around the court, but the native of southern California proved to be too strong.

Davenport broke Likhovtseva at 4-3 in the second set and never looked back.

Likhovtseva's game plan was to keep Davenport on her toes, but