

Column One

Boost sports WHIZZ KID

COMPETITION FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN
Competition-125

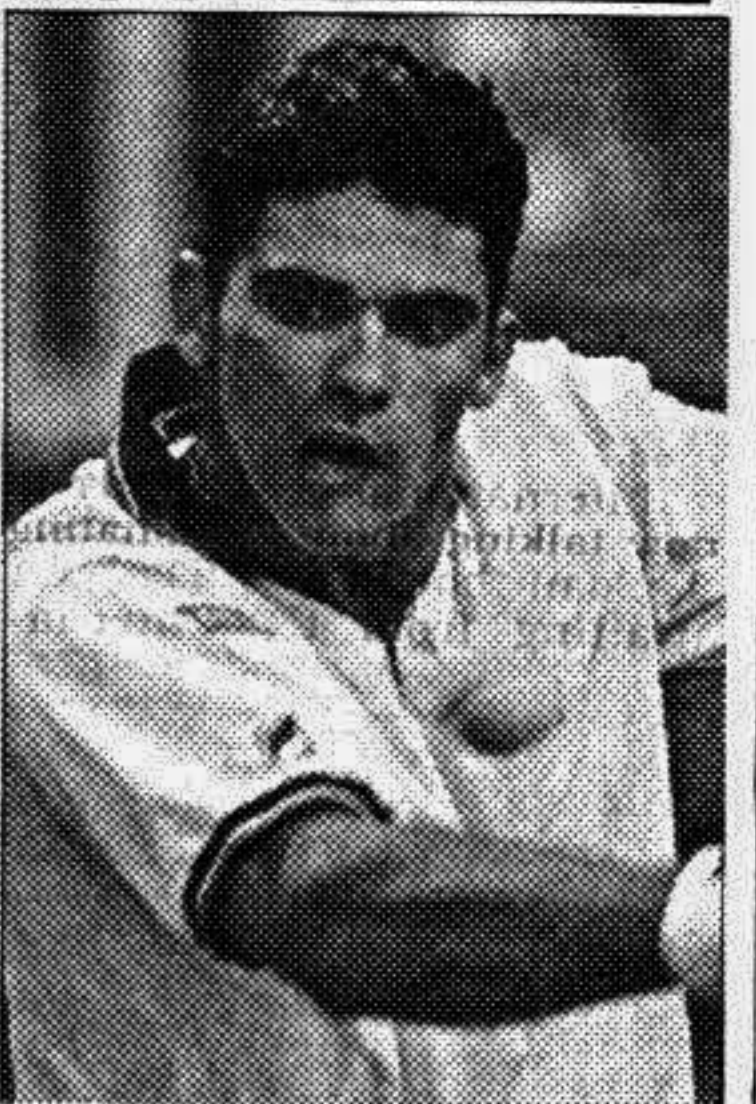
✓ Tick the Correct Answers
Post to The Daily Star
Win attractive prizes
Competition closes at 8 pm
Dec 31, '99 and draw
shortly afterwards

- Who was the man-of-the-series in the Australia-Pakistan Tests?
Langer Ponting Inzamam
- Who was the highest wicket-taker in the Australia-Pakistan Test series?
Akram Fleming McGrath
- How many Test hundreds has Mark Waugh scored to date?
15 16 17
- Who became champions in the Keya Premier soccer?
Muktijoddha Mohammedan Arambagh
- Who lifted the Expatriates' Open chess title?
Refaat Zia Tanveer

Name
Class Roll No.
School Address
Phone: (if any)

POWERED WITH
EN-VITS
ENERGY RELEASING VITAMINS

SPORTS TALK



Scene from yesterday's Cute First Division handball match between Victoria SC and Prime Sports Club. — Star photo

'See you next century'



MELBOURNE, Dec 23 (Internet report): Indian cricket coach Kapil Dev is certain West Indian Courtney Walsh will overtake him as Test cricket's leading bowler -- but not until the next century, reports AFP.

Walsh needs nine wickets in the second Test against New Zealand, starting at the Basin Reserve in Wellington on December 26, to surpass Kapil's record of 434.

"It's a pact between us, he'll do it in the next century," Kapil said on Thursday.

Walsh needed 12 wickets in the two Tests against the Kiwis to reach the landmark, but managed only three wickets in the first at Hamilton on Monday as the West Indians crashed to a nine-wicket defeat.

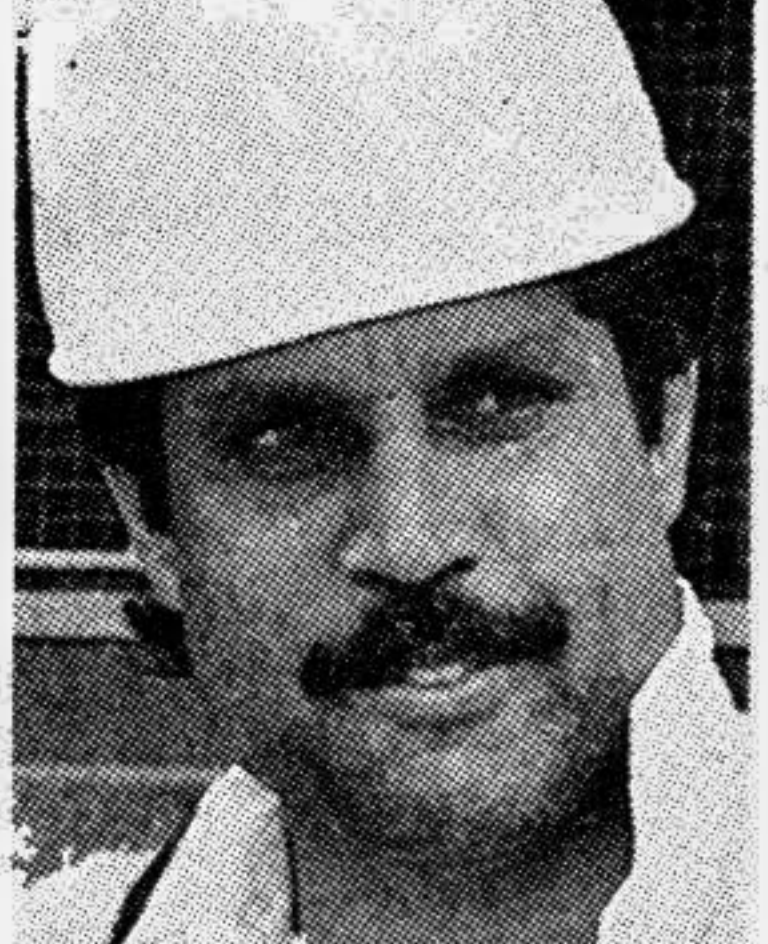
If he can't get the record at Wellington, the 37-year-old will wait till the series in England next May.

"He will be very happy when he gets there, just as I was," said Kapil, who surpassed New Zealander Richard Hadlee's record of 432 against Sri Lanka at Ahmedabad in 1993.

Kapil underwent a fourth arthroscopic surgery on his left knee here on Wednesday, forcing him to supervise the tourists' nets at the MCG on Thursday with the aid of

crutches. "Those legs have taken a lot of strain. Getting there can be very painful."

"The boys wanted me to rest today, but I wanted to be there for them," he said.



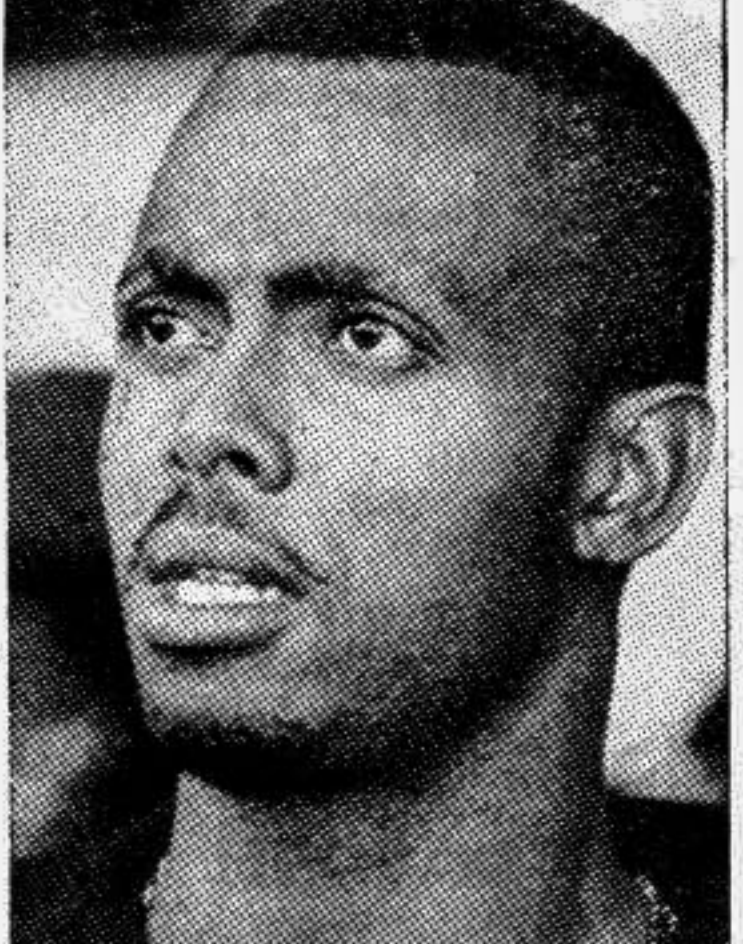
KAPIL DEV

India take on Australia in the second Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground from Sunday, a game they must win to keep the series alive till the third Test at Sydney in January.

Australia won the first Test at Adelaide by 285 runs.

India's reserve wicketkeeper Nayan Mongia, meanwhile, prepared to leave for home after the Indian board declared first-choice Mannava Prasad fit for the rest of the tour.

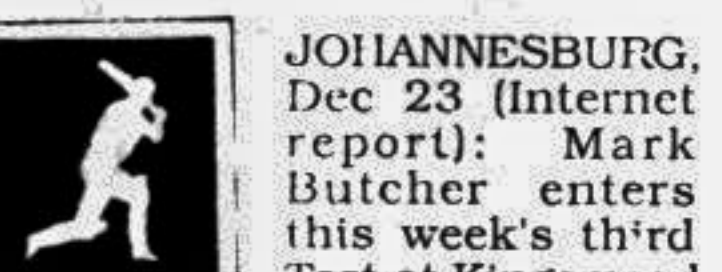
Mongia was flown in just before the Adelaide Test after a swollen knee left Prasad doubtful for the match.



COURTNEY WALSH

Mongia, who played the tour match against Tasmania earlier this week, was summoned home after the team management feared Prasad's fitness report to the Board on Wednesday.

Butcher under pressure



JOHANNESBURG, Dec 23 (Internet report): Mark Butcher enters this week's third Test at Kingsmead knowing any further failures could result in him being dropped by England for the second time in four months.

The Surrey left-hander approaches the Boxing Day Test with only one half-century to his name in 12 first-class innings on tour, having been robbed by rain of the opportunity to play his way back into form in the second innings of the four-day match against a Combined XI in East London.

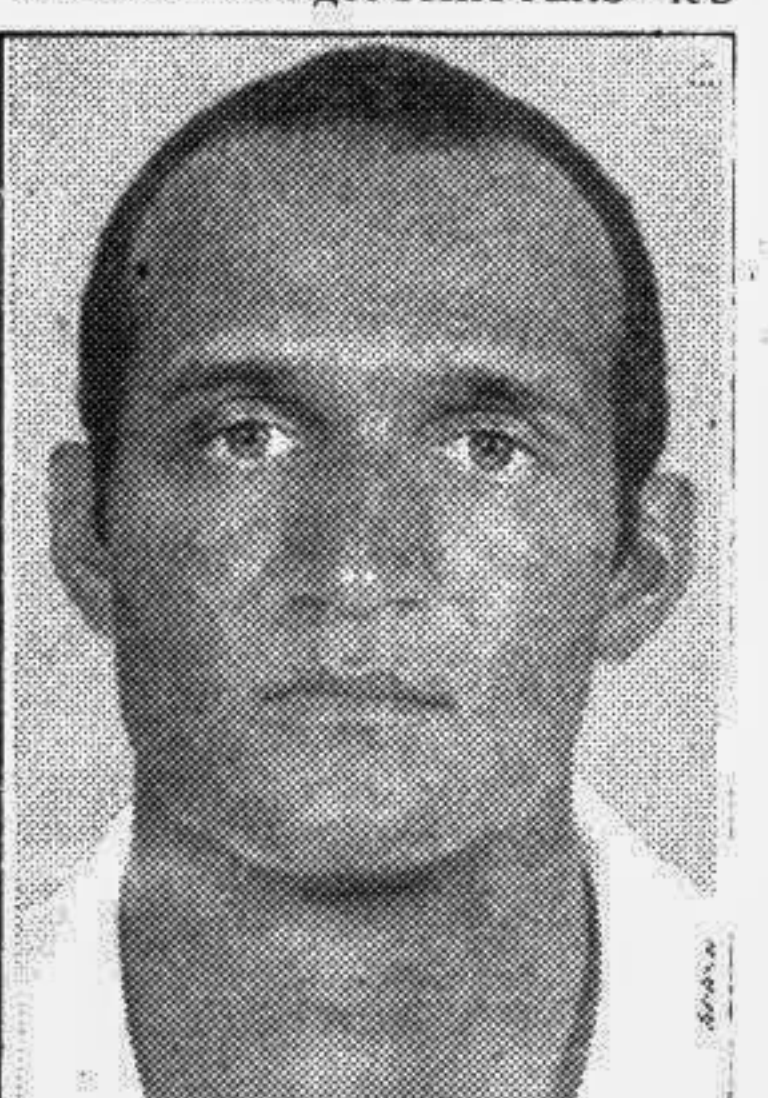
Further rain yesterday in Durban meant the tourists missed yet more practice, and with showers forecast in the days leading up to Christmas Butcher and the rest of the squad could be denied any meaningful work-out.

Butcher's poor form has left England needing to re-build their innings in virtually every match, with only four opening partnerships exceeding 50 and a further six ending in single figures.

Captain Nasser Hussain and coach Duncan Fletcher have both spoken of the need to stay loyal, but for the first time they have indicated their patience may not stretch much further and if Butcher fails again his place may be under threat.

"He needs to get some runs. There is no hiding place, and it's up to him to show some form and some strength of character to come back and get some runs," said Hussain.

"I don't think anybody doubts when they see him at the crease that he's a quality player but he has to get some runs - it's



MARK BUTCHER

not how you look that counts; it's how many you get."

England have a number of options should they decide to make the change, with Leicestershire's Darren Maddy waiting in the wings - although he

failed to make the most of his opportunity in East London when he was out for 14 to a reckless shot after Butcher was dismissed without scoring.

Yorkshire's Michael Vaughan, who has impressed at number four during the first two Tests, is also a possibility. But the bruised right index finger sustained while he was batting on Sunday has put his participation in doubt and may have saved Butcher from the axe in this Test.

For now, Hussain is content to give Butcher his unqualified support.

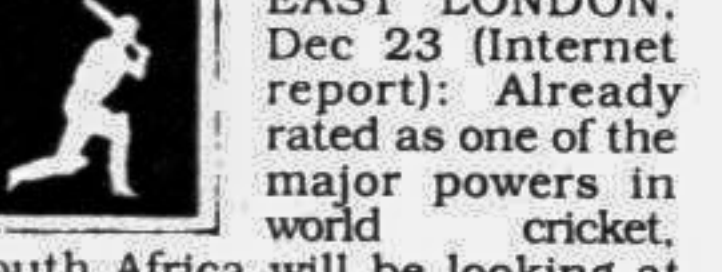
"He knows he needs to get some runs and he doesn't need me knocking on his door telling him that; he will need me putting my arm around him and asking him if there's anything we can do for him and if everything is fine."

"That's what he will get. He will get the support from me and the coach and every chance to go out there and succeed, and the rest is up to him as it is for everyone else."

Butcher has also received unexpected backing from Border captain Pieter Strydom, who said: "As a batsman I can sympathise with Butch."

"He's a good player. But everyone goes through a bad patch - it happens to every player. I won't complain if it helps South Africa during this series, though."

Brighter days ahead of SA



EAST LONDON, Dec 23 (Internet report): Already rated as one of the major powers in world cricket, South Africa will be looking at an even brighter future in the new millennium, says United Cricket Board managing director Ali Bacher.

Bacher is confident that his Board's transformation process -- now firmly under way -- will in no way compromise the high standards attained by Hansie Cronje's current side. "If anything," he insists, "it is going to be a boon."

Captain of one of South Africa's most successful sides of the 60s, Bacher said the crop of youngsters now coming through from all groups of the nation would prove critics of the transformation charter wrong.

"I'm prepared to put it in writing, our standards will not

be compromised," he vowed. In support of his argument, Bacher points out that six of SA's 14-strong under-19 World Cup squad selected over the



ALI BACHER

weekend are players of colour. "And they were selected strictly on merit," he says.

"What's more," he adds, "according to selection convenor Hugh Page, the standard this year is about 20 per cent higher than last year's."

Bacher, along with former national coach Bob Woolmer, also recently attended the PG Bison under-15 week in Pretoria.

"Bob described the talent on view as awesome. Selection convenor Dennis Lindsay was also over the moon and the black-white playing ratio among the 16 teams was close to 50/50," said Bacher.

"The whole debate about dropping standards, I feel, has been resolved."

Sher-e-Bangla nat'l soccer from March

Sports Reporter

The Sher-e-Bangla Cup national football championship will start from the third week of March, says a Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) press release yesterday.

The BFF has made Information Secretary M Akmal Hossain and BFF member Fazlur Rahman Babul as the chairman and the secretary of the tournament committee.

Sub-jr chess

Sports Reporter

Nine players were jointly leading the 20th national sub-junior chess championship table at the end of the third round yesterday.

On the third day of the nine-round Swiss League, Mehdi Hasan Parag, Golam Mustafa Bhuiyan, Naim Arefin Rattul, Nakibul Haque, Farhad Imam, Rowan Ehsan, Moksedul Monir, Saaduddin Ahmed and Ziauddin Ahmed won their respective matches and remained atop the table with full three points at the NSC chess room. The fourth round begins at 10 am.

Acme Div II cricket

Sports Reporter

Azad Sporting Club, Gulshan Youth Club and Tejaon Cricket Association won their respective Acme Second Division matches played at different city venues yesterday.

At the Dhanmondi Club ground, Azad Sporting Club handed Amarjoti Club a five-wicket defeat.

Middle order Raj produced a cameo innings of 54 as Azad, chasing Amarjoti's 207 in 40 overs, scored 212 for five with 11 overs in hand.

Raj hit three sixes and four boundaries in his 39-ball half-century. Opener Koton (48) and middle order Sanjoy (32) were the other notable run-getters for Azad.

Earlier, sent into bat, Amarjoti built their fighting total around middle order Hasan's almost run-a-ball 53.

Gulshan Youth Club recorded a four-wicket win over Rupali Bank at the Uttara Friends Club ground.

BRIEF SCORES

AMARJOTI CLUB: 207 for 8 in 40 overs (Hasan 53, Rajon 46, Alamgir 43; Rony 2/34)

AZAD SC: 212 for 5 in 29 overs (Raj 54 n.o., Koton 48, Sanjoy 32; Tarek 2/31)

Result: Azad Sporting Club won by 5 wickets.

RUPALI BANK: 209 for 9 in 40 overs (Shariful 46, Azimul 34, Samul 26; Jamal 2/28)

GULSHAN YOUTH CLUB: 210 for 6 in 38.4 overs (Russell 80 n.o., Bir 60; Malina 2/40)

Result: Gulshan Youth Club won by 4 wickets.

TEJGAON CA: 183 for 8 in 40 overs (Badshah 54, Hira 51; Liton 3/32, Bitul 2/12)

LALBAGH USC: 173 all out in 39.4 overs (Litu 64, Kamal 25; Shitu 3/19, Nasirul 2/34)

Result: Tejaon Cricket Association won by 10 runs.

Lower-middle order Russell hammered a quickfire unbeaten 80 as Gulshan Youth, in pursuit of Rupali Bank's 209 in 40 overs, reached their target for the loss of six wickets and with eight balls to spare.

Russell's 69-ball blitz included four over-boundaries and eight fours. He was ably supported by Biru who chipped in with 60 off 78 balls. The duo put on 130 runs for the sixth wicket.

Earlier, opting to bat, the bankers rode on middle order Shariful's 46 and opener Azimul's 34.

Away at the Mirpur Outer Stadium, Tejaon Cricket Association beat Lalbagh Union Sporting Club by 10 runs.

In a low-scoring match, Tejaon, aided by two half-centuries from Badshah (54) and Hira (51) scored 183 runs for eight in 40 overs.

In reply, Lalbagh were all out for 173 in 39.4 overs.

Shitu, the man behind Lalbagh's debacle, captured three wickets for 19 runs while Mohammad Ali and Nasirul evenly shared four wickets.

Cute h'ball

Victoria Sporting Club defeated Prime Sporting Club 12-6 in the Cute First Division handball league at the outer stadium handball court yesterday, reports UNB.

The winners led the first half 6-3.

Nurunnabi struck eight times while Shyamol netted two for the winners. Jamal scored three goals for the losers.

Friday's match: Satirtha Club vs Jatrabari KC Jr (3 pm).

JU sports

Kamaluddin Hall emerged champions in the Victory Day Vice-Chancellor Cup inter-hall football tournament of Jahangirnagar University in Savar on Wednesday, reports UNB.

In the Vice-Chancellor Cup ladies' hall handball tournament, Jahangira Alam Hall lifted the title defeating Nawab Faizunnessa Hall 5-3.

Forget about festivities



NASSER HUSSAIN

EAST LONDON, Dec 23 (Internet report): Christmas and New Year festivities will not be allowed to interfere with England's main mission over the next fortnight: Beating South Africa in the third and fourth cricket Tests.

When England last toured the republic two years ago, the then team manager Ray Illingworth claimed his troops had gone walkabout over the holiday period and the presence of wives and families had only aggravated the situation.

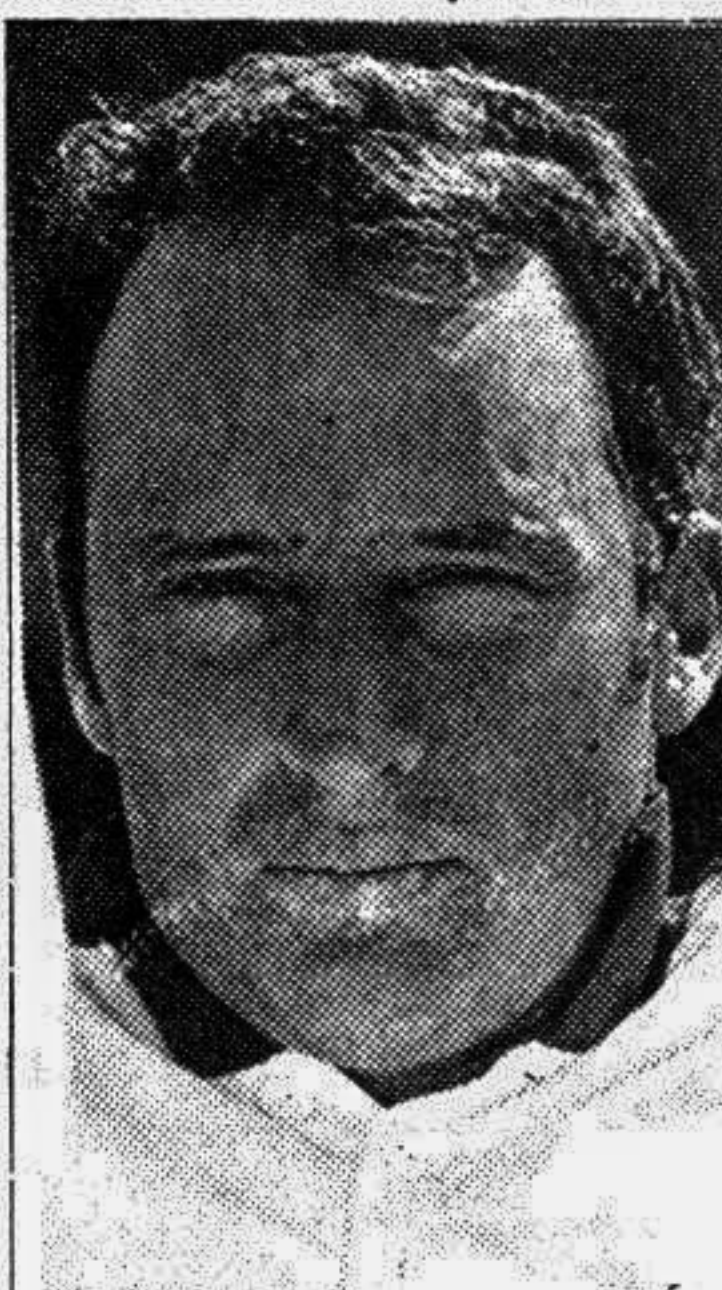
And although the current tourists will again be linking up with their families prior to the third Test in Durban this weekend, captain Nasser Hussain is adamant that history will not be repeating itself.

"These next two weeks are what this whole tour is all about," said Hussain. "If you work out the permutations we can either be out of the series in the next two weeks, be equal with them or still be 1-0 down."

"We will discuss it, but we will also give the boys enough credit to be professional, to realise that these next two weeks is what we are all here for."

As far as wives and families are concerned, Hussain said he had no problems with their presence. "The focus is always

on the cricket," he said, "but it does no harm in occasionally getting away from things, getting away from the boys and enjoying your own company."



NASSER HUSSAIN

"That does no harm. We'll make sure that the boys sit around and have drinks together and don't rush off and things like that, but cricket is what we are here for."

After a good personal second Test, Hussain said he was looking forward to getting back into action. "It's back-to-back Test matches, which are tiring, especially Durban and Cape Town."

"What with all our supporters coming out, everything will be geared towards cricket, Christmas, the New Year. It's huge fun. It's exciting stuff, so I'm really looking forward to the next two weeks."

With rain currently sweeping through the whole of Natal, however, Hussain and his troops may find their preparations further disrupted.

"Hopefully the weather will clear," said coach Duncan Fletcher, "but if it doesn't we will just have to go indoors, which won't be ideal. We need to get in some outdoor work."

Mark Ramprakash, who is being flown out as cover for injured middle-order batsman Michael Vaughan, is already on his way and is expected to arrive in Durban on Thursday.

It has, however, been made clear to the 30-year-old Middlesex star that he will only come into play in the event of another of the current specialists "going down" prior to the Test.

Ramprakash, who is also part of the England one-day squad, could in fact, find himself back on a plane back home after the fourth Test.

Pakistan in limbo



SHOAIB AKHTAR

KARACHI, Dec 23 (Internet report): Pakistan Cricket Board secretary Shoaib Akhtar said Wednesday that the PCB had requested a change of date for the telephone conference hook-up that will consider the legality of Shoaib Akhtar's bowling action.

The International Cricket Council's nine-man advisory panel on illegal deliveries is set to judge the Pakistan fast bowler's action via the teleconference on 30 December.

Rana said the PCB had requested that the date be moved to either December 26 or after the conclusion of the tri-nation series in Australia, which begins on January 9 and ends on February 6.

Rana said the request had been made because the Pakistan squad leaves for Australia on 29 December "and it would be an unkind act for Shoaib if he is declared ineligible to play in the series after being suspended by the advisory panel."

Shoaib's bowling was clocked at 155 kilometres (93 miles) an hour during a recent Test series in Australia. Pakistan lost the Test series 3-0, however, series officials complained about Shoaib's bowling action following the series.

Series referee John Reid and umpires Darrel Heir and Peter Willey, expressed concern about Shoaib's bowling action.

In a letter dated Dec 2, the ICC Cricket Operation manager Clive Hitchcock said that only three particular deliveries of Shoaib have caused concern. In these deliveries, Shoaib was trying to bowl faster or was hurling down a bouncer.



SHOAIB AKHTAR

"We have received a video footage along with the official complaint over Shoaib's bowling action," Rana said.

Now, Shoaib will only be eligible for the triangular series if the ICC panel clears him, he said.

Shoaib has the support of former Test cricketers, includ-

ing Pakistan's former captain-turned-politician Imran Khan, who is to represent Pakistan at the ICC hearing.

Meanwhile, Pakistan captain Wasim Akram added weight to the debate, saying it was unjustified to fix the teleconference date for the day after the Pakistanis had left for Australia. "We are getting the date (for the teleconference) seven days before we are embarking on the tour. Now tell me, how can a captain chalk out his strategy?"

"Similarly, no one can imagine what Shoaib Akhtar would be going through because at this stage he doesn't know if his career has been brought to a grinding halt or not."

Wasim said it would be a great loss to cricket if a charismatic bowler like Shoaib was prevented from playing. "Cricket needs players like Shoaib Akhtar. But instead of giving them a pat on his back, the authorities are adamant to end his career. It is sheer injustice."

Shoaib has refused to comment on the issue saying he is bound by the PCB players' code of conduct.

Shahid Nazir and Waqar Younis are the bowlers most likely to replace Shoaib if he is unavailable.

PCB chairman Tausiq Zia is expected to hold a press conference on the issue in Lahore today.

If weather permits Warne



SHANE WARNE

MELBOURNE, Dec 23 (AFP): Shane Warne hopes to become Australia's leading Test wicket-taker on his home ground next week -- provided the weather holds.

Thunderstorms have been forecast during the second Test between India and Australia which starts at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Sunday.

Warne said it would be a "fairytale" to take the remaining seven wickets needed to overhaul Dennis Lillee's Australian record of 355 before his own MCC bow.

But the blond leg-spinner, already Test history's most prolific slow bowler, realises the record could have to wait for a few more matches.

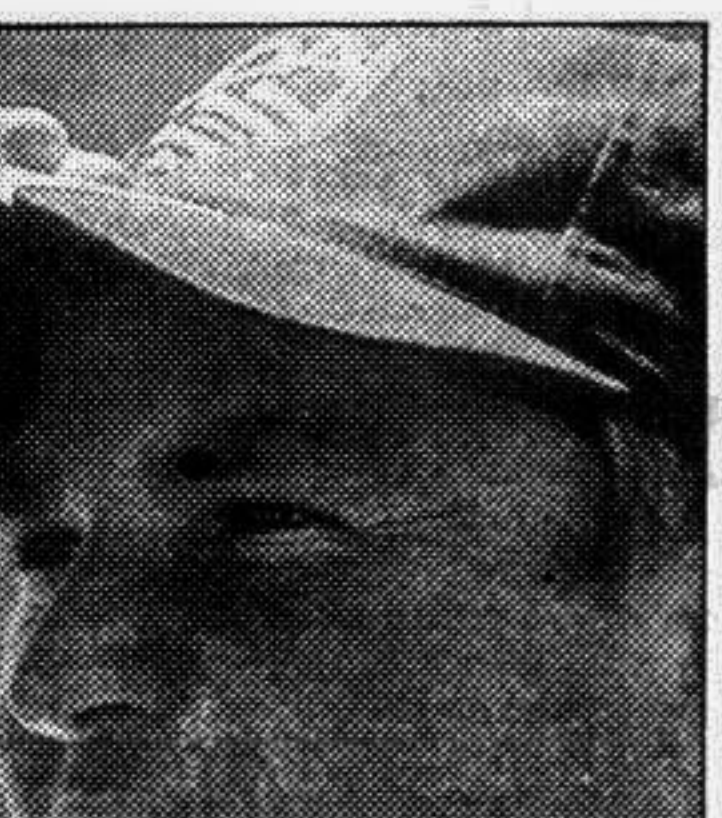
"It would be nice to do it here in Melbourne," said Warne, who has 349 wickets from 79 Tests.

"I probably needed a few more wickets in the first Test at Adelaide, but that was not to be. We won, and that was the main thing."

Warne, who took six wickets during Australia's 285-run

romp in the first Test, will still enjoy getting the record during the third and final Test at Sydney.

It was on the Sydney Cricket Ground in January, 1992, that he made an unimpressive Test debut against the Indians, taking just one wicket at the cost of 155 runs.



SHANE WARNE

Warne's attack on Lillee's record and the fascinating prospect of him bowling to India's master batsman Sachin Tendulkar will ensure a sizeable crowd at the 104,000-seater MCG.

Some 65,000 fans are expected on Boxing Day -- weather permitting -- to watch Tendulkar take the field for only his second Test at the MCG.

The maestro made 15 and 40 as an 18-year-old during the Test match in 1991 and a highest score of 30 in two one-day games here.

Tendulkar and fast bowler Javagal Srinath are the only ones in the touring squad to have played at the MCG before. Coach Kapil Dev has played three Tests at the venue.

"It's a great feeling to play at the MCG, just like it is at the Eden Gardens in Calcutta," Kapil said.

"Players like to perform before big crowds. I hope my boys can rise to the occasion here."

"Overall it has been a fantastic career so far and hopefully it can keep going for a few years yet. There is still a bit of spin left in the fingers and shoulders."

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Rajshahi cricket

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAH, Dec 23: Sohag Smriti Sangha and Al Rashid Club won their respective matches of the fifth Birsasba Tendulkar Cup tournament at the Rajshahi Railway ground today.

Friends were all out for 126 in 22.5 overs. Sarif (21) was the highest scorer for Friends.

In reply, Sumon's unbeaten 67 runs gave Sohag Smriti a comfortable total of 162 and helped the team to win by seven wickets.

Al Rashid Club beat Dorga Para Moon Club by nine wickets in their match of the day.

Winning the toss, Moon were all out for 89 in 19.2 overs.

In reply, the winners reached the target in 16.3 overs.