

Non-white to step into Bacher's shoes

BLOEMFONTEIN, South Africa, Jan 24: South African cricket will get a black managing director in the wake of the shake-up that resulted in United Cricket Board (UCB) president Raymond White resigning Saturday, reports AFP.

Ali Bacher, the current managing director, said in Bloemfontein Sunday he will step aside by October 1. But he will remain in charge of the sport's administration as executive director, a position which will be created for him.

In that capacity, Bacher aims to help the new managing director settle in over a two-year period. Bacher will also be in charge of planning for the 2003 World Cup in South Africa.

Bacher said his successor as MD would definitely be black.

"We have to be realistic on that issue, but the key factor will be the ability of the person, whether he is headhunted or appointed from inside cricket," he said.

"He does not necessarily have to have a cricket background, but it is important that it must not be a political appointment."

South African cricket appeared to be in turmoil following the resignation of White, who was accused by UCB council member Gerald Majola of retarding transformation.

Majola, a national selector, also called for the appointment of a black chief executive.

"It is vitally important that during the World Cup and the period leading to it that blacks start playing a vital role in the running of the game," Majola said in a letter that led to White's resignation at a UCB council meeting in Johannesburg Saturday.

Explaining the latest developments, Bacher, a former Test captain, said he was not being pushed out of administrative control of the sport.

Bacher spoke to journalists during a one-day international between South Africa and England in Bloemfontein Sunday. He said he would only switch full-time to planning the World Cup in April 2002.

Bacher announced, however, that he would resign as chairman of the International Cricket Council's development committee.

The weekend's developments have rocked a sport long haled as one of the success stories of the new South Africa since democratic elections in 1994.

Majola's letter to White followed several incidents in which white cricket officials were accused of dragging their heels on the transformation issue.

White's resignation will be effective February 11, after he has attended a meeting of the International Cricket Council in Singapore February 9 to discuss commercial arrangements for the World Cup.

He will be succeeded by vice-president Percy Sonn, who will be acting president until the annual meeting in July.

Sohn, like Majola, is a former member of the "nonracial" SA Cricket Board which merged with the formerly all-white SA Cricket Union in 1991.

Although the majority of top level players in South African cricket are white, there has been increasing pressure to bring more black South Africans into positions of influence in the sport.

Rushdi Magiet became the first black co-ordinator of selectors at the start of the season.

Concern that uncertainty over the administration of the sport might spill over into the performances of the national team led by Hansie Cronje was fuelled Sunday when England thrashed South Africa by nine wickets with 10.3 overs to spare, one of their heaviest defeats for several years.

Unique chance for Iraqi women

BAGHDAD, Jan 24: Iraq's women footballers are gearing up for their first ever international matches when they take on seven other Arab teams in five-a-side matches at the end of this month, reports AFP.

Dressed in black trousers and wearing shirts emblazoned with the Iraqi flag, a total of eight women have been chosen to represent the sanctions-hit state in the Amman tournament which runs from January 29-February 4.

The tournament will be the team's first international matches since the Iraqi women's football federation was created in 1950. Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and the Palestinians will also take part.

"The team has had no warm-up matches. It will pit itself against experienced teams. It will not be easy," coach Mohammed Abd es-Sabah said.

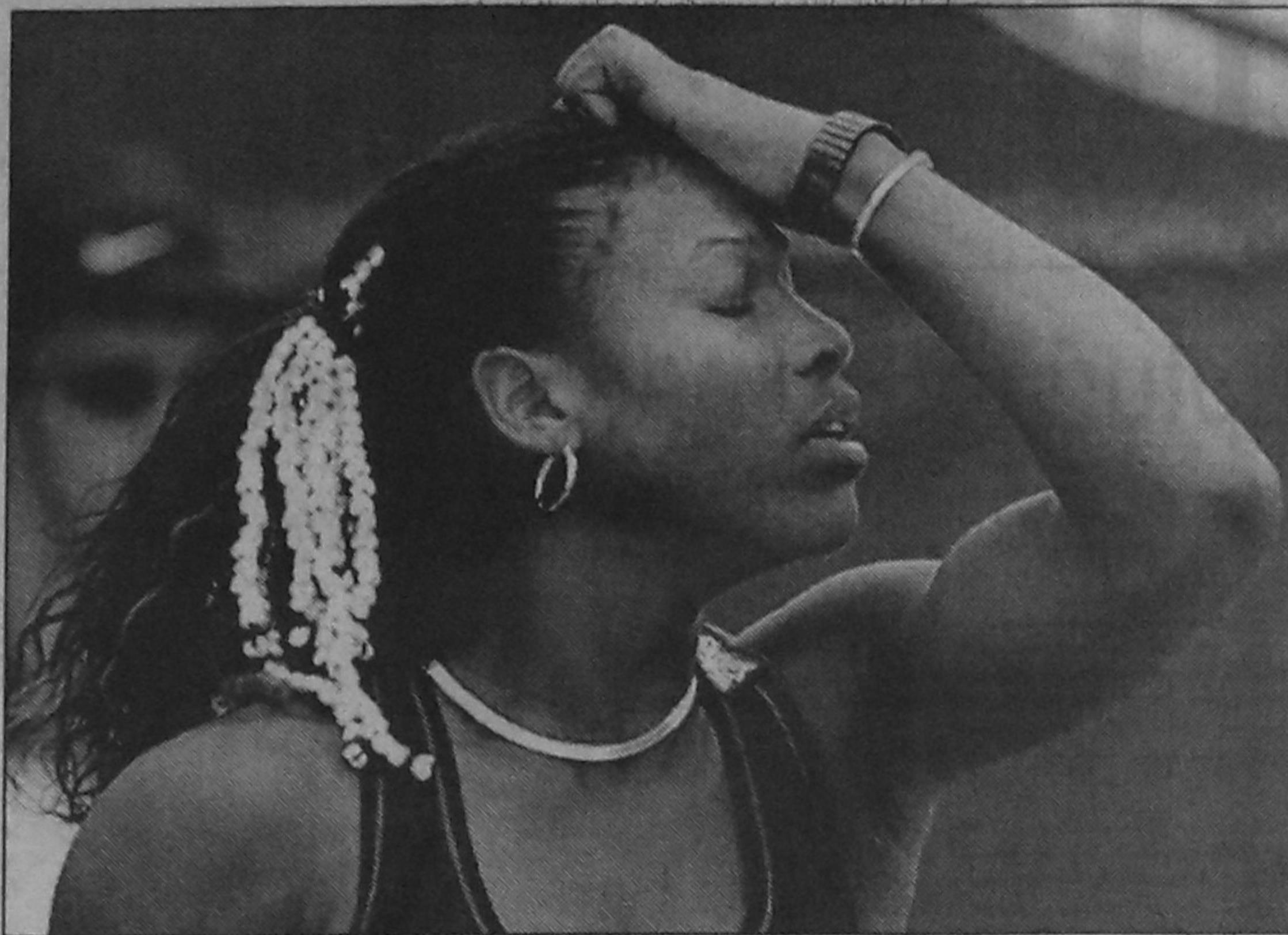
"As an Iraqi woman, I must tell the world that Iraqi women will not be prisoners of the embargo. The embargo has created a sort of defiance inside me," said team captain Khalid Abdul Karim, who is a student.

Iraq has been under UN sanctions since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"Since the team was formed, women's football has begun to win support among the population," said Fatima al-Hashemi, head of the Iraqi women's union.

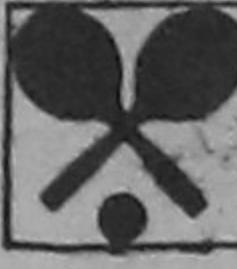
Most Iraqi provinces have women's football clubs, but there is as yet no national championship. Iraq also fields women's teams in disciplines such as volleyball, basketball, handball, athletics, fencing and some martial arts.

Women in the neighbouring conservative Gulf region have only recently begun to play football competitively, but tournaments are generally held behind closed doors and men are banned from the crowd.



American Serena Williams is visibly disappointed after losing a crucial game on way to make a fourth round exit from the Australian Open against Russian Elena Likhovtseva yesterday. —AFP photo

Serena sent packing



MELBOURNE, Jan 24: US Open champion Serena Williams denied she was unprepared but could not explain why she played so badly to crash out of the Australian Open on Monday, reports AFP.

In contrast, defending champion Martina Hingis, whom she was due to meet in the semifinals, danced on for a quarterfinal clash with 13th seed Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario.

Williams' flashy red shoes looked like lead as she dragged herself across court to miss passing shots or net her returns in succumbing to unfashionable Russian sixteenth seed Elena Likhovtseva 6-3, 6-3 in the fourth round.

Likhovtseva had never made it past the fourth round in her 24 previous Grand Slam ap-

pearances.

"I couldn't stop hitting errors. I don't know why I made so many errors. I just didn't do anything right," said Williams but denied being short of match practice.

She had opted against a warm-up tournament and only decided to come to Melbourne at the last minute without her father and coach Richard and elder sister Venus, who pulled out citing tendinitis in her left wrist.

"I wasn't unprepared. I was here long enough and I've answered this question a million times before. I just couldn't make the shots," she said.

Hingis, chasing a fourth successive title, swept aside Sandrine Testud 6-1, 7-6, recovering from 0-3 down in the second set when the French 12th seed started to match her ground strokes.

"I probably had some lucky

shots and everything went in and I was so aggressive, so excited to be out there, you know, almost too pumped up, over-hyper," said the Swiss world No.1, who tipped Lindsay Davenport as her likely final opponent.

But Sanchez-Vicario and fellow Spanish veteran Conchita Martinez also battled into the last eight and are out to upset her prediction.

Sanchez-Vicario, a triple French Open champion, reached her 34th Grand Slam quarterfinal by beating sixth seed Barbara Schett of Austria 1-6, 6-0, 7-5.

Tenth seed and former Wimbledon champion Martinez dispensed American Kristina Brandy 6-1, 6-1 to set up a match with Likhovtseva.

Williams' loss was a blow to the Australian Open's image, which has never been short of an opinion and this time he says he's got the game plan to produce future champions.

"They have been pretty lucky up until today."

CASH HAS A PLAN

Former Wimbledon champion Pat Cash is putting his money where his mouth is.

The Australian tennis coach has never been short of an opinion and this time he says he's got the game plan to produce future champions.

After reversing Mark Philippoussis slide down the world rankings, Cash will share the secret of success at the Cash Hopper International Tennis Training Academy on the Queensland Gold Coast.

He and Gavin Hopper, who trains Philippoussis, plan an academy similar to that of Nick Bollettieri in Florida, which has produced a steady stream of champion players, including world No 1 Andre Agassi and former women's No 1 Monica Seles.

NO PAIN, NO GAIN

Serena Williams had a bad

day at the office Monday, losing in the fourth round to Russian Elena Likhovtseva.

Asked what she would do to cheer herself up, the budding fashion designer said punishment was what was needed.

"I'm going to punish myself by finishing this work that I have to do, some homework I have to do—38 drawings," she said.

AYNAOUI APOLOGIZES

Lanky Moroccan Younes El Aynaoui said sorry Monday to "nice" Portuguese chair umpire Jorge Dias, who gave him two warnings on his way to a 3-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-10, 10-8 victory over Frenchman Arnaud Clement.

"The umpire was nice to me," El Aynaoui said. "I deserved a second warning."

"For the first warning I wasn't sure I really deserved it because it was a return of serve and I smacked the ball on the side and it went into the crowd and I got a warning for this."

"Then I spin my racket and it almost went into the crowd."

"As soon as I did it I apologized to the umpire. I didn't want to hit anybody in the crowd and I regretted doing that."

AUSTRALIAN OPEN NOTEBOOK



MELBOURNE, Jan 24 (AFP): Darren Cahill, coach of Lleyton Hewitt, said he can finally have a shave and his fiancee is thrilled to bits.

Cahill promised his young charge that he wouldn't shave his whiskers while Hewitt was still in men's singles contention.

But that was creating personal problems with his wife-to-be who was becoming anxious about their upcoming wedding and the accompanying photographs.

"It got to the stage where even my future wife was cheering against Lleyton," Cahill quipped of the Aussie youngster, who bowed out Monday in straight sets to Swede Magnus Norman, ending a 13-match unbeaten run.

HOT CAKES

Nike has brought out a Lleyton Hewitt cap and they're selling like hot cakes.

More than 600 have been snapped up so far this tournament.

"That's good, I think," said the 18-year-old Aussie, recognizable for wearing his white cap back-to-front.

I spoke about it late last year, making these hats. I was disappointed I couldn't get a Tommy Haas one and I spoke to one of the guys from Nike and they thought it was a pretty good idea for the summer circuit.

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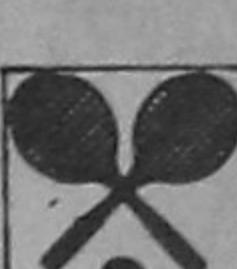
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Mark in Davis Cup team



MELBOURNE, Jan 24: Australia's Davis Cup preparations were boosted Monday with Mark Philippoussis making himself available, reports AFP.

But the Swiss camp remained in turmoil as captain Jakob Hlasek defended his decision to drop veteran Marc Rosset.

The Scud was named by team captain John Newcombe in his four-man squad alongside Lleyton Hewitt, Sandon Stolle and Wayne Arthurs, ending speculation that he didn't want to play.

"Mark has always said that he's very keen to play Davis Cup this year. There was speculation in the media whether he would play in the first match or not -- he's playing," Newcombe confirmed.

Two-time US Open champion Pat Rafter remains injured while Todd Woodbridge has tennis commitments in Hawaii at the same time. Mark Woodforde has retired.

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Cup career and led a revolt against the appointment of Hlasek for a five-year term.

"It's been tough but I'm going to be here for a long time," said Hlasek, who played Davis Cup for 13 years, most of them with Rosset.

"We always had conflict as team-mates," he said.

"I had to be his way. He has opened his mouth all the time but I know he also had some good results in the Davis Cup, so I expect I will be criticised in Switzerland for this decision."

But Hlasek said he refused to put up with distraction as Switzerland prepare for one of their biggest Davis Cup challenges.

"I cannot let the fact that he played well in the past become a distraction," he said. "Now I have to forget him and set my mind on what's best for the four

players of the team. Some of the other guys were with him for a while but they have come to their senses."

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Instead, Switzerland will go into the tie with world number 139 Michel Kratochvil joining Roger Federer, Georges Basti and Lorenz Manta.

Rosset said he would never play for Switzerland under Hlasek.

"You will not see me in the Davis Cup as long as Hlasek is captain," he said.

Hlasek has also been appointed head of the women's Fed Cup team, which features Martina Hingis and Patty Schnyder.

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