

Nat'l chess

Four lead the board

Four players were jointly leading the preliminary round of the 26th National Chess Championship with seven and a half points after tenth round matches at federation room yesterday, reports UNB.

They are: IM Abdullah Al Rakib, Abu Sultan Shakil, Sheikh Nasir Shiplu and An-fuzzaman Sikdar.

Six players — Enamul Hossain Rajib, Saifuddin Lavlu, Khandaker Aminul Islam, Anisuzzaman Mallik, Arman Hossain Monir and Shawkat Hossain Pallab — followed the leaders with seven points.

The eleventh and last round will be held today (Sunday) from 3 pm.

Meanwhile, the first open tournament of Dhaka Chess Festival 2000 organised by recently formed Prof Abdur Razzak Chess Club will be held from Thursday at Dhaka Daba Ghar on Green Road.

Interested players have been requested to contact Dhaka Daba Ghar office or Bangladesh Chess Federation office before 8 pm on February 23.

Acme Div II cricket

Gulshan Youth Club and Old DOHS won their respective matches in the Acme Second Division Relegation League at different city venues yesterday, reports UNB.

Gulshan Youth defeated Progoti Sheba Sangha by 63 runs at the UPL ground.

Opting to bat first, Gulshan Youth were all out for 185 runs in 36.3 overs.

In reply, Progoti Sheba were bundled out for 122 runs in 37.4 overs.

At the Mirpur Outer Stadium ground, Old DOHS beat CCS Blues by 46 runs.

Old DOHS made 238 for nine wickets in stipulated 40 overs after putting in to bat first.

In reply, CCS Blues managed 192 runs in 40 overs for nine wickets.

M'singh cricket

MYMENSINGH, Feb 19: Mukul Fouz Red earned a one-wicket victory over Shaheed Ratan Sangsad in the nail-biting match of the Begum Raza Premier Division League here today, reports UNB.

Battling first, Shaheed Ratan scored 187 for all in 45 overs with Jony making 61 and Lalal 44.

Shimul and Sajjad took two wickets each for 19 and 35 runs respectively.

In reply, Mukul Fouz reached the target of 188 runs with one wicket in hand in 42.3 overs.

Samaranch in Bangkok

BANGKOK, Feb 19: International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Juan Antonio Samaranch met Thai sports officials today, three weeks after Thailand said it was bidding for the 2008 Summer Games, reports AFP.

Samaranch who arrived in Thailand late Friday night, visited an indoor stadium in Bangkok to observe a game of sepak takraw which is reportedly being considered as an Olympic demonstration sport.

Takraw players try to propel a ball over a high net with their feet. The sport, which is similar to volleyball, is especially popular in southeast Asia.

Samaranch was later due to fly by helicopter to present King Bhumibol Adulyadej with the Lalounis Cup at a seaside summer palace in Hua Hin.

The cup recognises services to the Olympic movement.

Thailand joined the race for the 2008 Games just before the bid deadline last month and is shaping up as a rank outsider against from runner Beijing and eight other cities, including Paris.

Samaranch is due to hold talks with Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai and other officials and will also meet executives from Thailand's Olympic Committee Sunday.

Mighty club

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bring a Pakistani player, Badal said.

When Badal was still pondering on finalising his foreign players, Athar Ali Khan gave the true picture of a team, the leadership of which is likely to be bestowed upon him.

"It should have been better had they announced a captain before. If that had happened he could have done the homework of motivating the side. It is also a bit disappointing the way the practice is going now," said Athar Ali yesterday.

"The players are not giving their 100 per cent in the practice. Some are not even regular. This should not be the approach of any professional player," said the veteran right-hander.

The 36-year-old opener, who is about to take up the most demanding job after long ten years when he inspired Brothers Union to lift the title away back in 1990-91 season, was not even sure of the regular eleven.

"I only know that young opener Rashidul Haq is a good player. Nahid looks impressive with the bat and his agility in fielding. Hannan failed to impress me. I have bated against Monjurul in the nets. He is really a quality bowler. Rahul is a good all-rounder," said Athar.

"I think Rafique is the real asset of our team," said Athar. "Definitely we are capable of surprising other teams. And I'm looking forward to taking Mohammedan to a position where they used to be," rounded off the list right-hander.



Sri Lankan skipper Sanath Jayasuriya (L) receives the LG one-day series trophy after the third and last match against Pakistan at Lahore yesterday. —AFP photo

Black Caps blown away



AUCKLAND, Feb 19: Australia easily despatched a rusty and aimless New Zealand in a one-day cricket match here today, reports AFP.

The day-night game barely needed the lights as the whole game ended in just under 55 overs as the setting sun over Eden Park ensured the 33,000 spectators got an early night.

Australia polished off New Zealand's supposedly strong batting line-up for a dismal 122, with the first ball of the 31st over.

The tourists then reached their winning target at a good clip, off 24.4 overs with five wickets down. Tour replacement Matthew Hayden scored his second consecutive half-century to see them home.

It was a chilling reminder to New Zealand, coming off five straight one-day wins over the West Indies, that they were playing the form team of world cricket.

Aside from the no-result in the first one-day in Wellington on Thursday, Australia have now won 10 consecutive one-day matches.

Their world-class bowling attack caused New Zealand problems, but it was also poor shot selection by the home batsmen which contributed to several wickets.

Glenn McGrath and Brett Lee opened their tours with fiery spells, McGrath ending with three for 33 of 8.1 overs as well as having two confident caught behind appeals against Stephen Fleming turned down early on.

Man-of-the-match Brett Lee took three for 21 off seven accurate overs, while Shane Warne took two for 35 off 10 overs and Shane Lee chipping in with two for 27 off five.

Australia fielded brilliantly, with Brett Lee taking a memorable one-handed catch on the fine leg boundary to dismiss Chris Cairns for one.

Right from the fourth ball of the match when Craig Spearman edged an attempted off-drive off McGrath to Australian wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist, New Zealand were in trouble.

It didn't help when their form batsman Nathan Astle was deceived by a fast outswinger from Brett Lee — his first delivery of the tour — making it none for two after 1.1 overs.

Only Roger Twose and Craig McMillan showed any spine, with Fleming, Cairns, Chris Harris and Adam Parore all falling cheaply to leave New Zealand 81 for seven after 21 overs.

Twose survived the early barrage but was bowled by Warne on 25, while McMillan took the Australians on confidently, hitting five fours and a straight six off Shane Lee in scoring 35 off 49 balls.

He had almost run out of partners when he edged a wide ball from Brett Lee to Gilchrist.

Daniel Vettori added 35 for the ninth wicket with McMillan — the highest partnership of the innings.

Cairns and Vettori both claimed early wickets, Cairns having Mark Waugh caught behind for two and Vettori having Gilchrist caught on the mid-wicket boundary by Roger Twose for 10.

It could have been 36 for three when Andrew Symonds edged Cairns between wicket.

keeper Parore and first slip Fleming in the seventh over.

But some big hits from Symonds in his 33 from 26 balls, and another brief exhibition of the class of Hayden saw the chase through with ease.

Hayden hit nine fours and a six in bringing up his 50 off 46 balls but was out just 11 runs short of the winning target.

Vettori took two for 37 off 20 overs while Wiseman, who was only called into the team last night, had the scalps of Hayden and Michael Bevan to end with two for 21.

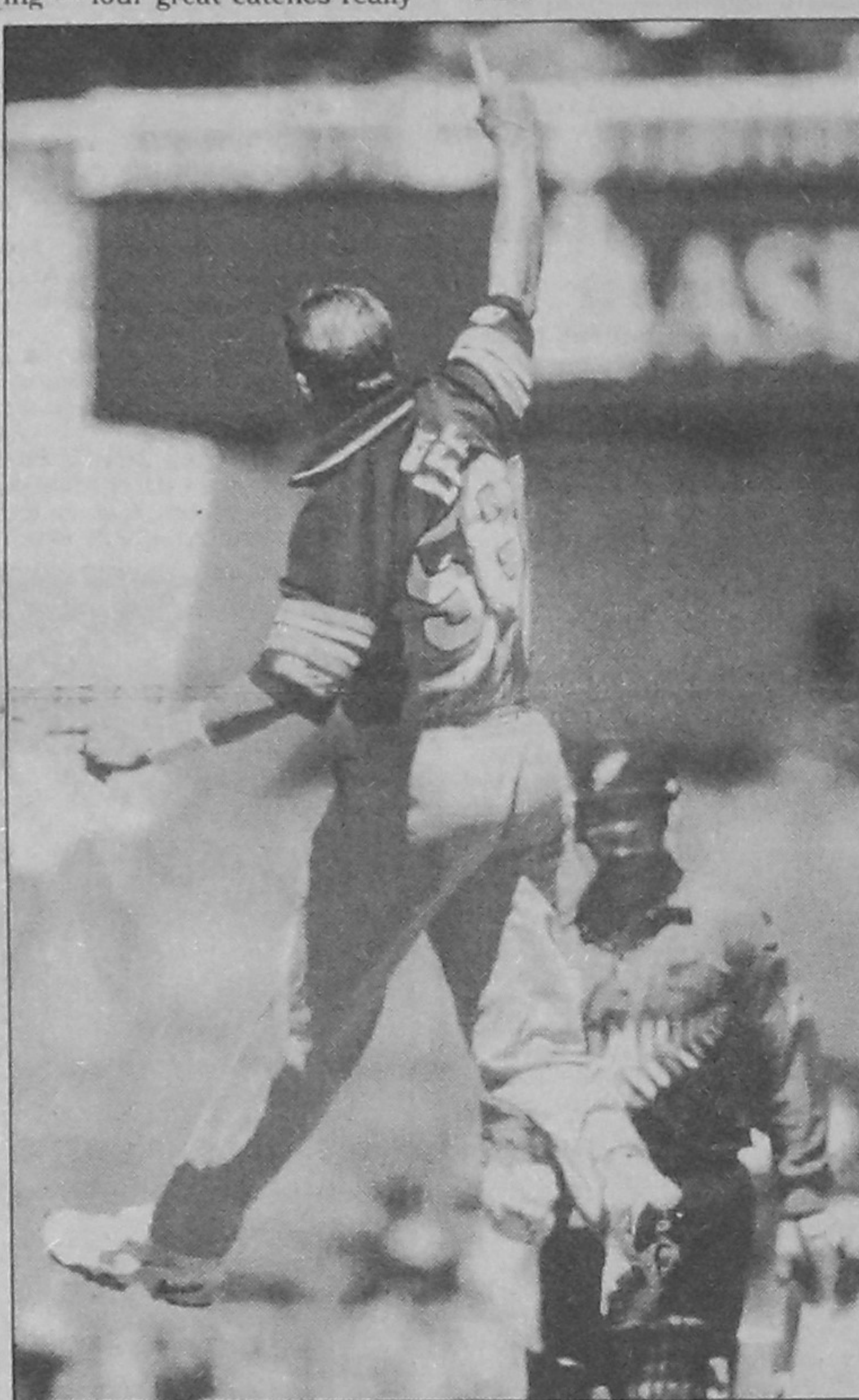
Australian captain Steve Waugh was understandably happy.

"The fielding was outstanding — four great catches really

NEW ZEALAND

Spearman c Gilchrist b McGrath	0	0	0	0
Astle c M. Waugh b B. Lee	14	14	14	14
Fleming c S. Lee b B. Lee	25	25	25	25
Twose b Warne	1	1	1	1
Cairns c B. Lee b McGrath	36	36	36	36
McMillan c Gilchrist b B. Lee	9	9	9	9
Harris c Gilchrist b S. Lee	0	0	0	0
Parore b S. Lee	1	1	1	1
Syris c M. Waugh b Warne	22	22	22	22
Vettori c Symonds b McGrath	1	1	1	1
Wiseman not out	14	14	14	14
Extras (lb-6, w-6, nb-2)	122	122	122	122
Total (All out in 30.1 overs)	122	122	122	122
Fall of wickets: 0-1: 0-2: 30-3: 31-4: 52-5: 81-6: 81-7: 84-8: 119-9: 122-10.				

Bowler	O	M	P	W
McGrath	8.1	2	33	3
B. Lee	7	1	21	3
Warne	10	0	35	2
S. Lee	5	1	27	2



Australian fast bowler Brett Lee jumps for joy after dismissing Nathan Astle during the second one-day international in Auckland yesterday. —AFP photo

won us the game," he said.

"Our opening bowlers have again done a great job. They've taken early wickets in the last six or seven games and we're playing good all-round cricket."

New Zealand captain Fleming had no excuses but said there was a long time to go in the series.

"We copped a lot of pressure and didn't handle it very well," Fleming said.

"It was a game out of the summer though and we can't get too hung up."

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the limited-overs cricket match between New Zealand and Australia at Eden Park on Saturday:

M. Waugh c Parore b Cairns	2	2	2	2
Gilchrist c Twose b Vettori	10	10	10	10
Symonds c Syris b Vettori	33	33	33	33
Hayden c Vettori b Wiseman	50	50	50	50
Bevan c Cairns b Wiseman	8	8	8	8
S. Waugh not out	4	4	4	4
Martyn not out	8	8	8	8
Extras (lb-1, w-3, nb-4)	8	8	8	8
Total (For five wickets in 24.4 overs)	123	123	123	123
Fall of wickets: 1-13: 2-17: 3-62: 4-98: 5-112.				

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Cairns	5	0	37	1
Vettori	10	1	39	0
Syris	4	0	21	0
Wiseman	5	0	21	2
McMillan	0.4	0	4	0

Result: Australia won by five wickets, lead series 1-0.

Man-of-the-match: Brett Lee

Warne clears the air



WELLINGTON, Feb 19: Australian cricket star Shane Warne, caught smoking on camera by a boy at Thursday's one-day international against New Zealand in Wellington, has denied yelling abuse at the boy, reports AFP.

Wellington police confirmed they had to intervene in an incident at the smoke-free WestpacTrust Stadium between Warne — who was paid a hefty sum to quit smoking last year — and two boys.

Steve Nightingale, of Upper Hutt near Wellington, said a friend of his 15-year-old son Shannon, Daniel Bassett, took photographs of a group of Australian players including vice-captain Warne playing cards after the match was abandoned because of rain.

Nightingale said Warne wanted to know why Daniel, who gave the camera to a friend, took the photographs and what he planned to do with them.

"Daniel said 'nothing' and Shannon started laughing,"

Nightingale said.

Warne then asked why they were laughing and abused them, the boys told police.

"It was disgraceful behaviour by an international cricketer,"

Nightingale said Warne asked for the camera, and when

the boys refused he told them he would get a security guard to escort them out of the ground.

A guard turned up and Warne grabbed Daniel's bag and put it over his shoulder.

When Nightingale arrived on the scene and asked for the bag to be returned, he said Warne "just stared at me..."

Nightingale then went and contacted police, who took the boys, Nightingale and Warne into a room where officers told the cricketer the boys were free to go and the bag was then returned.

Inspector Greg Gilpin, officer in charge at the game, said Warne was upset and agitated about the photo but willingly gave the bag back after police intervened. No charges were laid.

Warne denied verbally abusing the teenage boys and Australian team manager Steve Bernard also said the leg-spinner had not sworn or grabbed the bag.

Warne was paid 239,000 NZ dollars (120,000 US) last year to quit his 40-day habit and wear anti-smoking patches.

Shoaib cleared to play for Notts

LAHORE, Feb 19 (AFP/Internet): Pakistani pace demon Shoaib Akhtar was on Friday cleared to play for English county side Nottinghamshire from the end of May.

Pakistan officials said they needed Shoaib for the country's three-Test tour of the Caribbean from April 1 to May 26.

But the speedster dubbed the Rawalpindi Express had already been excused from duty in the tour to Sri Lanka in July, officials said.

"We will talk to the administration at Nottinghamshire and tell them we need Shoaib for the West Indies tour but he may escape the Sri Lanka tour in July," PCB ad hoc committee chairman General Tauqir Zia told AFP.

"The tour to the West Indies is very important so we need to have the best bowling attack there," Zia said.

Pakistan have never beaten the West Indies in the Caribbean.

Shoaib was recruited by Nottinghamshire after sparkling at last year's World Cup in England.

The acquisition of the 24-year-old has sparked a wave of excitement at Notts, helping to boost membership.

Shoaib was banned by the International Cricket Council (ICC) for having an illegal bowling action in December but was subsequently allowed to play again after an ICC ruling.

Shoaib is fired up for playing in England.

"Playing for the same country as two great bowlers like Sir Richard Hadlee and Clive Rice did will be a great privilege," Akhtar said earlier.

Tyson's next bout in Milan April 8

MILAN, Feb 19: Mike Tyson's second European fight is most likely to be held in Milan on April 8, Italian organisers said Friday, reports AP.

"Negotiations are in an advanced stage... We are confident about settling the last few details early next week," said Andrea Locatelli, an official of the Milan-based Media Partners group which is trying to organize the boxing meet in Italy.

The fight would be held at Assago Forum, which can house 12,000 fans. Lou Savarese appears to be the leading candidate as Tyson's opponent, Locatelli said.

Tyson, the former undisputed heavyweight champion, fought his first European bout in Manchester on Jan 29, scoring a second-round knockout victory against British champion Julius Francis.

Tyson has said he wants to do three more fights before challenging Lennox Lewis of Britain for the undisputed championship.

Better late than never for Gardener

MADRID, Feb 19: Britain's Jason Gardener was given a share of the European 50 metres record on Friday, two days after he ran the race, reports Reuters.

Gardener clocked 5.61 seconds at an indoor meeting in Madrid on Wednesday, equalling the European record of East Germany's Manfred Kokot set back in 1973.

The distance is not a championship event but is still contested quite regularly.

Gardener was running a 60 metres race but sophisticated electronic timing equipment was also set up at the 50 metres mark to capture an official time for the distance.

"There were problems on the night confirming the 50 metres times because Gardener changed lanes just before the start," a Spanish federation spokesman told Reuters.

The 60 metres was the last event on the night's programme and meeting officials were in a hurry to clear the arena.

"It was only when we got the photo-finish back in the Spanish federation office and examined it very closely that we saw that Gardener had run 5.61, equalling the record," the spokesman said.

Only two men — Canada's Donovan Bailey and American Maurice Greene — have ever run faster than Gardener over 50 metres.

The North American pair are joint holders of the world record at 5.56 seconds.

Gardener, clear favourite for the 60 metres title at the European indoor championships in Belgium next weekend, went to Madrid intending to break his own European 60 metres record of 6.46 seconds but on the night he was 0.02 seconds adrift.

Cuba's Freddy Mayola set a Caribbean and Central American 50 metres record after being given the same official time as Gardener.

However, Mayola was adjudged to have been behind the Briton by a few thousandths of a seconds at 50 metres and crossed the line after 60 metres in 6.49 seconds.

Statistics will breathe a sigh of relief that a European has finally run as fast as Kokot. There has been widespread scepticism about the accuracy of the mark, set in a preliminary round at a meeting on home territory in the former East Berlin.

The mark stood as a world record for 23 years until Bailey ran his time of 5.56 seconds in 1996, a few months before he went on to capture the 100 metres gold medal at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

Greene equalled Bailey's time last winter, a prelude to his exploits the previous summer which included an outdoor 100 metres world record and the 100 and 200 metres World Championship titles.

SA hit batting form



BOMBAY, Feb 19 (AFP/Internet): Openers Gary Kirsten and Herschelle Gibbs struck early form as South Africa unveiled their batting might on the opening day of their Indian tour on Saturday.

The tourists recovered from a mid-order collapse to score 293 for six after electing to bat against the Indian Cricket Board President's XI at the Brabourne stadium here.

Left-hander Kirsten made 56 and Gibbs 53 during a first-wicket stand of 104, which was built on 50 runs from star all-rounder Jacques Kallis.

The South Africans, 212 for two at one stage, lost four wickets in the space of 27 runs after tea to slip to 239 for six.

Skipper Hansie Cronje and

The second Test will be played in Bangalore from March 2, followed by five one-day internationals.

With the Indian squad for the first Test to be named on Sunday, the spotlight will be on the discarded trio of Mohammad Azharuddin, Ajay Jadeja and wicketkeeper Nayan Mongia when they bat for the President's XI on the second day.

The selectors have already had a good look at two young slow bowlers, Murali Karthik and Harbhajan Singh, who are strong contenders for the second spinner's spot in the Tests behind Anil Kumble.

Both bowlers claimed two wickets on Saturday, left-arm Karthik accounting for Kirsten and Lance Klusener (0) and off-spinner Harbhajan dismissing Gibbs and Pieter Strydom (14).

Klusener b Karthik 0  
Extras: (lb-4, lb-1, nb-6) 11  
Total: (For six wickets) 239  
Fall of wickets: 1-104; 2-125; 3-212; 4-217; 5-234; 6-239

To bat: M Hayward, C Eksteen, A Donald

Bowler (to date) O M R W

Mohanty	13	4	45	1
Kumar	13	5	28	0
Karthik	29	2	95	2
Bhandari	11	2	29	0
Harbhajan	24	1	88	2
Jadeja	1	0	3	0

England need to improve

BULAWAYO, Zimbabwe, Feb 19: Man-of-the-match Craig White said England must improve on their scrappy performance against Zimbabwe on Friday if they are to compete with the best, reports Reuters.

White took five wickets and scored 26 at a crucial time as England gained a 2-0 lead in the four-match one-day series.

"The less said about that the better," said White of the one-wicket win. "As Nasser (Hussain, the England captain) said, we can't afford to come so close to throwing away winning positions like that."

White was part of a near-catastrophic collapse by England who lost four wickets for five runs after reaching 120 for five chasing a target of 132 to win.

The all-rounder sparked the slide when he aggressively hit Gary Brent straight to point.

"I hold my hand up on that one -- it probably wasn't there to be hit," said White.

Despite making life so difficult for themselves, White agreed that the players were extremely happy to be leaving Bulawayo with two wins out of two.

After such a close finish which demanded a great deal mentally from the players, the Yorkshire all-rounder, a relative newcomer to the marathon four-month tour, recognised that the lengthy stretch away from home was beginning to take its toll.

"The boys are tired -- no one doubts or questions that," White said. "We've been here a long time but that's no excuse. When you've got an England shirt on you shouldn't need anything else to motivate you. We're all professionals and we know what's required."

"I've got a lot of respect for the Zimbabwe boys -- if you take them lightly, they'll beat you," conceded White. "When they do well they can put pressure on anyone, which is a credit to them and to their system. People are inviting them all over the world because they know Zimbabwe can compete now."

The teams travel to Harare on Saturday for one-day internationals on Sunday and Wednesday.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the first day of the three-day cricket match between India Board President's XI and South Africa on Saturday:

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings

Kirsten c Azhar b Karthik	56
Herschelle Gibbs c Kallal b Harbhajan	53
Kallis c Mongia b Mohanty	50
Cullinan run out	43
Cronje not out	33
Strydom c and b Harbhajan	14
Boucher not out	33

wicketkeeper Mark Boucher, however, prevented a further damage with an unfinished stand of 54 for the seventh wicket.

Both batsmen were unbeaten on 33 as the tourists looked ahead to an early declaration on Sunday to give their bowlers time to find form on the slow Indian wickets.

The practice match is South Africa's only game before the first of the two Tests against India starts at the Wankhede stadium here on February 24.

Zulu aims at Azhar



BOMBAY, Feb 19 (Internet report): Mohammed Azharuddin emboldened both Lance Klusener's biggest embarrassment and his greatest inspiration on a cricket field.

Lance will first have to get a possible duel with Azhar out of the way on Saturday before he can start looking forward to meeting with his most ardent supporter in Sharjah.

Klusener's fiancée, Isabelle, will be in waiting for him in Sharjah when the South African side arrives there on March 21. She will be spending ten days with him while the team competes with Pakistan and India in a triangular one-day series.

Zulu and his most devoted fan will be tying the knot in Durban on May 31.

For the moment Klusener will be concentrating his thoughts on the first Test against India that starts next Thursday, and especially on meeting his old enemy, Azharuddin, again.