

Walcott plays down Cronje affair

BRIDGETOWN, Apr 15: Sir Clyde Walcott, chairman of the International Cricket Council's cricket committee, says match-fixing allegations against South African players are very serious but does not believe the sport has a growing problem, reports AFP.

The former chairman of the ICC said he does not think there is reason for alarm despite an apparent increase in such cases.

"I don't know about an increase in the number of cases - because this is only the third case in three years," Sir Clyde told the Barbados Advocate newspaper.

"If people however, are fixing matches to get money, this could develop into a major problem for international cricket."

Sir Clyde said the ICC has instituted measures to counteract any rise in match-fixing and he believes the people entrusted with the powers to deal with such cases are very capable.

"The ICC is certainly prepared to deal with these cases and has set up a high-powered committee to deal with these issues," the former Barbados and West Indies wicket-keeper/batsman said.

"But one has to be very cautious since these are legal matters and the countries that contract the players deal with the allegations first."

Sir Clyde said that if the ICC was not satisfied with a country's investigations then it could launch an independent enquiry.

"The ICC has to deal with these issues because match-fixing is something that can harm the image of the game which is looked upon worldwide as a game of fair play," he said.

Howzzat!

LONDON, Apr 15: An unexpected revelation by a modest spin bowler has upset the authors of Wisden Cricketer's Almanac, the bible of the sport, which normally features little more than dry statistics, reports AFP.

On page 657 of this year's Wisden is a picture of the Leicestershire county team, all smiling dutifully for the camera in their whites.

Except that in the middle row, four from the left, is 29-year-old spinner Matthew Brimston apparently exposing himself, mischievous grin and all.

Wisden editor Matthew Engel was not happy. He described Brimston's prank as 'an insult to spectators'.

He also dished out some withering personal criticism.

"I think if you're going to pull this kind of stunt, you need to be a more competent professional sportsman than Matthew Brimston," he said.

"And, frankly, more impressively arrayed. Even when we increased the size of the picture, we couldn't be certain that we had seen what we thought we had seen."

Brimston, played just 13 times for the county last season and took only 22 wickets.

Leicestershire issued an apology on Brimston's behalf saying it was not in his character "to do anything that would cause offence."

Independence Day golf ends

The Independence Day golf tournament concluded at Savar Golf club yesterday, reports BSS.

Mrs Elani Zulkifly, wife of the Malaysian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, became champion in the ladies' group, while Masuk Jinnah became champion in the men's group.

Besides, Air Commodore Fakhru Azam, Major General Hassan Masud Chowdhury and Brigadier A Mannan became the first, second and third runner-up respectively.

AKM Belal Uddin was awarded the Nearest to Pin prize and Eshar Zulkifly got the award in the Longest Drive.

Chief of Army Lt General Muhammad Mustafizur Rahman took part in the tournament and later distributed prizes.

ECB chief for ICC summit

LONDON, Apr 15: Lord MacLaurin, chairman of the England and Wales Cricket Board, on Thursday called for an urgent meeting between the leading Test-playing countries to discuss the match-fixing controversy in South Africa, reports AFP.

MacLaurin revealed he has already sent a fax to the International Cricket Council suggesting such a conference.

Speaking at the England-player-of-the-year lunch in London, MacLaurin said he believes all the leading nations should meet up and determine whether their stance on the subject is the same.

He also called for any player found guilty of breaching the code of conduct to be banned for life.

MacLaurin said: "I have sent a fax to the ICC today and I said we could not afford this game of ours to fall into this sort of crisis."

"We should have a meeting of all the members of the ICC to make sure we are all singing from the same hymn sheet - I want to make sure we all understand how each other is thinking."

Bodyline blow for SA



NOTTINGHAM, England, Apr 15: Former South African captain Clive Rice said on Thursday that he believed cricket in South Africa would be tainted by the Hansie Cronje scandal for years to come - just as the infamous 1932-33 Bodyline series between England and Australia had affected the sport for decades, reports AFP.

The 30-year-old, who led South Africa to 99 wins against only 35 defeats in 138 matches, with one match tied and three others abandoned without a result, had been South Africa's most successful Test captain, with 27 wins and only 11 defeats from 53 matches.

Rice, who spent most of his international career in the wilderness because of apartheid, said that it was imperative that the South Africans sorted out what had exactly happened so that they could try and rebuild the image of the sport.

"This will go on for years - remember they're still talking about the Bodyline series - so it will carry on like that for years," Rice said.

"The sooner they get to the heart of it, they can get rid of it and then they can go forward," he added.

Rice admitted he felt a great deal of sympathy for Cronje, but was also critical of how he had been tempted into the seedier side of cricket.

"It's just really disappointing that Hansie, who is basically a really nice guy, will be remembered for this and what he has got involved in," he said.

"I'm sorry for him that this is how he's going to be remembered, but he's been very silly in terms of what he's been playing with here," he added.

But Rice was quick to point out that even though South African cricket was currently under a cloud, it would not be long before the sporting pride of the Proteas would see them

Sebastian in last four

CASABLANCA, Morocco, Apr 15: Sebastian Grosjean routed two-time French Open champion Sergi Bruguera 6-0, 6-0 on Friday, to reach the semifinals of the 350,000 dollar Grand Prix Hassan II tournament, reports AFP.

The 21-year-old Frenchman, seeded fourth, meets Argentine Mariano Puerta, the number seven seed, in Saturday's semifinals.

Puerta downed No 1 seed and local favourite Youssef El Aynaoui in two close sets 7-6 (8-6), 6-4.

Another French player, the No 8 seed Arnaud Di Pasquale, also made it to the last four with a 6-2, 6-3 victory against Swedish teenager Anders Vinigiera.

World Cup hero Lance Klusener, the latest figure to be linked to Cronje's alleged wrongdoings, meanwhile, strongly denied reports that he had informed Indian police

about his teammate's activities.

Klusener was reportedly seen to have had a bust-up with Cronje in a hotel foyer in India and is alleged to have then "shopped" his captain to the Indian authorities.

"Absolute rubbish," was Klusener's emphatic denial.

"It's crazy talk. I was never involved in any argument or dispute with Hansie in any hotel foyer."

The inquiry would be completed by the end of May and its report submitted to the ICC, Cronje had indicated he would co-operate fully with the probe.

Cronje, speaking from the offices of his lawyer, Leslie Sackstein, congratulated his erstwhile teammates for their "magnificent victory" over Australia at Durban on Wednesday.

"The only light that I have seen in these last few dark days has been the magnificent victory of (new captain) Shaun Pollock and his team against Australia last night," he said.

Cronje said speculation and criticism against other members of the South African team was wrong and unjustified.

"I know of no member of any side that I have led who has done anything reprehensible or wrong," a composed Cronje said.

Cronje said he found himself in an "awful predicament" brought about by his own foolishness and naivety.

Bacher told the Cape Town press conference, meanwhile, that Cronje's lawyers had handed over the 8,200 dollars in cash he had received to South Africa's Central Reserve Bank.

England arrived in Karachi on October 16 and will play one-dayers at Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar, while Lahore and Karachi will also play host to Tests.

Faisalabad was the site of an ugly incident during England's last tour of Pakistan in 1987-88, when then England captain Mike Gatting was involved in a finger-wagging on-field confrontation with umpire Shakoor Rana.

A full day's play was lost when Rana refused to start play until he received an apology from Gatting.

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Lequay runs for WICB office
PORT-OF-SPAIN, Apr 15: Alroy Lequay, the president of the Trinidad and Tobago Cricket Board, is to challenge incumbent Pat Rousseau for the post of president of the West Indies Cricket Board, reports AFP.

The decision of the 75-year-old Lequay to run for the position at the WICB's next annual general meeting in Georgetown from May 12 to 14 comes nearly two years after he stepped down as one of the twin-island republic's two representative on the body.

At the time, Lequay indicated he was stepping aside to focus on the construction of a national cricket centre for which land had been acquired in Central Trinidad.

"I am not happy with the direction of the organization," he told the Trinidad and Tobago media during the opening ceremony for the West Indies Under-15 championship here.

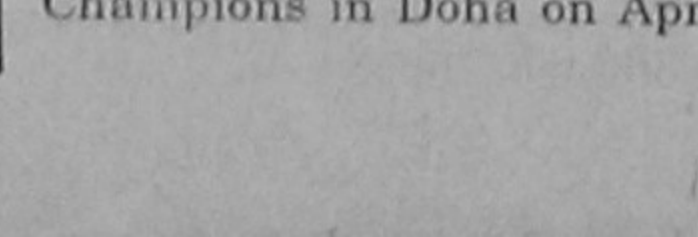
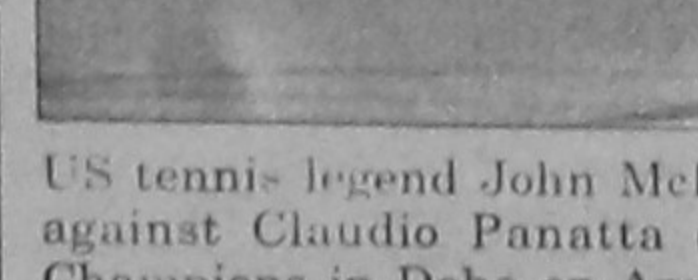
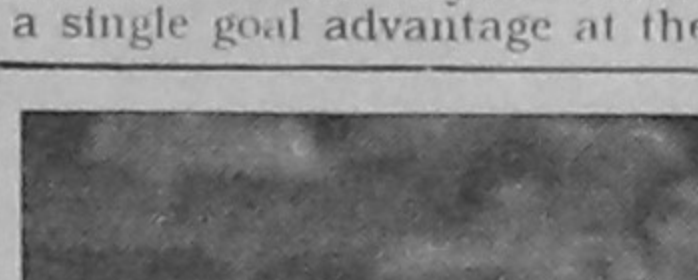
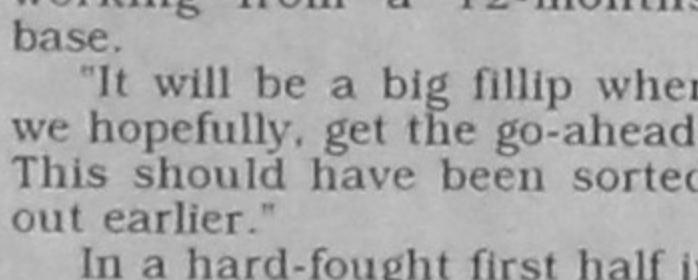
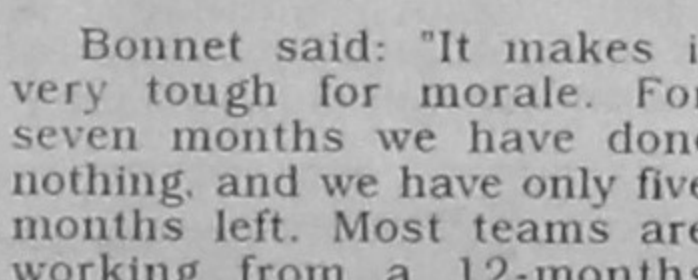
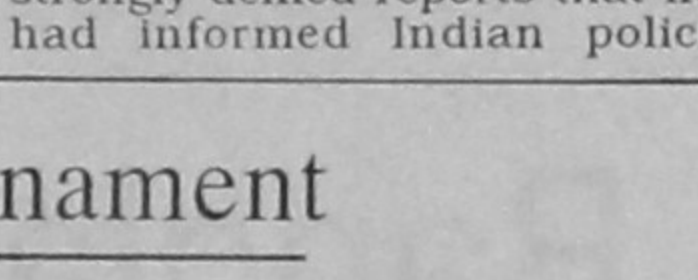
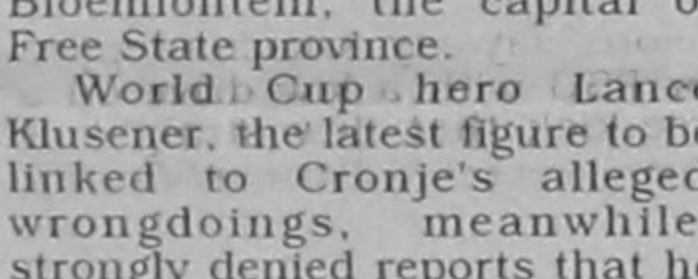
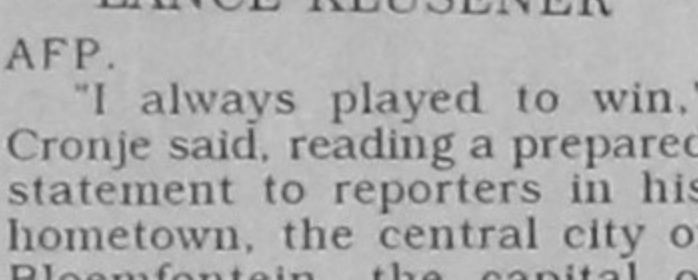
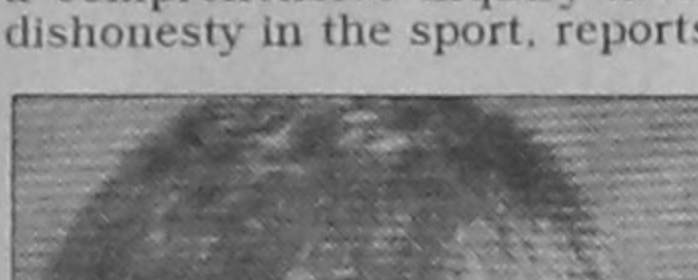
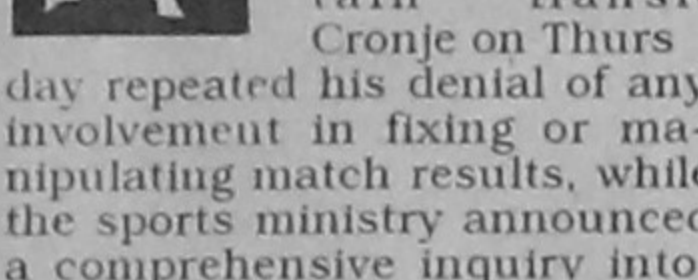
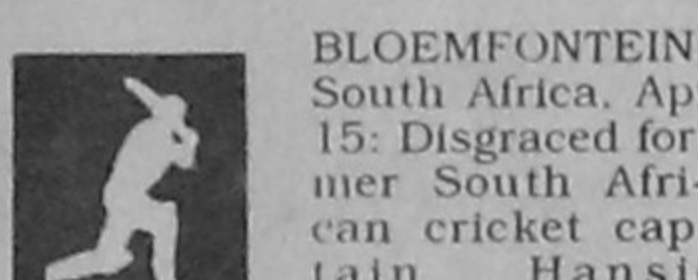
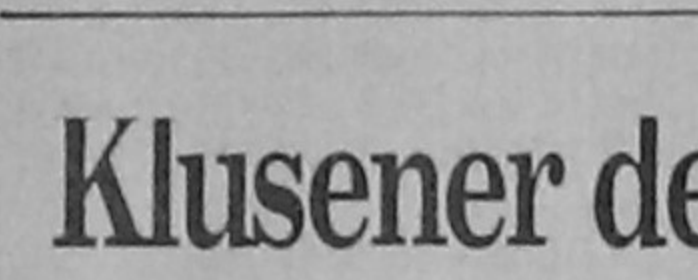
US tennis legend John McEnroe makes a backhand return against Claudio Panatta of Italy in the Senior Tour of Champions in Doha on April 14. McEnroe won 6-2, 6-2.

—AFP photo

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CLIVE RICE



bounce back.
"I think that it will just be a blip. There's too much pride and too much integrity. South Africa has always played their sport to win and on that basis I think they'll get back to that very fast," he said.

While doubts seem to have been cast of the international future of Cronje, Rice hopes the former skipper will be given a chance to atone for his mistakes by returning to play international cricket - although he conceded that he would never captain the side again.

"I would think Hansie's experience of what he has been through for the past week means that he would never ever want to do that again," Rice said.

"He wants to repair the damage and if it meant giving him the opportunity to repair the damage then you've got to give him a break - you can't keep kicking him in the teeth. But he's probably forfeited the opportunity to ever captain South Africa again."

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Gulshan Kumar's brother nabbed

NEW DELHI, Apr 15: An Indian film star has been arrested for illegal money transfers and suspected links with bookmakers in the alleged match-fixing scandal involving former South African cricket captain Hansie Cronje, Press Trust of India news agency said Saturday, reports AP.

Magistrate Swaran Kanta Mehra visited Kishan Kumar on Saturday in a local hospital where he is being treated for hypertension and chest pain. She put him in judicial custody even while in hospital.

Kumar, who was hospitalised the day the scandal surfaced last week, was arrested on Friday night, PTI said. He is the second accused to be arrested in the case.

The Enforcement Directorate officials are expected to interrogate him in hospital for unauthorised money transfers outside India. Details were not available.

Kumar is the younger brother of Gulshan Kumar, a wealthy Indian film music magnate, who was murdered in 1997 and the killing was allegedly organised by a music composer who felt Kumar was trying to end his career.

Police arrested Rajesh Kalra, a New Delhi bookie who gave police names of several others involved in betting, last week in New Delhi.

Police also are looking for another bookie, London-based Sanjay Chawla, who reportedly telephoned Cronje during his stay in India. But Chawla has been reported missing.

Based on taped phone conversations, New Delhi police charged Cronje, and South African teammates Herschelle Gibbs, Nicky Boje and Pieter Strydom with fraud, conspiracy and deceiving and defrauding spectators.

The charges stemmed from South Africa's 2-3 defeat by India in a five-match series last month.

Cronje has denied the match-fixing charge. He says he accepted up to 15,000 dollars only for giving forecasts, about matches.

Meanwhile, investigators who travelled to the five Indian cities where South Africa had played cricket matches last month were expected to return to New Delhi on Saturday.

Police stumbled upon the scandal while tapping the phones of suspected extortionists following complaints by some rich businessmen.

England coming to Pakistan Oct 16

KARACHI, Apr 15: England will play three Tests on a 57-day trip to Pakistan later this year, including one in Faisalabad, the site of a controversial incident during their last tour 13 years ago, officials said on Saturday, reports Reuters.

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Vice-Chancellor of Rajshahi University Prof. Sayedur Rahman Khan (4th from L) handing over the winner's prize of the Tapashi Rabeya Hall Sports Competition to the winning captain recently.

—Star photo

New Windies impresses Bishop

PORT-OF-SPAIN, Apr 15: Former West Indies pace-man Ian Bishop has commended the Jimmy Adams-led West Indies for the way they played during the last month of international cricket in the Caribbean, reports AFP.

Bishop, who captured 161 wickets in 43 Tests, indicated there were encouraging signs during the two Tests against Zimbabwe and the three matches in the limited-overs series, including Wednesday's 96-run triumph over Pakistan in Kingstown, St. Vincent.

"Many people were not convinced by the victories over Zimbabwe in the Tests and the limited-overs matches, but it is not about that really," Bishop told AFP.

"The essence of it is building on what they did against Zimbabwe because this is a Pakistan side with a better bowling attack and better batsmen."

"It's a side more competent at international level and West Indies lifted their game to a level that was enough to surpass them," he added.

Bishop, who acts as a summeriser for radio, felt the new spirit