

Mahanama, Mendis' denial

COLOMBO, May 3: Former Sri Lankan cricketers Roshan Mahanama and Duleep Mendis have denied allegations that some of their country's players were approached by Indian bookies in the past to fix matches and called for inquiry into the charges, reports PTI.

Reacting to a report in the Sunday Times of London that he along and fellow players Sanath Jayasuriya and Ashanka Gurusinha were offered money by Indian bookies for match forecasts during Australia's tour to the island in 1992, Mahanama, who retired in huff last year, said the incident had not taken place at all.

"I am totally surprised to hear that someone offered us money to do this. It is news to me and it does not really look good. I think there should be an inquiry into the matter," he was quoted as saying in Daily Mirror here on Tuesday.

He also denied the report that the three had sought police protection following rejection of the bookies' offer.

"There was no reason for us to make any official complaint and we did not seek any police protection during the series referred to," he said.

The report was also denied by Duleep Mendis who was the team coach at that time. "As far as I know none of the players had anything to do with the bookies. I will welcome any inquiry," he said.

Former Sri Lankan board president Thilanga Sumathipala, whose restaurant here has been mentioned in the report as place at which the bookies approached the players, also dismissed the report as irrelevant.

"This has no relevance and during my tenure in the board, players had never been involved with the bookies," he said.

However, board chief executive Dhammika Ranatunga, brother of former captain Arjuna Ranatunga, has ruled out any inquiry saying that there was not enough evidence to prompt an inquiry.

"There is a lot of loose talk these days, we have to be careful in what we do. But if there is enough substance we can look into the matter," he said.

NatWest Trophy Early exits for Scots, Irish

LONDON, May 3: International rivals Scotland and Ireland suffered a double dose of NatWest Trophy misery on Tuesday after being dumped out of the first round by Minor Counties opponents, reports AFP.

Scotland, fielding nine players who recently took part in the Emerging Nations Tournament in Zimbabwe, were quickly on the rack against Wiltshire at the South Wilts ground in Salisbury after stand-in skipper Jamie Glasdon won the toss and inserted last season's World Cup qualifiers.

Seamer Kevin Nash -- three for 10 -- had them in deep trouble at 32 for four -- one of his victims being highly-rated Australian overseas player Dene Hills for one -- and there was to be no recovery.

Spinner Richard Bates helped himself to three for 16 as Scotland were routed for just 93, the lowest total on first-round day.

Wiltshire themselves lost their first three wickets for only 18 runs but Dwan Winter (37) and Jimmy Taylor (36) steered them to victory.

Parton, a 33-year-old left handed opening batsman making a comeback after three years away in Scotland, carried his bat for an unbeaten 51 off 49 overs to help Shropshire pass Ireland's modest 140 all out.

Ireland, now coached by Ken Rutherford, the former New Zealand captain and recent winners over Scotland for the first time since 1993, were soon on the back foot after Shropshire won the toss and elected to field.

Adam Shillmons took three for 30 and slow left-arm Adam Byram weighed in with four for 24, and only a defiant 56 from their captain Angus Dunlop kept Ireland ticking over.

Shropshire then possessed the perfect anchor in Parton and he refused to give up his wicket to see Shropshire to victory with six balls to spare.

Elsewhere in the first round the closest finish came at Chester Boughton Hall, the venue where Cheshire famously defeated Northamptonshire-off the penultimate ball in 1988.

This time it was Cheshire who just lost out in a thrilling finish to Lincolnshire on more wickets lost when the scores finished tied.

Cheshire were bowled out for 204 and Lincolnshire matched that total on 204 for nine when Nick Armstrong lifted the third delivery of the final over from Australian import Geoff Foley for a crucial six.

APOLOGY

In yesterday's report 'Pakistan win comfortably', at the end of the scoreboard we mentioned the result as match drawn. In fact, that wasn't a drawn affair as the story said. Besides, in Pakistan's bowling analysis, Mushtaq was Saqlain and Ahmed was Mushtaq.

—Sports Editor

MacLaurin's own campaign



LONDON, May 3: England and Wales Cricket Board chairman Lord MacLaurin on Tuesday launched an anti-corruption campaign by demanding the world's governing body declare themselves free of any financial interest in the sport, reports AFP.

MacLaurin promised, before the start of the two-day emergency meeting of the International Cricket Council (ICC) at Lord's that any investigation should start "from the President down".

He signalled that intent at the start of Tuesday's meeting by insisting all 18 members of the executive board sign a declaration indicating they have no financial interest in cricket and agree to open their accounts for inspection.

It gives the ICC the authority to probe the business or private financial records of any member and should begin the long process of restoring the reputation of the governing body following the damaging blows to its integrity during the aftermath to the Hansie Cronje scandal.

The declaration also gives the ICC a mandate to begin their inspection of other levels of the game knowing their own credentials are very much open to scrutiny.

"It is necessary that we (the ICC) should demonstrate to the cricketing world that we come to these problems without any undeclared personal financial interests in the game, which

may be, or may seem to be, an obstacle to our doing what is necessary in the widest interest of world cricket," wrote MacLaurin.

He asked the ICC to sign undertakings "that they have no financial interest, direct or indirect, in the game of cricket," other than that which is "in the public domain."



LORD MACLAURIN

MacLaurin insists those declarations -- and the willingness of the delegates to open their accounts for inspection -- is crucial to hopes of restoring the public's confidence after weeks of allegations and innuendo.

"I strongly believe that the high ground which we occupy in relation to our governance of the game demands that we are, and are seen to be, as transparently open as possible at this

time when the cry of corruption in the game is becoming ever louder," he said.

"Only by taking such a lead can we expect to foster public confidence in the steps we shall propose and, were any director or delegate to decline to give the assurances which should now be sought, in turn, he must forfeit the confidence of the ICC and this executive board."

Chief executive David Richards claimed every delegate agreed to MacLaurin's request "without hesitation" to make it "absolutely clear from day one that the people in charge of the governing body of world cricket are themselves clear."

ICC's open stance has also been welcomed by the Federation of International Cricketers' Association, a newly-founded body which represents members from all nine Test-playing nations, who have put their observations in writing to Richards.

"It's crucial that the most thorough investigation is undertaken to include every level of the professional game reflecting both the players participating in games, but also those individuals involved in the staging of international matches," said chief executive David Graveney.

"It's critical to the future well being of the game that corruption is identified and removed as soon as possible. To this end, it's important that cricket Boards make available any information at the earliest opportunity to the investigating body."

Test series starts tomorrow

An intriguing prospect



GEORGETOWN, May 3 (AFP): In Test cricket, many people would consider India to be the most formidable opponents when they are playing on home soil.

West Indies too, could make a similar claim. Five years ago, Mark Taylor's Australians became the only touring side to have prevailed over the Caribbean cricketers in the last quarter of a century.

In that period, they have played 92 Tests, won 47, lost 13 and drawn 32. Such a remarkable record coupled with West Indies' present vulnerability makes their imminent three-Test series against Pakistan very appealing.

On four previous visits to the Caribbean, Pakistan have failed to win a Test series.

After taking the preceding tri-nation Cable and Wireless 2000 Trophy limited-overs series and blessed with an abundance of talent, the Pakistanis must feel this is their time.

The key to the series for both sides lies in the batting. Both West Indies and Pakistan are packed with enough firepower in their bowling attacks, so batsmen on either side will have to show an enormous amount of tenacity to help give their respective side the upper hand.

Many sides in international cricket would give anything for as varied an attack as Pakistan's that comprises Wasim Akram, Shoaib Akhtar, Abdur Razaq, Mushtaq Ahmed and Saqlain Mushtaq with Waqar Younis in reserve.

Quite a few too, would be glad to have a four-pronged fast bowling armory consisting of the ageing warriors Curtly Ambrose and Courtney Walsh, albeit they are in the twilight days of glittering careers, supported by young bucks Reon King and Franklin Rose.

On the other hand, just as many international sides may shy away from the batting line-ups of the two combatants.

While West Indies lack obvious world class batsmen, Pakistan have the most unpredictable queue.

Brian Lara's self-imposed exile has thrown the burden of carrying West Indies' batting onto the shoulders of new captain Jimmy Adams, vice-captain Sherwin Campbell, left-hander Shivnarine Chander-

paul and, to a lesser extent, wicketkeeper-batsman Ridley Jacobs.

All four have struggled to put together substantial scores consistently in recent times. It does not help that the support batting of Adrian Griffith, Chris Gayle, Wavell Hinds, Ricardo Powell and uncapped Ramnaresh Sarwan only have the combined experience of 12 Tests and 563 runs at an average of 28.15.

Over the last two months during two Tests against Zimbabwe and the subsequent tri-nation limited-overs series that also involved Pakistan, what West Indies have lacked in ability they have compensated for with enthusiasm.

Adams has been able to get his side to give 100 per cent every time and in every situation. Throughout, he has been realistic rather than philosophical. He has noted that giving their all may not be enough and a time will come when they will have to improve in every area of the game to win.

He found that out in the last of the three-match finals in the 2000 Trophy Series, when West Indies were bundled out for a mediocre 114 and, though they fought hard in the field, the runs were just too small for their bowlers to defend.

Adams is also intelligent enough to know that the come-

backs with which West Indies were able to get away against lesser lights Zimbabwe will not be allowed by a Pakistan side eager to atone for its own lapses against Australia and Sri Lanka in the last six months.

Similar to West Indies, Pakistan's batting will revolve around a few key players -- captain Moin Khan, opening batsman Saad Anwar and Inzamam-ul-Haq, though Wasim Akram is capable of a cavalier lower-order knock.

Saeed's experience was badly missed at the top of the order during the 2000 Trophy Series. He is arguably the best opening batsman in the game today which is testimony to his 3,583 runs at an average of 46.53.

With him to shepherd either teenager Imran Nazir, Wajidullah Wasti or Shahid Afridi, "the kind" of opening stands Pakistan missed in the preceding limited-overs matches they could very well get in the Tests.

That would take an enormous amount of pressure away from the imposing figure of Inzamam.

Easily the best of Pakistan's current crop of batsmen, he was batted superbly in the limited-overs series and it was always felt if he was dismissed cheaply, the opposition would win.

Others like Younis Khan, Yousuf Youhana and Mohammad Wasim, all of whom have shown glimpses of ability in their brief international careers, will have to deliver much more than promise for Pakistan to post formidable totals and threaten West Indies' record on home soil.

Three years ago, Wasim Akram's men battered Walsh's hopeless band 3-0 on the subcontinent, but the conditions are different and so too, is the West Indies' attitude.

Army b'ball

The annual basketball championship of the Bangladesh Army concluded at the Mirpur Cantonment yesterday, says a press release.

Hosts, Air Defence Artillery won the title defeating the Chittagong Area by 85-82 points.

The winners led the first half by 48-45 points.

Nk Muhammad Abdul Alim of the Chittagong Area was adjudged the best-player-of-the-ten-day-meet.

Anwar blow for Pakistan

GEORGETOWN, Guyana, May 3: Pakistan will be without experienced opener Saeed Anwar when they meet West Indies in the first Test starting at the Bourda Oval on Friday, reports Reuters.

Team manager Khawaja Nazir said Anwar was still in some discomfort following knee surgery in England.

It is still not clear whether he will be fit for the second and third Tests of the three-match series.

Pace bowler Shoaib Akhtar enhanced his chances of playing with a rigorous session in the nets on Tuesday.

Nazir had said Akhtar would play in Pakistan's final warm-up game against West Indies under-23 team and his subsequent non-appearance had prompted speculation he was not fully fit after a groin injury.

West Indies batsman Shivnarine Chanderpaul, who missed the recent triangular one-day series also involving Pakistan and Zimbabwe because of fatigue syndrome, has been passed fit to play in the opening Test.

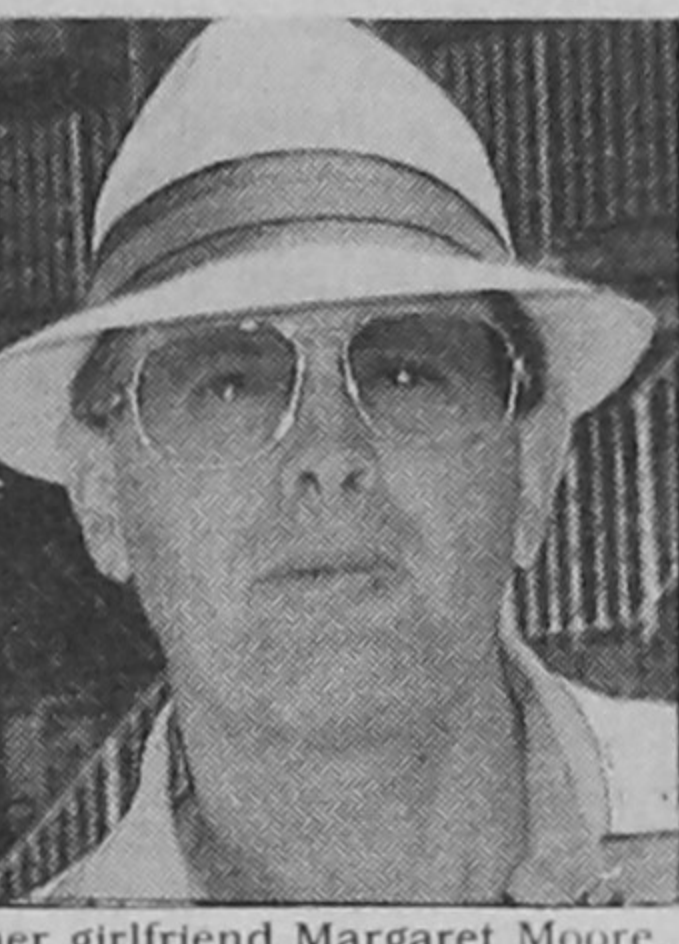
Court bows Boycott

AIX-EN-PROVENCE, France, May 3: A French appeal court on Wednesday confirmed a three-month suspended prison sentence against the former England cricket star Geoffrey Boycott for beating his girlfriend, reports AFP.

The appeal court also confirmed a 50,000-franc (6,950-dollar) fine and the symbolic one franc in damages claimed by Moore.

Earlier in the day, Boycott appeared in the court, appealing against the prison sentence.

Boycott, 59, was found guilty by a lower court in Grasse in November 1998 of beating for-



mer girlfriend Margaret Moore. Moore has said Boycott beat her at a hotel in the exclusive French Riviera resort of Cap d'Antibes on October 2, 1996, claiming the former England batsman beat her up to 20 times following an argument over money.

Boycott, now a millionaire author and broadcaster, has denied beating her and said she fell during an argument.

Moore's lawyer had told the lower court that photographs showed her client had two black eyes and said she could not possibly have fallen onto one eye and then the other.

Moore has said she suffered black eyes and bruising to her nose, cheeks, lips and jaw and her injuries kept her for five days off her work as head of a computer company.

She has said Boycott accused her of poorly negotiating his television contracts after which she said she threw his toiletries out of the window and he hit her.

Rixon again NSW coach

SYDNEY, May 3: Steve Rixon Wednesday was announced as coach of the struggling New South Wales cricket team for the next two years, reports AFP.

Rixon, whose last job was coach of New Zealand, replaced former Blues teammate Steve Small who held the job for the past three summers.

Former Test wicketkeeper Rixon guided NSW to three Sheffield Shield and three one-day titles from 1989-90 and 1994-95.

His first-class match-winning percentage of 42.47 compared favourably with his successors Geoff Lawson (34.78) and Small (18.75) with the Blues finishing bottom of the Shield ladder in the past two seasons.

New South Wales have finished bottom of the Shield table for the past two seasons and Rixon told Australian television on Wednesday he wanted to return a sense of self-belief to the players.

Peng's superb county debut

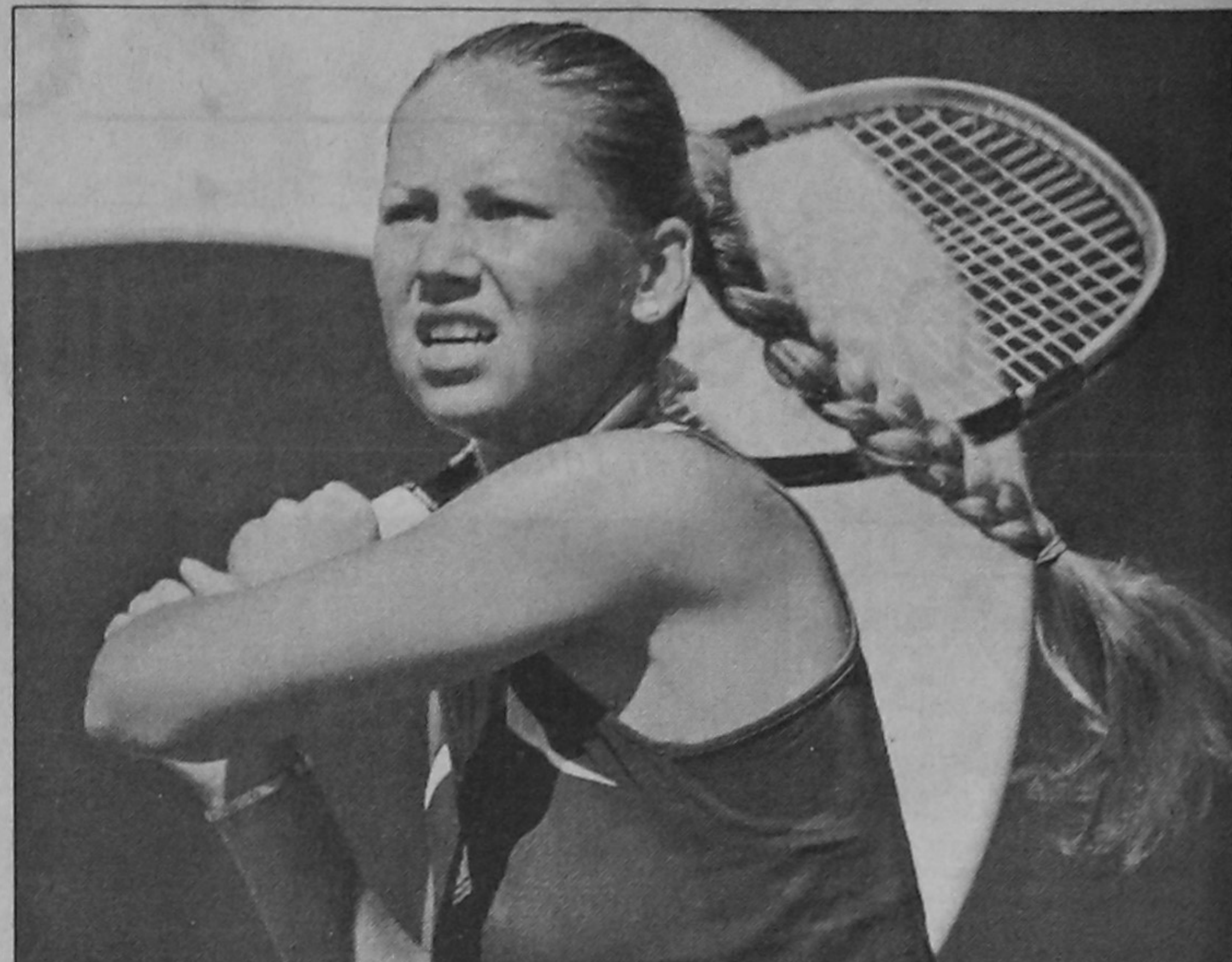
LONDON, May 3: Durham teenager Nicky Peng fell two short of a magnificent century when making his first class debut against county champions Surrey on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Aged 17 years 227 days, Peng built a superb innings before being out on 98, caught off Ben Hollis.

Going in at 48 for four at Chester-le-Street, he was last out with the total on 234, to which the champions replied with 47 for two in 28 overs.

"It was probably one of the worst balls I faced," said Peng. "I just got a bit excited and went for it. I couldn't believe I was out."

Peng, who recently left Newcastle Royal Grammar School, is not on Durham's full-time staff and is playing only because Michael Gough has a back injury.



Russian Anna Kournikova follows through on a return against Anna Smashnova of Israel during their Hamburg Open engagement on May 3. Kournikova won 6-3, 6-2. — AFP photo

Venus back in action

HAMBURG, May 3: Venus Williams will face Irina Spirlea of Romania in her comeback match when the American bids to defend her title at the Betty Barclay Cup this week, reports AFP.

Second seeded Williams, who has not played since losing to Martina Hingis in the semi-finals of the Chase Championships nearly six months ago, came through her latest practise session with no ill-effects.

She has not played since November after suffering from tendinitis in both her wrists, but announced that she now feels strong and anxious to play.

"I feel I'm hitting the ball harder than ever," she said. "Maybe it's because I'm fresh because I haven't been playing. It was difficult to get back into it after such a long break, but now I feel I'm ready."

Spirlea, who has now slipped out of the top 50, advanced with a 6-2, 6-3 victory over Natasha Zvereva of Belarus, and will play Williams on Thursday.

Amanda Coetzer also won, overwhelming Romanian Ruxandra Dragomir 6-0, 6-4.

Ilie sent packing

LAKE BUENA VISTA, May 3: Anthony Dupuis of France ousted top-seeded Andrei Ilie of Austria 3-6, 7-6 (6), 7-6 (4) in a controversially-filled first-round match in the US Men's Clay Court Championships, reports AP.

Ilie, who came into the tournament with a career-best 10-match winning streak, squandered four match points, converted only one of 15 break-point opportunities and lost the match without ever dropping his own serve on Tuesday night.

For Ilie, the turning point was a confrontation with Dupuis early in the second set. Ilie complained throughout about Dupuis' slow play, at one point calling out to the crowd, "I could go to the bathroom and be back before he's ready."

Between games the Frenchman approached Ilie's chair, the Australian stood up, and the two stood nose-to-nose in a heated discussion.

Ilie claimed Dupuis threatened him.

"He told me he was going to kill me after the match. He threatened me three or four times. The umpire was right there and didn't give him a warning. He should have been defaulted right then and there," said Ilie, who admitted that the incident affected his play.

"I was really shaken up by what happened. I'm going to ask for a suspension or a very big fine."

Dupuis denied he threatened to kill Ilie, but said that he was upset by Ilie's taunting. "I said I wanted to take him behind the grandstand and talk to him about it."

The unseeded Dupuis, 27, saved the first match point with a service winner at 5-6 in the second set tiebreaker and then took the next two points to win the set and even the match.

The two then held serve routinely until Ilie earned three more match points on Dupuis serve at 5-6. After Ilie misfired on a backhand on the first match point, the Frenchman saved the next two with a service winner and a disputed forehand winner that was initially called out before the chair umpire overruled the linesman in Dupuis' favor.

Dupuis then secured his upset victory from 4-4 in the tiebreaker by sweeping the final three points of the match.

It was Dupuis' second ATP Tour win of the year against Ilie. 24, has an ATP record of 9-9, but had won his last 10 matches including Challenger title matches and was undefeated this year on clay.

In other matches, third-seeded Gianluca Pozzi of Italy beat Alexander Popp of Germany 6-3, 6-2, fourth-seeded Jason Stoltenberg of Australia defeated Alex Moron-Lopez of Spain 6-1, 6-4 and Belgium's Xavier Malisse of Belgium beat India's Leander Paes 6-3, 6-2.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 The whole enchilada
4 God of love
8 Weaponry
12 Court
13 Albacore, e.g.
14 Spring
15 Major U.S. defense contractor
17 Mysterious character
18 Piano lineup
19 Fought Foreman
20 Lucy's pal
22 Evil agency
24 Bank trans-action
25 Starving
29 It's cold!
30 Yuletide melody
31 Leading lady
32 Pangloss
34 "Mildred Pierce" author

DOWN
1 Pointed tool
2 Old card game
3 "Lassie" star
4 Anti-knock fluid
5 Is contrite
6 Indivisible
7 Blue
8 Not this way!
9 Sauce thickener
10 Outcry of the greedy
11 Coaster
16 Sharp
19 Seethe
20 Exile
21 Rent

22 Actress Black
23 A cross's forte
25 Destiny
26 WWF tactic
27 Satan's specialty
28 Say it ain't so
30 Bivouac
33 Reveal
34 Use the phone
36 Code name?
37 Just one of those things
38 Downey of "Touched by an Angel"
39 Slightly
40 Cherished
42 Dollar coin monogram
43 Toper's comment?
44 Come-dienne
45 Barbie's beau

Solution time: 25 mins.
ACROSS: 1. WHOLE, 2. TOOL, 3. LASSIE, 4. GOD, 5. CONTRITE, 6. INDIVISIBLE, 7. BLUE, 8. NOT THIS WAY!, 9. SAUCE, 10. OUTCRY, 11. COASTER, 12. COURT, 13. ALBACORE, 14. LOVE, 15. MAJOR, 16. SHARP, 17. MYSTERY, 18. PIANO, 19. FOUGHT, 20. LUCY, 21. RENT, 22. ACTRESS, 23. ACROSS, 24. BANK, 25. STARVING, 26. WWF, 27. SATAN, 28. SAY, 29. IT'S, 30. YULETIDE, 31. LEADING, 32. PANGLOSS, 33. REVEAL, 34. USE, 35. PHONE, 36. CODE, 37. JUST, 38. DOWNEY, 39. SLIGHTLY, 40. CHERISHED, 41. TON, 42. DOLLAR, 43. TOPER, 44. COMEDienne, 45. BARBIE.

7. 6-2, 7-6, and Austria's Sylvia Plislike beat Seda Noorlander of the Netherlands 6-4, 4-6, 6-1.

Noorlander failed to qualify but replaced Nathalie Dechy, who withdrew with a stomach muscle injury.

Elena Likhovtseva, who played for Russia in the Fed Cup at the weekend and who was to have been the number eight seed, also withdrew after injuring the Achilles tendon in her left ankle.

After winning the first seven games, Coetzer allowed Dragomir to establish a 3-1 lead in the second set.

But she immediately rallied and used her greater consistency to reach the second round. Coetzer admitted that she almost let her opponent back because she is still uncomfortable with the new format that allows the players a two minute break at the end of a set, regardless of the score.

"I had a bit of a let-down after the first set because it feels to me like we're starting all over again," said Coetzer. "I knew even in the first set that she is dangerous and could come back, but I played two good games to get back to 3-3."

In other matches, Anne-Gaëlle of France ousted Germany's Marlene Weingartner 5-

consecutive breaks of serve 1-1, the first before the seed man aged a 3-1 lead. The result marked the fifth time that Prinosil has played this even without passing the first round.

Haas missed number two Younes El Aynaoui in moving ahead on the Iphitos club clay. The Moroccan, seeded behind Sweden Thomas Enqvist, came through 7-5, 6-4 over Frenchman Arnaud Di Pasquale.

"I'm glad to have won in straight sets," said the African who next faces Richard Fromberg of Australia.

Two seeds fell by the way side. Big-hitting Max Mirnyi of Belarus dispatched fourth-seeded Argentine Mariano Zabaleta 6-7, 6-3, 7-5.

PRAGUE, May 3: A teenage Czech athlete has died after being hit by a hammer in a free accident at a local meeting, club said today.

Zuzana Krejcová was struck in the head and neck by the hammer which broke while being thrown by Czech novice one Vladimir Masko in Turn on Monday. Mirko Graef, an athletic at the Slovak Liberec club, told Reuters.

The 18-year-old middle distance runner was hit as she was about 10 metres outside the throwing zone.

The athlete, who finished fifth in the Czech junior indoor 800 metres championship earlier this year, died of her injuries in hospital on Tuesday.

Graef said standard precautions were taken for throwers the seven kilogram (14.4 pound) hammer.

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