

## Nat'l league Lancs, Leics tie match

MANCHESTER, England, May 8: Defending champions Lancashire Lightning tied with the Leicestershire Foxes in the English National League Division One on Sunday, reports Reuters.

The Foxes' last-wicket pair of Jonathan Dakin and Anil Kumble needed 11 runs off the final over for victory of Old Trafford.

But, as they closed in on their target in a thrilling finale, they could scramble only a single off the last ball to leave the scores level.

Lancashire's new overseas player Saurav Ganguly (61) and England opener Mike Atherton (46) steered the home side to 177 for seven in their 45 overs.

But the Foxes were always in the hunt thanks to a splendid innings from Ben Smith before he was run out for 90.

Australian paceman Glenn McGrath took two for 22 as the Worcestershire Royals beat the Yorkshire Phoenix by nine runs at Headingley.

Paul Pollard (55) and Reuben Sprig (49) were Worcestershire's top scorers in a total of 173 for eight.

Yorkshire made 164 for nine in reply.

James Averis took five for 20 in just 29 balls to bowl the Gloucestershire Gladiators to victory over the Northamptonshire Steelbacks in a game reduced to 35 overs a side because of rain.

In Division Two, Nick Knight continued his impressive form with the bat as the Warwickshire Bears ran out nine-wicket winners over the Glamorgan Dragons at Edgbaston.

The England left-hander made an unbeaten 68 from just 26.5 overs after the Welsh county had been dismissed for a meagre 125.

The Nottinghamshire Outlaws snatched a three-run victory over the Essex Eagles at Chelmsford in a another rain-affected contest reduced to 42 overs.

England captain Nassar Hussain (55) and Ronnie Irani (42) not out ran out of support as the Eagles finished on 187 for nine in reply to the visitors' 190 for seven.

At Lord's, Shane Warne's three for 33 could not prevent the Hampshire Hawks from losing by four wickets to the Middlesex Crusaders to remain at the foot of the table.

## Agassi's Roman crusade

ROME, May 8 (AP): It once seemed that Andre Agassi played in Europe only against his will as he exited quickly from the clay court tournaments and repeatedly returned home frustrated in his bid for the French Open title.

But having finally won the only Grand Slam played on clay last year, the American is showing another side.

The top-ranked Agassi makes his seasonal debut on the European circuit, heading the field in the Italian Open which begins play Monday.

Rome has attracted the strongest field on European clay this year, with only an injured Pete Sampras missing among the top attractions.

Agassi has been in Rome for nearly a week, taking part in practice sessions that have drawn thousands of fans as well as dozens of paparazzi looking for shots of the player with girlfriend Steffi Graf forcing her to retreat to her hotel.

Agassi has also played in a charity event and appeared on a Sunday TV variety show, flanked by former Italian tennis champion Adriano Panatta and top model Adriana Sklenarukova.

"How can you ask for more than a great city, the best food in the world, women like this and the tennis?" Agassi said.

When Panatta praised Agassi for fighting back from deep in the rankings to regain the No 1 spot, Agassi said: "It's not about struggle. It's about life."

All told, his stay has contrasted sharply with tournaments in Rome a few years ago when he would fly in at the last minute, then lose early, drawing whistles and boos from the noisy Foro Italico crowd.

Agassi has compiled an uneven record on the tour this year.

After winning the Australian Open in January, his best showing has been a semifinal defeat against Gustavo Kuerten in Miami in March. In April, he pulled out of a tournament in Atlanta with a strained hamstring.

But no player has emerged as dominant on clay this season.

In his first match, Agassi drew fellow American Todd Martin.

## Sierra Leone West African champs

BANJUL, May 8: Sierra Leone's national cricket team put the fighting in their country to the back of their minds as they defeated Ghana to become West African champions at the weekend, reports Reuters.

The Sierra Leoneans bowled out Ghana for just 63 and scored the 64 required to win in just 14 overs, in a competition hosted by Gambia.

The West African Cricket Quadrangular normally brings together teams from four former British colonies but Nigeria had to pull out this year because of financial constraints.

# Probe for finding truth

### Time, place yet to be fixed for Hansie hearings



CAPE TOWN, May 8: The inquiry into match-fixing allegations involving former South African captain Hansie Cronje aims only to find the truth and not to recommend criminal prosecutions, the head of the probe said Monday, reports AFP.

"This is in no sense a criminal prosecution," Edwin King, head of the government-appointed commission of inquiry into the scandal, told reporters here.

There is no prosecutor and there are no criminals -- I do not see it at present as my function to recommend any formal criminal proceedings," King said.

King said his brief was only to establish the truth around allegations of match-fixing.

The commission, appointed last week, will start hearing evidence "sooner rather than later," King said. It has to present a preliminary report to the government by June 30.

"We have a very real sense of the urgency of the matter, the great public interest, and the necessity to get this thing started as quickly as possible."

"But if we kick off without proper preparation, we will achieve the exact opposite of what we want to achieve," he said.

However, the country's Sports Minister Ngconde Balfour said today he was still unable to announce a definite venue or starting date for hearings in the match-fixing inquiry.

The hearings were originally scheduled to take place in Pretoria, but King has requested it be based in Cape Town. Balfour indicated this request was still being considered.

Speaking at a press conference following a meeting with King, Balfour said: "Whilst we realise the sense of urgency of the inquiry, every effort will be made to ensure that the inquiry starts as soon as possible. No definite date of hearings will be given at this stage."

Last week it was announced that the hearings would start on Monday.

The commission was announced after Cronje admitted on April 11 that he had taken 8,200 dollars from an Indian bookmaker to provide "information and forecasts" during a one-day series involving South Africa, England and Zimbabwe last year. He was immediately sacked.

It will also look into the allegation that the South African team was offered 250,000 dollars to throw a match in Mumbai, India, in December 1996.

Claims by the Indian police that Cronje and teammates Herschelle Gibbs, Nicky Boje and Pieter Strydom were involved in the fixing of one-day

matches during South Africa's tour of India in February and March will also be probed.

King, who retired two weeks ago as judge-president of the Western Cape province, said he hoped to conduct the inquiry in a "congenial" atmosphere. However, he would subpoena witnesses if necessary, he said.

"I'm hoping people will come forward and open up to the commission and make this almost a cleansing and healing process -- but make no mistake: If I have to use firmer methods, I will," he said.

King said the jurisdiction of the commission was limited to South Africa, but he would seek cooperation from other countries and from the International Cricket Council.

Balfour said South Africa's foreign ministry would request "relevant documentation" from other countries, including recordings made by Indian police allegedly of telephonic conversations between Cronje and a London-based Indian bookmaker.

HANSIE CRONJE

## Mobile mystery

UNDATED, May 8 (Internet report): A Dubai-based newspaper 'Gulf News' has carried reports that after an extensive investigation it has solved the mystery over the ownership of the cell phone used by former Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin.

The paper said, "The number is registered with a Dubai-based businessman, who is also involved with cricket in a personal capacity."

It said that the phone num-

ber was found to be registered for the past six years with 'Bluebells Shipping Company' managed by Pradeep Menon.

The investigations were carried on by the newspaper after an Indian fortnightly published a detailed report that Azharuddin had been contacted by his

ex-teammate Ajay Sharma over a cell phone during the tri-nation series at Sharjah played between March 22 and 31 involving India, South Africa and Pakistan.

The magazine alleged that Azharuddin was contacted during India's matches with South Africa on March 21 and against Pakistan on March 23 and 26. The fortnightly also claimed that Ajay Sharma was being the mediator for his long time friend and the bookmaker.

Gulf News said that, when contacted, Menon confirmed of giving the mobile over to the Hyderabad. Menon said "Yes, I did give Azharuddin my mobile phone during the Sharjah tournament," and added "There is nothing to hide. Azharuddin is an old friend and when he needed a phone, I gave it to him as a friend was in need and I helped him out, there is no hanky panky."

The report said that Menon was also the owner of the first-ever indoor cricket stadium in the Gulf region called Inportz Complex and claimed that Azharuddin made a visit to the sports complex two years ago, at the insistence of Menon and signed autographs for cricket fans.

Menon also claimed that he knew Azharuddin for a long time. He said "I even send my teenage son to Hyderabad for cricket coaching."

Menon claimed that the phone had been registered under the company's name and that it had been along used as a spare line. He said "We use this for our operation staff as and when we need to. Otherwise, we keep it switched off."

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## Qayyum report to be delayed

LONDON, May 8: Less than a week after the International Cricket Council (ICC) vowed to root out corruption, two independent inquiries into match-fixing have been delayed, reports Reuters.

In Karachi Pakistan officials said the long-awaited judicial inquiry into match-fixing due to be released on Tuesday might now be held up for several weeks.

And in Cape Town, South African Sports Minister Ngconde Balfour said he was unable to announce a definite venue or starting date for a hearing into the Hansie Cronje scandal. The hearing was scheduled to start on Monday.

The Pakistan report by Judge Malik Mohammad Qayyum was due to be released at the conclusion of the first Test between Pakistan and West Indies in Georgetown, Guyana, on Tuesday.

Qayyum submitted the report, which recommends life bans for some players and tough penalties against others, last November.

But on Sunday Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Taqir Zia said the report would be further delayed because of an intervention by President Rafiq Tarrar, patron of the PCB.

"I have been told to seek advice from legal experts," Zia said. "There are certain points the president wants to clarify."

## Premier kabadi

Sonali Bank Club and Dilkusha Sporting Club won their respective matches in the Metropolis 6th Premier Division Kabadi League at the Outer Stadium kabadi court yesterday, reports UNB.

In the day's first match, the bankers beat Fire Service A 26-15 with two losses. They dominated the first half by 14-5.

In the other match, Dilkusha SC piled up a huge 34-5 points victory over Fire Service B after leading the first session by 13-1 points. The winners earned three creditable losses.

Bangladesh Police A will play Bangladesh Rifles B today.

## Pisnik clinches Bol Open

BOL, Croatia, May 8: Slovenia's Tina Pisnik, who arrived in Bol as the world number 81, won her first WTA event by defeating the French third seed Amel Mauresmo 7-6, 7-6 in the 170,000 dollar Bol Open event here on Sunday, reports AFP.

Bol proves to be a tournament which suits young and not well known players, as in 1997 another young player, Croatian Mirjana Lucic, scored her first victory.

The 19-year-old Pisnik remained the biggest surprise of the tournament till its very end. However, taking into the account the quality of the match against Mauresmo her victory was more than deserved.

In a dynamic match with a lot of play at the net by both players and mixed shots, Pisnik won both sets due to better concentration in tie-breaks.

At the very beginning of the first set Pisnik made a break giving her the lead, but the 1999 Australian Open finalist responded by winning four games in a row.

In that period Mauresmo's game was powerful, and she had a 4-1 lead. It seemed unlikely that the inexperienced Pisnik could get back in the game.

At 4-1 Mauresmo had a 40-15 lead on Pisnik's service. However, the Slovene not only managed to save her serve, but broke back in the following game, and then levelled at 4-4.

It was a period of Pisnik's rather brave game. She was not intimidated by Mauresmo's experience and attacked strongly at the net.

The first set was decided in tie-break in which Mauresmo had a 2-0 lead, but Pisnik reached 2-3, and at 4-5 Mauresmo lost her own service. Pisnik took over at 6-4, sealing the set on her first set point.

## Mallorca Open Safin's

PALMA, Spain, May 8: Russian fourth seed Marat Safin made it two titles in a week on Sunday by wrapping up a 6-4, 6-3 victory over Sweden's Mikael Tillstrom to land the 500,000 dollar Mallorca Open here, reports AFP.

Safin, 20, who had been merciless by allowing Spaniard Galo Blanco just four games in the semifinal, had to work a little harder for his third career title after Barcelona last week and Boston last year.

World number 27 Safin, who has spent most of his career based in Spain and who lives in the eastern city of Valencia, picked up a 66,000-dollar cheque for his 11th straight win.

Safin, who ousted former world number one Carlos Moya in the quarterfinals, relied heavily on his powerful serve sending down 10 aces and not giving unseeded Tillstrom a sniff of a break.

He managed breaks of his own in the last game of the opening set and again in the second game of the second.

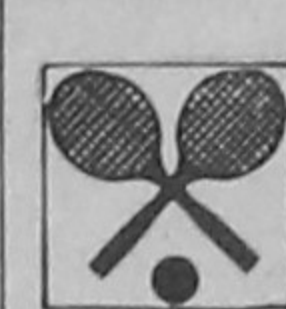
Tillstrom had predicted his task would be "almost impossible" and even a prediction to come to the net regularly in an attempt to seize the initiative proved his analysis correct.

In this form Safin threatens to make his Grand Slam mark in the French Open at the end of the month at Roland Garros.



Martina Hingis of Switzerland (R) and Spaniard Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario pose with their trophies after the Betty Barclay Cup final on May 7. —AFP photo

## Hingis celebrates in style



HAMBURG, Germany, May 8: Martina Hingis celebrated her return to the top of the women's tennis rankings with a 6-3, 6-3 win over Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario in the final of the 535,000 dollar Betty Barclay Cup on Sunday, reports Reuters.

Hingis, who will replace Lindsay Davenport as world number one on Monday, struggled to find her rhythm in the first set and was put under pressure by the Spaniard's superior baseline drives as the players traded early breaks.

"You can't win against Arantxa by playing long rallies, she's better than most players at them," Hingis said. "I think you have to play aggressively."

The top-seeded Swiss, who had lost to Sanchez-Vicario only once in 14 previous meetings, took a 4-1 lead with a rare ace, yet won only one of the next

nine points as an exquisite lob brought the Spaniard, seeded fourth, back into the set at 4-3.

"Obviously against Martina you have to go for the shots," Sanchez-Vicario said. "I had my chances."

But Hingis wrapped up the first set after a series of entertaining rallies — which brought a quiet 7,800-strong crowd to life — and settled into her stride in the second, quickly building up a 3-1 lead with an early break.

Sanchez-Vicario, a veteran of 13 years on the WTA tour, held her serve against impressive all-court play from Hingis, betraying few signs of two marathon matches she played on Saturday and sparking hopes of a comeback.

"On court she's such a fighter, you don't see that she's tired or anything," Hingis said.

But the Spaniard lost the next service game to love after failing to put a first serve in

play, handing Hingis, who also won here in 1998, a commanding 5-2 advantage.

"I was playing better when I was returning than serving," Sanchez-Vic