

Schofield gets England nod

LONDON, May 13 (Reuters/AFI): Durham pace bowler Stephen Harmison was a surprise choice in England's 13-man squad announced on Saturday for the first Test against Zimbabwe at Lord's next week.

There were also Test recalls for opener Nick Knight and swing bowler Ed Giddins and a call-up for leg spinner Chris Schofield.

Chairman of selectors David Graveney said that with a number of bowlers unavailable through injury the selectors had wanted to find the right combination to support Andrew Caddick and Darren Gough.

"We considered a number of bowlers including Angus Fraser, Martin Bicknell and Alex Tudor," said Graveney. "What swung the decision was Stephen Harmison's extra pace and Ed Giddins' ability to swing the ball."

Harmison said he was "thrilled to bits" when told he had been selected.

"If I am in the final eleven it will be even more special to make my international debut at Lord's. I've only played there once before for Durham in a championship game two years ago against Middlesex when we won by one wicket and I was lucky enough to pick up seven wickets."

Graveney said Mark Ramprakash would open the batting with Mike Atherton and Knight, who has failed to establish himself as an England regular in Tests, would bat at number six.

Earlier on Friday, England's selectors face a dilemma over whether to risk pitching young leg-spinner Chris Schofield into his maiden Test match after he has made just 16 first class appearances for Lancashire.

He is yet to be tested against players of the calibre of Alistair Campbell, Andy Flower and Murray Goodwin, however, as he will be at Lord's if England decide to gamble.

Former Lancashire second-team coach Peter Sleep, who has guided Schofield's career since he joined the Old Trafford staff in 1997, believes Zimbabwe are the ideal opponents for his young protege to begin his Test career.

"It's important England choose the right games to bring Chris on," claimed Sleep, who played 14 Tests for Australia in the 1980s.

"I wouldn't play him against India or Pakistan at the moment, but Zimbabwe and the West Indies are two of the weaker sides around and there's no doubt that Chris is the new kid on the block and could certainly be England's leg-spinner for then next 10 years."

SQUAD

Nasser Hussain (captain), Michael Atherton, Andrew Caddick, Andrew Flintoff, Ed Giddins, Darren Gough, Stephen Harmison, Graeme Hick, Nick Knight, Mark Ramprakash, Chris Schofield, Alec Stewart, Craig White.

Euro 2000

Rijkaard picks his probables

ZEIST, Holland, May 13: Netherlands coach Frank Rijkaard named a preliminary squad of 26 players for the European Championships to be co-hosted by Holland and Belgium from June 10-July 2, reports AFP.

PRELIMINARY SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Edwin van der Sar (Juventus/Ita), Sander Westerveld (Liverpool/Eng), Ed De Gooijer (Chelsea/Eng).

Defenders: Frank de Boer (Barcelona/Spa), Winston Bogarde (Barcelona/Spa), Bert Konterman (Feyenoord), Arthur Numan (Glasgow Rangers/Scot), Andre Ooijer (PSV Eindhoven), Michael Reiziger (Barcelona/Spa), Jaap Stam (Manchester United/Eng).

Midfielders: Ronald de Boer (Barcelona/Spa), Philip Cocu (Barcelona/Spa), Paul Bosvelt (Feyenoord), Giovanni van Bronckhorst (Glasgow Rangers/Scot), Edgar Davids (Juventus/Ita), Clarence Seedorf (Inter Milan/Ita), Aron Winter (Ajax).

Forwards: Dennis Bergkamp (Arsenal/Eng), Patrick Kluitert (Barcelona/Spa), Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink (Atletico Madrid/Spa), Pierre van Hooijdonk (Vitessa Arnhem), Roy Makaay (Deportivo La Coruna/Spa), Marc Overmars (Arsenal/Eng), Boudewijn Zenden (Barcelona/Spa), Jeffrey Talan (Heerenveen), Peter van Vossen (Feyenoord).

Agassi skips Hamburg Series

HAMBURG, Germany, May 13: World number one Andre Agassi of the United States on Saturday joined a growing list of absentees from next week's 2.95 million Hamburg Masters Series tournament, reports AFP.

Agassi did not give organisers any reason for his decision to pull out of the event, one of the major warm-up events for the French Open -- which begins at Roland Garros on May 29.

The American was beaten 6-4, 6-4 by Dominik Hrbaty of Slovakia in the third round of this week's Rome Masters Series event.

Former world number one Pete Sampras is now the top seed for the Hamburg event as the ATP Tour's much-vaunted Masters Series events continue to fail in their aim to attract all the top names.

Hingis passes Testud test



BERLIN, May 13: World number one Martina Hingis was stretched to the limit by French woman Sandrine Testud before edging through to the semifinals of the German Open here on Friday, reports AFP.

The Swiss 19-year-old, who regained the number one spot off American nemesis Lindsay Davenport last weekend in Hamburg, took 2 hours 35 minutes to beat the French number five seed 7-5, 6-7, 6-2, and will now play third seed Conchita Martinez of Spain, who ended the run of Gala Leon Garcia with a 6-4, 6-2 victory.

The other semifinal features a South African clash between 10th seeded Amanda Coetzer and the unseeded Joannette Kruger.

Coetzer overcame eighth seeded German Anke Huber 6-4, 6-4, and Kruger recovered from 0-5 and saved four match points in the final set to overcome Russia's Elena Dementieva 2-6, 6-3, 7-6.

Having struggled at times against Silvia Talaja in the third round, Hingis again failed to dominate in the manner expected of a world number one.

She was saved eventually more by her greater fitness than any tactical superiority. Testud attacked Hingis from beginning to end, but was clearly tiring in the third set.

Neither player gave an inch in the long baseline rallies, and there was little to choose between them until the final stages.

Testud served for the first set at 5-4 but Hingis not only fought off the threat and levelled at 5-5 but broke for the set with a brilliantly struck cross-court return.

Testud's strong groundstrokes often left Hingis flat-footed, and she maintained her challenge throughout the second set.

She once again found herself serving for the set at 5-4, again lost her serve to 15, but she broke again to lead 6-5 and this time closed out the set.

It was not until late in the deciding set that Hingis began

Headley's surgery next week

LONDON, May 13 (Reuters): Kent and England pace bowler Dean Headley will undergo spinal surgery next week, the England Cricket Board said on Saturday.

The surgery is needed to cure a lower back injury.

The ECB said Headley would continue as one of England's 12 contracted players despite being sidelined for between three and four months.

to get on top of her resilient opponent, converting her third break point to lead 4-2.

With a mountain to climb, Testud finally began to wane and Hingis broke her again for the match.

"It was a hell of a match," said a relieved Hingis.

Coetzer reached her second semi-final in two weeks and prevented Huber from returning to the top 10 for the first time in more than two-and-a-half years.

Like the battle between Hingis and Testud, both attacked vigorously from the baseline as well as mixing in some challenging dropshots. But Huber suffered several lapses which, although, they only lasted for a few points, were enough to let Coetzer through the door.

Anna Kournikova has withdrawn from next week's Italian Open after suffering a capsule ligament injury to her left ankle while losing to Leon Garcia in the second round.

In layman's terms that is a sprain, but it is not thought to be serious and she is still expected to play at Roland Garros in two weeks time.



World number one Martina Hingis appears relieved after winning a three-set thriller against Sandrine Testud in the German Open on May 12.

Kuerten, Hewitt in semis

ROME, May 13: Defending champion Gustavo Kuerten and Aussie teenager Lleyton Hewitt both reached the Masters Series event semifinals here on Friday, but the two men took very different routes on the Centre Court, reports AFP.

Kuerten, the 1997 French Open winner, made plenty of mistakes yet still comfortably beat Spaniard Albert Costa 6-4, 7-5 to line up a match with another Spanish clay courtier, Alex Corretja.

But Hewitt, tennis' new rising star, was punching the air and pounding his heart as he won a thrilling battle with Argentina's Mariano Puerta 6-3, 3-6, 6-1. He now faces third seed Swede Magnus Norman, who easily beat Spain's Felix Mantilla.

Kuerten emerged after a scrappy performance in his night match. Though broken twice, the fourth seeded Brazilian always seemed to be in control of the match and was able to break back at will.

He proved it in the 10th game -- although Costa was unlucky to lose the set on a net cord, as Kuerten's shot plopped over the Spaniard's side.

And he showed it again in the 12th game of the next set, bringing up match point when he finished a rally with a crunching forehand which Costa scampered for but was never going to reach.

Kuerten saved his best shot for last, sprinting forward to tip the ball elegantly over the net after Costa tried a drop shot.

"I made more mistakes than in my other match," Kuerten said.

"But I really played well when I needed to. I think that was the key to the match today. I was feeling the ball well. I was playing good tennis and all the time I saw myself as having a good chance to win," he said.

"And I think that's the way I should approach my next match."

Hewitt's victory was all the more remarkable for three reasons -- he is back on court this week after a month's absence due to a virus, he's a relative novice on clay and he was playing doubles until midnight the previous night.

Hewitt, the winner of three tournaments this year, said: "The attitude going into this season was just to gain experience. I don't think I've mastered clay court tennis just yet. But I think I've definitely taken a big step this week."

"I really enjoyed it out there," he said. "Once I lost the second set, I really had to raise my bar and that's what I was happy with... He's one of those guys who's not going to lose a match, you have to go out there

and win it."

Hewitt lost to Norman in the Australian Open fourth round in January and is wary of repeating his mistake.

"I think I've got to try to stay with him early tomorrow," he said.

"In Australia, I let him get away. He got his confidence going, he served huge and he hit a lot of big groundstrokes as well... you can't take him lightly at all."

Norman, speaking before Hewitt's match, had no preference over his opponent.

"It doesn't matter who I'm playing, you know," he said. "I just try to concentrate on my own things. If those things are clicking, no-one can beat me."

On Friday, there was no beating an Adelaide teenager who needed just 13 minutes to reach 4-1.

Facing serve at 3-5, Puerta tried to put the pressure on Hewitt by racing to the net for the opening point. Hewitt watched him move and calmly steered a passing shot into the corner.

He then reeled off three points to reach 4-0 with an ace, and hit a service winner to lead 1-0.

Puerta found another gear in

the second set, but Hewitt showed a remarkable ability all afternoon to find a winner just when he needed it.

Puerta earned the first of two break points in the second game with a glorious drop shot. Hewitt hit back with a heart-stopping forehand from the back court into the right-hand corner. Puerta quickly brought up another chance -- but Hewitt drilled down an ace.

Hewitt came unstuck though next time around and, at 3-1 down, had three chances to break back. But Puerta coped with them all and won applause from the centre court crowd -- and even from Hewitt -- as he dived at full length to win a point.

The Argentine finished in a heap and needed time out to treat an injury to the little finger of his left hand. But it didn't stop the left-hander serving out for 4-1, and later for 5-2 as his opponent kept finding the net.

Hewitt appeared to be heading out of the tournament, but it proved to be deceptive. The Aussie conjured up his first-serve form for the third -- breaking for 2-0 with a superb pick-up to Puerta's drop shot.

"This is the first time in the 83 years since we instituted the rule that anyone has lost a match," a Japan Sumo Association official said.

Asanokiri was in a hard fought match with Chiyohaku but it was stopped immediately when a Sumo elder sitting ringside saw the offending member and invoked the exposure rule.

The mawashi belts are about seven to eight metres (23-26 feet) long and are wrapped tightly several times around the bodies of the massive wrestlers.

"I tied my mawashi the way I always do, but today it just came loose," local media quoted Asanokiri as saying.

"I went out a little bit harder than what I usually do and I've learnt that that doesn't really suit me as best as other ways have."

"I think if I can control my race in the first half a bit more, I would have had a little bit more to come home with."

Thorpe said making the Olympic team was the realisation of his dreams as a young swimmer.

"It means a lot, because there's this really exclusive club and it means a lot to an athlete. It's the highest level that any athlete in this sport can reach. It was something that was a goal of mine when I was a youngster."

Thorpe said it was a big relief to have made the team in his first event at the eight-day meet, adding that he could now go into the remainder of his races feeling much more relaxed.

Nottinghamshire's reply had reached 72 for two when rain ruled out any play after tea.

Sales was summoned to an England training camp last month after touring with the A side during the winter. Is now pressing for a middle-order place against Zimbabwe and the West Indies this summer.

"It would be nice to get a call up, but, at the end of the day, I'm here to score runs for Northants and help get us promoted into Division One of the Championship," he said.

Sales' 375-ball knock was the fourth highest in Northamptonshire's history and a county best against Nottinghamshire, surpassing the late Fred Bakewell's 246 at Northampton in 1933.

Only Dennis Brookes, who achieved the feat six times, has exceeded Sales' tally of four innings in excess of 200 for the club.

Sales and Hayden posted 197 in 47 overs for the sixth wicket -- also a club record against Notts -- and the visitors launched their response just after lunch, needing 436 to avoid the follow-on.

Openers Darren Bicknell and Usman Afsar gave them a solid 69 run start, but Afsar then edged to slip in left-arm spinner Michael Davies' first over, and, without addition to the total, Bicknell was taken low down at the wicket off seamer Richard Logan.

Rain keeps on playing foul with Zim

CHELMSFORD, England, May 13 (AFP/AP): Zimbabwe lost more vital time to rain on the second day of their tour match against Essex at Chelmsford on Friday -- and also came no closer to solving their opening batting run-drought less than a week before the first Test against England at Lord's.

Key strokebreaker Neil Johnson confirmed his return to form after starting the tour with a brace of noughts. He has since made 70, an attractive 45 not out from 57 balls on Friday, plus a century and 41 in two one-day matches.

Grant Flower, however, has yet to blossom and his four first-class knocks have brought scores of 0, 10, 0 and 10, while Zimbabwe's opening partnerships show a sparse tally of 1, 15, 4 and 2.

Captain Andy Flower re-emphasised the importance of his brother to the Zimbabwe side by saying: "Grant has been important historically for us, and it is not a good sign that our openers haven't got runs on the board."

"They probably won't get another chance in this game, but they are going to have to go out there and put it in during the Test. It's a hard game, and they've got to do it first up at Lord's."

Apart from Grant Flower's failure, taken behind off a rising ball from Danny Law, Trevor Gripper was shot out for a duck by David Thompson.

Zimbabwe lost five sessions of play to the weather in the opening match against Hampshire, more than a day in the Kent game after losing by an innings, then Thursday's first day of the Essex game was washed out.

On Friday, there was less than three hours of cricket as the tourists reached 143 for four in what could be their last innings before the maiden Test appearance at Lord's.

The extraordinary 17-year-old nicknamed Torpedo clipped half a second off his own world record -- established at last August's Pan Pacific Championships here -- to clinch selection in his country's Olympic Games team in his home city.

Judging by his latest swim, Thorpe is a hot favourite for the gold medal in September.

Swimming in a full-length bodysuit, Thorpe swam three minutes 41.33 seconds to eclipse his old mark of 3:41.83 by 0.50 seconds.

Grant Hackett was trailing almost 10 seconds in his backwash to finish second in 3:51.05 and gain automatic Olympic selection in second place with Josh Krogh third in 3:52.79.

In an astonishing swim, Thorpe went out hard and burnt off Hackett, gaining a 2.3 break on him by halfway.

"I was only surprised by the fact that I was able to make the Olympic team, that was one of my main priorities coming into this meet," Thorpe said.

"I didn't swim that race as well as I would like, but I swam that race to make the team and I think if I planned the race a little bit better I would have been able to do a better time."

"But I am really overwhelmed and so happy about the situation that has arisen now... I can now put that word Olympian next to my name."

Thorpe explained that he could have had a better plan going out in the race.

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Australian swimming hero Ian Thorpe exults after creating world record in 400m freestyle during the Olympic qualifiers in Sydney yesterday.

Torpedo strikes again

SYDNEY, May 13: Australian teen sensation Ian Thorpe sent an undeniable message to his gold medal rivals at this year's Sydney Olympic Games with a world record-breaking swim in the 400 metres freestyle at the Olympic trials here Saturday night, reports AFP.

The extraordinary 17-year-old nicknamed Torpedo clipped half a second off his own world record -- established at last August's Pan Pacific Championships here -- to clinch selection in his country's Olympic Games team in his home city.

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THORPE'S TALLY

SYDNEY, May 13 (AP): Following is a list of Thorpe's individual world records (at both short course and long-course events):

— May 13, 2000 -- cuts 0.5 seconds off his own 400 metres freestyle record, clocking 3:41.33 at the Australian Olympic selection trials at Homebush.

— Feb 6, 2000 -- better his own short course 200-metre time at the Berlin World Cup meet, clocking 1:41.10.

Jan 18, 2000 -- registers the 200 metres Freestyle World Short-course time of 1:42.54 at the Sydney World Cup meet.

— Aug 24, 1999 -- sets his third world record in three days, winning the Pan Pac 200-metres freestyle final in 1:46.

— Aug 23, 1999 -- clocks 1:46.34 in a semifinal to set a new world 200 metres freestyle mark in the Pan Pacs.

— Aug 22, 1999 -- records his first world long-course record over 400 metres, touching in 3:41.83 at the Pan Pacs.

— April 1, 1999 -- sets a new world short-course 200-metre freestyle record at the Hong Kong World Short-course Championships, clocking 1:43.28.

— Sept. 25, 1998 -- Thorpe breaks the world short-course 400 metres freestyle record at the Australian short-course titles in Perth, clocking 3:39.82.

His world record splits on Saturday were 53.15 (100m), 1:49.14 (200m), 2:45.18 (300m) and 3:41.33 (400m).

Thorpe's time on Saturday was 6.64 seconds faster than the time New Zealander Danyon Loader took to win the gold medal in the event at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

First into the Australian team was 17-year-old West Australian Jennifer Reilly, who won the women's 400m individual medley in 4:44.20, the fifth fastest time in the world this year.

She beat home Rachel Harris (4:45.98) and comeback muck Hayley Lewis (4:48.54). Harris

also qualified for the Australian team.

"Today there were a lot of butterflies in my stomach but before the race I was calm... It's amazing. I'm so happy," said Reilly.

PARIS, May 13 (AFP): Men's 400m freestyle world records:

3:51.20: Vladimir Salnikov (USSR) 24/02/80 at Leningrad

3:50.49: Peter Szmidt (Can) 16/07/80 at Etobicoke

3:49.57: Vladimir Salnikov (USSR) 12/03/82 at Moscow

3:48.32: Vladimir Salnikov (USSR) 20/02/83 at Moscow

3:47.80: Michael Gross (Ger) 27/06/85 at Remeisheid

3:47.38: Artur Wojdat (Pol) 26/03/88 at Orlando

3:46.95: Uwe Dassler (Ger) 23/09/88 at Seoul

3:46.47: Kieren Perkins (Aus) 03/04/92 at Canberra

3:45.00: Yevgeny Sadoviy (CIS) 29/07/92 at Barcelona

3:43.80: Kieren Perkins (Aus) 09/09/94 at Rome

3:41.83: Ian Thorpe (Aus) 22/08/99 at Sydney

3:41.33: Ian Thorpe (Aus) 13/05/00 at Sydney

Thomas Cup South Korea shock hosts

KUALA LUMPUR, May 13: South Korea gave a polished display to shock hosts Malaysia 3-2 in a Thomas Cup Group A match on Friday, reports Reuters.

The Koreans upset the form-book to displace a packed crowd of 10,000 Commonwealth Games champion Wong Choon Hann was stretched but delivered Malaysia's first point when he defeated Shon Seung Mo 15-8, 5-15, 15-13 in the opening singles.

World No 2 pair Kim Dong Moon and Ha