

Sport

Nat'l TT starts from Jan 20

The 24th National Table Tennis Championship will be held in the northern city of Raipur from January 20-26, reports UNB.

Fourteen events have been included in the meet, organised by Raipur District Sports Association under the auspices of Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation (BTTF).

Events: Men's team, women's team, boys' team, men's singles, women's singles, boys' singles (under-18), boys' singles (under 16), men's doubles, women's doubles, mixed doubles, boys' doubles (under 18), boys' doubles (under 16), boys' singles (sub-juniors under 12), girls' singles (sub-juniors under 12).

Interested players and teams have been requested to send their entry by January 15.

India going to Zimbabwe May 25

NEW DELHI, Jan 3: India's cricket chiefs on Wednesday changed the itinerary for a tour of Zimbabwe in May, wiping out one Test match from the original schedule issued only a few hours earlier, reports AFP.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) clarified the tour would comprise just two Test matches, and not three as announced earlier in the day.

The 43-day tour, commencing on May 25, will also feature a limited-overs tri-series between India, Zimbabwe and the West Indies. BCCI secretary Jayawant Lele said.

Lele said a previously rejected itinerary had been released mistakenly by the BCCI office.

According to the revised programme, the Indians will start the tour with two three-day matches at Harare and Mutare.

The first Test will be played at Harare from June 7, followed immediately by the second at Bulawayo from June 15.

The tri-series starts on June 23 with the final scheduled to be played at Harare on July 7.

ITINERARY

May 25: Indians arrive in Harare

May 28-30: Tour match v CFX Academy, Harare

June 2-4: Tour match v Zimbabwe A, Mutare

June 7-11: First Test, Harare

June 15-19: Second Test, Bulawayo

Tri-series: June 23: Zimbabwe v West Indies, Harare

June 24: Zimbabwe vs India, Harare

June 27: Zimbabwe v India, Bulawayo

June 30: India v West Indies, Bulawayo

July 1: Zimbabwe v West Indies, Bulawayo

July 4: India v West Indies, Harare

July 7: Final, Harare

Conciliatory cricket

SYDNEY, Jan 3: An Aboriginal cricket team will play a side hand picked by the Prime Minister in a match April 5 aimed at promoting reconciliation between black and white Australians, reports AP.

Prime Minister John Howard and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSI) chairman Geoff Clark announced the Canberra match at a joint press conference Wednesday at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Howard, frequently condemned by Aboriginal leaders for refusing to apologise for mistreatment of Australia's indigenous people since European settlement in 1788, said the match would form part of celebrations to mark Australia's centenary of federation.

Current fast bowler Jason Gillespie has revealed he has some Aboriginal ancestry, although only a handful of Aboriginal cricketers have competed at first-class level.

A team of Aborigines from Victoria state was among the first ever touring teams to represent Australia, visiting England in 1868 when Australia consisted of six separate colonies under British rule.

The colonies formally federated to form the Commonwealth of Australia on Jan 1, 1901 and celebrations to mark Australia's 100th anniversary of nationhood are planned throughout this year.

The Aboriginal tourists gained fame for their cricketing skill but also for their general athletic prowess, with cricket matches often punctuated by demonstrations of boomerang throwing and running.

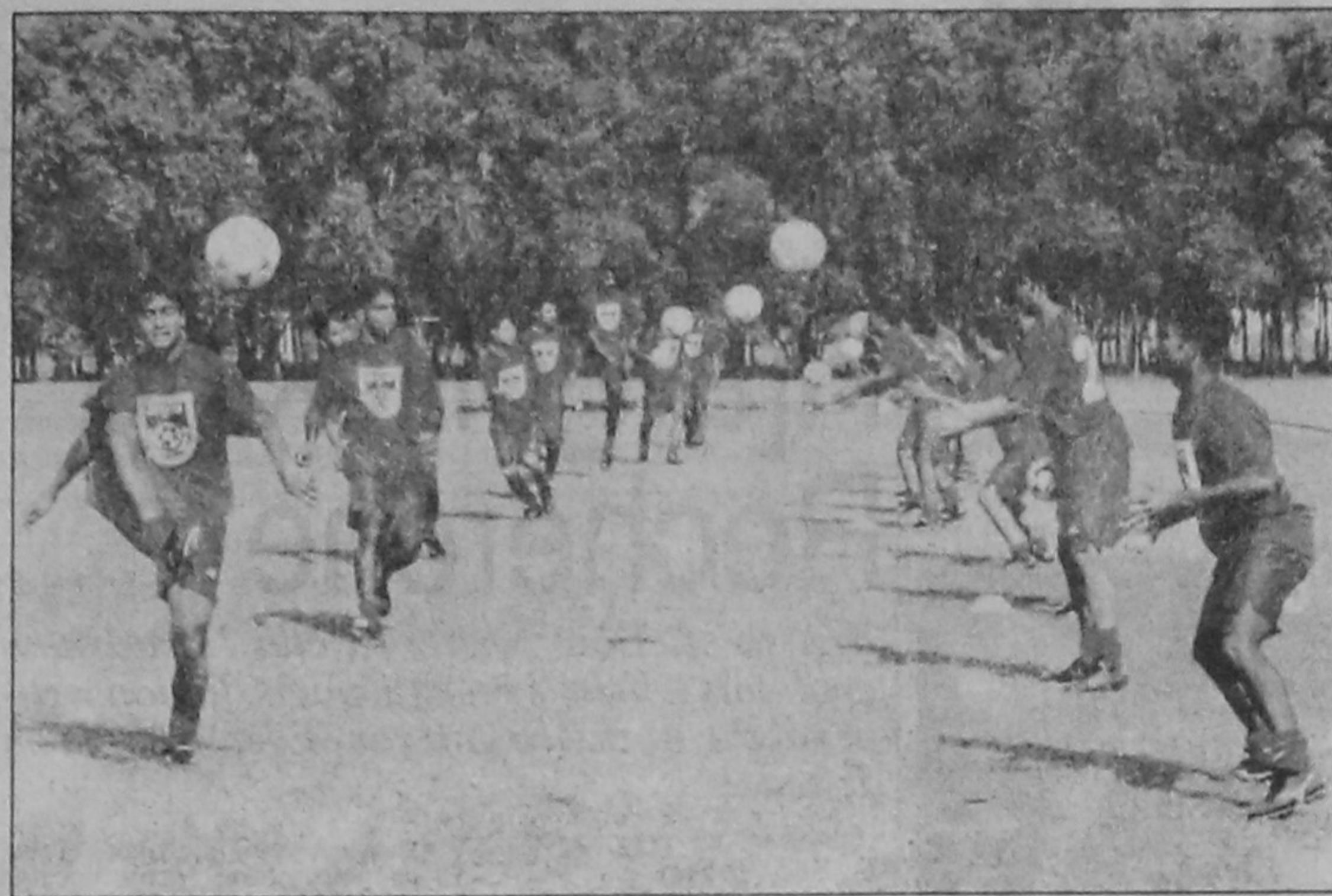
Steve steadies

From page 13

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Rows: McGrath, Gillespie, MacGill, Miller.

AUSTRALIA: First innings. Slater c Samuels b Nagarmotoo 96. Hayden c Lara b Walsh 3. Langer c Jacobs b McLean 20. M. Waugh run out (Campbell) 22. S. Waugh not out 82. Ponting not out 51. Extras: (b-1, lb-1, nb-8) 10. Total: (for 4 wts in 87 overs) 284. Fall of wickets: 1-17, 2-55, 3-109, 4-157.

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Rows: Walsh, Stuart, Nagarmotoo, McLean, Adams, Samuels.



Bangladesh booters preparing themselves at the BKSP in Savar on Tuesday for the forthcoming Millennium Cup in India. The 16-nation meet will be held from January 10 to 25. —Star photo by Anisur Rahman

SA's mission forget-Hansie

CAPE TOWN, Jan 3 (Reuters): South Africa are determined to put 'Cronjiegate' behind them and 'go places', according to the country's new cricket chief Gerald Majola.

There definitely is a new era in South African cricket -- there is life after Cronjiegate, Majola, the United Cricket Board's (UCB) new managing director, said on Wednesday.

We need to realise that what's done is done and cannot be undone, and we need to look to the future, he said during the second test against Sri Lanka at Newlands.

South Africa are striving to recover from the corruption scandal that broke last April when former South Africa captain Hansie Cronje admitted taking money from bookmakers for match information. He has been banned for life from cricket.

Majola officially took over on Monday from Ali Bacher, who has resigned as UCB managing director to organise the 2003 World Cup in South Africa.

Majola, the first black man to run South African cricket's day-to-day affairs, though the UCB has had black presidents, has promised leadership of a

lower profile. I've probably got a different management style to Dr Bacher's, Majola said. I'm not saying it's better or worse, just different.

Until Monday, Majola was a national selector. He helped pick the team playing the second Test here -- the first South

Kiwis call for backup

WELLINGTON, Jan 3 (Inter-net report): Spinner Paul Wiseman and uncapped batsman Jacob Oram have been called into the New Zealand squad for the second one-day international against Zimbabwe in Wellington on Thursday.

Wiseman comes in for Chris Cairns, still recovering from a knee injury, while Oram is cover for Nathan Astle who reportedly suffered a spell of light-headedness yesterday and was taken to hospital for tests.

Astle, however, is expected to play in the match. The changes follow the Black Caps' embarrassing 70-run defeat at the hands of the tourists in Taupo on Tuesday. The final match of the series takes place in Auckland on Sunday.

African XI to include three non-white players in opener Herschelle Gibbs and fast bowlers Makhaya Ntini and Mfuneke Ngam.

"I never crossed our minds that we had selected three players of colour, we just picked our best side," Majola said. That is a very positive indication that we are going places in South African cricket.

Majola was confident Shaun Pollock -- he took over from Cronje last April -- was the man to lead South Africa along its fresh path.

"Shaun has matured tremendously since he became captain," Majola said. I know what it feels like to take up a new challenge, and he has made a fine job of accepting the challenge of leading the South African team.

Although Cronje's shadow is steadily fading from South African cricket, he still has a place in some of his former teammates' hearts.

Evidence of that came when Allan Donald was asked before the first Test against New Zealand in Bloemfontein last November whether he and Cronje remained friends.

The veteran fast bowler's reply was as quick and well-directed as his feared bounce: "Always."

Slater couldn't care less

SYDNEY, Jan 3 (AFP): Michael Slater said it was unfortunate -- but nothing else -- that he has been involved in three run-outs in this summer's Test series against the West Indies after another catastrophic mix-up cost a wicket here Wednesday.

Mark Waugh was run out for 22 after previously cruising along unruffled in a third-

Slater was on 63 at the time and was later frustrated to be caught going for a boundary when four runs short of his hundred -- the ninth time he had been dismissed in the 90s in Tests.

Earlier it had been apparent only an error was going to break up the blossoming partnership between Slater and Waugh, and it came in the 30th over at 109 for two when Waugh hit behind point and started off for a run.

But Slater hesitated and called out forcing Waugh to do a double-take. Waugh could not beat Sherwin Campbell's throw to keeper Ridley Jacobs to be out when he looked set for a big score.

The finger has been pointed at Slater throughout the series for his jack-rabbit running between wickets. His opening partner Matthew Hayden has been run out twice, in the first and third Tests.

But Slater was adamant there was nothing wrong with his running between wickets.

In 67 Test matches I think I've been involved in six run-outs and that's over the course of eight years, said Slater. "It's unfortunate that I've been involved in three this summer."

Slater said Waugh had motioned down the wicket without calling and, he went off his partner's body movement.

"I was awaiting his call of

yes, I couldn't see the angle and with his body movement I thought it must have been hitting the gap and if got past Sherwin there was going to be two."

"I was watching Mark and when I looked over Sherwin was picking it up, so then I called 'No', but we had both committed too far and unfortunately for Mark he was going back to the danger end and he was found short."

Rios certainly looked happier as he described his current mood. "Last year was not a great tennis year for me, but it was for me personally, and this should help me," he said.

"I feel life is different. I have a lot more in my life and every step I take helps me mature. It's a difficult thing to say that I can be number one again but it is my goal and what I did once I can do again, if I play well."

He did play extremely well for much of the time, despite a double fault contributing to the only break of serve in the second set. His ground strokes were fluent, weighty and hard to read, and he remained focussed during the periods when an inspired Simonjic played above himself.

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Scared Seles

PERTH, Jan 3: Monica Seles was visibly shaken Wednesday when an autograph seeker after the Hopman Cup approached her after her mixed doubles match against Russia, reports AP.

Seles was sitting courtside after the match when a middle-aged man tapped her on the shoulder to seek an autograph.

Witnesses say Seles, who was stabbed by a German fan while sitting courtside in 1993, was upset by the approach and immediately grabbed her American playing partner Jan Michael Gambill, who ushered her from the area.

There was no immediate comment from Seles or from tournament officials. Security officials at the Burswood dome ushered the man from the scene, but there was no action taken against him.

Seles was the world's top-ranked player on April 30, 1993 when, during a changeover in her quarterfinal against Magdalena Maleeva, 38-year-old German Guntter Parche broke through security and stabbed her in the back.

Seles missed 18 months of tennis and has never regained the No. 1 ranking. After arriving in Australia for the Hopman Cup on Friday, Seles said the German incident still haunts her.

"I don't know how many tournaments I want to play this year," she said. "Obviously a lot of tournaments have moved to Germany and I'm not playing them. That is going to hurt my rankings a little."

India pull out of Malaysia tri-series

KARACHI, Jan 3: India have refused to take part in a tri-nation cricket tournament in Malaysia because Pakistan is also competing, a Pakistan Cricket Board official said Tuesday, reports AFP.

"The Malaysian Cricket Association has informed us that the planned tri-series between Pakistan, India and Malaysia has been cancelled because of India's refusal to play," Brigadier Munawwar Rana told this news agency.

Malaysia had invited Pakistan and India to join them for a tri-series tournament from January 28 to February 9 in Kuala Lumpur.

"They (India) have said that time was short but it is not an appropriate excuse," Rana said, adding the real reason was that they did not want to play with Pakistan.

"It's disappointing that India has turned down the invitation because this would have given a tremendous boost to cricket in Malaysia."

Malaysian cricket chief Tunko Imran visited India last month to invite India for the series.

Earlier the Indian government refused to allow its cricket team to tour Pakistan because of political tensions between the two countries. The government has refused to review the decision despite pressure from the International Cricket Council (ICC).

"Pakistan would still love to play India anywhere in the world because the contests between the two generate a lot of interest and following," Rana said.

"India's continued refusal to play Pakistan will affect the ICC's 10-year programme because Pakistan will lose financially every time India refuse to come," he added.

The ICC plans to finalise the cricket itinerary for the next decade in its meeting next month in Melbourne.

However, Rana said he was hopeful that the April tri-nation series in Sharjah involving Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka would go ahead as planned.

"There should be no problem for the tri-series in Sharjah because it is held every year and is planned well before time."

Rios survives a scare

DOHA, Jan 3: Marcelo Rios, the former world number one, began the new year with a new bride and a surprising new attitude, but with an old target in the 975,000-dollar ATP event here on Tuesday, reports AFP.

The controversial Chilean, who fought off a surprisingly fierce challenge from the Yugoslav qualifier Nenad Zimonjic by 6-4, 3-6, 6-1, reckons that his 17-year-old Puerto Rican wife Juliana can improve his long-term frame of mind and help him regain the pinnacle.

"Having a wife so young is fun, and being on the tour is not always fun - it can be boring," said the man who three times in a row won the French Open's prix de citron award for the tour's most miserable player.

Rios certainly looked happier as he described his current mood. "Last year was not a great tennis year for me, but it was for me personally, and this should help me," he said.

"I feel life is different. I have a lot more in my life and every step I take helps me mature. It's a difficult thing to say that I can be number one again but it is my goal and what I did once I can do again, if I play well."

He did play extremely well for much of the time, despite a double fault contributing to the only break of serve in the second set. His ground strokes were fluent, weighty and hard to read, and he remained focussed during the periods when an inspired Simonjic played above himself.

Seles, Gambil gun Russians down

PERTH, Australia, Jan 3: Americans Monica Seles and Jan-Michael Gambill boosted their hopes of coaching the Hopman Cup tennis final while ending those of Russia in a bruising six-and-a-half hour duel here Wednesday, reports AFP.

During a thrilling deciding 105-minute mixed doubles confrontation, Seles and Gambill edged out men's world number two Marat Safin and partner Elena Likhovtseva to clinch the crucial tie 2-1 after the singles clashes had been shared.

The Americans, third-seeded of the eight nations in the round-robin contest, beat the Russian pair -- seeded second -- 4-6, 6-2, 6-2.

It was the United States' second win in the competition, following their sweeping 3-0 drubbing of the Slovak Republic Monday.

Russia registered their second successive loss, having gone down 1-2 to Belgium in a shock result on the same day.

Safin, 20, had kept the Russians in the tie at the Burswood Dome when he defeated 23-year-old Gambill, ranked 33rd in three sets, 6-4, 6-7 (6/8), 6-3 after Seles had overcome Likhovtseva in the women's singles.

Seles, 27, ranked fourth in the world, used her vast experience to grind down a plucky Likhovtseva, 25, ranked 21st.

Seles, the former world number one, got home in straight sets, 6-3, 6-3. "I am playing pretty well and I am happy with my form," Seles said. "I just hope I am not going to get into top form too soon -- because I want to be playing well in two weeks during the Australian Open."

Seles, Gambil gun Russians down



Jan-Michael Gambil and Monica Seles are all smiles after beating Marat Safin and Elena Likhovtseva in the mixed doubles match of the Hopman Cup yesterday. — AFP photo



Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden in action against German Nicolas Kiefer in the Qatar Open in Doha on January 2. —AFP photo

Seeds sent packing

MADRAS, Jan 3: Swedish top seed Magnus Norman, ranked four in the world was shocked by teenager American wildcard Taylor Dent in the first round of the 400,000-dollar Indian Open here on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Dent won in straight sets 6-3, 7-6 (7-3).

In another major upset, second seed and world No. 14 Franco Squillari of Argentina was stunned by another teenager, Russian Mikhail Youzhny, the youngest player in the tournament.

Youzhny, ranked 99 places below Squillari, won 6-7 (4-7), 6-1, 6-2 to throw open the event.

"You have to stay cool if you want to be a champion," said Norman later. "I said yesterday that Dent was a dangerous customer and I was not mistaken. I was mistiming my shots and he was serving great and playing cleanly."

He added that Dent's having

nothing to lose" approach also made a difference. "Dent had nothing to lose, he went out and enjoyed himself. In my case, if you're not 300 per cent, you can lose to anyone."

France's Cedric Pioline was nearly the third upset of the day, but he took his time after a slow start and got past Spain's Galo Blanco. Pioline, a semi-finalist last year and the third seed here, won 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7-4), but it wasn't easy.

Blanco made some great looping top spin drives in what was basically a baseline duel.

Pioline could not convert his first match point with Blanco serving 30-40, 4-5 in the final set, and tried to slice and keep the ball low.

He succeeded in the end to frustrate Blanco, who made errors at crucial points in the tie-break, netting a backhand return to give the Frenchman his second matchpoint and then sending down a double-fault to end the matter.

Pioline said he was happy to win the match, despite the manner in which the win was accomplished.

Another Frenchman to win Tuesday was Jerome Golmard. The defending champion let up a little to lose the second set tie-break after closing out the first set, but made short work of Switzerland's George Bastl in the third to win 7-5, 6-7 (3-7), 6-1.

Golmard said he wasn't really worried at any stage of the match, except about his back. "I had eight weeks of treatment on my lower back in August and even now, my one major opponent is my back. If that will hold, I can deal with anyone."

Sweden's Andreas Vinciguerra, who has made second round exits the last two years here and was yesterday named by Norman as one of the people who could end the year on top, posted a quick win over Switzerland's Michel Kratochvil 7-6 (7-4), 6-3.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer. Includes a crossword puzzle grid and a list of clues. Also includes a Cryptoquip puzzle and its solution.