

Onus on Athers

Michael Atherton on Sunday made Sri Lanka firm favourites to win the first Test after England ended the fourth day still 100 runs adrift after following on.

Atherton, who ended on 44 not out as the tourists closed on 118 for two, said: "It will be a great effort if we can get a draw."

"The pitch is turning and really breaking up now — people may say it's slow but I can think of better ones to bat on. It's a good pitch for the spinners."

"On these pitches you are always going to have a cluster of wickets go at some time and that's what happened but we came back well. I just hope the rub of the green goes our way tomorrow."

Atherton, renowned for some marathon rearguard innings to get England out of trouble, conceded that he was short of his best form.

NSW ride on Bevan

Michael Bevan, regarded by some as the world's top one-day batsman, guided New South Wales to victory over Western Australia in the final of the Australian one-day cricket competition here on Sunday.

Bevan, a 30-year-old left-hander, hammered an exhilarating 135 not out as New South Wales won a bad-tempered match by six wickets before a crowd of almost 10,000 at the WACA Ground.

Khagrachhari v'ball

Salkatal Club became unbeaten champions in the Chababmog Smriti volleyball tournament yesterday.

Salkatal club defeated Dighinala Fadangthong Club 19-7, 17-15 points in the final at the Marna Unnayan Club ground.

Tanvir left

FROM PAGE 13 Atherton lhb b Vaas 33

But, with 55 votes, Tanvir Ahsan Saad, a former national cricketer and selector, faced a real challenge before making it through.

Tanveer Mazhar Islam and Mobasser Hossain had to hold their breath for a while as they finally filled in the last two available posts.

Following is the unofficial result of the election:

Candidate	Vote
Mahmud Ul Haq	90
Gazi Golam Dastagir	88
Syed Ashraf Huj	83
Aziz Al Kaiser	81
Jalal Younus	80
Afzalur Rahman Sinha	74
Enayet Kabir Chanchal	73
Ali Khabir Chand	73
Ahmed Sajjadul Alam	70
Enayet Hossain Siraj	70
Alam Chowdhury	69
Mahabubul Anam	65
GS Hasan Tanim	59
Tanvir Ahsan Saad	55
Tanveer Mazhar Islam	54
Mobasser Hossain	50
Mozammel Huj	50
Ahsan Kadir	48
Ahmed Iqbal Hasan	33
Syed Siraj Uddin	31
Mainul Huj	29
Rafiqul Alam	23
Munir Hasan Mintu	23
Arifur Rahman Jinnah	19
Tanvir Haider	18
Hossain Molla	16
Iftekar Rahman	4

England still

FROM PAGE 13 Atherton lhb b Vaas 33

England's batsmen were struggling in the first Test, but they managed to score 253 runs in the second innings to level the match at 1-1.

Sherpur badminton

A badminton tournament, organised by the District Sports Association, was held at local New Market ground recently.

A total of 16 teams took part in this tournament. In the final, Sonam-Sathi team defeated Inom-Sathi team by 2-1 set.

Sirajganj soccer

Our Correspondent, Sirajganj Sirajganj Jamuna Traders blanked Sirajganj Ambagan Sporting Club in the semifinals 11-0 to reach the final of the First Division Football League at Shahid Shamsuddin Stadium yesterday on Saturday.

Masumpur Kriachakra defeated Ekok Sangha Sporting Club 1-0. The final will be played after Eid.

Kiwis flatten Pakistan

Cricket

AFP, Christchurch

New Zealand ensured the one-day cricket series against Pakistan would go to the fifth and final match with a 138-run win in the fourth match at Jade Stadium here on Sunday.

New Zealand, thanks to a whirlwind century by Craig McMillan, scored 284 for five then bowled a disappointing Pakistan out for 146 in the 47th over to square the series 2-2.

McMillan's 104 off 75 balls was the 12th equal fastest one-day century of all time, alongside Chris Cairns' effort on the same ground against India two years ago.

It was also McMillan's highest score, beating the 116 he scored against South Africa in 1997-98. He hit six fours and five sixes, and brought up the mark with a six off the last ball of the innings off Saqlain Mushtaq. Opener Nathan Aspinall got the innings rolling with 71 off 88 balls. Roger Twose scored 42 and Chris Harris chimed in with 39 at the end to add an unbroken 112 off 97 balls with McMillan.

Pakistan's reply never got going as they slumped to 36 for five in the 14th over.

The only meaningful contributions came from Moin Khan, who scored 50 off 60 balls, and Inzamamul Haq, who scored 37 off 101 balls.

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SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the fourth one-day cricket international between New Zealand and Pakistan on Sunday.

NEW ZEALAND Fleming b Younis 0

Satisfied Saber

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Cricket Board president Saber Hossain Chowdhury on Sunday praised the Under-17 cricket team for their positive approach to the game.

"I am satisfied with the performance of our inexperienced cricketers in the Under-17 Asia Cup," he told reporters at the National Sports Council.

Bangladesh, who beat previous champions Sri Lanka to reach the final, lost to experienced India and became the runners-up.

He said, "The approach by our boys during batting, in particular, was positive. And they were never under psychological pressure like the seniors and this is very good sign for our cricket."

"They were not shy in the first 13 overs during the inner-circle limit," he said.

'Leave him alone'

REUTERS, Christchurch

Controversial Pakistan pace bowler Shoaib Akhtar is good for cricket but not bigger than the game, according to former New Zealand all-rounder Lance Cairns.

Cairns, the father of New Zealand all-rounder Chris, said any debate about the legality of Akhtar's action helped promote interest in the sport.

But he advised the "Rawalpindi Express", and his opponents to avoid the issue.

Cairns, writing in the Sunday News, argued: "The media will always have an interest in him because of the speed he can bowl. I think it is great Akhtar creates this interest."

"His bowling generates debate and keeps the sport in high profile."

But he added: "Akhtar has to realise cricket is bigger than him. If some decide his action is illegal and he is banned again, cricket will still be played and he'll soon be forgotten."

The International Cricket Council's (ICC) bowling panel ruled Akhtar's action should be adjusted at the end of 1999 following doubts about its legality during Pakistan's tour of Australia.

The 25-year-old Akhtar had responded by arguing his action did not need changing and the ICC then overruled its bowling panel and cleared him to play again.

Cairns added that New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming had been wrong in questioning Akhtar's action earlier in the ongoing one-day series between the sides.

"Fleming should not be making comments, no matter how flippant, because when his team is losing, it smacks of sour grapes," he wrote.

Suspended ban on Hick

INTERNET, Colombo

Graeme Hick has been given a suspended ban Sunday after displaying dissent over his dismissal in the first Test against Sri Lanka in Galle.

He was summoned to a hearing at the close of play on the fourth day by match referee Hanuman Singh with England coach Duncan Fletcher also present.

Hick shook his head at being given out, caught behind by umpire Peter Manuel shortly before lunch.

But after a lengthy hearing, Singh, who warned both sides of the possible punishment if he did not adhere to the International Cricket Council's code of conduct prior to the start of the series, issued a suspended one-match ban which ends once the current tour is completed.

Singh said: "As far as dissent is concerned we must learn to accept decisions with good grace."

Magura cricket

Our Correspondent, Magura

Dilip Smriti Sangsad recorded a seven-run victory over Bangabandhu Jubo-Kishore Sangsad in the second match of the Haidar Akter Banu Memorial Cricket Tournament at the Magura Stadium yesterday.

Batting first, Dilip Smriti scored 95 all out in 19.1 overs.

In reply, Bangabandhu Jubo-Kishore Sangsad made 88 all out in 23.4 overs.

Inzy's tour in doubt

AGENCIES, Christchurch

Pakistan batsman Inzamamul Haq's tour of New Zealand could be in doubt after he suffered a double injury while fielding in the fourth one-day international in Christchurch on Sunday.

Inzamam injured both his groin and a calf muscle while fielding within 10 minutes of the Sunday morning start.

He batted in the Pakistan innings with a runner and made a painstaking 37 in 101 minutes as the tourists went on to lose the match by 138 runs for New Zealand to square the series 2-2 with one match to go.

Pakistan captain, Moin Khan, said Inzamam's injury was "fairly bad." He said the team would not take the chance of playing him in the next match and if he did not look like healing in time for the three-match Test series, a replacement could be called for from Pakistan.

"His injury is a big handicap for us," Moin said. "He's a key batsman and we need him fit."

Shoaib Akhtar is still struggling with a thigh injury he suffered almost a week ago in Napier, according to Moin. He said he is in doubt about playing in the final one-day match in Dunedin on Wednesday and any decision would be made on the advice of team medic Taufeeq Razaq.

"He's a very important player for us," Moin said. "We might have to wait until the Test series before he is fit."

Born-again Hirwani

Cricket

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Half a decade is too long a lay-off to leave any cricketer, however promising he is, in with a chance to stage a comeback to the highest level of the game. But not, it seems, for Narendra Hirwani, the 32-year-old leg-spinner who has been recalled to the Indian team for the first Test against Australia beginning in Mumbai (Bombay) next week.

It is a virtual rise of the mythical Sphinx from the ashes. Not even the most foolhardy supporter of Hirwani would have dared to bet on his return to the national squad after he had played his previous Test against South Africa at the Eden Gardens, Calcutta, in November, 1996. India had lost that Test and Hirwani could collect just two wickets at an average of 64.50 in that match.

Consider what had happened to Hirwani, or "Hiru" as he is popularly called by teammates, only eight years ago. It was a dream debut for a leggie by any standard. The 19-year-old Sindhi-speaking lad from Indore, the town in central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, finished with 16 wickets giving away 136 runs in his very first Test appearance — against a formidable West Indies batting line-up in Madras in 1988.

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seen him bagging 36 wickets in four Tests. He became an overnight celebrity and was among the galaxy of top Indian sports personalities who featured in an immensely popular musical video album on

NARENDRA HIRWANI

the theme of India's national integrity.

Thereafter, Hirwani suddenly went into a decline managing only 36 wickets in 13 Tests in the next ten years before being dropped from the side after that Test against the South Africa in Calcutta in 1996. Interestingly, that Test saw another leg-spinner Anil Kumble making his debut. Why did Hirwani go into virtual oblivion as far as Test cricket was concerned? Cynics would say he had

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been off to a too good a start in his career and from there could only come down.

Hirwani may have found a place back into the national team after five years due to the injury of Kumble. But the senior leggie attributes his selection to "God's grace" and his own "hard work" over the years. "I never gave up hope of bowling for India again. I am a firmly believer in honesty and hard work and that is what helped me in making this comeback," he said.

Hirwani believes it is not that he is bowling better. "I have been the same the last 30 years. Probably, this time I was watched closely and I am grateful to national selectors for recognising my calibre," says he. No doubt, the Indian team coach John Wright, captain Saurav Ganguly and selection committee chairman Chandu Borde watched him bowl from close and were impressed at the training camp recently in Madras.

Borde said Hirwani was preferred because the Aussie batsmen were found difficulty in playing leg spin in their tour opener match in Nagpur last week. Hirwani, according to him, was more accurate than another leg spinner Sajid Bahutule at the camp.

Hirwani says he is determined to live up to the faith reposed in him by the selectors as well as Wright and Ganguly and to make his return to Test cricket as memorable as was his debut.

Martina 'Desert Queen'

Tennis

AFP, Dubai

Martina Hingis claimed her third title of the year here on Saturday when she overcame weary French veteran Nathalie Tauziat 6-4 6-4 to win the Dubai Tennis Championships.

The victory, which was her second successive title on her mini Gulf State tour and was her fifth final of the year, earned her 90,000 dollars, but the match lacked excitement until late in the second set.

Although 33-year-old Tauziat, seeded third, often played textbook serve and volley and was able to remain competitive, she never looked capable of troubling the top seed.

Hingis immediately stamped her authority on the match by breaking serve in the opening game, aided by several blistering service returns.

And when the 20-year-old Swiss held break point at 4-2 and sent a forehand winner whistling past the Frenchwoman, Tauziat was reduced to desperately throwing her racquet at the ball.

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MARTINA HINGIS



(L-R) Former Bangladesh cricket captain Minhazul Abedin (L), coach Osman Khan, ex-cricketer and Abahani manager GS Hasan Tamim and former national wicketkeeper Nasir Ahmed having a chat at the BCB office yesterday.

Saurav annoyed at fans

Cricket

AFP, Bombay

India's cricket captain Saurav Ganguly on Sunday lashed out at the media and fans alike for predicting a cake walk for the world-beating Australians in the upcoming Test series.

Ganguly, preparing for the first Test starting here on Tuesday, raved the Indian tradition of placing more faith in the opposition than in their own team.

"Every country backs their own team, only we Indians think negatively about ourselves," the embattled skipper said.

"But deep inside, I believe it is really possible to beat Steve Waugh's side."

The Indian media has forecast a drubbing for Ganguly's men against the formidable Australians, rated the best team in the world after securing a record 15 consecutive Test wins.

India, always a formidable side at home despite moderate success overseas, had not lost a series in their backyard for 13 years till South Africa ended that streak last year with a 2-0 whitewash.

Hansie Cronje's men routed India in three days at the same Wankhede Stadium where the first Test will be played, suggesting the home team is vulnerable even in familiar conditions.

But Ganguly, targeted by the media recently for an alleged extra-marital affair with a film actress, said the pressure will be

entirely on the Australians to win the series.

"They may be the world champions with 15 wins in a row, but they have not won a series in India since 1970," Ganguly said.

"We beat them easily the last two times they played here in 1996 and 1998, so they are the ones who have a point to prove."

"Time is running out for the batsmen," said captain Steve Waugh, who considers the Indian tour as the last frontier for his all-conquering side.

"We will have to bat much better if we are to win the series."

Australia's plight against the turning ball could see India including three spinners for the first Test at the expense of a medium-pace.

With the hosts determined to play six batsmen, Ganguly himself may share the new ball with Javagal Srinath to accommodate the three spinners — recalled leggie Narendra Hirwani, off-break bowler Harbhajan Singh and left-arm debutant Rahul Sanghvi.