

Lanka A 216-5

REUTERS, Matara
Sri Lanka A were 216 for five at the close on the opening day of the three-day match against West Indies at the Uyanwatte Stadium Thursday.

Scoreboard at close on the opening day of the three-day match between Sri Lanka A and West Indies in Matara on Thursday. Includes batting and bowling statistics for both teams.

'India's present to Pollock & co'

REUTERS, New Delhi
India were under fire from local media on Wednesday for handing the first Test to South Africa "on a platter".

Indians present Test on a platter to Pollock's men," said a banner headline in the Hindu after South Africa won the first Test in Bloemfontein by nine wickets on Tuesday.

The Times of India said: "India make it easy for Pollock." India scored 379 in their first innings but were dismissed for 237 in the second as South African captain Shaun Pollock captured six for 56 to complete his first 10-wicket haul in Tests.

"A match that many branded as a great advertisement for Test cricket before the start of the fourth day, ended in a blaze of embarrassment for the Indians," said the Hindustan Times under the headline, "Pollock shows lost Indians the way to doom."

The paper pointed out that the team had lasted a full day of batting only twice in their last 10 away Tests. "All those who have followed India's fortunes overseas are familiar with three words: despair, dejection and gloom," it said.

The Indian Express blamed the defeat on India's poor bowling and on the batsmen's inability to deal with the moving ball on pacy wickets. "India lost the Test because their bowling and fielding were atrocious... the batting didn't rise to the occasion either," said the paper under the headline, "Ship sinks after Indians fall to drop anchor."

India's skipper Saurav Ganguly was criticised for his batting failure after he fell fending rising deliveries in both innings.

The second match of the three-Test series starts in Port Elizabeth on November 16.

Zia turns

FROM PAGE 13
Sattar, Abdullah Al-Rakib and Enamul Hossain Rajib have the potential to become GM.

"Look at India. They are producing more chess players than us only because they have provided players with advanced facilities under a modern game management," he said.

Zia, who obtained his masters degree in anthropology from the Dhaka University couple of years back, finally singled out his sponsor Biman Bangladesh Airlines for his success.

"I am grateful to Biman. I could not have reached here without their help. Whenever I needed to go abroad they were there with my air ticket," he said with a tinge of emotion.

Last session drama at Gabba



AFP, Brisbane

New Zealand clawed back from a record double-century opening stand to rock the world champion Australians in a topsy-turvy opening day of the first cricket Test at the Gabba on Thursday.

Matthew Hayden and Justin Langer provided the home side's foundation with a 224-run opening stand with the New Zealanders unable to buy a wicket in the first two barren sessions.

But once the visitors finally broke through by prising Hayden's wicket for 136, fortunes swung decisively for the spirited Kiwis with part-time bowler Craig McMillan the unlikely hero.

McMillan claimed 3-5 off 17 aggressive medium-pace deliveries to send the Australians tumbling from 224 without loss to 263 for six - effectively, 39 for six in just over an hour.

"It was a strange day's cricket and we knew we had to hang in, stay positive and the rewards would come," said McMillan.

Up until the collapse, Kiwi skipper Stephen Fleming's decision to put Australia in after winning the toss looked disastrous, but he stuck faithfully to his game plan.

With astute field placements backed up by spirited bowling and abetted by reckless Australian batting, the Kiwis stormed back into the game after looking all but out of contention.

At stumps, Australia were 294 for six with Adam Gilchrist on 13 and Shane Warne on 18.

Before the extraordinary turn of events, Australia had batted their way into a seemingly impregnable position through Hayden and Langer.

Coming together after Langer replaced Michael Slater for the fifth Ashes Test against England, the new Australian opening pair amassed 158 in their first hit together and backed that up with Thursday's double-century stand.

The two left-handers established Australia's highest opening partnership against New Zealand.

eclipsing Mark Taylor and Slater's stand of 198 in Perth in the 1993-94 series.

"At one stage out there, Matt said to me 'how good is this?' and I said it was like playing backyard cricket, not because of the New Zealand attack, but because we were having so much fun," said Langer.

Hayden was at his imperious best, clubbing 20 fours and two



LANGER 104

sixes in a 251-minute knock that enraptured his home crowd with his fourth Test century and first at the Gabba ground.

Hayden was dropped on 83 off left-arm seamer Shayne O'Connor when McMillan made an acrobatic dive in the covers, taking a hot catch in his out-stretched left hand only to spill it when his elbow hit the ground.

Langer, who grasped his chance at The Oval with a fighting 102, had a heart-flutter in the day's first over but showed steely determination to grind out his ninth Test hundred in just under five hours at the crease.

Chris Cairns vociferously appealed for an lbw decision on Langer with his fifth ball of the innings. Television replays

appeared to vindicate Cairns' appeal, but Australian umpire Daryl Harper turned it down.

Upon Hayden's dismissal, when he hooked Cairns to Matthew Richardson in the deep, the battling Kiwis sensed an opportunity.

Ricky Ponting faced just seven balls before he top-edged Cairns to Vettori for five and Mark Waugh was lbw to Nathan Astle for a duck.

Steve Waugh, without a first-class lead-up match to the Test after a bout of deep vein thrombosis arising from a troublesome calf muscle injury, looked unconvincing as he poked around for 23 balls for three until he was caught behind by Adam Parore off McMillan.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the opening day of the first Test between Australia and New Zealand at the Gabba on Thursday:

Australia: First innings. Langer c Vettori b McMillan 104. Hayden c Richardson b Cairns 136. Ponting c Vettori b Cairns 5. M Waugh lbw b Astle 0. S Waugh c Parore b McMillan 3. Martyn c Vettori b McMillan 4. Gilchrist not out 13. Warne not out 18. Extras: (lb-3, w-1, nb-7) 11. Total: (For 6 wickets in 90 overs) 294. Fall of wickets: 1-224, 2-233, 3-235, 4-256, 5-260, 6-263.

To bat: Brett Lee, Jason Gillespie, Glenn McGrath.

Bowler O M R W. Cairns 23 4 95 2. Nash 18 6 39 0. O'Connor 14 3 55 0. Vettori 12 0 60 0. Astle 16 7 29 1. McMillan 7 1 13 3.

NEW ZEALAND: Mark Richardson, Matthew Bell, Mathew Sinclair, Stephen Fleming, Nathan Astle, Craig McMillan, Chris Cairns, Adam Parore, Dion Nash, Daniel Vettori, Shayne O'Connor.

Umpires: Steve Bucknor (WI), Daryl Harper (Aus).

Lanka spin plan for West Indies

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka on Thursday named three spinners in their 15-member squad for the first Test against the West Indies, starting at Galle on Tuesday.

Left-arm spinner Niroshan Bandara, who has played just four Tests since making his debut in 1997, has been recalled to assist off-spinners Muttiah Muralitharan and Thilan Samaraweera on a traditionally spinner-friendly track.

Samaraweera is also a useful lower-order batsman, having scored a century on debut against India in August.

The selectors have also recalled all-rounder Suresh Perera, whose bowling action was reviewed and then cleared by a Sri Lankan board-appointed panel of bowling experts.

With key fast bowler Dilhara Fernando ruled out of the Test because of a back injury, the selectors have included three pacemen in Ruchira Perera, Charitha Buddhika and Nuwan Zoysa.

Left-arm Zeena returns to the squad after missing the home series against India and the recent Champions Trophy tournament in Sharjah due to an ankle injury.

SQUAD

Sanath Jayasuriya (captain), Marvan Atapattu, Mahela Jayawardene, Russel Arnold, Kumar Sangakkara, Hashan Tillakaratne, Michael Vandort, Thilan Samaraweera, Suresh Perera, Muttiah Muralitharan, Niroshan Bandara, Ruchira Perera, Chaminda Vaas, Charitha Buddhika, Nuwan Zoysa.

Dighe coming back to India

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's wicketkeeper Sameer Dighe is returning home midway through the South African Test tour because of a back injury, an Indian cricket official has said.

Dighe joined the squad for the three-Test series but was sidelined on the morning of the first game in Bloemfontein on Saturday because of back spasms.

He will return without playing a game after he failing to respond to treatment in South Africa.

Deep Dasgupta, who kept wicket during a one-day series in South Africa and was retained as a back-up for the Tests, made his debut in the game won by South Africa by nine wickets.

Shah said the team management had not yet asked for a replacement.

India play a four-day match against South Africa "A" at East London from Saturday before the final Tests in Port Elizabeth (November 16-20) and Centurion (November 23-27).

Shah also said skipper Saurav Ganguly, who became a father on Saturday, has decided against returning to Calcutta to see his daughter.

Tailor made!

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's cricket team is to get an overhaul of its wardrobe ahead of the three-Test series with West Indies after grappling with ill-fitting clothing, skipper Sanath Jayasuriya said.

The decision to make new outfits for the team was taken after Sri Lanka lost the Champions' Trophy by five wickets to Pakistan at Sharjah on Sunday with 38 balls to spare.

Jayasuriya said he did not want to blame the poorly-tailored kits for their bad performance at the finals, but the problem with the ill-fitting garments had now been resolved.

"We lost the finals because we did not perform well," Jayasuriya said playing down reports from officials that the badly-made garments also played a role in hampering the players.

Akhtar reported again

PCB defends him; Holding to help correct action



AFP, Karachi

Pakistan cricket officials and players on Thursday rallied behind fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar after his bowling action was again questioned by an international referee.

"I don't know why this issue is raised time and again when a report by experts has cleared Akhtar," Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Lieutenant General Tahir Zia told this news agency.

"Sri Lankan spinner Muttiah Muralitharan was cleared from the same research centre as Akhtar and we have sent a report of that to the International Cricket Council," he said.

The ICC said Wednesday that match referee Denis Lindsay and umpires Rudi Koertzen of South Africa and George Sharp of England had cast doubt on Akhtar's bowling action after the Champions' Trophy in Sharjah that Pakistan won last week.

There was, however, no report made by West Indian Ed Nichols, the third umpire standing in Sharjah, an ICC release said.

Akhtar, 26, playing for Pakistan for the first time since June, took three wickets in the final against Sri Lanka.

The ICC followed up its report that Akhtar had again been cited by announcing Thursday that West Indian fast bowler great Michael Holding would help the troubled Pakistani speedster.

"I am delighted that Michael has agreed to work with the ICC and Shoaib Akhtar in this important area," ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed said in a media release.

"His outstanding record as a player and the excellent communications skills he brings to his work in the media make him perfectly suited to the role."

Holding, nicknamed the "Rolls Royce of fast bowlers" for his classic run-up and action, will hold

sessions with Akhtar in the next few weeks to sort out the Pakistani's bowling problems.

ICC referee John Reid of New Zealand first reported Akhtar's action in December 1999.

After he was cleared in March 2000, New Zealand umpires Doug

delivery needed revising.

"This means every other spinner chucks," Alam said. "The ICC is putting needless pressure on a youngster who is very exciting to watch, they have frustrated him time and again."

National wicketkeeper Rashid Latif said it was well-known that he had been born with an unusual formation of the elbow. "So what is the purpose of reporting him again and again?" he said.

Akhtar, nicknamed the Rawalpindi Express, and Australian Brett Lee, whose bowling action was also cleared last year, are regarded as the fastest in the world.

Both have approached speeds of 99 miles (158 kilometres) an hour and could be the first to breach the 100mph (160kph) barrier.

Experts at the Australian Institute of Human Resources, Human Movement department in Perth helped Akhtar correct his action in April and then cleared him, saying in a report that his bowling arm was deformed at birth giving an illusion of throwing.

"The match referee did not say anything to me in Sharjah except he said he wanted the ICC to have another look at Akhtar's action," Pakistan team manager Yawar Saad said.

"These allegations will be rejected on the basis of the experts' report," he said.

Working with Holding is part of stage two of the ICC process for dealing with bowlers with suspect actions.

A detailed assessment of Akhtar's action and any remedial work undertaken will be submitted to the ICC and the PCB within three months, the ICC said, adding the report will be made public.

Akhtar will be allowed to play international cricket during this period but an ICC review panel could ban him for a year he is reported again within 12 months of Holding's work.



SHOAIB AKHTAR

Cowie and Steve Dunn reported Akhtar's action in March 2001 during Pakistan's 3-2 loss in a one-day series.

"It's mind boggling, when Akhtar is cleared once, why raise heaven time and again," said fellow fast bowler Wasim Akram.

"Let him play cricket freely because he is exciting and people want to watch him."

"I am bound by the ICC code, otherwise I can say that there are a number of bowlers currently playing international cricket who have more doubtful actions," Akram said.

Former Pakistan captain Intikhab Alam said the law of illegal

England trio fit to tour

India change one venue



AFP, undated

England's three remaining doubtful players for their forthcoming tour of India all passed fitness tests Wednesday.

Warwickshire left-arm spinner Ashley Giles (Achilles tendon), Yorkshire all-rounder Craig White (knee) and Leicestershire fast-medium bowler James Ormond (knee) will now take their places in the 16-man party.

Both Giles and White were among England's "flattering five" who asked for extra time before agreeing to tour because of security worries sparked by the terror attacks in the United States and the subsequent military action in Afghanistan.

White and Ormond both bowled in the nets at Edgbaston on Wednesday under the supervision of the England physiotherapist Dean Conway and doctors have given them the all-clear to resume cricket.

However, doubts still remain over Giles who will not, according to a statement from the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) is not expected to play any part in the warm-up games.

"But if his recovery goes to plan he will be in contention for the Test matches," the statement added.

Giles said: "I've really made great strides with the injury in the last three weeks and everything has

gone to plan apart from picking up an infection in the Achilles which prevented me training for a while.

"But once I get up to India that will give me an opportunity to get used to playing on grass again and work on my fitness with Dean Conway and Nigel Stockill (England physio)." "I'm not going to put pressure on myself by saying when I think I will be ready to play again, but hopefully I can be in the frame for the first Test," Giles added.

"Everyone I've spoken to says India is a fantastic place to tour and I'm really looking forward to the challenge of bowling to top-class players like Dravid, Laxman and Tendulkar."

England, due to arrive in India on November 14, are scheduled to play three Tests at Mohali, Ahmedabad and Bangalore.

They will then return home for Christmas before coming back to India mid-January for a series of five one-day internationals.

Meanwhile, India's cricket chiefs on Thursday changed the venue for England's tour opener from a ground with no fences to the regular Test centre in Bombay due to security reasons.

The two-day match against a team from the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) was to be hosted by the Bombay Gymkhana on November 18 and 19.

But with the Gymkhana ground having no fences or stands, it was decided to shift the game to the

Wankhede Stadium, Bombay's Test centre, where adequate security can be provided to the tourists.

"We have been asked to host the match at the Wankhede for security reasons," MCA joint secretary Mayank Khandwala said from Bombay.

"It's a late development. There is some repair work going on in the west stand, so the Wankhede Stadium may not be in the shape we wanted it to be for a tour match."

India also named the match officials for the Test series against England.

West Indian Steve Bucknor, Zimbabwean Ian Robinson and Asoka de Silva of Sri Lanka will be the neutral umpires. According to list released on Wednesday, Bucknor and international panel umpire Srinivas Venkataraghavan will officiate during the first Test at Mohali on December 3-7.

Robinson and AV Jayaprakash will be on duty for the second Test at Ahmedabad while De Silva's partner for the third and final match in Calcutta is yet to be named.

SQUAD Nasser Hussain (captain), Marcus Trescothick, Mark Butcher, Graham Thorpe, Mark Ramprakash, Usman Afzaal, Michael Vaughan, Craig White, Warren Hegg, James Foster, Ashley Giles, Richard Dawson, Jimmy Ormond, Matthew Hoggard, Richard Johnson, Martyn Ball.

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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes a solution time of 24 mins and a list of words to be filled in.

Cryptogram puzzle grid with a key: E P V C Q C A A P N A N. Includes a solution: Saturday's Cryptogram: BEFORE STUFFING YOURSELF WITH MACARONI, BE CERTAIN YOU HAVE ENOUGH ELBOW ROOM.

Fed Cup

Belgium blank Germany



AFP, Madrid

Favourites Belgium got their Fed Cup campaign off to a flying start here Wednesday whitewashing Germany 3-0 in their opening tie of the women's tennis team tournament.

Kim Clijsters and Justine Henin launched Belgium's bid for a maiden Fed Cup victory in style by easily winning their singles ties in straight sets against the Germans who were called up as late replacements for the United States.

Henin ousted Martina Muller in their Pool B tie 6-3, 6-1 in 73 minutes and was followed on court by Clijsters who took just 52 minutes to mete out the same treatment to Bianka Lamade, equally winning 6-3, 6-1.

Elis Collens and Laurence Courtois however proved to be the weakest links in the Belgian attack, dropping a set before coming away 6-4, 6-7, 6-1 winners against Lamade and Barbara Rittner in the

Akram's call to play in Pak



AFP, Karachi

Pakistan's veteran fast bowler Wasim Akram on Wednesday urged the West Indies and Australia to wait before refusing to play Test cricket in Pakistan because of the US air strikes on Afghanistan.

"It's perturbing that there are attacks on our neighbours but the situation is not as worrying as people have made it," Akram told this news agency.

"I would appeal to the West Indies and Australian cricket officials that they must not take premature decisions on playing in Pakistan."

"I hope this war ends early and Pakistan cricket is not affected by it because everyone here hates war and loves cricket," Akram said.

Sport in Pakistan has been badly hit by the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington and the reprisal air raids in neighbouring Afghanistan.

New Zealand cancelled a tour of Pakistan last month, the Pakistan Open squash was postponed and the Champions' Trophy field hockey was shifted from Lahore to the Dutch city of Rotterdam.

The Pakistan Cricket Board has lost tens of millions of dollars because of the loss of revenue from home series.

Akram, who was to fly to Hong Kong on Wednesday night to take part in Super Sixes event with the Pakistan team led by Rashid Latif, said: "I hope the situation will improve and we will definitely be able to hold cricket series in

Pakistan.

"They must send their officials first to check security in Pakistan," he said. "Had the New Zealanders arrived here they would have easily completed their series."

West Indies are due in Pakistan in late January to play three Tests and three one-day internationals. Pakistan are scheduled to host Australia in September 2002.

The West Indies board is press-

ing hard to play Pakistan on neutral territory after the International Cricket Council last month approved the use of third countries for series affected by unrest.

Former Australian captain Ian Chappell has expressed doubts that Australia would play in Pakistan.

"Every team likes to play before its home crowd but if the situation warrants then we can also play on neutral grounds," he said.



WASIM AKRAM

Morocco, Sharjah and the Bangladesh capital, Dhaka, are the contenders to stage Pakistan's internationals. Morocco has built a new ground with international facilities.

Akram, part of the Pakistan side which won the Champions' Trophy in Sharjah last weekend, said he was elated over his performance.

"I had the full backing of the captain Waqar Younis and coach Mudassar Nazar and I enjoyed bowling in Sharjah," he said.

Akram tipped Pakistan to win the Hong Kong Super Sixes. "We have a very strong team and we won there last time so hopefully we will defend our title."

Australia, England, Hong Kong, India, Pakistan, South Africa and Sri Lanka are taking part in the event on November 10 and 11.

All-rounders Azhar Mahmood, Abdur Razaq, Imran Nazir, Naveedul Hassan, Shoaib Malik and Shahid Afridi are also in the Pakistan squad.

Rajshahi soccer

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Abahani Kriya Chakra and Upashahr Club won their respective matches of the First Division football tournament at the local stadium yesterday.

In the first match, Abahani defeated Seroil Club 2-0. Royal and Tota netted one goal each for the winners.

In the other match, Upashahr beat Seroil Colony 2-0.