

Anand falters

AFP, Moscow

India's reigning FIDE chess world champion Viswanathan Anand stumbled in his bid to retain the title Tuesday, losing his opening game as the 2001-2002 World Championship got under way in the Kremlin.

Nearly 200 of the world's top players, 128 men and 64 women, gathered in the Kremlin's Palace of Congresses -- still generously emboldened by Soviet-era insipid -- for knock-out contests in a format designed to make the game more spectator-friendly.

The men's championship began with a shock result, the hot favourite Anand going down with the white pieces to France's Olivier Touzane, a rank outsider who qualified via an Internet tournament and whose rating is the lowest among the 128 contestants.

Touzane achieved the upset by playing the Petroff defence. He now stands a sporting chance of securing the draw he needs to eliminate Anand in the return game on Wednesday.

Anand can still advance to the second round if he can secure his revenge with the less-favoured black pieces, but the result illustrates the intense pressure brought on players by the new time-control rules.

U-15 cricket 18 picked for exhibition matches

UNB, Dhaka

An 18-member Bangladesh under-15 cricket team was announced yesterday for playing some exhibition matches in West Bengal from December 4-16.

Jishan Abedin has been made captain while Mushfiqur Rahim his deputy, according to a BCB press release.

Other members of the team are: Ashiqul Islam, Nazmus Sadat, Shumon Kumar, Marshall Ayub, Mazhar Uddin, Ishrak Sonnet, Mehedi Hasan, Shirhan Sharif, Sirajullah Khadem, Arif Reza, Rezaul Islam, Sohathi Subho and Abu Sayeed Rajid.

Asaduzzaman, Shamsur Rahman and Ruhul Amin will remain standby.

History beckons

FROM PAGE 13

The selectors kept faith in Russel Arnold who has scored just three half-centuries in his last 33 Test innings.

TEAMS
SRI LANKA (from): Sanath Jayasuriya (captain), Marvan Atapattu, Kumar Sangakkara, Mahela Jayawardene, Russel Arnold, Hashan Tillakaratne, Thilan Samaraweera, Chaminda Vaas, Muttiah Muralitharan, Niroshan Madanarasirane, Nuwan Zoysa, Charitha Buddhika, Upul Chandana, Suresh Perera.
WEST INDIES (from): Carl Hooper (captain), Brian Lara, Chris Gayle, Daren Ganga, Ramnarain Sarwan, Marlon Samuels, Ridley Jacobs, Wavell Hinds, Leon Gerrard, Neil McGarrell, Dinanath Ramnarine, Colin Stuart, Mervyn Dillon, Marlon Black, Pedro

Fleemo turns

FROM PAGE 13

frustrating first two Tests this summer, and appears poised for a bigger contribution on one of his favorite grounds.

For New Zealand to be competitive, it is essential Cairns should produce his menacing best with the new ball.

The fact that he made his Test debut in Perth just over 12 years ago may give the 31-year-old the lift he needs to rise above a disappointing 28-over spell in Australia's only Hobart innings.

Fragile English batting



AFP, Jaipur

England go into next week's first cricket Test against India without solving their batting problems after crashing to 170 in their last warm-up game here on Wednesday.

The tourists, resuming at 37 for no loss, looked uncomfortable against both pace and spin before being dismissed in 51.3 overs to concede a 63-run lead to India A on the penultimate day of the three-day match.

The hosts also found batting difficult as they struggled to reach 75-3 in their second innings, with all-rounder Craig White rocking the top order with a triple strike in his lively opening spell.

Seamer Iqbal Siddiqui, who turns 27 next month, grabbed four wickets to trigger the England collapse which saw the tourists lose seven wickets for 46 runs on a pitch of uneven bounce.

Siddiqui's four-wicket performance did not go unnoticed as the national selectors included him in a 14-member squad for the first Test against England, starting at Mohali on December 3.

Left-arm spinner Sunil Joshi, who played the last of his 15 Tests against Zimbabwe a year ago, however, missed the bus despite finishing with 3-39 off 16 overs.

England, who had made 163-9 in their previous innings on Saturday, did little to enhance their batting reputation as three of their specialist batsmen failed to build on a good start.

Captain Nasser Hussain, top-scorer with 40, again began on a promising note but could not complete his half-century for the third successive innings on the tour.

The England skipper, who made 46 and 38 in his last match at Hyderabad, hit one six and five fours in his 88-ball knock before being bowled by Joshi.

Opener Mark Butcher (37) and Michael Vaughan (22) also failed to play long innings, adding to their team's woes ahead of the opening Test.

England were in danger of being shot out for less than 150 before wicket-keeper James Foster (32) and Richard Dawson (19) put on 42 for the last wicket.

It was, however, a minor consolation for the tourists who have yet to adjust themselves to Indian conditions before the three back-to-back Tests.

SCOREBOARD

Second day's scoreboard in the three-day tour match between

England and India A at the Sawai Man Singh stadium on Wednesday:
INDIA A: First innings 233-9 declared (A Kale 122, G Khoda 64; A Flintoff 3-47, R Johnson 3-56)

ENGLAND: First innings (overnight 37-0)

Butcher c Kale b Siddiqui	37
Trescothick c Ratna b Ganesh	7
Vaughan c Mane b Siddiqui	22
Hussain b Joshi	40
Ramprakash lbw b Siddiqui	0
Flintoff c Ratna b Siddiqui	0
White b Sodhi	2
Giles c Khoda b Joshi	2

128					
Bowler	O	M	R	W	I
Ganesh	20	5	65	1	
Siddiqui	21	5	53	4	
Joshi	16	5	39	3	
Sodhi	5.3	2-	12	2	

INDIA A: Second innings

Mane lbw b White	15
Gambhir b White	30
Goud not out	13
Khoda lbw b White	0
Parida not out	4
Extras: (lb-9, w-1, nb-3)	13
Total: (For 3 wickets in 38 overs)	75
Fall of wickets: 1-39, 2-64, 3-64	

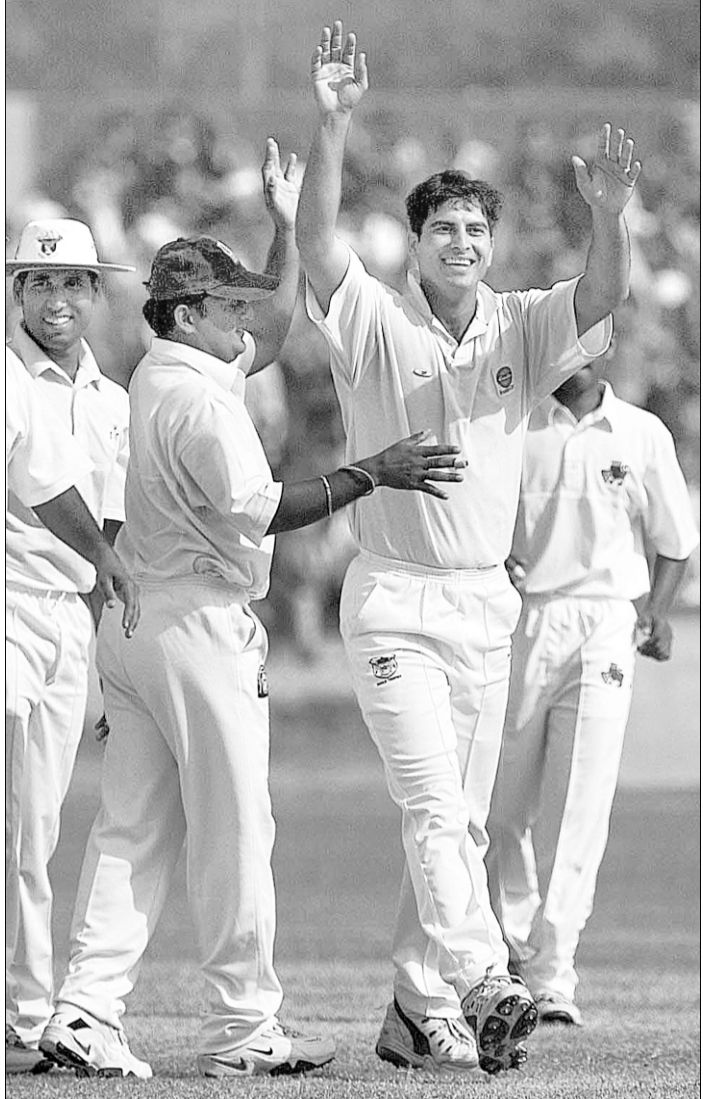


PHOTO: AFP

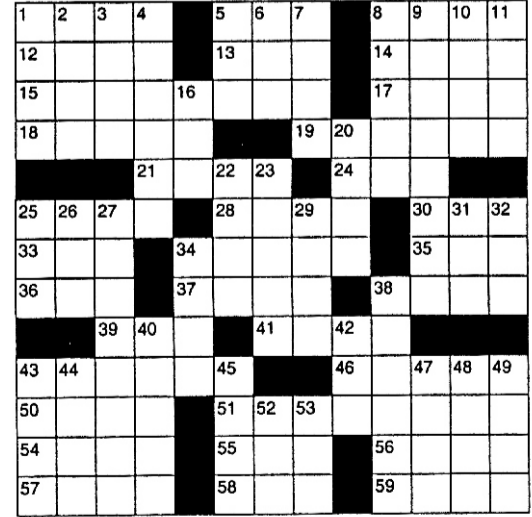
India A paceman Iqbal Siddiqui (2nd from R) is jubilant after dismissing England's Andrew Flintoff on the second day of their tour match in Jaipur yesterday.

Foster not out	32	Bowler	O	M	R	W	I
Johnson b Joshi	5	Johnson	7	2	20	0	
Dawson lbw b Sodhi	19	Flintoff	11	5	13	0	
Extras: (lb-1, nb-3)	4	White	9	3	21	3	
Total: (All out in 62.3 overs)	170	Butcher	11	7	12	0	
Fall of wickets: 1-46, 2-46, 3-82, 4-86, 5-90, 6-97, 7-100, 8-122, 9-							

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Resorts
5 Scenery
8 Heart of the matter
12 "She Sweet?"
13 Be 15-
14 Golden
15 Obligated
17 "An apple..."
18 Acknowledges
19 Enjoys the meal
21 Buddhist scriptural language
24 Chum
25 Cheese choice
28 initial stake
30 Small lizard
33 Director
34 Alphabetical listing
35 New Deal org.
36 Write a P.S.

DOWN
1 A job
2 Ever-green
3 "Shave" haircut
4 Treeless plain
5 Stolen
6 Leave expense jawed
7 Nurse's cartload, for short
8 Tropical fruit
9 Lazy
10 Celeb
11 Santa's load
20 Pinnacle
22 Highway section
23 Gandhi's balliwick
25 Bikini top
26 Staff
27 Business
29 See to
31 Saute
32 April expense
34 Persia, now
38 Artist's wardrobe
40 Drizzles
42 Actress MacGraw
43 Big name in NYC theater
44 Draftable
45 Present
47 First miracle site
48 Scintilla
49 Reply to "Shall we?"
52 Born
53 Ruby or Sandra



CRYPTOQUIP

N D O M L D O Q X U
J M N S L L S M U I T A Z L
X M A Z M Q E Z E O C S D O Z C Q
S L T O I I "C J B B I"
Yesterday's Cryptogram: THE QUACK DERMATOLOGIST IS QUITE INFAMOUS FOR MAKING A LOT OF RASH DECISIONS.

Today's Cryptogram Clue: L equals T

The Cryptogram is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

Rajshahi sports

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Mohammedan Sporting Club trounced Simla Sporting Club 6-0 in the Rajshahi First Division Football League at local stadium yesterday.

Sizar scored a hat-trick for the winners. In the other match of the day, Helenabad Colony shared points with Upashar Club at the same venue. The match was ended in a 1-1 draw.

CRICKET
Young Association and Upashar Cricket Coaching Centre won their respective matches of the seventh Birshrestha Captain Mohiuddin Jahangir Smriti Gold Cup cricket tournament at local Railway ground yesterday.

In the first match, Young Association beat Sepoypara Sporting Club by 41 runs. Winning the toss, Young collected 155 for three in stipulated 25 overs. In reply, Sepoypara managed 114 for 8 in stipulated 25 overs.

In the other match of the day, Upashar beat Sagorpara Sporting Club by six wickets.

Comilla cricket

UNB, Comilla

The First Division Cricket League begins at local stadium today.

Eight teams splitting into two groups will participate in the tourney organised by District Sports Association.

Comilla Town Club will take on Hidden Heroes Club on the opening day.

Deputy Commissioner will inaugurate the meet at 9 am.

The final match will be held on December 12.

Chris thinks

FROM PAGE 13

Vincent said the New Zealanders would love to be the first visiting team to win a series in Australia since the West Indies triumphed in 1992-93.

"This is our opportunity to be something big in history," Vincent said. He added that he had no qualms about starting his Test career against pace experts of the calibre of Glenn McGrath, Jason Gillespie and Brett Lee -- and on the paciest strip in the country.

"It's a huge task, but we all want to get challenged with the hardest thing possible because if you succeed with the hardest thing possible you feel like you're half-decent."

Martin, who already has 28 wickets in seven Tests, said he had been frustrated at sitting on the sidelines for so long on this tour and was itching to have a go at Australia's left-handed openers Matthew Hayden and Justin Langer.

The pair have hammered two double-century stands in the first two Tests.

"I like to bowl to left-handers because I tend to jag the ball away from them, that's my natural action," Martin said.

"And the left-handers seem to be getting a lot of hundreds over here at the moment... so I'd like to make a difference to the way we're bowling at the top order."

"I bowled to Hayden in a game against Queensland at the start of the tour, and it was a good challenge. I eventually got him."

"I've watched a bit of Langer, and he's been a bit lucky, to be honest."

ITC Golf Club Tournament Kurmitola Eagles soar at Kolkata

SPORTS REPORTER

Kurmitola Eagles of Dhaka clinched the best international team award in the ITC Golf Club Tournament which concluded at the Tollygunge Club in Kolkata on Saturday (November 24).

A total of 778 golfers from 193 teams took part in one of the biggest amateur golf competitions in the world.

In the tournament, Kurmitola Eagles team, comprising Brig Gen AAK Mahub Hasan, Iqbal Mahmood, Iqbal Bahar and Azharuddin Ahmed, scored 426 points over two rounds that gave them an eight stroke lead over their nearest opponents.

Chairman of ITC (Indian Tobacco Company) YC Deveshwan distributed prizes among the winners at a colourful closing ceremony.



Kurmitola Eagles brigadier general (ret'd) AAK Mahub Hasan (L), Azharuddin Ahmed (2nd from L), Iqbal Mahmood (R) and Iqbal Bahar Chowdhury (2nd from R), all holding their crests, pose with YC Deveshwan during the prize-giving ceremony of the ITC Cup golf tournament in Kolkata on November 24.



PHOTO: AFP

Australian Davis Cuppers Patrick Rafter (L) and Lleyton Hewitt share a light moment during the practice session in Melbourne yesterday.

Rafter's swan-song



AFP, Melbourne

Pat Rafter, probably the most popular player on the circuit, bows out of international tennis here this week-end when he tries to win the Davis Cup for Australia.

The 28-year-old has been plagued by arm and shoulder injuries since winning the first of his two US Open titles in 1997, and has finally decided to call it a day.

But first he has vowed to play through the pain in the hope of helping Australia triumph in the Davis Cup final against France.

The game's best volleyer since Sweden's Stefan Edberg, the popular Australian is taking a six-month break at the end of the season and admits he may never return.

He was in the Australian team that lost to Spain in last year's final on clay and persuaded the Australians to get the International Tennis Federation to agree to a

portable grass court to be laid on the Rebound Ace surface he detests at the Rod Laver Arena here.

Rafter, ultra-fast around court, is superb on grass, losing his second successive Wimbledon final in July to Goran Ivanisevic in five pulsating sets.

Not an out-and-out great like Rod Laver, Lew Hoad, John Newcombe, Roy Emerson or Ken Rosewall, he is by far Australia's most popular current sportsman.

The Bermuda-based Queenslander ends a 10-year career that has yielded two US Opens, back-to-back Wimbledon finals and a brief stint as world No. 1.

"There probably couldn't be a more fitting ending if I could win this one," Rafter said.

However, he admitted he might be tempted to return if Australia lost.

"If it wasn't meant to be, then I would like to come back... because the Davis Cup is a great event, it's a lot of fun," said Rafter.

"I'm never going to officially retire in case I ever want to come back."

In 1997, he received the Stefan

Edberg Sportsmanship award for a rarely seen gesture of fair play at a tournament in Adelaide. He reversed a line call in the second-set tiebreak to virtually hand the match to Andrei Cherkasov.

Later that year, after winning his first Grand Slam in New York, Rafter donated 150,000 US dollars to a Brisbane hospital.

In 1998, after winning his second Grand Slam at Flushing Meadows, Rafter gave another 150,000 to a hospital for terminally ill children.

Nowadays, The Patrick Rafter Cherish The Children Foundation, launched in 1999, does all the donating.

Rafter's rugged good looks, combined with his impact as a tennis star and humanitarian role on the global stage, was enough for People Magazine in the US to once vote him among the 10 sexiest men alive.

Hewitt worries Grosjean



AFP, Melbourne

Sebastien Grosjean admitted Wednesday he needed to shake off his inhibitions to overcome a psychological grip world No. 1 Lleyton Hewitt has gained over him this season.

Grosjean, ranked sixth in the world, said of all the top players Hewitt was the one he least liked playing against.

"He is consistent and so mentally strong and is rarely tempted to over hit when opponents try to attack by forcing the pace," the French No 1 said.

The 20-year-old Hewitt, who won the US Open this year as well as becoming the world's youngest No. 1, also has the ability to turn defence into attack with his retrieval skills and use of the lob.

"He really asks you big questions. He defends well on every shot, so it's very difficult to get him out of place or penetrate his defence," added Grosjean, who lost twice to Hewitt in the Masters Cup in Sydney two weeks ago.

"He's also learnt when he's in danger to come up to the net more often."

Hewitt has won on hardcourt and grass this year and is one of the fastest players around.

But Grosjean, who went on to win the Wimbledon boys' title after being discarded as a 14-year-old by the

French tennis federation because he was too small, refused to concede defeat.

"I've been working very hard and with the coaches we feel we have come up with the best way of playing him," he added.

Hewitt and Grosjean were not expected to meet before Sunday in the reverse singles.

Grosjean, 23, broke through with his Masters Series win in Paris earlier this month before reaching the final of the season-ending Masters Cup in which he lost to

Hewitt.

Friday's opening rubbers were expected to see Wimbledon finalist Pat Rafter play Grosjean and Hewitt tackle either Australian Open finalist Arnaud Clement or Nicolas Escude, the man who beat him in this year's Wimbledon.

Todd Woodbridge and Wayne Arthurs should play Cedric Pioline and Fabrice Santoro in Saturday's doubles but the final lineup will not be known until Thursday when the respective captains name their starting sides.

Woolmer ashamed

REUTERS, London

The row between the International Cricket Council (ICC) and Indian chiefs over match referee Mike Denness has brought the game into disrepute, former South Africa coach Bob Woolmer has said.

"They (India and South Africa) have brought this noble game into disrepute by undermining the authority of match referee Mike Denness," Woolmer, the ICC's high performance manager for emerging nations, said in a column in Tuesday's Daily Telegraph.

"Just what example are we creating for the game that we serve when effigies of Denness are burned on Indian street?" he added referring to the protests in India that followed the second Test.

Woolmer, who played with Denness at Kent, also said the ICC was right to downgrade the third Test to just a first-class game.

"But the effect of the whole sorry episode has been to erode cricket's credibility," he added.