

Rajshahi cricket

Chatton Smriti Sangha and Disari Sangha (Red) won their respective matches of the seventh Bishreshtha Captain Mohiuddin Jahangir Smriti Gold Cup cricket tournament at local Railway play ground yesterday.

Hinds returning, not Garrick

Left-hander Wavell Hinds will leave the West Indies team, while Leon Garrick will stay on for the upcoming one-day international series with Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe.

Lara, Vaas

Table with 5 columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Lists bowling figures for Vaas, Zoysa, S'weera, B'tilleke, M'tharan, J'suriya, Arnold, and Tratne.

SRI LANKA: First innings Alapattu c Gayle b Collins 4 Jayasuriya c Ramnarine b Black 85 Sangakkara c Gayle b Dhillon 55 Jayawardene not out 32 Arnold not out 10 Extras: (b-1, lb-5, nb-1) 7 Total: (For 3 wkts in 59 overs) 193

Sourav angry

FROM PAGE 13 refusal to lead India two seasons ago amidst reports of a spat with the selectors. In an unexpected move, the selectors omitted the entire five-man pace attack that went to South Africa, for the Mohali Test scheduled to start on Monday.

Lou not that happy



REUTERS/AFP, Perth

Debutant century-maker Lou Vincent said a late New Zealand collapse had taken the shine off his special day in the third and deciding Test against Australia.

New Zealand lost four wickets for 17 late in the day to finish at 293 for seven. "I have mixed emotions at the end there, because I was hoping we would finish the day with a maximum of five wickets down," said Vincent.

"Seven down is a bit of a kick in the guts, but, yes, it is a special day for me despite that. I had a hundred in mind.

"It was tough at times, but it was a pretty flat wicket, with a lot of pace in it. I would say it was an ideal pitch to play cricket on, and that was in my favour."

New Zealand were outplayed in the first two drawn Tests of the series and dropped opener Matthew Bell for the right-handed Vincent, who played and missed his first ball, from Auckland.

The 23-year-old lost Mark Richardson (nine) and Mathew Sinclair (two) with only 19 runs on the board before adding 199 for the third wicket with his captain Stephen Fleming (105).

"It doesn't matter what level of cricket you play, you want to do well," he said.

"Walking out today, there was definitely a few nerves there. That first ball... I thought it might be up around the rib cage or the helmet but it wasn't to be.

"I played and missed and I thought well I didn't nick it so it could be my day, so keep going."

Vincent, who was raised in South Australia before returning to New Zealand, became the sixth player to make a century on debut for the Kiwis.

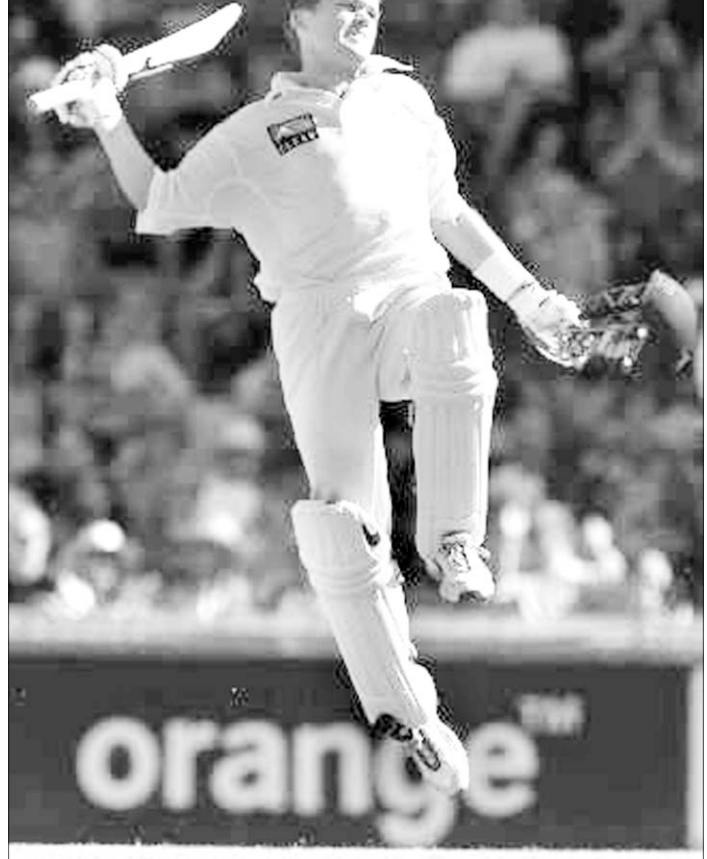
"I just try to keep it simple and do

the hard work at training and stuff and learn from the other guys around me.

"It was good to nick a couple over the top and get three figures." Vincent said batting was hard work against the Australia pace attack who bowled to three slips and two gullies for much of the day.

"I was expecting a few more bumpers, definitely," Vincent said. "I think whatever comes down, you have to be at your best and play it well.

"At the end of the day winning does count. It will mean a lot to me if we can get through these five days and get a result," Vincent said.



Debutant New Zealander Lou Vincent jumps for after reaching the century against Australia on the opening day of the third and final Test at the WACA Ground on Friday.

ICC, India

FROM PAGE 13

Indian demand to replace the former England captain as the referee in the third Test and the ICC responded by declaring the match an unofficial Test.

The Indian authorities refused to accept the ICC's ruling and maintained that as Sehwaag had missed the third match against South Africa he had not served his ban.

In reply the ICC said Sehwaag, who had been named in a 14-man squad for the first Test, still had to serve his sentence and gave the Indian board until noon (0630 GMT) on Friday to say whether or not he would play. On Thursday the deadline was put back to Saturday.

A cricket civil war became imminent when Dalmiya said he would not accept the ultimatum, raising the possibility that the ICC would rule the Test against England unofficial as well.

England had made it clear they would abandon their tour if the Test was stripped of its official status.

An England withdrawal would have placed the entire three Test series in jeopardy and posed questions on the fate of five one-day international matches India and England are scheduled to play.

Plans for an emergency meeting in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday between Dalmiya and ICC officials were abandoned earlier on Friday when the prospects of a compromise solution became imminent.

The ICC executive board meets in March.

Meanwhile, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has said it is delighted an agreement had been reached between the ICC and Indian cricket officials.

"I am delighted to hear this news. The decision is a victory for common sense and I congratulate both the ICC and BCCI on reaching an agreement," ECB chairman Lord McLaurin said in a statement.

"As we have made clear, the ECB has always been fully supportive of the ICC's position throughout this process.

"The decision will strengthen the ICC's authority and integrity as the world governing body for cricket, but the family of cricket is the real winner."

Tim Lamb, ECB chief executive, said, "This is good news for the millions of cricket followers worldwide and England's supporters.

"There is huge expectation about the series and I am delighted that the tour can now proceed as planned, and that the England team can continue their preparations for the first Test in Mohali without any further distractions."

Leeds, who sit second, are set to give Robbie Fowler his first start after signing him from league leaders Liverpool earlier this week, when they travel to Fulham on Sunday.

David O'Leary's side are just two points behind Liverpool in the table and many Anfield fans are wondering why such a prize asset should be allowed to join title rivals at this stage of the season.

But with the Bosman ruling meaning Liverpool would receive nothing for the England striker when his contract expires, and with Fowler unable to secure a regular place in the starting 11, club chiefs clearly felt now was the time to cash in.

Jamie Redknapp for one believes the Liverpool-born Fowler has made the right decision.

"Perhaps some of the fans thought he would stay at Liverpool for life but I can understand Robbie's decision," the Liverpool club captain said.

"He wants to be playing regularly and sitting on the bench isn't good enough for him," the England midfielder added.

"I'm sure there are a lot of players out there who would happily pick up their wages every week without getting a spot of first-team football but Robbie's not like that," Redknapp told his personal website on bigfanof.com.

Elsewhere, third-placed Arsenal travel to bottom of the table Ipswich Town. But there will be no return for the Londoners' former Ipswich keeper Richard Wright. The England international has a calf injury and with David Seaman (shoulder) also out, third choice Stuart Taylor is expected to start.

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SCOREBOARD Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Lists bowling figures for Richardson, Vincent, Sinclair, Fleming, Lee, Warne, Martyn, M'Vaugh, Ponting, and McGrath.

Mother of all FROM PAGE 13 ensuring it is as open and pure as possible. This means that countries which met in the qualifying competition could also meet again in the finals -- pitting perhaps England and Germany together again, or Portugal, Russia and Slovenia and Turkey and Sweden.



Australian Patrick Rafter is jubilant after beating Sebastien Grosjean of France in the second rubber of the Davis Cup final in Melbourne yesterday.

Even going at Melbourne



AP, Melbourne

It's "even-stevens" after the first day of the Davis Cup final, said Australian captain John Fitzgerald. But even his rival French captain Guy Forget wouldn't have guessed how.

It started with a surprise win by France's Nicolas Escude who had won just one match since September's US Open over the world's hottest player, Australian Lleyton Hewitt.

Then it was a gutsy performance by Pat Rafter whose place in the Australian team was in doubt because of tendonitis in his right arm in beating Sebastien Grosjean to leave the final all square after Friday's opening singles.

"I've played so many Davis Cup matches and I've watched so many that a lot of times a lot of unexpected things happen," said Forget. "And now again."

Rafter, who beat Sebastien Grosjean 6-3, 7-6 (6), 7-5, said he wasn't sure how his sore arm would

feel until he got up on Saturday morning.

But he made sure he and his teammates felt better on Friday night after Escude had given France a 1-0 lead by beating Hewitt, the world's top-ranked player and winner of 22 of his previous 24 matches. 4-6, 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4.

"Right now the adrenalin is pumping and it's hot," Rafter, who plans to take an extended break from tennis next year, said of his injury. "I've justiced it, so you don't know about these things until the morning."

On Saturday, Wayne Arthurs and Todd Woodbridge were scheduled to lead Australia in doubles against Cedric Pioline and Fabrice Santoro, but changes can be made to the doubles lineup up to an hour before the match.

Fitzgerald said he might do just that.

"We will give it a little bit of thought tonight," said Fitzgerald. "We will see how the big fellow (Rafter) is feeling and what the rest of the team thinks."

Forget said he doesn't plan to change the French doubles team.

On Sunday in the reverse sin-

gles, Hewitt will play Grosjean and Rafter is set to play Escude.

Rafter was down a break in the second set and Grosjean was serving for the set at 5-3 when Rafter broke back to help even the set and send it to a tiebreaker.

Grosjean had three set points in the tiebreaker but Rafter saved all three. Grosjean then double faulted to set up set point, then wracked a forehand long to give Rafter the tiebreaker 8-6 and the second set.

"He never was the same player in the third set," said Rafter. "He was scrambling and I felt like I had him on the ropes a lot more. He made a bit of a booboo there."

Escude broke Hewitt in the eighth games of the second and fourth sets, then held his serve in the pivotal eighth game of the deciding set after Hewitt held three break points.

Hewitt was only able to convert three of his 18 breakpoint chances in the match while Escude took advantage of four of eight.

"I felt the match start to go my way in the fourth, and the key was holding my serve when it seemed as if Lleyton would come back in the fifth," said Escude.

Premiership preview

Barthez question



AFP, London

Fabien Barthez is sweating out the next 48 hours as Manchester United boss Alex Ferguson decides whether the France 'keeper merits a place in the starting line-up away to Chelsea on Saturday.

While Ferguson contemplates the English champions' woes, the ever-flamboyant Barthez will be trying to forget the string of blunders which have contributed to United's current predicament.

The dramatic 3-1 defeat to Arsenal last week -- in which Barthez played a starring role -- was the fourth defeat of the season and left them in lowly sixth place.

Another two defeats, Ferguson warned this week, and United can kiss goodbye to hopes of retaining their title.

In his last season in charge such a finale would be tragic for the man who took United to seven Premiership titles and the European Cup.

But in a bid to relaunch his team, and make a sign to disgruntled fans, Ferguson may sit Barthez on the bench -- a strategy he is not afraid to employ.

Ferguson sent Peter Schmeichel off on a Caribbean holiday during the Dane's final season at United when he had a bad run, although he did return for the Treble run-in.

Before that Ferguson dropped Jim Leighton for the 1990 FA Cup final replay after the Scot had a nightmare game at Wembley.

Gary Bailey, United's first choice keeper from the late 1970s to the

mid 1980s, believes it is now time for Ferguson to give Barthez a break.

"Psychologically you look at the goalkeeper and you think he needs a rest," he said.

"Now might be the time to give him a break. Let things calm down and just get away from the pressure.

"Whether it's Roy Carroll or Raimond van der Gouw who goes in is up to the coaching staff to decide.

"I remember 'Schmeichl' (Schmeichel) a couple of seasons ago was going through a bad patch and Sir Alex sent him on holiday," Bailey told MUTV.

"Maybe Fabien should get the map out and pick a nice little island and go and have a couple of weeks in the sun."

Defensive problems are not Chelsea's main worry, having lost just one league match to lie two places and a point behind United.

In contrast, Claudio Ranieri's expensively assembled team are the Premiership's draw specialists with eight of their 13 matches ending in stalemate.

This has angered some sections of their crowd who feel they should be getting better value for money, especially for their expensive season tickets at Stamford Bridge.

A goalless draw against Blackburn last week did little to improve the morale of some Chelsea fans but they would have been heartened by Wednesday's 2-0 League Cup win away to Premiership leaders Leeds.

However, such is the intense focus on Ranieri that Chelsea managing director Colin Hutchinson felt compelled earlier this week to issue a statement saying the Italian had not offered to quit.

"At no stage did he offer his

resignation. There is no reason for him to offer his resignation and we have certainly not asked for it."

Indeed many teams at the other end of the league would happily swap places with Chelsea.

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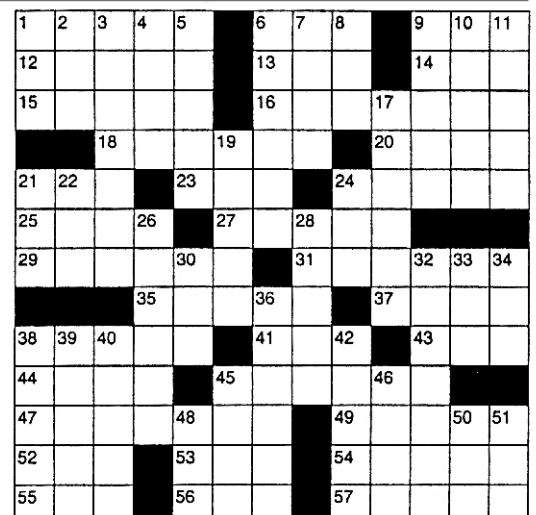
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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 41 Mel of 1 Old Testament book 6 Cubs' cudgel 9 Shriil bark 12 Scent 13 Coach 14 "y Plata" (Montana's motto) 15 Blouse ruffle 16 Fruity dessert 18 Shatters 20 DNA component 21 Cartoonist 23 Conk 24 Hoedown "seats" 25 Perception 27 Harsh 29 Fun container? 31 Wild and crazy 35 Artist Rivera 37 Emanation 38 Mature



CRYPTOQUIP A B Y K U H Y H A N V M M I U W Y I S C P G X I D Y W A X S U A B W I C S G I X K A B Y I X W Y X W V Y A X N I X H D U A U P. Yesterday's Cryptogram: IF A PAIR OF SNAKES ARE FIGHTING, DO YOU THINK THEY MIGHT HISS AND MAKE UP? Today's Cryptogram Clue: U equals I 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.