

A Rhodes confession

REUTERS, Melbourne

South African Jonty Rhodes on Monday said his team was more than happy to be facing New Zealand rather than Australia in the finals of the one-day series.

Australia beat South Africa by 33 runs in the last pool match of the triangular series in Perth on Sunday, but failed to gain the bonus point necessary to qualify for the best-of-three finals.

"I think we play pretty well against them, I think it's definitely a confidence thing when we go on the field against New Zealand."

"We've had a good run against them in the last 16 games and the guys seem to play to the best of their ability without any restrictions or inhibitions," added Rhodes, who made 107 not out in South Africa's 67-run win over New Zealand in Perth on Friday.

Rhodes also said playing Australia at Melbourne Cricket Ground on Wednesday would have given the home side a lift.

"If you're playing at the MCG with 100,000 Australians supporting their side, as they do very loyally, it will be a different atmosphere," Rhodes said.

"We're not going to be feeling like there's a hostile crowd against us playing against the Kiwis here.

"We would have played anyone in the final. We were just happy to get into the final the way we were playing at one stage.

"I think it's going to help our cause playing against New Zealand but they're still a good one-day side and we respect them for their abilities."

Hingis moves up WTA ladder

AFP, Miami

Switzerland's Martina Hingis vaulted past injured American Lindsay Davenport into third place in the WTA rankings following a victory over Monica Seles at the Pan Pacific Open tennis tournament in Tokyo on the weekend.

Hingis has 4,054 points to Davenport's 3,862 points. American Jennifer Capriati remains in first place with 4,825 points, while Venus Williams is in second with 4,200 points. Seles is 10th with 2,749 points

1. Jennifer Capriati (USA) 4825 pts
2. Venus Williams (USA) 4200 pts
3. Martina Hingis (Swi) 4054 pts
4. Lindsay Davenport (USA) 3862 pts
5. Kim Clijsters (Bel) 3698 pts
6. Serena Williams (USA) 2875 pts
7. Justine Henin (Bel) 2816 pts
8. Amelia Mauresmo (Fra) 2780 pts
9. Jelena Dokic (Yug) 2780 pts
10. Monica Seles (USA) 2749 pts
11. Sandrine Testud (FRA) 1978 pts
12. M Shaughnessy (USA) 1944 pts
13. Silvia Farina Elia (Ita) 1805 pts
14. Nathalie Tauziat (Fra) 1754 pts
15. E Dementieva (Rus) 1649 pts
16. M Maleeva (Bul) 1603 pts
17. A. Sanchez-Vicario (Spa) 1548 pts
18. Amanda Coetzer (Rsa) 1477 pts
19. I Tulyaganova (Uzb) 1224 pts
20. Barbara Schett (Aut) 1139 pts
21. T Tanasugarn (Tha) 1104 pts
22. Lisa Raymond (USA) 1074 pts
23. Angeles Montolio (Spa) 1030 pts
24. Henrieta Nagyova (Svk) 1027 pts
25. Magui Serna (Spa) 1005 pts
26. Anne Kremer (Lux) 999 pts
27. D Hantuchova (Svk) 990 pts
28. Rita Grande (Ita) 953 pts
29. Francesca Schiavone (Ita) 916 pts
30. C. Torrens Valero (Spa) 900 pts

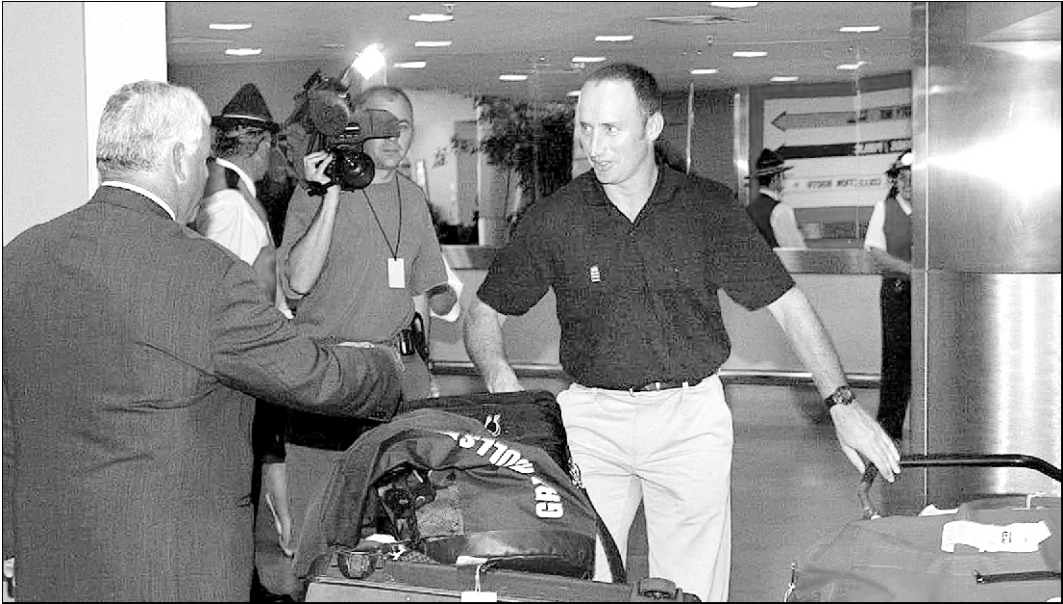


PHOTO: AFP

England skipper Nasser Hussain is greeted by a mediaman upon arrival at Auckland International Airport on Tuesday.

Happy Nasser's men in NZ



REUTERS, Auckland

Two teams coming off successful series make England's one-day and Test series against New Zealand a mouth-watering prospect, England captain Nasser Hussain said on Tuesday.

Hussain made his comments at an airport press conference on his squad's arrival in Auckland fresh from India, where England won a thrilling final one-day international against India on Sunday to square the series at 3-3 after being 3-1 down.

Also in form, New Zealand play the first of a best-of-three final against South Africa in Melbourne on Wednesday after the two sides advanced ahead of the hosts in Australia's annual triangular one-day series.

"Both sides are playing well," Hussain said. "Series between us and New Zealand have always been

close in the past.

"New Zealand are on the up and have a core of fine players, while we are a young side still learning and we learnt a lot and did very well in India.

"Both countries are in similar positions in world cricket, so everything points towards a fantastic one-day and test series," he added.

When asked how he felt about Australia's poor showing in their own tournament, Hussain said: "We didn't really want New Zealand to do too well and be on a high when the play us, but than again we didn't want Australia to win."

Hussain said he hoped the interest in New Zealand's showing in Australia would have a positive effect on England's tour, saying it was always best to play in front of big crowds with a good atmosphere.

Told that New Zealand was likely to have groups of people to take on England's famed Barmy Army in the noise stakes, Hussain said they had not come across many of the Barmy Army in India.

"I know for certain that lots of

them are coming over here, so opposing armies of fans sounds good," he said. "Anything that adds to the atmosphere is good."

England's first match action are two one-day matches against Northern Districts in Hamilton on Friday and Sunday, before moving to Christchurch for the first of five one day internationals on February 13.

The first of three Tests, also in Christchurch, starts on March 13 and Hussain said it was important for England to get used to New Zealand conditions.

"We're on a bit of a high now but that will count for nothing if some of the young guys don't adapt to conditions that can't be further removed from that they faced in India," he said.

The England captain has fond memories of his last tour of New Zealand in 1996-97.

"We won the Test series 2-0 and would have got the lot if Danny Morrison and Nathan Astle not batted all day to save the match here in Auckland."

overcome these nerves."

Fitzgerald was sure his players would rise to the challenge.

"We have a lot of respect for them but the bottom line for us is that this is a fantastic opportunity for this group of young fellows here," he said.

"These don't come along too often in life and whatever happens in the next week, these guys will never ever forget it as long as they live. We have got a lot to gain here. A hell of a lot."

Woodbridge will be playing in his 24th tie, equalling the total of his former doubles partner, Mark Woodforde, and second only to Adrian Quist who represented Australia in 28 ties over a nine year period in the 30s and 40s.

Surprisingly this is the first time that Woodbridge, with 70 career titles to his name, has visited South America to play.

Arthurs, inconsolable after losing the deciding rubber in last December's final against France when Rafter pulled out injured, declared himself ready should he be asked to play either singles, doubles or even both.

"I'm very fit and ready to go if I'm called upon to play both singles and doubles. I'll be there," he said emphatically.

The winners of the Australia-Argentina match progress to a second round meeting with either Germany or Croatia, who clash in Zagreb this weekend.

Sajid's all-round

FROM PAGE 13
Shahidul 28; Sajidul 4/37, Kawsar 3/40)

Result: Muradpur Adarsha High School won by 60 runs
Blue Bird Kindergarten vs Jannat Academy

Venue: GYG
JANNAT ACADEMY: 218 for 8 in 35 overs (Emon 65, Mizan 42, Kamal 37; Faruque 2/38)

BLUE BIRD KINDERGARTEN: 107 all out in 24 overs (Faruque 23; Kamal 3/10; Rony 2/18)

Result: Jannat Academy won by 112 runs
Government Laboratory High School vs Willes Little Flower School

Venue: DCS
G O V E R N M E N T LABORATORY HIGH SCHOOL: 173 for 9 in 35 overs (Faisal 53, Rajjir 40; Rashedul 4/25)

WILLES LITTLE FLOWER SCHOOL: 155 all out in 32.2 overs (Russel 40, Faisal 3/37, Amio 5/31)

Result: Govt. Laboratory High School won by 18 runs
T & T High School vs Nawabpur Government High School

Venue: MOS
T & T HIGH: 213 all out in 31.5 overs (Selim 56, Raihan 50; Mainuddin 3/42, Rubel 2/18)

NAWABPUR HIGH: 135 all out in 29.4 overs (Nasir 29, Mainuddin 28; Younus 3/24, Sohrab 2/18)

Result: T & T High School won by 78 runs

DBBLBD Open Golf Jaiveer's group clinches pro-am title

SPORTS REPORTER

New Delhi's Jaiveer Virik team on Tuesday won the pro-am event of the Dutch-Bangla Bank Bangladesh Open at the Kurmitola Golf Club course.

Akbar Ali's team emerged second and Binod Pandey led his side to the third place in the curtain-raiser competition of the richest professional tournament that begins today.

The four-day Second Bangladesh Open is part of the Hero Honda Indian Open Tour.

The invitational tournament was teed-off by Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen M Harun-Ar-Rashid at 7.30 am.

The pro-am was played on a Stableford format with the professional's score and the two best nett scores of the amateurs over 18 holes making up the team total.

Jaiveer and his team comprising KGC captain Manzoor Ahmed, Iqbal Bashar Chowdhury and Mrs Jung Suk Jung scored 115. The leader contributed 40, amounting to four-under 68.

Akbar's group of Brig Gen Shahid Hasan Salim, Group Captain Lokman and Shibaab Rahman totalled 109.

Although Binod Pandey and Indrajit Bhalotia's sides finished tied on 107, the former group that included MH Cho and KS Yoon collected the third prize.

Magura cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Zia Smriti Sangsad defeated Shaheed Mintu Sangha by 66 runs in the opening match of the Econo Cricket League at the Magura Stadium on Tuesday.

Winning the toss, Zia Smriti batted first and collected 155 runs for six wickets in the stipulated 35 overs.

In reply, Shaheed Mintu were all out for 89 runs in 20.5 overs.

BRIEF SCORES

ZIA SMRITI SANGSAD: 155 for 6 wickets in the 35 overs (Doris 49, Rubel 19, Haradhon 18; Rubench 2/19, Golam Rasul 2/25, Zico 1/12).

SHAHEED MINTU SANGHA: 89 all out in 20.5 overs (Koton 15, Masum 14, Zico 11, Anup 4/33, Haradhon 2/14, Ali 2/13).

Result: Zia Smriti Sangsad won by 66 runs.

Greta expels Elena

AFP, Paris

Elena Likhovtseva had her hopes of hogging a little of the Russian lime-light, before compatriot Anna Kournikova makes her grand entrance here, snatched away by German qualifier Greta Arn on Tuesday.

Arn, ranked 119 in the world, knocked-out Likhovtseva 6-3, 6-4 in the first round of the 585,000-dollar Paris WTA event and proved that there is simply no substitute for hard work.

The 22-year-old from Stuttgart had to come through three tough rounds of qualifying here to make the main draw and now must overcome another Russian challenge - either Elena Dementieva or Elena Bovina - if she is to make it to the third round.

"Playing in qualifying certainly gives you the right sort of rhythm," said Arn who is getting used to stepping out of the shadows in the big events.

Last month she also negotiated three rounds of qualifying at the Australian Open before she eventually fell to Martina Hingis in the second round.

Meanwhile, French hopes of a home victory here suffered a setback when the number eight seed Sandrine Testud was forced to pull out through injury.

The world number 12, and the sixth-seed here, withdrew from the event complaining of severe pain and inflammation in her neck.

"I am very disappointed to miss the event," said the 29-year-old Testud.

"I first experienced the pain when I arrived in Australia, but with physiotherapy I felt much better.

"But at the end of the Tokyo event, the pain returned and right now it is quite severe. I can't even turn my head. My osteopath has told me I need to rest," added Testud.

Dementieva has moved into Testud's spot in the draw while America's Meilen Tu was promoted into the main draw after originally being knocked out in the qualifiers.

Later on Tuesday, Kournikova, battling her way back from an injury-decimated 2001, takes on Switzerland's Emmanuelle Gagliardi in her first round match.

Sunil finds solace!



REUTERS, New Delhi

Former Indian captain Sunil Gavaskar has slammed the English cricket team as "champion whiners" after their six-match one-day series in India ended in a 3-3 draw.

England had complained about poor umpiring decisions and lack of proper practice facilities almost throughout the one-day series.

"Trust the champion whiners of the world to only moan about what affects them and not utter a word about what benefits them," Gavaskar wrote in his column in The Hindustan Times daily on Tuesday.

"The English skipper (Nasser Hussain) has obliquely referred to the decisions that have gone against his team as the reasons for his team's defeat, but when you look at the decisions in his side's favour, there has not even been a beep," he wrote.

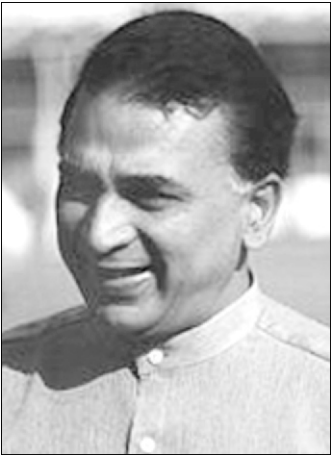
"He (Hussain) got the benefit of the doubt in the Delhi game. Considering that India lost the game by only two runs, that decision made a difference."

After the first one-day match at Calcutta last month, Gavaskar wrote that England were robbed of the game due to poor umpiring decisions.

A leading batsman of the 1970s and 1980s, Gavaskar said the

English team was "the most boring side to have played cricket in India" after the home side won December's Test series 1-0.

He also slammed India for "snatching defeat from the jaws of



SUNIL GAVASKAR

victory" in the series.

India were up 3-1 in the one-day series before falling two runs short in New Delhi on Thursday and then failing in the chase to score 256 for victory on a good batting wicket in Bombay's Wankhede stadium on Sunday.

"India has to look seriously at its batsmen getting to the 20s and 30s and then throwing it away," Gavaskar wrote.

"There is inexplicable stubborn-

ness about the combination of the team. It's very well to have faith in some but blind faith leads to a disaster as we saw at the Wankhede Stadium."

Meanwhile, on Sunday the Indian media have criticised their country's cricketers, calling them "chokers" after the five-run defeat.

"Despair and delirium in Mumbai (Bombay): India snatch defeat from victory," said a front page photo caption in The Indian Express.

"If ever there's an advertisement for self-destruction, the Indian cricket team would be an ideal role model," the newspaper said under an eight-column banner headline: "Final act, choking scene: India's storyline remains unchanged".

"Sourav Ganguly's best effort in a crunch match was not enough to win the sixth and final one-day international," said The Hindu.

"He made his bat talk, but it was the England captain Nasser Hussain who had the last laugh," the newspaper added.

"Indian run-chase falls flat once again," said a headline in the Hindustan Times, while The Asian Age said: "England tie Indian middle-order in knots".

India will now start to prepare for two tests and five one-day internationals at home against Zimbabwe, a series of matches which start later this month.

Dokic set to dazzle



AFP, Paris

Jelena Dokic has her sights set on upsetting the established order in women's tennis this season and is looking to smash down the barriers starting at the 585,000-dollar Paris indoor tournament this week.

Despite preferring a wintry Belgrade to the charms of Melbourne when she snubbed the opening Grand Slam of the season, the 18-year-old is determined that being out of the spotlight in January can be turned to her advantage.

However, she needs to be as good as her word.

In Tokyo last week she crashed out to unheralded Anne Kremer in the second round of the Pan Pacific Open - her 7-5, 6-2 defeat coming in her first appearance on court since the season-ending WTA Championships in Munich in November last year.

Not surprisingly, she looked ring-rusty - guilty of 11 double faults.

"It was always going to be tough because I haven't played in months," said Dokic.

"It's always tough to come back and play indoors. But I have a lot of tournaments coming up right now and I feel good. I don't regard that defeat as a let down. I won't let that match take my confidence away."

Dokic, who skipped Melbourne as well as the warm-up events in Australia because she feared a backlash over her decision to

renounce her Australian citizenship to return to the colours of Yugoslavia, is right to be confident.



JELENA DOKIC

In 2001, she was one of the form players picking up her first career title at the Italian Open and then adding the crowns in Tokyo and Moscow to her collection.

At one stage, she reached five finals in six consecutive events - not bad for a girl who, as well as satisfying her own professional goals, has to keep short-tempered dad Damir smiling.

Dokic, who broke into the one-million-dollar earning bracket in 2001 and reached a career high of nine in the world, was a late entry into the Paris event.

She is seeded number four and receives a bye in the first round, as do the top three seeds - Venus Williams of America, Belgium's

Veron pondering Lazio return?

AFP, Rome

Rumours that Manchester United's Argentinian midfielder Juan Sebastian Veron may return to former club Lazio in the summer were further fuelled Monday by two separate developments.

Another of Lazio's Argentinian contingent Claudio Lopez, who spent much of the weekend with the Manchester United man, said that he believed Veron may well return while it emerged that Lazio president Sergio Cragnotti would meet the player's agent on Wednesday.

Lopez said: "Maybe he (Veron) will be back quickly and playing with us again. Anything can happen in football and I think the fans at the stadium yesterday showed how they feel about the issue."

Lopez was referring to the standing ovation by Lazio fans for Veron who spent much of Saturday at the Formello training camp and then attended Sunday night's 1-1 draw with AC Milan at the Olympic Stadium.



State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman distributing 'Diploma for Volunteer' certificates in the city on Monday.