

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. Amelie 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



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 then 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

Australia have reached the last three finals, winning in France in 1999, but are without world No 1 Lleyton Hewitt and dual US Open champion Pat Rafter for their opening 2002 tie in South America.

Andrew Ilie, ranked 62, and Scott Draper (218) -- who could make their Davis Cup debuts -- are the lowest-ranked pair to play for Australia for years.

Arthurs (76) and Todd Woodbridge (2 in doubles) make up the rest of the Australian team.

"It's fair to say Argentina are the favourites here but having said that, that takes the pressure off us and we have a quiet confidence in this team and we believe we have a damn good chance," Fitzgerald said.

"We're here to compete and you've got to believe you can win."

His confidence was echoed by Draper who played down the higher singles rankings of the Argentine players.

"Davis Cup is about preparing for one three-day tie. It's about harnessing everything you have from your team environment, from your whole country, and just performing on that day," he said.

Asked if he felt the legacy of past Australian success in the competition, he said, "You feel the ghost of Australian Davis Cup and you have a reputation to uphold, not only for your country but for yourself."

"I feel pressure, absolutely. Those nerves are what we play the game for. It would be a boring sport if we didn't feel pressure and try and

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 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, equaling the total of his former doubles partner, Mark Woodforde, and second only to Adrián 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-Australia 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
Shahid 28; Sajid 4/37, Kawas 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
GOVERNMENT LABORATORY HIGH SCHOOL: 173 for 9 in 35 overs (Faisal 53, Rajur 40; Rashedul 4/25)

WILLES LITTLE FLOWER SCHOOL: 155 all out in 32.2 overs (Russel 40, Faisal 3/37, Amro 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, Raian 50; Mainuddin 3/42, Rubel 2/18)

NAWABPUR HIGH: 135 all out in 29.4 overs (Nasir 29, Mainuddin 28; Younis 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.

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 net scores of the amateurs over 18 holes making up the team total.

Jaiveer and his team comprising KGC captain Manzoor Ahmed, Iqbal Bashir Chowdhury and Mrs Jung Sok 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 Rahaman 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.

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."

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, Haradhan 18; Ruben 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, Haradhan 2/14, Ali 2/13).

Result: Zia Smriti Sangsad won by 66 runs.

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

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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.