

Shower saves New Zealand

AFP, Kingston

Rain came to the rescue of New Zealand on Wednesday after a storm ended the match, preventing the West Indies chasing a modest target of 176.

"We've probably been saved by the weather in this game. This is probably the best scenario for us," said New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming after his team was skittled out for 176, two balls short of the maximum 50 overs.

Players and umpires had just retaken the field for the West Indies innings at Sabina Park when the heavens opened. There has been criticism about staging five limited-overs internationals and two Tests in the Caribbean during the rainy season.

The rain lasted for more than an hour and when it stopped umpires Billy Doctrove and Arsoka da Silva ruled that the outfield was too wet. Much of the water on the outfield had spilled out of the covers as they were being removed.

West Indies Captain Carl Hooper, who switched away from an all-pace attack to use spin against the New Zealanders, clearly felt victory had been his for the taking.

"I don't think it would have been a difficult target. I would have preferred to be in our position than New Zealand's," he said.

Fleming won the toss and chose to bat, although Hooper said after the match he would have bowled if he had won the toss. "They've had a lot of rain here. There's always something for the seamers early on."

SCOREBOARD

First innings scoreboard in the one-day international between the West Indies and New Zealand on Wednesday:

Table with columns: NEW ZEALAND, Player, Runs, Wickets, Extras, Total, Fall of wickets, Bowler, O, M, R, W.

Lewis-Tyson showdown tomorrow

AFP, Tunica

Lennox Lewis figures Mike Tyson has already bitten off more than he can chew, so boxing's bad boy probably will not take any more bites out of him.

World heavyweight champion Lewis of Britain said here Wednesday that he is ready for whatever the ex-champion tries in Saturday's heavyweight title showdown at 49.4 Memphis, Tennessee. But he doubts teeth will be involved.

"I always expect the unexpected," Lewis said. "I don't hold no hate for Mike Tyson. We're two combatants, two gladiators. I don't even worry about him biting me. I don't expect Tyson to do that to me."

Tyson bit Lewis on his left thigh after touching off a January brawl in New York at a news conference. As a result, the fighters will not have contact with each other before the opening bell, including no pre-fight glove touching.

The most notorious Tyson bite came in 1997 when he ripped a chunk of flesh from Evander Holyfield's right ear during a title fight.

But after watching Holyfield beat Hasim Rahman last Saturday, largely thanks to a head butt from Holyfield that raised a huge bruise on Rahman's head, Lewis said he could see why Tyson bit Holyfield.

"He had his reasons for biting in that fight, made evident in the past week," Lewis said. "I understand why the man got bit. He brings a new dimension, the head butt."



Table with columns: ESPN, World Cup Today, Sportscentre Hindi, STAR Sports, World Cup Today, World Cup Today.

SA say Hansie bye



REUTERS, Bloemfontein

South Africans remembered only the best of Hansie Cronje as they buried the disgraced cricket legend who died in a weekend plane crash.

Former teammates, family, politicians and fans gathered in Cronje's home town to pay tribute to the 32-year-old who was expelled from cricket two years ago for his role in a match-fixing scandal that shocked his sports-mad country.

"For the past two years I wanted to shout out, explain to people that even though Hansie made a mistake he was still the same Hansie...an honourable man," his widow Bertha told 2,500 mourners at Grey College in the central South African city.

"Over the last couple of days I've come to realise nobody forgot the special qualities that I knew he had," the petite blonde said at the two-hour ceremony, broadcast live by South African television channels.

Cronje and two South African pilots died on Saturday when their cargo plane slammed into a mountain near the resort town of George in bad weather.

A devout Christian with dazzling skills on the field, Cronje stunned the cricket world in 2000 when he admitted he had accepted about 130,000 dollars from bookmakers to influence the course of matches. He was banned for life.

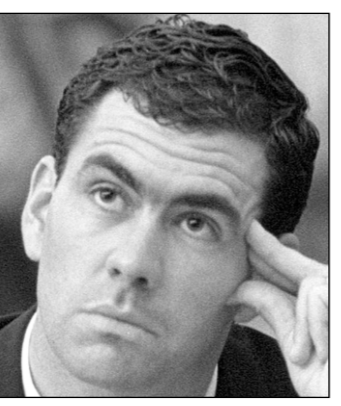
"He never got forgiveness before he died, but in Bloemfontein the feeling has definitely changed," said Johannes Steenkamp, Cronje's former teacher.

The congregation sang "Onward

Christian Soldiers" as seven family members bore the coffin from the assembly hall at Cronje's former high school, Grey College.

Defence Minister Mosiuoa Lekota, chairman of the country's ruling African National Congress, headed the government delegation.

Sports Minister Ngconde Balfour and former South African cricketers Pat Symcox and Allan Donald were among the mourners with veteran England international Bob Woolmer, the South African coach



HANSIE CRONJE

during Cronje's captaincy.

Current South African captain Shaun Pollock, who flew in for the funeral from Britain, recalled his friendship with Cronje. He described him as an outstanding leader, cricketer and friend.

"Hansie had a profound and positive impact on the careers of his South African cricket teammates..." Pollock said.

"We want to thank you for being so much more than even that," he said, with many of Cronje's former teammates standing behind him on

stage. "He touched each and every one of our lives."

A tearful Pollock concluded his speech by saying: "We'll miss you." Bouquets of flowers were strewn at the entrance to the 147-year-old college and schoolboys in striped blue blazers lined up to form a guard of honour as the casket left the hall.

"You have to look at all of the positives he made in South African cricket and not the mistakes," said Gerald Majola, chief executive of the United Cricket Board (UCB) of South Africa which banned Cronje.

The Cronje family initially told UCB executives they would not be welcome at the funeral. But his widow later allowed them to attend, saying that was what her husband would have wanted.

State broadcaster SABC said it had been "inundated" with letters and e-mails of support for Cronje's family.

The South African parliament lauded Cronje's achievements and called his death "a Greek tragedy".

Cronje's father Ewie told SABC TV his son had been rebuilding his life when he died. In February, Cronje was appointed as a financial manager by a company listed on the Johannesburg stock exchange.

Schoolboys, many in tears, sang: "Hansie is our hero" before the hearse departed. Plans were made for Cronje's body to be cremated in a private ceremony.

Cronje, 32, made his debut for South Africa in 1992, and captained the national team from 1994 to 2000.

He represented South Africa in 68 Tests -- 53 as skipper. He led his country to victory in 71 per cent of the one-day internationals he captained, and 51 per cent of Test matches.

Pak want Aussies to come



AFP, Melbourne

Pakistan players said Thursday they hoped Australia would go ahead with their cricket tour of the sub-continent in August.

However, it appears unlikely as the Australian Cricket Board has said it will take advice from the Foreign Affairs ministry which last week ordered all Australians to leave Pakistan and India because of fears of a war over Kashmir.

And most of Australia's top Test stars have come out against touring Pakistan.

Sharjah and Morocco have been suggested as alternative venues. Australia are scheduled to play a tri-nation one-day series against Pakistan and New Zealand in Pakistan in August, followed by three Tests in September-October.

A 13-strong Pakistan squad arrived here Thursday for a three-match one-day series in Melbourne and Brisbane and coach Mudassar Nazar said his players were keen for the Australians to make the return

visit.

"We're hoping the tour will go ahead and we're anticipating the series coming to Pakistan," he said.

"It is my and everyone else's earnest desire that Australia does come to Pakistan.

"Yes, I can easily understand their reluctance. But if it doesn't take place in Pakistan then hopefully it will take place somewhere else."

Pakistan team manager Yawar Saad stressed it would be an issue decided by the two countries' cricket boards.

"We are all very keen that they should go to Pakistan and whatever discussions that are required will be done by me at this level," he said.

"The real decision makers are the two boards."

Pakistan recently played a Test match against the West Indies in Sharjah. The Emirates city has hosted many one-day tournaments but Yawar said the crowd was disappointing for the first-ever Test there.

New Zealand cut short their tour of Pakistan in May after a suicide bombing outside the team's hotel in Karachi killed 14 people.

A one-day series between

Pakistan and Sri Lanka is scheduled for Morocco later this year if approved by the International Cricket Council.

"We have heard that it is far superior even to Sharjah," said Yawar.

"The ICC is due to visit next week to okay the facilities and, from what we've heard, certainly it will be okay."

Pakistan might actually do better playing at a neutral venue. They have lost five of their last six Test home series, with the only victory coming in a one-off Test against Bangladesh.

In the past five years, Pakistan have won just six out of 21 matches at home but their away record is 10 wins, eight draws and eight losses in 26 matches.

The 13-strong squad for the Super Challenge here does not include Saqlain Mushtaq and Abdur Razaq, who are playing county cricket in England. Batsman Misbah-Ul-Haq was also a late withdrawal after contracting hepatitis.

Green Delta hockey Abahani amerce BD Sporting

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani Krira Chakra beat Bangladesh Sporting Club 5-2 in Thursday's lone Green Delta Premier Hockey League return leg clash at the Maulana Bhasani Stadium.

The winners led the first half 3-1. Forward Ashraful Islam Shishu netted two goals while Mirajul Ahsan, Indian Ronald Kiran and Mahbubul Alam Rana added one each to the winners credit.

On the other hand, Rubel scored both the goals for the losers.

It was Abahani's 13th win against two defeats and raised their tally to 39 points from 15 matches, one less than leaders Mohammedan Sporting Club who have 40 points with a match in hand.

On the other hand, Bangladesh Sporting Club's eighth defeat kept them glued to their previous tally of 16 points.

Elina, Javed's JVC glory

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Javed and Elina Begum gave hosts Bangladesh something to cheer about when they won the mixed doubles title of the JVC Bangladesh Asian Satellite Badminton Championship at the Suhrawardy Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

In the final, they won the all-Bangladesh final against Russell Kabir Sumon and Konika Adhikari 17-14, 15-5.

Earlier, the local pairing beat teammates Mahbub Rab abd Ayesha Khatun Noori 15-9, 15-3 in the semifinals.

Meanwhile, in the men's singles India's Arvind Bhutt moved into the final after a 17-16, 15-2 win over compatriot Aroop Bhadaya.

In today's final, he will take on compatriot JVS Bidyadhar who beat Niluka Karuna Ratnayek 15-10, 15-1 in the other semifinal.

The men's doubles final will be held also this morning.

Plotting pair

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Officers will have netguns -- used to ensnare thugs in nets -- and hand-held water cannons in case of trouble, said another spokesman, Katsumi Sumiyoshi.

Many shopkeepers in the area are expected to close for the day, and police are considering a city-wide ban on alcohol, Sumiyoshi said.

The British Embassy said Thursday that a total of 35 England supporters have been turned away so far for a variety of suspected offences, including hooliganism.

The embassy has estimated that between 8,000 and 8,500 England fans are in Japan. Not many more are expected to arrive. England plays Nigeria in Osaka on June 12 in the final match of Group F.



Mohammad Javed and Elina Begum in action during the mixed doubles final of the JVC Bangladesh Asian Satellite Badminton Championship yesterday.

Mother of all grudge games

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they're fit and it's important that they play," he said.

"Sorin got a knock on the calf (muscle) but has recovered satisfactorily and can play tomorrow."

The team will again be captained by Juan Sebastian Veron as Roberto Ayala, who pulled a thigh muscle warming up for the match in Ibaraki, is not being risked.

Diego Placente retains his place on the left of the back three with Walter Samuel again standing in for Ayala as sweeper.

Gabriel Batistuta, whose winner against Nigeria was his tenth World Cup goal, again leads the attack in a side with five veterans from Argentina's last World Cup clash with England in the second round of the 1998 finals.

Asked whether Batistuta or his rival for the central striker's role Hernan Crespo would take the penalty if Argentina were awarded one during the game, Bielsa said: "One of the two."

Crespo came on for Batistuta for the last nine minutes of the match against Nigeria. Bielsa has so far discarded the option of playing them both together up front.

But he did not rule it out altogether, saying: "We always like to have the field well covered.

than against Nigeria, which was calmer, the players are going to run more metres and at greater speed," he said.

Bielsa said his team have prepared for the aerial problems England are expected to pose.

"They are not only good headers, but also good with the long ball. This is going to be a very good test for us in that sense."

England are likely to drop striker Darius Vassell, one of their best players against Sweden, to make room on the left side of midfield for Kieron Dyer, who has recovered from a knee injury and came on as a substitute against Sweden.

Dyer's return to a midfield over-

run by Sweden will allow Emile Heskey to link with Owen up front.

The experienced Nicky Butt should replace 21-year-old Owen Hargreaves, joining his Manchester United team mates David Beckham and Paul Scholes against a midfield directed by another club colleague, Juan Sebastian Veron, who captains Argentina in Ayala's absence.

Beckham, who has just recovered from a broken foot, is expected to last 90 minutes after playing for 63 against Sweden.

Zahovic

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have a long history of internal dissent -- Germany's Lothar Matthaeus was never shy of outspoken criticism in the late 1990s while the Dutch camp was for many years riven by racial problems.

Dutch midfielder Edgar Davids was sent home from the European championship in +1996 for publicly criticising coach Guus Hiddink, coach of co-hosts South Korea at this tournament.



THE WAIT GOES IN VAIN! A spectator waits for the resumption of play at the French Open in Paris on June 5. In fact, only 36 minutes' play was possible on that day.

Rainy day at Roland Garros



AFP, Paris

Torrential rain, thunder and a biting cold wind brought havoc to the tenth day of the French Open here on Wednesday when only 36 minutes of play was possible before organisers decided to abandon all hope of further action.

With less than two hours of play taking place at Roland Garros, they are facing a massive compensation bill of hundreds of thousands of dollars as they will be forced to refund those spectators who bought their tickets by mail.

The crowd figure for the day was 16,499 with a total revenue of 870,000 dollars.

In the little centre court action that did take place, Spain's Juan Carlos Ferrero, the 11th seed, built up a 6-3, 1-0 lead against fourth-seeded American Andre Agassi in their quarterfinal clash.

That match took place over two sessions with the players returning at 1645GMT once the rain had briefly abated.

But 13 minutes later Agassi called for the tournament referee Stefan Fransson and demanded the match be halted as the drizzle fell

again. However, Fransson insisted that he wasn't pressurised by the American to call a halt.

"We were hoping to be able to play under good conditions -- unfortunately that didn't turn out to be the case. That's why it was subsequently stopped."

"The spectators may have thought that Agassi didn't want to carry on, but I spoke to him first because he was closest to me," said Fransson.

"I discussed it with both players before we went out and while we were out there and we all then decided that was it."

The rain that swirled around Roland Garros didn't quite result in the worst weather day in the tournament's history -- that happened on May 30, 2000, when the whole programme was lost without a ball being hit.

Start of play had already been delayed at the beginning of the day by 90 minutes before Agassi and Ferrero were able to come on to a two-thirds empty stadium shortly after 1130GMT.

After just 23 minutes on centre court, the Spaniard raced into a 5-2 lead but the rain came sending the players scurrying back to the changing rooms and there they stayed for

the next four hours and 45 minutes.

The match will be completed on Thursday as will the clash between Romania's Andrei Pavel and Alex Corretja which had been suspended due to bad light on Tuesday night.

Spaniard Corretja, the 18th seed, was leading Pavel 7-6, 7-5, 4-5 when play was halted but Pavel may be forced to default as he had rushed back to his home in Germany to be with his wife who is expecting their second child.

The weather also meant that the final men's quarterfinal scheduled for Wednesday between second seeded Russian Marat Safin and French 10th seed Sebastian Grosjean will also be played on Thursday.

Only one last eight men's match has been completed -- Spain's Albert Costa having clinched his first career Grand Slam semifinal spot with a five-set win over Argentina's Guillermo Canas.

The remaining quarterfinals will share centre stage on Thursday here with the women's semifinals between top-seed Jennifer Capriati and fellow American, the third seeded Serena Williams and second seed Venus Williams' duel with unheralded Argentine Clarisa Fernandez.

FRENCH FRIES



AFP, Paris

They may be number one and number four in world's tennis but Lleyton Hewitt, 21, and 18-year-old girlfriend Kim Clijsters proved they are still just kids at heart when after their elimination from the French Open they were spotted enjoying the attractions at Disneyland-Paris.

The duo preferred to pass the evening with Mickey et Co than the French Cancan evening at the Moulin Rouge proposed by tournament organisers.

WANTING TO EMULATE IDOL

Argentine Clarisa Fernandez is bidding to go further than idol and countrywoman Gabriela Sabatini when she takes on Venus Williams in the final four of the French Open here on Thursday.

Former US Open champion Sabatini reached the semifinals five times at Roland Garros and Fernandez, who has achieved a career best here, said that more than anything she wanted to emulate her idol's ability to stay natural

despite her fame.

"I met her three or four years ago when I came to play as a junior and liked her from the outset. She has kept her head on her shoulders. Everything she did I think was wonderful," said Fernandez.

PAES LIKES DARKNESS!

Indian star Leander Paes was one of the few players to enjoy still being out on the courts late on Tuesday despite the gloomy and overcast conditions.

"I enjoy playing in the dark because the others can't see me," smiled Paes after he and partner Tomas Cibulce of the Czech Republic had come from a set down to beat American twins Bob and Mike Bryan 3-6, 7-6, 6-4 in the quarterfinals of the men's doubles here.

The match finished at 2130 local time (1930GMT) and it gave Paes and Cibulce a semifinal showdown on Thursday against Mark Knowles and Daniel Nestor.

HE'S JUST JEN'S FRIEND

Top seed and defending champion Jennifer Capriati found herself facing questions about her private life after reaching the semifinals of the women's singles. Watching in the crowd was actor Matthew Perry,

who plays the part of Chandler in the TV comedy Friends and the press tasted a romance in the air.

"He's just a friend, uh-huh," was Capriati's only comment after beating Jelena Dokic to book a last four clash with Serena Williams.

NOT VENUS, BUT VENOOS!

Venus Williams says she has adopted a new personality for her assault on what would be her first French Open title.

"It's Venooos, not Venus," said the American using her best French accent.

"I want to get into the French mentality. This has happened this year," said Venus who despite being a double US Open and Wimbledon champion, has never reached a Roland Garros final.

"I don't know what happened the other years. It only happens once you hit the semi-finals. But the French Venooos is not nicer than the other Venooos -- you can't talk to her that much because she's so serious and hardly ever leaves her hotel room, only to eat."

"If she can, she'll have her food brought to her. She just reads books, concentrates. You can't get her to smile that much. That's Venooos."

Diego doing his part

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football - and no morning lessons. Teachers' union leader Marta Maffei revealed most schools had agreed to put the start of the timetable back by three hours.

One headmistress, Viviana Digano, praised football's educational value - she was already saving foreign press cuttings of match reports to use in language classes.

Schoolchildren are not alone in their enthusiasm, with figures from all walks of society wearing their footballing hearts on their sleeve come the game - including President Eduardo Duhalde, who was up before dawn to watch the win over Nigeria.

Actor and singer Alfredo Casero has already done his bit for the cause by writing a song in Japanese - but not everyone is getting in on the act.

Musician Pipo Cipolatti vowed to stay in bed - presumably his television is in his sitting room - because "since Diego stopped playing I no longer watch the team."

Writer Dalmiro Saenz does not share such negative sentiment and doesn't have to worry about getting to the office on time.

"That's one advantage of never having worked in my life," he joked. Maradona would have liked to

watch on the spot - but his drug record meant the Japanese government refused to give him a visa.

And that has only increased his bitterness - especially as that cost him some 160,000 dollars in lost television commentary fees.

Maradona blasted tabloid reports which quoted Argentina's Manchester United midfielder Veron as saying that "the match against the English doesn't mean anything special for me."

Maradona told La Nacion that was a complete misrepresentation.

"In the papers they took his comments out of context to make it sound as if he is nervous. But tell Veron from me: Go out and play your normal game, don't listen to anyone ... they are scared to death."

"If they win they will say it was because they made Veron nervous; but if they lose they will make life impossible for him - they will drive him crazy," said Maradona, whose 1986 exploits turned him into a hate figure for the English tabloid press.

Maradona, whose second goal that year has just been voted the best ever strike in World Cup history, says all Argentina have to do this year is turn up and the trophy is theirs.

"Argentina is the only serious team of all those playing in this

tournament," he boasted.

The British press have also targeted Diego Simeone in the past for his foul on David Beckham that prompted the England star to retaliate and get sent off in Argentina's penalty shootout win at France 98.

Simeone and Beckham have long since made up and the former is looking forward to renewing their acquaintance.

"Beating England is something special. It's a match played with a unique intensity ... it's been a classic going right back to the previous World Cup meetings between us."

Simeone is, however, fed up with discussing his previous contretemps with Beckham.

"Ever since 1998 that's all people have talked about. It's a media ploy."

"We just have to make damn sure we beat the English. We both really need the win - and the midfield battle will be decisive."

Most Argentines agree with Maradona that they are the clear favourites - and hope for a win to boost morale at a time of economic recession following four years of deep recession.

"In a country which has hit the buffers two more hours off won't change much," one disgruntled fan told Radio Continental.