

Journey starts from Lord's?

Cricket

AFP, London

England captain Nasser Hussain received an Officer of the British Empire (OBE) at Buckingham Palace on Friday and then got back down to the business of plotting the downfall of India in Saturday's NatWest triangular series final at Lord's.

Hussain hopes victory over the Indians will establish England as challengers for the World Cup in South Africa next February.

"Today was the first opportunity to go to the Palace and I wanted to do that and now I've done that it's back to my day job trying to win games of cricket, but I wouldn't swap the award I got today for much," stressed Hussain.

Since the mini-revolution within the England one-day side during the winter, introducing younger more agile cricketers like Paul Collingwood and Jeremy Snape, they stand at 4-4 with their opponents with their match at Chester-le-Street last week being washed out.

They will face India again in September during the ICC Champions' Trophy before meeting up for the big showdown -- their World Cup preliminary match in Durban on February 26.

Hussain is eager to develop a culture where winning games

becomes a habit and would like to start by holding the trophy aloft at Lord's.

"This is not that important in the grand scheme of things," he said. "We won this tournament two years ago when we had Zimbabwe and West Indies over here and no one remembers that too highly now."

"But it will be nice to win and you do have to keep an eye on that World Cup even though it will proba-



NASSER HUSSAIN

bly be better to beat them in the World Cup because that will be the major one-day tournament.

"Sometimes it's frustrating when we take one step forward and two steps back and it would be nice to just go forward all the time, but that has got to come from our disciplines

and our work ethic. "Just because we've had a good game against India at the Oval, it doesn't mean we can afford to slack off in practice -- we have to try to go forward all the time."

The prize on offer for all of England's players will be to clinch a place in this winter's one-day squad, which will almost certainly be identical to the one that travels to South Africa for the World Cup.

England are already almost there in the selection of their squad, with only the Sri Lanka tournament and a triangular series in Australia to go before they launch their campaign against Zimbabwe in Harare.

"We're closer now than ever to picking our one-day squad for the World Cup and a good performance and a good result against India in this match will make it very difficult to make too many changes," admitted Hussain.

"There haven't been that many new names in this squad from the winter tours -- we've shuffled and made ourselves a bit more flexible in our batting line-ups and we're closer to knowing our squad, but we're still a little bit away from knowing our best XI."

"We've got plenty of games to put that right and the door's not closed by any means. You only have to see Ronnie Irani as an example -- two or three months ago nobody had him down but now everyone has him in the squad and there's other people out there who could easily burst into

this squad." Whether England's best line-up includes Graham Thorpe, an indispensable member of the team until last winter, remains to be seen having been overlooked for their last three matches.

Initially overlooked because of a slight ankle complaint, he has missed the last two purely on selection grounds and with Hussain insisting they will play their best team for tomorrow's final, the Surrey left-hander's importance to the side will be reflected when England announce their line-up.

Hussain stressed: "He's played a lot of cricket for England over the last two years when he's been available for selection and it will be a very difficult selection because all 15 people could easily play."

"Originally he had a sore ankle and we wanted to give him a rest, look at Michael Vaughan and try a few other things and be a bit more dynamic in the field."

"We want people to get caps under their belt so that if someone rocks up for a semi-final injured or something the lads that are coming in have played quite a bit of cricket."

Thorpe's ankle is unlikely to rule him out contention while Darren Gough (knee) and Andrew Flintoff (groin) are also nursing slight injuries but all should be available, although Dominic Cork is unlikely to force his way into the starting line-up after being called up to replace James Kirtley.



A combo picture shows American sprint queen Marion Jones (L) celebrating her 100m victory while world and Olympic champion Maurice Greene holding his trophy after winning the 100m dash in Rome's IAAF Golden League at the Olympic Stadium on July 12.

Marion, Maurice Roman stars

Athletics

AFP, Rome

US sprint king Maurice Greene scorched to the fastest 100 metres time in the world this year while Marion Jones recovered from a terrible start to triumph in the Golden League meeting here on Friday.

Greene, the world and Olympic champion, burned off any doubts that he was back to his best after a poor start to the season as he made an electric start in the short sprint and was never headed, clocking 9.89sec.

World silver medalist Tim Montgomery finally re-discovered his form with second place in 9.94sec.

Greene said he had been struggling with a head cold before the meeting but was helped by the warm conditions in the Olympic Stadium.

"Tonight I'd been feeling a little unwell and so I said to myself I wanted to express myself from the start and that's what happened. That meant I was able to accelerate and I ran well."

Gabriela Szabo lost her grip on a share of the 50 kilograms of gold ingots awarded to athletes who win all seven of the Golden League races when she was beaten into third place in the women's 5,000m.

Berhane Adere broke for home with a lap to go and the Romanian world 1,500m champion was completely unable to follow but Kenyan veteran Edith Masai overhauled the Ethiopian in the home straight, winning in 14min 53.77sec.

Olga Yegorova, the Russian who caused such controversy last year when she failed a test for the blood-

boosting drug EPO but later won the world title, trailed in 13th place. World champion Felix Sanchez of the Dominican Republic proved he is the best 400m hurdler in the world with a brilliant win in 47.73sec.

But there was a shock for British world record holder Jonathan Edwards in the triple jump. He could only manage 17.25 metres and was beaten by Walter Davis of the United States who jumped 17.33, meaning Edwards also dropped out of contention for the jackpot.

Courageous British athlete Kelly Holmes almost won the women's 1,500m but was beaten into third by Maria Mutola, running her first race at the distance for two years.

Mutola clocked 4min 01.50sec, the fastest time in the world this year.

Canadian Mark Boswell is a hot favourite for Commonwealth Games gold in the high jump after a winning jump here of 2.35 metres, while 35-year-old American Gail Devers maintained her 100 percent record in this season's Golden League with a win in the 100 metre hurdles in 12.51sec.

Ana Guevara of Mexico smashed her personal best to win the women's 400m in 49.51sec, also keeping her in contention for the Golden League jackpot. Her time has only been bettered by Cathy Freeman in the past two years.

But the current lack of quality in the men's 400m was illustrated when Michael Blackwood of Jamaica won in 44.99sec, a time the now-retired Michael Johnson used to run for fun.

Hingis to miss US Open

AFP, St. Petersburg

Martina Hingis will miss this year's US Open as she continues to recover from left ankle surgery, the WTA Tour announced on Friday.

The former world No. 1 from



Switzerland had surgery on May 20 in her homeland to repair ligaments in her ankle.

According to her representatives, rehabilitation is "progressing well" and Hingis hopes to resume play soon.

Hingis will not appear in upcoming events in San Diego, Los Angeles and Montreal and will not submit an application for the year's final Grand Slam event.

The 1997 US Open champion and five-time Grand Slam champion has missed each major in 2002.

Initial reports claimed Hingis' injury -- allegedly caused by her sneakers -- was career threatening.

Hingis, who will be 22 in September, won titles in two of her first three appearances in 2002, increasing her career total to 40. She claimed the Australian Open crown from 1997-99 and Wimbledon in 1997.

Becker in trouble

REUTERS, Munich

German prosecutors said on Saturday they had brought charges against three-times Wimbledon tennis champion Boris Becker for alleged tax evasion.

"There is sufficient reason to suspect tax offences," said the head of the Munich public prosecutor's office, Manfred Wick. He said the Munich district court had not yet decided whether the charges were admissible for court action to go ahead.

Wick declined to say what the alleged tax offences were.

Becker's communications director Robert Luebenoff could not immediately be reached for comment.

Tightest security

FROM PAGE 13 "We provided New Zealand the best of security until that blast occurred but New Zealand team was never a target," he said.

PCB director Brigadier Munawwar Rana also downplayed the May bombing as a reason for Australia not to tour Pakistan.

"New Zealand appreciated our security arrangements and what happened in Karachi could have happened anywhere in the world," Rana said.

A military spokesman last week said that Pakistan's fight against terrorism had begun to pay dividends after arrests of some key suspects and hoped things would settle down.

The unrest in this strife-torn country has already caused Pakistan to lose hosting rights to a tri-nation one-day series involving Australia and New Zealand in August-September.

It was originally scheduled to be staged in Karachi but is likely to be shifted to Nairobi, Kenya.

ITF's rebuttal

Tennis

REUTERS, London

Claims by Australia's top doping official that drug use in professional tennis was widespread were "inaccurate, inappropriate and defamatory", the International Tennis Federation (ITF) said on Friday.

Francesco Ricci Bitti, president of the ITF, said remarks made by Australian Sports Drug Agency (ASDA) chief executive John Mendosa on Thursday that tennis was heavily influenced by doping were "ill-judged and insulting".

"Mr Mendosa's remarks were not only inaccurate and inappropriate but also defamatory to our sport and to the tremendous efforts made by the ITF and its partners in the tennis anti-doping programme," Ricci Bitti said in a statement on Friday.

"His remarks are ill-judged and insulting to the players and to the ITF, ATP (men's tour) and Sanex WTA (women's tour)," he said.

Ricci Bitti said Mendosa had acknowledged in a conversation with ITF executive director Deborah Jevans on Thursday that his remarks had been based on rumours and supposition and were taken out of context.

Mendoza was expected to release a statement on Friday to set the record straight, but Ricci Bitti said to his knowledge that statement had not been made.

Mendoza, whose agency was in charge of drug testing at the Sydney Olympics, was quoted as saying in The Australian newspaper that the problem was worse in the women's game.

The use of performance-enhancing drugs, particularly steroids, was now so common in women's tennis that the sport was heading towards a crisis like that which hit swimming at the 1994 world championships or cycling before the Tour de France drug busts in 1997, he was quoted as saying.

Mendoza's comments were rejected as "irresponsible and damaging" by the Women's Tennis Association.

"We categorically reject the claim that the success or physical condition of women's tennis players today is proof of rampant drug use," said

Kevin Wulff, chief executive of the WTA, in a statement made on the WTA website.

He said several hundred anti-doping tests were carried out on more than 140 different players in 2001 at tournaments, grand slams and Fed Cup competitions.

"Top players were tested as many as eight different times and we are proud of -- but not surprised by -- the fact that no anti-doping offences were committed in 2001," Wulff said.

"It is a priority and a goal, both of

the tour and its players, to increase and expand anti-doping efforts, education and testing in 2002 and beyond and we are committed to making that a reality."

"Stereotyping of our athletes as dopers is simply unfair and unacceptable. We will not tolerate remarks like Mendoza's and anxiously await the retraction and apology we have demanded."

Ricci Bitti said the ITF had asked Mendoza for a full retraction of his comments but said "...there is no way he can retract the damage he has done to our sport."

My World Cup

FROM PAGE 13 pm and after some time a huge roar went out because the German players were walking on to the pitch.

After playing the anthems at last the referee blew his whistle and the game kicked off.

Germany put eight goals past the hapless Saudis. Miroslav Klose's hat-trick made the victory even sweeter.

I left for the hotel very satisfied. The next match, however, was going to be a tough encounter against Ireland on June 5th at Kashima, Ibaraki.

Once again the atmosphere around the venue was electrifying. I too got into the spirit by having my face painted for free.

Kashima Stadium was packed to capacity with the Irish fans easily outnumbering the visitors. The game itself was a very tense affair. A late equaliser by Robbie Keane denied Germany all the points.

Now, everything depended on the last match against indomitable Cameroon at Shizuoka on June 11. I was not taking anything for granted especially as the tournament was proving to be a sort of burial ground for the fancied teams.

With the splendour of Mount Fuji in the backdrop, Shizuoka was a picture perfect setting for any football match.

One of my German friends thought that the wet conditions would suit our team. Yet, for much of the first half it was a different story.

And only when Bode and Klose struck in the second half did the celebrations begin in earnest.

Looking back on my extraordinary pilgrimage it was worth its weight in gold. While Bangladesh may not be ranked among the best teams just yet, but their fans deserve to be considered as world number one because they literally eat, breathe and talk football.

--- Khondkar Mohammad Rakibul Islam, Standard Chartered Bank, Dhaka Main

FIFA official

FROM PAGE 13 The visit of the Sri Lanka is also significant in the light of the forthcoming AFC elections. Monilal will be contesting for the same post in the Asia's football governing body.

Llodra, Blake in last four

AFP, Newport

Michael Llodra of France changed his vacation plans and spoiled the chance of an all-American semifinal Friday in the 381,000-dollar Hall of Fame Tennis Championships.

Llodra, the seventh seed, moved into his first semifinal of the season with a 6-4, 1-6, 6-1 win over Mardy Fish in the grass court ATP Tour tournament on Friday.

He advanced to play top seed James Blake, who overpowered Justin Gimelstob, 7-5, 7-5, in the other quarter-final.

Unseeded Taylor Dent and Robby Ginepri booked a semifinal matchup with victories on Thursday.

Llodra never expected to play this well in the tournament and had booked a vacation to begin Saturday.

"I wasn't sure if I was going to come here," he said. "I was supposed to go on holiday. If I make the final, I only miss three days of holiday. But I prefer to win the tournament."

The first prize of 51,000 dollars would make the shortened vacation even more enjoyable.

Blake often laboured through his match with Gimelstob, who failed to convert on any of his six break points in the match.



PHOTO: STAR

Zobera Rahman Linu displays the crest she was awarded with by Mariner Youngs Club on her entering into the Guinness Record Book during a reception yesterday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 MP's quarry

5 Nutty

9 Private address?

12 Mafia bigwig

13 First victim

14 Expert

15 In excess of

16 Square

17 Encyc. bk.

18 Vaudeville's "Perfect Fool"

19 John of "Touched by an Angel"

20 Say it isn't so

21 Gorilla

23 From -- to Z

25 Smoothed board

28 Pillaged

32 Whopper topper

33 Make into one

34 Women's WWII scarcity

36 Remit early

37 "Scionco Guy" Bill

38 Pompous sort

39 Puzzle-page offering

42 Sinbad's flyer

44 Fable god

48 Candle count

49 Fringe benefit

50 Bear in the air

51 Commerce Secretary

52 Never again?

53 Crack the books

54 Narcissus' problem

55 Bog stuff

56 Chatters

DOWN

1 "Don't have --, man!"

2 Undulous

3 Tournament format

4 Black-more heroine

5 Settled down

6 Behave

7 Breakfast option

8 In need of repair

9 Except

10 PC picture

11 Hinge (on)

20 Trudeau cration

22 Abo's on it

24 Goes sight-seeing

25 Henry VIII's desire

26 Whatever number

27 Zlich

29 Lagnippe

30 JFK info

31 "L.A. Law"

35 Tranquil

36 Small envelope

39 Put together

40 Eyes-a-poppin'

41 Stoic philosopher

43 Killer whale

45 Vicinity

46 PQO, on a memo

47 Young fellows

49 -- the mission

Solution time: 28 mins.

G A L D I S H C O P E
E M U A S I A A V I T S
M I N A R E T I S C I E N T
A I T H I O S T H I R I E
L O E W M I N O T A U R
U N O E A R L Y U S A
M I N I S T R Y E D E N
H A L L I K U S I A M E
A L L I A N T O W R I T S T
L E T T A M I N D O A N I A O
L E I T A A L O E C U D
L E A D N E W S E K E

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12				13				14		
15				16						
18				19				20		
			21	22			23	24		
25	26	27				28		29	30	31
32								33		
34				35			36			
			37				38			
39	40	41		42	43		44	45	46	47
48				49				50		
51				52				53		
54				55				56		

CRYPTOQUIP

LYXBYTB ZHLOYUBVBZ

GKIG RIGB HT KHL

RHWB VYTIRZ XOZYTRZ

ZBUBRYNBZ WIRRBTVOKBL

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: AT ANY DECENT ROBOT PARTY, I THINK THE SNACK SHOULD PROBABLY BE ASSORTED NUTS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Z equals D

The Cryptoquip 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.

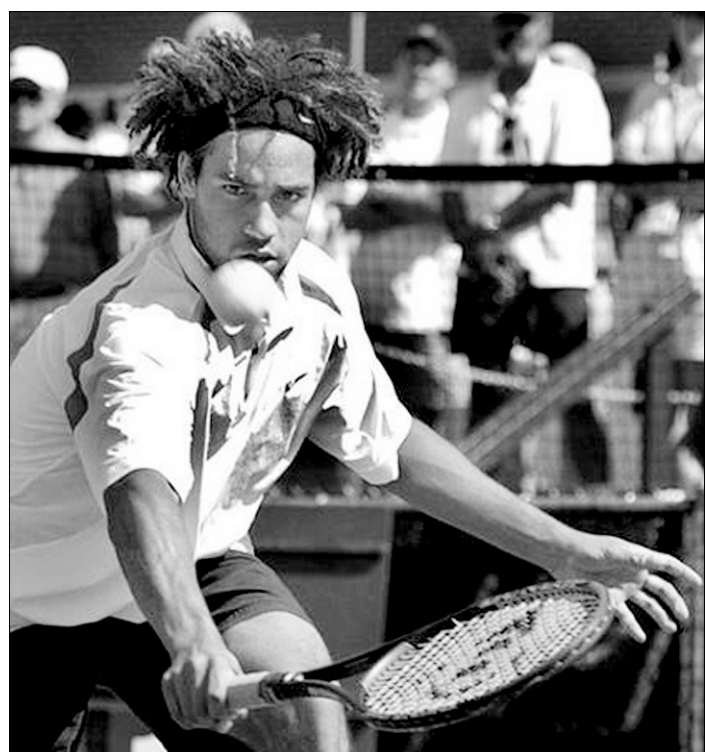


PHOTO: INTERNET James Blake plays backhand against Justin Gimelstob at the Hall of Fame Championships in Newport on July 12.