

Pak-Zim 3-dayer ends on 2nd day

AFP, Harare

Pakistan's warm-up match which began their month long tour of Zimbabwe ended here Wednesday following 20 hours of chilly rain.

After noting more than 40mm of rainfall by mid-afternoon of the third and final day, the umpires abandoned the Pakistan versus Zimbabwe A tour opening fixture at the Zimbabwe Academy ground.

After declaring on 456-6, with Taufeeq Umar's 86 and Younis Khan's 84 leading the Pakistan runs chase, Zimbabwe 'A' replied with 200-5.

Their captain Guy Whittall reached 67 not out before bad light brought the second day to a close.

Other Pakistan batsmen made runs. Inzamam ul Haq scored a rapid 63 and Hazan Raza 64.

The exception was Younis Youhana, who was run out after scoring just one run.

The Pakistan tour to Zimbabwe comes right at the beginning of the Zimbabwe rainy season.

Zimbabwe will announce their Test 12 or 13 Thursday morning, but Brigadier Khawaja Nasir told AFP that Pakistan would not choose their line-up until Friday evening.

The first Test begins here Saturday.

Lee vows to bowl back

REUTERS, Sydney

Strike bowler Brett Lee says his axing from Australia's team to play England had made him more determined than ever to make the grade.

He told reporters on Thursday: "I know I can bounce back from it. It's made me very hungry and I'm just going to work twice as hard now and really focus on what I've done the last couple of years."

Lee will join former Test players Mark Waugh, Michael Bevan, Stuart MacGill, Michael Slater and Simon Katich in the New South Wales side to host Tasmania in a four-day interstate match at Sydney Cricket Ground starting on Friday.

Men keep on

FROM PAGE 13 Joanna Dworakowska and Monika Socko. Maya Chiburdanidze and Lewta Radzievich drew.

The Georgians' once imposing 2.5 point lead was shaved to only a half-point when the Chinese drubbed the Romanians, 2.5-5. Zhu Chen, playing black, did not lose this time, and drew against Corina Peptan.

Russia edged Germany in a hard-fought match where Tatiana Kosintseva prevailed after Ekaterina Borulya failed to make the most of the Germans' chances.

Armenia and the US were joined by Vietnam, which smashed Moldova, 3-0, with 21.5 points to share fifth to seventh places.

Taposh, Rafiquel

FROM PAGE 13 observe their progress for another 24 hours," said Faruque, adding that the two along with Kapali will miss Bangladesh national team's next Challenge Trophy match against BCB Development Squad starting at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium tomorrow.

"They will be released from CMH tomorrow with an advice to take at least a week's rest. Besides, Kapali also needs some time to cure his swollen right shoulder," said Faruque.

However, Tushar Imran, who only had a few cuts and bruises, returned to action yesterday during the final day's play of the Challenge Trophy match against the A team.

Sunny irate at unruly fans

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

Cricket legend Sunil Gavaskar called Thursday for the boycott of unruly venues after unsporting Indian fans disrupted a one-day international against the West Indies.

Play was stopped for 10 minutes during Wednesday's match in the eastern city of Jamshedpur when the crowd, fearing an Indian defeat, threw bottles on to the field and lit fires in the stands.

An angry match referee Mike Proctor initially abandoned play and awarded the game to the West Indies before rival players persuaded him to allow the final three overs to be completed.

The West Indies went on to win by four wickets as Ramnaresh Sarwan hit a last-ball boundary off Ajit Agarkar to help his team surpass India's challenging 283-6.

"Crowds that cannot accept an Indian defeat should get no cricket whatsoever," said Gavaskar, who heads the world governing body's cricket committee.

"The Indian board must seriously start thinking of not only banning venues where there is crowd disturbance, but also heavily fine the staging association for not ensuring proper conduct of the match."

Indian cricket chief Jagmohan Dalmiya also condemned the incident, saying the board would have to think hard before allotting international matches to disturbance-prone venues.

"Crowd disturbances at cricket grounds anywhere in the world are condemnable. It is against the spirit of the game," said Dalmiya.

"What happened on Wednesday was no exception. The board will have to think hard before allotting matches to disturbance-prone venues as players' safety and security are pre-requisites for staging international matches."

Ironically, the Bihar Cricket Association, which hosted Wednesday's match, is headed by a former police chief of the state, Amitabh Chowdhury.

Proctor said he will report the match to the International Cricket Council (ICC) which said it was committed to safeguarding the safety of the players.

"The ICC and representatives of Boards and the players are working together to ensure that every country has in place effective safety and security plans at all venues," ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed said in a statement from London.

But will any action be taken? Going by past experience,

nothing is likely to happen at least in India, where only two venues, Mohali in the north and Madras in the south can be considered safe for cricket.

The Eden Gardens in the eastern metropolis of Calcutta has twice in the last eight years seen its reputation as one of cricrce's great centres tarnished.

The World Cup semi-final in 1996 was abandoned and awarded to Sri Lanka after violence broke out in the stands when India was on the verge of defeat.

Four years later, Pakistan won a Test match before empty seats in the 100,000-capacity stadium after police were forced to vacate the stands following crowd trouble.

Yet, the Eden Gardens remains a Test venue at the behest of former ICC chief Dalmiya, who hails from Calcutta and heads both the Indian board and the Cricket Association of Bengal.

The good news for Proctor was that Wednesday's match was allowed to be completed. The bad news is that there are six more internationals to be played across the country.

Three of them will be held in Rajkot, Baroda and Ahmedabad, all in the sensitive western state of Gujarat where hundreds were killed in communal violence earlier this year and where state elections are due next month.

"We are keeping our fingers crossed," admitted a cricket board official who did not want to be named.

But he declined to comment when asked why such potentially dangerous venues continued to be granted international matches.

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SUNIL GAVASKAR

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Sarwan remains cool

Cricket

REUTERS, Jamshedpur

Ramnaresh Sarwan kept his cool to claim victory for the West Indies against India in the first one-day international on Wednesday despite a late halt in play due to crowd trouble.

The 22-year-old batsman hit a last-ball four to lift West Indies to a four-wicket win after the players had been forced off the field with three overs remaining.

When they returned the West Indies lost two quick wickets and needed three from the last ball. Sarwan then hit medium pacer Ajit Agarkar past extra cover to seal victory and finish on a career-best 83 not out to be named the man-of-the-match.

West Indies reached 284 for six in reply to India's 283 for six.

"I was always thinking positive," said Sarwan who blames his loss of concentration for not converting good starts into big knocks in the past.

This time he displayed plenty of

quade and who has lost some of the pace that gave batsmen trouble in his first two or three years at Test level.

He was not in the original squad of 19. Olonga is likely to be 12th or 13th man.

Captained by Alistair Campbell, Zimbabwe include Grant Flower, Andy Flower, Hamilton Masakadza, Dion Ebrahim, Guy Whittall, Tendata Taibu, Andy Blynnaut, Blessing Mahwire, Raymond Price, Mluleki Nkala, Mark Vermeulen and Henry Olonga.

Masakadza scored a Test century on debut against West Indies here last year but has been studying at university since and has not played a lot of cricket.

The Zimbabwe top order has often failed and it might once again fall to the Flower brothers to give substance to Zimbabwe's batting.

It was in 1995 that Zimbabwe scored 544-4 off Pakistan, their highest since gaining Test status in 1992. Grant Flower making a double century and his brother Andy a high century.

However, the main player in the Test might be the principal Zimbabwe rain-god Chamunuka.

Hayden thanks

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123, including 12 fours and two sixes.

The pair took the game away from England to set the tone for what looms as another forlorn Ashes campaign for England.

Hayden clubbed 23 fours and two sixes after Australia was sent in, but he also rode some incredible luck once he reached three figures.

He was dropped three times -- with two of the chances when he was on 102 and 138 sitters.

The religious Hayden crossed himself after the second let-off when Michael Vaughan fumbled a simple chance at cover.

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Eng lose Jones for six months

AFP, Brisbane

England fast bowler Simon Jones faces at least six months out of cricket after rupturing knee ligaments while fielding in the first Ashes cricket Test against Australia here on Thursday.

A team spokesman said the 23-year-old Welshman had ruptured the anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee and required reconstructive surgery in England.

The Glamorgan speedster, who had taken the wicket of Australian opener Justin Langer (32) in the pre-lunch session, went down writhing in pain clutching his knee while sliding to stop a Ricky Ponting drive from reaching the long-on boundary rope shortly after lunch.

His spikes appeared to stick into the outfield and his knee jammed into the ground leaving a huge divot.

ICC to give its verdict later

AFP, London

The International Cricket Council (ICC) said it wanted to study the match referee's report before passing judgement on the crowd trouble that marred Wednesday's India versus West Indies one-day international.

The game in Jamshedpur had to be interrupted twice by spectators throwing missiles before West Indies' four-wicket victory over hosts India in this first of seven one-day internationals.

ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed said in a statement: "It is disappointing that a game has been interrupted and Mike (Proctor)'s report will help us understand why this has taken place."

Speed said player safety was paramount and that incidents of this type should not happen.

Proteas wait

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pened in the preceding games. Murali will approach every Test in the same manner." Whatmore added that the Sri Lankans were in a way spoilt in having Muralitharan in their ranks but felt that a tour to South Africa meant that the quicks would have to make more of an impression.

The tourists' pace attack will be led by Chaminda Vaas, the left arm seamer who has improved markedly since touring this country in 2000.

"South Africa is a good place for fast bowling," said Vaas. "But last time I was here I didn't do so well, so this time I'm hoping to do a lot better."

Disappointed Indian skipper Sourav Ganguly blamed his bowlers for the defeat.

"We fought pretty well, we were in a position to win today, but the bowlers didn't do well," he said.

Leading duo of off-spinner Harbhajan Singh and leg-spinner Anil Kumble struggled on a flat pitch. Harbhajan went for 68 in nine wicketless overs while Kumble returned 1-48 in seven overs.

It was in 1995 that Zimbabwe scored 544-4 off Pakistan, their highest since gaining Test status in 1992. Grant Flower making a double century and his brother Andy a high century.

However, the main player in the Test might be the principal Zimbabwe rain-god Chamunuka.

Merciless Matthew

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Then Michael Vaughan, who had a horror day with many misfields, grassed an absolute sitter with Hayden resigned to his fate and not attempting a run.

Hussain is defying history in electing to send the Australians into bat here.

Len Hutton was the last English captain to put Australia into bat in Brisbane in the 1954-55 series only for it to rebound spectacularly as the home side amassed 601 runs before declaring their first innings.

Australia went on to win that Test match by an innings and 154 runs.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at close of the opening day's play in the first Ashes cricket Test between Australia and England at the Gabba ground on Thursday:

AUSTRALIA: First innings Langer c Stewart b Jones 32 Hayden not out 186 Ponting b Giles 123 Martyn not out 9 Extras: (b-1, lb-8, w-1, nb-4) 14 Total: (For 2 wks in 90 overs) 364 Fall of wickets: 1-67, 2-339 To bat: Steve Waugh, Darren Lehmann, Adam Gilchrist, Shane Warne, Andrew Bichel, Jason Gillespie, Glenn McGrath

Bowler O M R W Caddick 19 3 71 0 Hoggard 22 5 86 0 Jones 7 0 32 1 White 16 3 67 0 Giles 24 3 87 0 Butcher 2 0 12 0

ENGLAND: Nasser Hussain, Marcus Trescothick, Michael Vaughan, Mark Butcher, John Crawley, Alec Stewart, Craig White, Ashley Giles, Andrew Caddick, Simon Jones, Matthew Hoggard.

Seles' great escape

Tennis

AFP, Los Angeles

Monica Seles saved seven match points to escape with a three-set victory over Lindsay Davenport Wednesday, setting up a quarterfinal clash with second seed Venus Williams at the 3-million-dollar WTA Tour Championships.

Seles saved three match points in the second set to force a tie-breaker, in which she fended off four straight match points before emerging with a 3-6, 7-6, 6-3 triumph.

"I was thinking, 'Go for the shots,'" Seles said. "At that stage it is a little bit of luck, too. I just really tried to hang in the match."

"She was able to win that match

to another finals showdown with her sister Serena, the top seed and world number one.

Serena downed her elder sister in four finals this year, including the French Open, Wimbledon and US Open. She'll open her campaign for a second straight triumph in the elite season-ending Championships on Thursday against Israel's Anna Smashnova.

Third seed Jennifer Capriati, who won the Australian Open, plays Silvia Farina Elia in the first round on Thursday.

Seles is returning to the exclusive season-ending event after skipping last year, when it was held in Munich.

The 28-year-old has qualified for the event, open to the top 16 players on the WTA Tour, 12 times, and she won it three times from 1990-92.

out the match quickly against Seles, who hadn't played since reaching the semi-finals in Bahia, Brazil, in early September.

Davenport led 3-0 in the second, but gave the break back in the fifth game, a break Seles called a big morale booster.

Davenport had another chance to gain the upper hand in the eighth game, in which Seles saved three break points to level the set at 4-4.

In the 10th game Seles trailed 30-40, but saved that match point with a service winner and held serve. In the 12th game she trailed 30-40, but Davenport netted first a backhand and then a forehand as Seles forced the decider.

Davenport quickly raced to a 6-2 lead, but even that wasn't safe as Seles won the next five points to take the set.

Seles earned the only break of the third set to lead 5-3 and took the match on her first match point when Davenport netted a backhand.

Seles is no stranger to such heroics. She saved six match points against Serena Williams at Manhattan Beach, California, last year.

"Some nights you pull out a match where you are almost ready to shake hands," Seles said.

"I can't even remember all of them," Davenport said of her missed opportunities. "It seemed to keep snowballing on me."

Fourth seed Justine Henin and No. 5 Kim Clijsters set up an all-Belgian quarterfinal with straight-set victories in the sparsely attended afternoon session.

Henin downed Russian Elena Dementieva 6-3, 6-3 in 1hr 21min, while Clijsters needed just 57 minutes to beat American Chanda Rubin 6-1, 6-2.

"It's always a little bit special," Henin said of the prospect of meeting Clijsters. "For sure in Belgium it's a special match, but we have to deal with that. I will try to be focused on myself and forget the situation."

There was little sense of occasion for the first two matches at Staples Centre.

The arena, which holds 18,000 for Lakers basketball games, is configured to seat 10,000 for the WTA Championships, but only a few hundred were sprinkled through the stands in the afternoon. Total attendance for the day was estimated at 3,200.

Brave Widjaja

AFP, Pattaya

Indonesia's Angelique Widjaja overcame both a stomach upset and Sandra Kleinova on Thursday to reach the quarterfinals of the women's open in the Thai resort of Pattaya.

She defeated her Czech opponent 6-4, 6-1 on just a few hours sleep after waking at dawn to consult a doctor.



PHOTO: AFP

Venus Williams in action during the first round of the WTA Championship in Los Angeles on November 6. Williams won 6-2, 7-6.

when the odds were against her," said Williams, who took the court at the Staples Center after Seles and survived her own second-set struggles to beat Switzerland's Patty Schnyder 6-2, 7-6.

Williams, who said she was rusty after playing just one match since the US Open, moved a step closer

Davenport, sidelined from January through June due to a right knee injury she aggravated in this event last year, had reached the final in three of six tournaments she has played in her abbreviated season -- including at Moscow and Zurich last month.

She appeared poised to close

Paradorn's new role

Tennis

AFP, Bangkok

Thai tennis sensation Paradorn Srichaphan, the world number 18, on Thursday became the kingdom's latest cultural ambassador in a ceremony at Government House.

Paradorn, who cracked the top 20 this week after a rousing semifinal performance in Paris, was issued a red diplomatic passport from Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

The likeable 23-year-old has already earned kudos for his graceful nature on court, where he offers a traditional Thai bow, or "wai", to all four corners of the court after each match.

The ritual has endeared him to many international fans for whom the respectful gesture is a rare encounter with Thai culture.

"Paradorn's wai is a good example for Thai teenagers who have forgotten the wai. Most teenagers don't even wai to me," Thaksin said

after the ceremony.

Paradorn is suddenly all the rage in his native Thailand, where revered King Bhumibol Adulyadej reportedly has been avidly watching his matches, and he is seen as the kingdom's most amiable cultural ambassador in years.

For now, he appears to appreciate the attention, signing autographs, chatting with supporters and hitting the talkshow circuit.

But the humble star, whose nickname "Ball" has blanketed the Thai media since his return after a string of heroic performances, is said to be tiring of the spotlight.

"We thank the Thai people for the warm welcome and attention but Ball is being stretched by media schedules," his mother Ubun was quoted as saying in the Nation newspaper Thursday.

"We don't want him to be too exhausted taking interviews all the time he stays in Thailand," his father-coach Chanachai was quoted as saying.

A gaggle of multinationalists has lined up in the hope of signing sponsorship deals with the rising star.

On Thursday he announced the

launch of his own clothing line with one of his major global sponsors.

Then he signed a three-year deal with sponsor Thai Airways International amounting to nine million baht (187,056 dollars) of free travel and one million baht in cash.

Several telecom giants are also believed to be seeking to cash in on Paradorn fever, with proposed sponsorship deals now estimated to total 100 million baht (2.3 million dollars), the English-language daily said.

"We have a new Thai sports hero, for which we have waited a long time," Suwat Liptapanlop, labour minister and president of the Lawn Tennis Association of Thailand, said at an afternoon ceremony at the airline's headquarters.