



PHOTO: AFP

The victorious Sri Lanka A cricket team members pose for photographers after they won the final of the three-nation limited-overs series against India A in Calcutta yesterday.

Lara rules out whitewash

Cricket

AFP, Durban

West Indian captain Brian Lara ruled out a second successive whitewash defeat in South Africa after his team were beaten by an innings and 65 runs on the fourth day of the second Test at Kingsmead Monday.

"There's no chance of a white-wash," said Lara after the match. The master batsman added his team were improving all the time and were looking forward to 2004 as a new start.

They take on South Africa again on the second day of the new year when they play the third Test at Newlands, Cape Town, Friday.

They have lost both matches so far in the four-Test series and lost all five Tests in 1998-99.

Even if the persistent injury problems dogging his side don't clear up, Lara said his team would not suffer the fate of the side he led five years ago.

"It's not going to happen," he insisted.

Lara appeared on the verge of backtracking when he was asked whether the West Indies could win the last two Tests to share the

series.

"That's a possibility he said. A whitewash is also a possibility but I'm ruling it out."

Lara said he was being realistic in his assessment that his side were improving.

"Our batting is getting better all the time. We've got a bowling problem but that's easier to fix than the batting."

He said the fight shown by the current side was already an improvement on recent performances on away tours to Sri Lanka, Australia and England.

Lara said the toss had played a big role, with his side being bowled out for 264 in overcast conditions after being sent in on a pitch with early life.

The pitch then played easily as South Africa scored 658 for nine under sunny skies.

The West Indies were bowled out for 329 Monday despite centuries by Ramnaresh Sarwan and Shivnarine Chanderpaul.

SCOREBOARD
Final scoreboard on the fourth day of the second cricket Test between South Africa and the West Indies at Kingsmead on Monday:

WEST INDIES: First innings 264 (Lara 72, Drakes 67, Jacobs 58; Ntini 5-66, Nel 3-43)

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 658-9 declared (Gibbs 142, Kallis 177, Kirsten 137; Sanford 3-170)

WEST INDIES: Second innings (overnight 18-0)

Hinds b Nel 11
Ganga lbw b Pollock 12
Sarwan b Ntini 114
Lara c McKenzie b Hall 11
Baugh c Ntini b Kallis 2
Jacobs c Kirsten b Rudolph 15
Chanderpaul c McKenzie b Ntini 109
Drakes c Rudolph b Nel 4
Dillon c Gibbs b Nel 0
Sanford not out 18
Edwards c Boucher b Ntini 5
Extras: (lb-16, nb-11, w-1) 28
Total: (All out in 113 overs) 329
Fall of wickets: 1-31, 2-32, 3-78, 4-95, 5-130, 6-243, 7-271, 8-271, 9-317

Bowler
Pollock 22 9 42 1
Ntini 26 8 72 3
Nel 18 3 68 3
Hall 13 3 20 1
Kallis 11 3 20 1
Rudolph 23 3 91 1

Result: South Africa won by an innings and 65 runs and lead the 4-Test series 2-0.

Man-of-the-match: Jacques Kallis.
Toss: South Africa.
Umpires: Simon Taufel and Darrell Hair.

Beat Akhtar by Akram!

AFP, Wellington

New Zealand cricket has adopted the "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" philosophy, sending an SOS to the great Wasim Akram after being humiliated by the reverse swing of fellow Pakistani Shoaib Akhtar in the seven wicket loss in the second Test which ended here Tuesday.

New coach John Bracewell and captain Stephen Fleming raised the prospect of bringing in the retired Pakistani seamer after Akhtar's devastating match-winning haul of 11 for 78 ensured Pakistan the Test and the two-match series.

Akhtar achieved figures of 17 for 89 from the two Tests against New Zealand, whose batsmen failed to get to grips with his extreme pace and swing.

Input from Akram would be invaluable, Fleming said.

"Why not go to the best, and if we can get him, great," Fleming said.

"Certainly if we can get the best players in the world at that skill, then it'd be great to learn."

New Zealand have some useful exponents of reverse swing to call on, namely injured star Shane Bond and former Test players Danny Morrison and left-arm Geoff Allott.

BFF want Festival

FROM PAGE 13

Halal informed that the BFF would try to reschedule the planned visit of AFC president Muhammed Bin Hamam to Bangladesh from the last week of March to early April so that the Asian football boss could be present during the inaugural ceremony of the under-14 festival.

Reefat's 2nd

FROM PAGE 13

enough for him to earn his second nine-round GM norm. The win also made Reefat richer by 12 thousand dollars.

He now needs another nine-game norm to become the country's third Grand Master after Niaz Murshed and Ziaur Rahman.

Reefat got his first GM norm in the White Plus Grand Masters' tournament in Dhaka last year.

With the outcome, Reefat secured seven points while three players Niaz, GM Alexander Fominyh of Russia and GM Alexi Barasov of Uzbekistan collected six points each to secure the second to fourth positions.

In the last round games: Niaz beat Debashish, Zia beat Monjur and Dinesh beat Amin while Fominyh drew with Barasov.

Procter finds no pitch problem

AFP, Melbourne

Match referee Mike Procter said he has no problems with repair marks made on the pitch before the final day's play in the third cricket Test won by Australia by nine wickets over India here on Tuesday.

South African Procter said he noticed a small hole had been repaired by groundstaff before the start of play and he referred it to the match umpires Englishman David Shepherd and New Zealander Peter Bowden, who have sole control of the pitch once a match is underway.

Procter said the hole was caused by groundsman brushing away debris off the crumbling wicket after Monday's fourth day's play and it had been subsequently filled in.

He said the umpires told head ground curator Tony Ware they wanted the pitch in exactly the same condition as it had been at the end of the fourth day's play, which Ware did.

"I don't think there was anything malicious in it at all. Tony Ware was totally above board, he was totally transparent and he had no problems replacing the piece of pitch which the umpires wanted out, so I have no problems with it, there was nothing untoward about it."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

41 "I Re-

1 "Re-

43 Gushed

48 Blond

53 Corral

58 Future

63 Keanu

68 Reeves

73 movie

78 Dr. Ruth's

83 field

88 Sully

93 Putty

98 container

103 John

108 Irving hero

113 46

118 Ensigns'

123 school (Abbr.)

128 Opposite of "post-"

133 "Mayday!"

138 Grand rd.

143 Tussaud's

148 material

DOWN

16 Vast

20 Impossi-

21 "ble"

26 Barnyard

31 Sound

36 Triangu-

41 Religion

46 of Japan

51 "The—

56 Yard" (1974 film)

61 Field

66 mouse's

71 predator

76 Philate-

81 list's prize

86 Millionaire

91 aboard

96 Nathan or

101 the

106 Barbara

111 Coast

116 30

121 Dought

126 fight

131 Break

136 Votes for

141 Thought

146 out loud

151 Conde-

156 scend

161 Silly

166 Putty

171 container

176 John

181 Irving hero

186 46

191 Ensigns'

196 school (Abbr.)

201 Opposite of "post-"

206 "Mayday!"

211 Grand rd.

216 Tussaud's

221 material

Solution time: 24 mins.

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

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

12 13 14 15 16 17 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 57 58 59

Z G S U K N Q S T S N T J S

W N I K Z C S F B Z I S K J S Z Y V U

N B - V L I C Q L Y Z W Z L I K U N

G S K O T S F C O T S F K

CRYPTOQUIP

Saturday's Cryptoquip: I WAS SUPPOSED TO MAKE DINNER TOMORROW, EXCEPT NOW I THINK I'LL COOK UP AN EXCUSE.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: T equals P
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.

Tri-series title goes to SL A

AFP, Calcutta

Schoolboy Farveez Maharoor grabbed 4-39 as Sri Lanka A whipped India A by seven wickets in the final of the three-nation limited-overs series here on Tuesday.

In a one-sided match in front of some 10,000 fans at the Eden Gardens, the Sri Lankans shot the hosts out for 197 and then galloped past the modest target with 16.2 overs to spare.

BRIEF SCORES

INDIA A: 197 in 44.4 overs (Sridharan Sriram 65; Farveez Maharoor 4-39, Ranga Herath 2-46)
SRI LANKA A: 198 for 3 in 33.4 overs (Jehan Mubarak 61, Prasanna Jayawardena 54, Russel Arnold 31 not out; Sarandee Singh 2-61)

Result: Sri Lanka A won by seven wickets to lift the title.

Shakil Rating chess champ

Fide Master Abu Sufian Shakil clinched the Prime Bank Sixth International Rating Chess tournament title with a game to go at the NSC yesterday.

Shakil earned maximum 8 points after the end of the eighth round games. Mehdi Hasan Parag was in the second position with 6.5 points and ASM Nasser hold the third place with 6 points.

In this round Shakil beat FM Rezaul Haque, Parag beat Monir Hossain and Nasser beat Alamgir Hossain.

Meanwhile, in the 25th National Women Chess Championship Masuda Begum took the solo lead in the points table with maximum 4 points after the end of the fourth round games of the preliminary phase of 25th National Women Chess Championship at the NSC yesterday.

Four players were in the second position with 3.5 points each. They are: Afroza Khanam Bably, Shumaiha Sharmin Shimmi, Sharmin Sultana Shirin and Mahmuda Haque Chodhury Moly

U-13 cricket Barisal zonal champions

UNB, Jhalakati

Barisal DSA emerged zonal champions in the National Under-13 Cricket Championship beating Bhola DSA by three-wickets in the final at local stadium yesterday.

Winning the toss, Bhola batted first and were all out for 135 runs in 35.4 overs with opener Tanji making 26 and Sohel 20 respectively.

In reply, Barisal reached their target making match-winning 136 runs for the loss of seven wickets in 31.4 overs with Nibir scoring 28 and Supriya unbeaten 27 runs respectively.

Cute h'ball on

UNB, Dhaka

Narinda Pragoti Boys Club made a good start in the CUTE Metropolis Premier Division Handball League beating Victoria SC by 25-15 in the opener at the Outer Stadium hand-ball ground yesterday.

Narinda Pragoti dominated the first half by 11-7. Akram scored 8 and Reefat 6 for the winners while Sagar made 5 and Milan 4 for the losers.

In the day's other match, Bangladesh Rifles beat Dhanmondi Club 37-21 after leading the first half by 20-7 at the same venue.

Saiduzzaman contributed 9 and Khairuzzaman 8 goals for the winners while Ripon scored 6, Faruque 5 and Tanveer 4 for the losers.

State Minister for Youth and Sports M Fazlur Rahman inaugurated the eight-team meet.

Baggio's last football days

AFP, Milan

Injury-plagued former Italy international Roberto Baggio says he will retire at the end of the current season.

"My career has been marred by injuries to my knee which have affected my running and at my age this is difficult to overcome," the 36-year-old Brescia striker told Teletutto radio station.

"Unless there's an incredible change of heart I don't believe I will go back on my decision. Retirement will cost me a great deal, but in life one must know when to say enough is enough."

Known as 'The Divine Ponytail' because of his hairstyle and religious beliefs, Baggio has had a stop-start season with several knee operations and a back strain limiting his number of appearances.

Baggio began his professional career 1982 at third division Vicenza and made his Serie A debut with Fiorentina three years later.

After four seasons in Florence, he signed for Juventus in 1990 for a then record 11.3 million euros (14.1 million dollars).

Premiership

Pires the difference

Football

AFP, Southampton

Robert Pires seventh goal in six meetings with Southampton was enough to see Arsenal maintain their unbeaten record in the Premiership this season as they came out 1-0 winners here on Monday against an understrength home side.

The Frenchman's first-half effort - his seventh of the season in the Premiership and 10th overall - settled a disappointingly one-sided affair where the Saints failed to muster one shot in the second-half and saw Arsenal move to within a point of leaders Manchester United.

Pires has proved to be Southampton's nemesis in the past three meetings scoring a hat-trick in their last Premiership clash and then the only goal in the FA Cup final last term.

"I like playing this team. I am their bogeyman," grinned Pires. Arsenal coach Arsene Wenger was content to have maintained the pressure on United.

"It was a well done job," the Frenchman said. "We didn't win by more because their keeper made some good saves."

Wenger also insisted he would not be flashing the cheque book in the transfer window which opens in January. "No I'm not not at all going to buy. "If you look at the players we have out and in the team at the moment I think we have a strong enough squad."

Thierry Henry wasn't totally satisfied with the performance.

"We could have done better," said Henry, who set up Pires for the goal.

"Still it is very important to keep the race tight and not lose points now."

However Saints handler Gordon Strachan accused his players of running scared and

warned them they could be harmed by that performance for the rest of their lives.

"It is the first time ever since I have been here that we looked like we were scared of the opposition. "We should be able to bottle that smell of fear."

"I told the players you must remember that game for the rest of your life and how you embarrassed yourselves in front of a record crowd (32,151)."

"I told them it could be a good game for your career as it will make you buck up or a bad game for your career when that's it for you as a player here and you will make your way down the leagues."

Freddie Ljungberg came within a whisker of doubling Arsenal's advantage 10 minutes into the second period as a Southampton defender passed it inadvertently to him inside the penalty area but his rasping shot was brilliantly deflected for a corner by Antti

TOP SCORERS

Leading scorers in the English Premiership after Monday's match:

15 goals - Alan Shearer (Newcastle)	
13 - Ruud van Nistelrooy (Manchester United)	
12 - Thierry Henry (Arsenal), Louis Saha (Fulham)	
9 - Nicolas Anelka (Manchester City)	
8 - Juan Pablo Angel (Aston Villa), Michael Owen (Liverpool), James Beattie (Southampton), Mikael Forssell (Birmingham)	
7 - Frederic Kanoute (Tottenham), Hernan Crespo (Chelsea), Les Ferdinand (Leicester), Robert Pires (Arsenal)	
6 - Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink (Chelsea), Teddy Sheringham (Portsmouth), Paul Dickov (Leicester)	
5 - Robbie Keane (Tottenham), Kevin Davies (Bolton), Harry Kewell (Liverpool), Alan Smith (Leeds), Andy Cole (Blackburn), Luis Boa Morte (Fulham), Steve Watson (Everton), Tomasz Radzinski (Everton), Adrian Mutu (Chelsea)	

Niemi.

Niemi had to be at his best again 10 minutes from time when he blocked Henry's low shot from outside the area and only Pires's slipping on the wet turf stopped Arsenal from scoring.

Pires had struck in the 34th minute after a slide rule pass by Henry released him free on the left and the French international's nicely taken shot gave Niemi no chance.

It was no more than the Gunners deserved as they had dominated play and Dutch ace Dennis Bergkamp should have given them the lead earlier in the first-half when on his 250th appearance for Arsenal he botched a free header when found unmarked at the far post by the irresistible Henry.

The closest Southampton came to causing worries in the Arsenal defence in the first 45 minutes was when Kevin Phillips trod on Jens Lehmann's toe while preparing for a corner - Lehmann did not forget and as the final whistle sounded the German goalkeeper childishly threw the ball at Phillips head but the referee opted to let him off.

The referee admitted later he couldn't take any action because he had blown his whistle, though Wenger as usual saw little malice in it.

"He shouldn't have done it. "I think he was frustrated many times and was hit a few times in the air."

"He's not used to that when he played in Germany."

TOP SIX

English Premiership table after Monday's match (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):

Man United	19	15	1	3	38	13	46
Arsenal	19	13	6	0	35	12	45
Chelsea	19	13	3	3	36	16	42
Charlton	19	8	6	5	27	22	30
Fulham	19	8	4	7	30	26	28
Liverpool	18	7	5	6	28	21	26

Yasin 10 2 24 2
Ahsanullah 10 1 26 3
Result: Chittagong won by 14 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Ahsanullah Hasan (Chittagong).

RAJSHAHI V BARISAL
Venue: Barisal Stadium

RAJSHAHI
Jamilul c Nayan b Anisur 2
Imroz b Anisur 0
Rafique lbw b Anisur 0
Murad c Anisur b Bikash 6
Nuruzzaman c Nayan b Arman 67
Anisur lbw b Anisur 81
Mashud c Shawpan b Anisur 34
Hasanuzzaman not out 50
Aminul not out 19
Extras: (lb-6, nb-1, w-12) 2
Total: (For seven wkts in 50 overs) 261

Fall of wkts: 1-2, 2-2, 3-3, 4-14, 5-153, 6-176, 7-255

Bowler
Bikash 10 0 46 1
Anisur 10 1 42 5
Rabindra 6 0 30 0
Mustadir 10 0 41 0
Arman 6 0 36 1
Tariqul 8 0 60 0

BARISAL
Ranim c Hasanuzzaman b Shahjada 13
Imran b Shahjada 9
Jamal c Hasanuzzaman b Shahjada 12
Nahidul not out 69
Nayan b Rezaunul 19
Mustadir run out 0
Rabindra lbw b Murad 0
Arman c Aminul b Murad 26
Tariqul not out 15
Extras: (b-2, lb-2, nb-1, w-14) 19
Total: (For seven wkts in 50 overs) 166

Fall of wkts: 1-19, 2-36, 3-40, 4-72, 5-72, 6-80, 7-103

Bowler
Aminul 7 1 24 0
Shahjada 8 1 23 3
Murad 10 0 32 2
Rezaunul 10 0 27 1
Jamilul 6 0 30 0
Nuruzzaman 7 0 16 0
Rafique 1 0 4 0
Mashud 1 0 6 0

Result: Rajshahi won by 95 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Hasanuzzaman (Rajshahi).

'Beckham not as good as Mekelele'

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid's polyvalent Spanish international defender Ivan Helguera believes that England midfielder star David Beckham will never fill the boots of former team-mate Claude Makelele.

French midfielder Makelele moved to English Premiership big-spenders Chelsea this season after a protest at Madrid's refusal to increase his salary which he claimed was a fish of what Ronaldo, Zinedine Zidane and Beckham earn.

And Helguera, who also plays midfield, believes that his friend Makelele is sorely missed by the Spanish champions, even with Beckham in their side.

"He (Beckham) doesn't match the defensive level of Makelele whatever anyone says," Helguera told the Futbolista magazine.

Helguera often worked in tandem with Makelele, but he finds Beckham, his partner this season, who has been converted from right winger to midfield defender, sorely lacking.

"He's not as defensive. He has a lot of technical quality, he helps a lot in defence and has a spectacular touch with the ball. He plays great football. It shows that he is happy and this allows him to play to his full capacity."

Helguera said however that the arrival of coach Carlos Queiroz has not changed the Real system of play.

"Whatever coach arrives has to play with the system which we always use. The team plays like that and it has worked for us these last few years. Imagine that (Fabio) Capello or another arrived: he couldn't ask Ronaldo to change his way of playing which has always delivered results," added Helguera.

Mayor to help catch Rivaldo!

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

The Mayor of Rio de Janeiro, Cesar Maia, said Monday that he has offered local club Botafogo financial assistance in order to hire Brazilian international striker Rivaldo, who has been released by Italian side AC Milan.

"The council is ready to help the big clubs in the town sign big-name players in a bid to revitalise football in Rio," Maia told the sports daily Lance. "In the case of Rivaldo an offer was made by us to Botafogo."

Maia said that he was counting on the club, which was promoted to the top flight after falling into Division Two the previous season, to negotiate a fair price for the player.

Since leaving AC Milan, 31-year-old Rivaldo, has been resting in Brazil while awaiting a new contract.

A clutch of clubs are reported to be chasing Rivaldo, but a stumbling block could be his wages. The 1999 FIFA World Player of the Year was reported to be on 215,000 euros (258,000 dollars) a week at Milan.

Rivaldo's agent says they have had three offers from English Premiership clubs and have already turned down an offer of one million dollars a month to play in Qatar. Portuguese giants Benfica are also reported to be interested.

Rivaldo joined Milan from Barcelona after Brazil's World Cup triumph in Japan.

Aussies draw

FROM PAGE 13

Extras: (b-4, lb-2, w-1, nb-4) 11
Total: (For 1 wkt in 22.2 overs) 97

Fall of wicket: 1-9

Bowler
Agarkar 7 2 25 1
Nehra 6 3 16 0
Kumble 6.2 0 43 0
Sehwag 3 0 7 0

Result: Australia won by 9 wickets and level the series at 1-1.