

Mendis named new SLC boss

BBC ONLINE, undated

Duleep Mendis has been named as the new chief executive of Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC).

It is the latest in a series of major roles for Mendis, who has already been captain, coach and manager of the national team, and a selector.

The 51-year-old succeeds Anura Tennakoon, who retired from the post last month.

He takes over at a difficult time with SLC president Thilanga Sumathipala currently in custody on charges of fraud and passport forgery.

Mendis was a hard-hitting batsman during his playing career and captained Sri Lanka in 19 of his 24 Tests as well as 61 one-day games.

He played in Sri Lanka's inaugural Test against England in 1982, led them to their first victory over India three years later, and also appeared in three World Cups.

His last role was as acting coach following the resignation of Dav Whatmore last year.

He was in charge for a home Test series against New Zealand and the A tour to the West Indies which followed.

Vermuelen has successful op

AFP, Brisbane

Zimbabwe batsman Mark Vermuelen has had surgery here to repair a skull fracture sustained in the triangular one-day series against India on Tuesday, a team spokesman said on Thursday.

The three-and-a-half hour procedure was completed successfully at the Mater Hospital, the spokesman said.

As well as reconstructing the impact area above his right eye, the surgery also repaired damage he sustained in a previous fracture incurred while practising during the World Cup.

"Marks recovering well from the surgery and should make a full and complete recovery from the injury," Zimbabwe team physiotherapist Brad Robinson said on Thursday.

"He will stay in hospital for the next few days at least while his progress is monitored."

Once Vermuelen is discharged he is due to travel to Perth to recuperate further with family.

No timescale has yet been fixed for his return to Zimbabwe, the statement said.

Vermuelen was hospitalised after top- edging a hook shot off an Irfan Pathan bouncer into his forehead.

The 24-year-old opener was wearing a new-style helmet but the ball squeezed in between the visor and peaked leaving him bloodied and bruised.



French schoolgirl Tatiana Golovin in action against 14th seeded Anna Smashnova-Pistolesi of Israel yesterday. The youngster stunned her experienced opponent with a 6-2, 6-3 win.

Business as usual

Australian Open

AFP, Melbourne

A pair of wild card entrants provided a bit of excitement Thursday to an otherwise predictable Australian Open where the tournament favorites breezed effortlessly into the third round.

French schoolgirl Tatiana Golovin gave the Grand Slam its first big upset by beating 14th-seeded Anna Smashnova-Pistolesi in straight sets, 6-2, 6-3.

Golovin, 15 and ranked just 354th in the world, used powerful groundstrokes to blow past Smashnova and now faces 23rd seed Lina Krasnoroutskaya of Russia in round three.

Australian wildcard Todd Reid then triumphed in a marathon five-set duel with the experienced Armenian Sargis Sargsian.

Reid, a fiercely competitive 19-year-old who is drawing comparisons to fellow Australian and former world No 1 Lleyton Hewitt, had to battle three hours and 36 minutes to beat Sargsian 6-3, 6-4, 4-6, 6-7, 6-4.

But there were no shocks at the sharp end of the competition as pre-tournament favorites continued to outclass their rivals in straight sets.

Swiss second men's seed Roger Federer, 22, did away with American qualifier Jeff Morrison with little ado, 6-2, 6-3, 6-4, showing the kind of form which won him the Wimbledon and season-ending Masters crowns last year.

He will face Reid in round three and declared confidently: "I know I can win this tournament".

Third seed Juan Carlos Ferrero of Spain shook off an elbow injury suffered in a third-set fall to beat Italian Filippo Volandri 6-4, 7-6, 7-5 and advance to a third-round tie with Swede Joachim Johansson.

The 23-year-old Ferrero, the French Open champion and runner-up to world No. 1 Andy Roddick in last year's US Open final, has yet to get past the quarterfinals in three attempts at the Australian Open.

Ferrero's and Federer's advance to round three mirrored that of Roddick and defending champion Andre Agassi, who both defeated lesser rivals in straight sets on Wednesday.

David Nalbandian of Argentina also had no difficulty advancing on Thursday with a straight-sets beating of German qualifier Florian Mayer 6-1, 6-0, 6-3.

The athletic 22-year-old is seeded eighth and is seen as a dark horse contender for the Australian Open crown since he beat Agassi in last week's Kooyong Classic final.

"Right now, I think I'm very good," Nalbandian said after Thursday's match.

Further down the men's draw, former world number one Lleyton Hewitt took a slightly longer four sets to beat Slovak Karol Kucera 1-6, 6-1, 6-4, 6-1, and pursue his bid to become the first Australian to win the home Grand Slam in 28 years.

On the women's side, world number two Kim Clijsters and third seed Venus Williams won both their second-round matches in

under an hour on their way to a likely semifinal clash.

The other main favourites -- world number one Justine Henin-Hardenne and Frenchwoman Amelie Mauresmo -- did the same on Wednesday in the other half of the draw.

Back-in-form Clijsters barely broke a sweat in demolishing world number 92 Maria Elena Camerin of Italy 6-0, 6-0.

The 20-year-old Belgian said she had no problem with the left ankle that she injured early this month and that had bothered her in the first-round match on Tuesday.

"I felt very sharp ... really doing with the ball whatever I wanted," she said.

Williams, returning to competition after a six-month injury break, then blasted 17-year-old Russian debutante Vera Douchevina 6-4, 6-2 to set up a third-round match with 25th seed Lisa Raymond.

Asked if she thought Williams was back to full form ahead of their possible semi-final meeting, Clijsters said simply: "Yeah, she's still Venus. She still is so quick and she still probably is the best mover out there."

Four lower-ranked seeds fell on Thursday led by eighth-ranked Ai Sugiyama who lost to Japanese compatriot Saori Obata.

Their departures brought to 14 the number of women's seeds defeated in the first two rounds of the Open, where the field had already been weakened by the absence due to injury of Serena Williams and Jennifer Capriati.

Singer chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Fide Master Khandker Aminul Islam, Savkat Hossain Pollab and Aminul Islam Polash were sharing the lead after the seventh round of the Singer 30th National Chess Championship at the NSC auditorium yesterday.

They have earned six points respectively.

Aminul defeated Arman Monir, Palash beat Abul Malek while Pallab drew with Nasir.

Nasir Ahmed, Saif Uddin Lavlu, Rezaul Haque, Sohail Chowdhury and Debaraj Chettarjee were occupying second place with 5.5 points each.

The eighth round starts today at 3 pm.

Office hockey Army, Library in Super League

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Army and Friends Library advanced into the Office Hockey Super League as Group A champions and runners-up respectively at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Army outplayed Bangladesh Air Force 6-1 in the first match of the day. They led the first half 4-0.

Shyamol Sarkar, Yasin Ali, Thunio Marma, Rafiqul Islam, Ajmeer Alam and Ferdous Goldar scored for Army while Saiful Hasan struck the consolation goal for the losers.

Star-studded Friends Library rolled up a hapless Rising Group B-1 after leading the first half 3-1.

National forward Rafiqul Islam Kamal led the Friends care with three goals and Shahidullah Tito netted twice. Jamal Ahmed Hasan, Maksud Alam Habul and Ariful Haque Prince shared the other goals.

The four-team Super League starts on Saturday.

Slow-going Tasmania

AFP, Hobart

Tasmania drew the ire of Queensland captain Jimmy Maher after adopting a go-slow approach in their Sheffield Shield cricket match at Bellerive Oval here on Thursday.

At stumps on the second day, Tasmania were 170 for three after facing 71 overs in reply to Queensland's 400 for 8 declared.

Left-hander Michael Di Venuto was unbeaten on 67 after 20 minutes at the crease and Michael Dighton on four.

The last wicket to fall was former Australian one day all-rounder Shane Watson who was caught behind by Wade Scoble for 53 off paceman Joe Dawes who finished with 2-35 off 14 overs.

Queensland declared at 8-400, half an hour before lunch after starting the day on 6-289. Nathan Hauritz was unbeaten on 40, their partnership yielding 58 runs off 48 balls.

Some relief

FROM PAGE 13 SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 198 all out in 84.3 overs (Rashedul Haq 19, Moniruzzaman 45, Nasiruddin 64 n.o., Tushar Imran 1, Halim Shah 0, Mazharul Haq 42, Anwar Hossain 3, Fahim Muntasir 0, Monjurul 0, Gazi Alamgir 1, Arafat 4-26, Faisal Afridi 1-47, Saeed Ajmal 5-50).

KRL: First innings 160 for 5 wks in 33 overs (Saeed Anwar Jr 76, Mohammed Ramzan 34, Sayed Bin Naser 21, Ali Nagbi 12, Yasir Arafat 8, Intekhab Alam 4, Julqir 1, Jamaluddin 1-41, Fahim Muntasir 4-38).

Result: Match drawn.

Mohammedan

FROM PAGE 13 footballers have urged the club to give its decision of boycotting the league a second thought.

In a meeting held at the club premises yesterday, they also asked DMFLC to revoke their punitive measures taken against the club.

Chaired by former Mohammedan captain Zakaria Pintoo, the protest gathering was also attended by Al-Haj Zahirul Khondker Nununnabi, Badal Roy, Abu Yusuf, Kaiser Hamid, Syed Hassan Kanan, GM Nowsher Prince and other past players.

"In a closed door conference, the ex-players unanimously agreed that the decision of not playing the final minutes of the Muktijoddha match was a major mistake made by the team management," said a source from the meeting.

Meanwhile, table toppers Brothers Union has threatened to demand compensation from DMFLC if the league remained stopped for an indefinite period.

In a press conference at the club premises yesterday afternoon, the club officials claimed that they had to spend around Taka one lak everyday to maintain the football squad.

Olonga backs boycott

Cricket

AFP, London

Former Zimbabwe cricketer Henry Olonga welcomed the news Wednesday that England were on the verge of cancelling their tour of the strife-torn nation in protest at the policies of its President Robert Mugabe.

Olonga said that while any boycott was unlikely to change much in the short term, it would be part of a process that would help Zimbabwe become a democratic nation.

Next week an England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) meeting will consider whether to go ahead with the tour, scheduled for November, after details of a report compiled by one of its senior officials saying Mugabe's human rights record had to be a factor in the decision were made public.

At last year's World Cup Olonga and teammate Andy Flower wore black armbands and issued a powerful statement mourning the "death of democracy" in Zimbabwe, a move that effectively ended the duo's international careers.

Former pace bowler Olonga, the

first black player to represent Zimbabwe, admitted, from a sporting perspective, it would be disappointing if the tour was cancelled.

"If England don't go, I think it will be sad, cricket will lose out," he told Sky Sports TV.

"But the reason we are in this situation is because Zimbabwe as a country has already lost through



HENRY OLONGA

the bad leadership and governance of the President and whatever we can bring to highlight this dire situation in Zimbabwe is welcome by me and others."

But he said an England boycott would make little difference either to Mugabe or most Zimbabweans.

"I don't think it will have any effect on President for a start. From the lot of the average Zimbabwean person who lives in the country it probably won't change their lives either."

"But what we need in Zimbabwe is a change and that change will come about by a process, a process of constant pressure being applied on this government... That comes from little incidents and issues like this."

Olonga, now pursuing a music and broadcasting career in England having sustained a knee injury, said he felt no ill-will to those cricketers who continued to play for Zimbabwe.

"I still follow their progress with a lot of passion. I enjoy watching the team and I feel they are innocent victims caught in the crossfire."

However, he added: "The only thing, and I've said this in the past, is that I wish they were a bit more vocal in expressing their feelings about the country."

"But they are not speaking out for good reasons. They might endanger themselves, their careers and their families and I understand that."

ICC cautions England

Cricket

AFP, London

Cricket's world governing body warned England Wednesday that it faced legal action and a compensation payment if it withdrew from its planned tour of Zimbabwe on political grounds.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) re-affirmed its stance that safety and security was the only basis for cancelling international matches after a report produced by a senior English official concluded that pulling out of the Zimbabwe tour would be justified on moral grounds.

The report, drawn up by England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) corporate affairs chairman Des Wilson, said concerns over Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe's human rights record could and should be taken into account when the board decides on January 29 whether to proceed with the November tour.

"Can we tour this country knowing what we do about its stance on human rights and the suffering of its people?" Wilson's report said.

"The safety and security of a touring party can in today's circumstances no longer be the only factor in deciding whether or not to proceed with a controversial tour."

Wilson's recommendations, if implemented, would represent a major departure from the existing policy of the ECB which to date has followed the ICC's 'safety-only' position.

ICC president Ehsan Mani and chief executive Malcolm Speed held a meeting Tuesday with ECB counterparts David Morgan and Tim Lamb where the global governing body repeated its position.

"All Test-playing countries, including England, have given a binding commitment to each other that political considerations would not be a factor when reviewing playing obligations and this commitment was discussed during the meeting," said Mani in a statement.

"In this case, the arrangements for this tour have been made on a bilateral basis under the umbrella of the ICC's future tours programme that is agreed by all countries."

Mani, a Pakistani, added that the ICC would try to ensure fairness for both parties but said the ECB could be subjected to disciplinary action if it pulled out.

"Should the ECB elect to withdraw from this tour for reasons other than safety and security, it would then be open to the ZCU (Zimbabwe Cricket Union) to take the ECB to the ICC's Disputes Resolution Committee to determine if any compensation is payable or to take any other legal action that might be open to it under the terms of any agreement between the ECB and the ZCU."

Wilson stressed Wednesday that no decision had been taken. "This is the management board's decision, not mine. I am merely suggesting the factors they should take into account," he told BBC

Radio. But after his report received blanket coverage in the British press, it is hard to see how the ECB could now give the go-ahead to the tour without suffering a major public relations embarrassment.

The ZCU reacted to Wilson's report by appealing to the ECB to honour their commitment to tour in return for Zimbabwe coming to England last year.

ZCU chairman Peter Chingoka said: "Having honoured our word that we would tour the UK we naturally expect England to reciprocate by touring Zimbabwe."

England's promise to tour Zimbabwe followed the team's boycott of a World Cup match in Harare last year on security grounds.

The ICC ruled that England were not justified in that decision and docked them World Cup points as well as withholding 2.3 million pounds of their share of tournament revenues.

But even if England had to pay compensation, they could yet save money by not touring. One of English cricket's major sponsors, communications firm Vodafone, has warned it may withdraw its annual three million pound (5.4 million dollar, 4.3 million euro) backing if the tour goes ahead.

Bangladesh in February, Sri Lanka in April and Australia in May and June are all set to tour Zimbabwe before England. Australia is due to send a delegation to Zimbabwe in March to assess the situation.

Micevic charged

FROM PAGE 13

charge of common assault, laid before Hooke's died.

Defence lawyer Brian Rolfe said Micevic, a former champion amateur boxer, had been forced leave his home after receiving death threats since Hooke's death on Monday.

"The publicity has led to the fact that my client has been receiving hate mail and death threats at his home," Rolfe told the court.

"The media has camped outside his house 12 hours a day, his family has been forced to flee their own home."

Hooke's, 48, who had been coaching the Victoria state cricket side, suffered massive head injuries when the bouncer allegedly struck him to the ground during a dispute in the Melbourne suburb of Saint Kilda late Sunday.

He died a day later, leading to an outpouring of grief in cricket-mad Australia, with Prime Minister John Howard leading the tributes.

Life on Planet Venus

Australian Open

AFP, Melbourne

Venus Williams is on a permanent voyage of self-discovery. But tennis will always be her guiding light.

The former world number one plotted a course into the Australian Open third round Thursday by dispatching Vera Douchevina of Russia 6-4, 6-2.

Afterwards Williams declared herself hungrier than ever to add the Australian Open crown to her two US Open and Wimbledon titles, after six months on the sidelines recovering from a stomach injury.

The most difficult part of her rehabilitation had been accepting that she could not force the pace of her recovery, she said.

"As much as I like tennis, I was okay being away from it," the 23-year-old told a news conference.

"The hardest thing was accepting my limitations, to accept that I couldn't do it.

"Growing up in the Williams house, there was no such thing as can't or cannot. That was a hard thing to accept."

Williams has a keen interest in fashion and interior design, plays the guitar and bass and says she wants to learn the keyboard. She has also dabbled in languages, recently trying her hand at Spanish, Italian and Russian.

But there is no chance of tennis taking a back seat.

"I'm quite ambitious. My mum, she knows that I try too much and she worries for me. She doesn't want me to lose my focus on tennis -- which I won't."

"I'll always keep that, it's like my lighthouse, I'm always going towards the tennis. But for me, it's important to be well-rounded in order for me to my best at the tennis."

"More than anything, I like exploring myself, and each year I realise there's so much more that I like to know, so much more that I'd like to do.

"I think more than anything I just want to improve myself, that's my whole goal. Whether it's fashion or any other endeavour, I just want to do my best and just keep getting more out of me."

So far in Melbourne there has been no sign that Williams' busy extra-curricular schedule is taking a toll on her game.

When it's not tennis!

AFP, Melbourne

The world's top tennis players may only spend a few weeks down under each year, but it's been enough for a couple of the best to pick up on Australia's national pastimes -- cricket and Aussie rules football. Belgian world number two Kim Clijsters said she'd traded her European interest in soccer for the action-packed Australian football.

"I can't wait to come here and watch a few games," Clijsters said after advancing to the third round at the Australian Open.

"I do like soccer as well, but you can have nil-nil matches and not really have seen that much. In the AFL football, there's always something going on, so I really enjoy that," she said.

Clijsters is engaged to marry Australian tennisman Lleyton Hewitt, an AFL fanatic, and said that through him she had become friends with a number of players from his hometown Adelaide Crows.

But asked if she would "be allowed" to back another team than her husband-to-be's beloved Crows, Clijsters shot back: "Sure, I've got my own leanings, too."

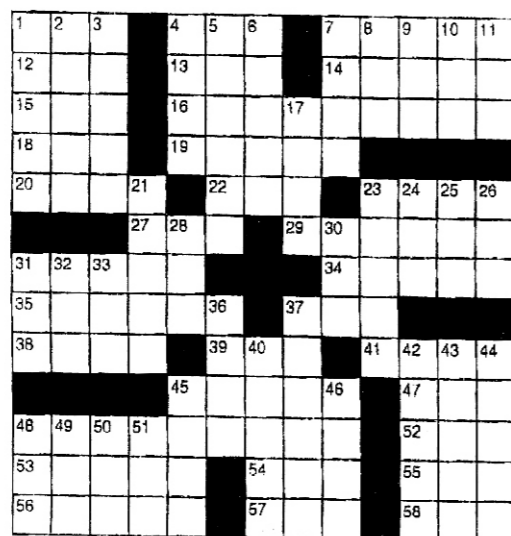
Clijsters' counterpart on the professional men's tour, Swiss world number two Roger Federer, meanwhile revealed a fascination for cricket -- not a pastime followed by many on the world tennis circuit.

"I just really watch it because it's relaxing," Federer told reporters after winning his second round match, adding with a smile: "I understand the rules, that's already something for a European."

"The other guys, all my friends, they don't understand the sport."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.



CRYPTOQUIP

Clues and solution for the Cryptiquip puzzle, including the key: Today's Cryptiquip Clue: F equals D.

Gough, Tykes part company

Cricket

AFP, London

Former England Test bowler Darren Gough announced on Wednesday that he would be leaving his county Yorkshire for family reasons.

Gough, 33, said he hoped to continue playing first-class cricket for another county in the hope of reviving his international career but had not yet found a new employer.

In a statement issued by Yorkshire, the county of his birth and the side he has represented throughout his first-class career, Gough said: "I wish to confirm that, for family reasons, I have today agreed with Yorkshire CCC that, after 15 very happy years, I will leave the club."

"I am incredibly grateful for the support that the club and fans have shown to me throughout my Yorkshire and England career and I would especially like to thank the

chief executive, Colin Graves, who, as well as being my employer, remains a true friend."

"Having joined Yorkshire as a YTS (member of the Youth Training Scheme) when I was 18, it has been one of the hardest decisions I've ever had to make, and I

muting, and much more time with my young children," said Gough who lives in the south of England.

"My definite aim is to continue playing first-class cricket and hopefully regain my one day international place back."

"I hope to make a further announcement on my future within the next few weeks," said Gough.

The injury-plagued paceman was furious at being left out of the one-day sections of England's recent tours of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka and believes he could still be playing at the top level when the 2007 World Cup comes around.

Gough made a comeback from long-term knee injury last summer and played a key role in one-dayers against Pakistan, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

But the strain of playing in Test cricket proved too much and he bowed out of the five-day game after England's innings defeat by South Africa in the second Test at Lord's in August.

Gough has taken 727 first-class wickets at an average of 26.92.

Lee robs India

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103 in India's 19-run win over Australia in Brisbane last week, reached his fourth one-day century, all against Australia.

The wristy strokeplayer faced 130 balls and hit four boundaries, continuing his dominance of Australia's bowlers following his two centuries in the recent drawn test series.

World champions Australia claimed three early wickets, removing Ganguly for one, Parthiv Patel for 28 and Rahul Dravid for 12.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard of the triangular VB Series one-day cricket match between Australia and India at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Thursday:

Table with columns: Team, Player, Runs, Wickets, Overs.

Table with columns: Team, Player, Runs, Wickets, Overs, and other statistics.