

Zimbabwe omit suspect bowler

AFP, Harare Zimbabwe fast-medium bowler Blessing Mahwire, who was reported by match referee Mike Procter for a suspect bowling action after the first Test against Sri Lanka here last week, has been left out of the side for the second and final match in Bulawayo starting on Friday.

Under the International Cricket Council regulations Mahwire will be able to play for up to six weeks while he works with coaches and human movement experts to try and remove suspicions about his action. But the Zimbabwe selectors have decided instead to replace him with an opening batsman Vusi Sibanda.

They were limited in choice to a similar side that lost to Sri Lanka by an innings and 240 runs because the 12 rebellious white players, who in normal circumstances would form the basis of any Zimbabwe team, were sacked on Monday after failing to report for duty.

India-Pakistan hockey series later this year

AFP, New Delhi

India will host a four-match field hockey series with Pakistan later this year, an official announced here on Tuesday.

"We will host Pakistan soon after the Olympics and hope that the series will revive interest in the game," Indian Hockey Federation (IHF) chief Kunwar Gill told reporters.

Pakistan's tour was expected to take place in September but the dates and venues were yet to be finalised.

Gill said the success of India's recent cricket tour of Pakistan had given them hope for similar series in the future.

"India will also tour Pakistan for many matches soon after the series here and we hope to make Tests between the two countries an annual affair," said Gill.

No Lara

FROM PAGE 13 Sylvester Joseph, Dwayne Smith, Dwayne Bravo, Ridley Jacobs (wkt), Ian Bradshaw, Ravi Rampaul, Fidel Edwards, Tino Best.

Waugh sees

FROM PAGE 13 bit of fear in the opposition," said Waugh, who retired along with twin brother Mark from all cricket following the end of the domestic season earlier this year.

"The attack is looking good, they've got experience with the batting but they will measure themselves up against Australia."

However Waugh said his former team-mates -- whom he led to victory in 41 of 57 Tests and also the 1999 World Cup -- were still the team to beat in Test cricket especially after their recent series win in Sri Lanka.

"To win in those conditions against Murali was a big feat for the side and particularly Ricky Ponting in his first series (as captain)," he said.

"India loom as the main danger, England are playing some good cricket recently then you've got the talent of Pakistan and the strength of South Africa.

"It's always difficult to stay on top but I think we can stay on top for a bit longer."

Murali may dump doosra



AFP, Colombo

Test cricket's bowling record-holder Muttiah Muralitharan of Sri Lanka on Wednesday hinted he will drop the controversial 'doosra' delivery from his armoury after it was deemed illegal by the sport's world governing body.

"The 'doosra' has always been at the back of my mind," Muralitharan was quoted as saying in the Colombo-based 'Daily News' in perhaps his first public statement on the controversial delivery.

"People have questioned me about it. I have done all the tests that are required and the reports have gone to the International Cricket Council (ICC).

"At the end of the day what matters is what the report, the expert, my cricket board and the ICC says."

Sri Lankan cricket authorities on Wednesday confirmed they had asked the off-spinner not to bowl the 'doosra', a delivery which spins away from the right-handers instead of coming into them like a normal off-break.

"We have advised Muralitharan not to bowl the 'doosra'. We had also informed the team manager before he played in Zimbabwe," said a Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) official.

The spinner, however, did bowl the 'doosra' in the opening Test

against Zimbabwe at Harare where he took eight wickets to break retired West Indies fast bowler Courtney Walsh's world record of 519 Test wickets.

But Muralitharan, with 521



MUTTIAH MURALITHARAN

wickets in 89 Tests, is unlikely to continue with the controversial delivery in Friday's second Test at Bulawayo following a ICC statement on Tuesday that it supported the SLC's decision to tell the bowler not to bowl the 'doosra' delivery.

Muralitharan was reported for a suspect bowling action by English match-referee Chris Broad during the third and final Test against Ricky Ponting's Australians at Colombo in March.

He was then sent to Australia to

work on his action with a team of experts who found the Sri Lankan straighten his arm by 10 degrees, which was five degrees more than what is permitted under ICC regulations.

ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed on Tuesday warned that Muralitharan could face a 12-month ban if he persisted with the 'doosra'. "The report forwarded by Sri Lanka Cricket proves that the degree of straightening is well outside the ICC's specified levels of tolerance," said Speed.

Muralitharan is currently within the six-week stage-one phase of the ICC's bowling review process after being reported by Broad.

"If his action does not conform to the laws of cricket, no second report can be made until this six-week period is completed. This period expires at midnight on Thursday, May 13, 2004," Speed said.

"Should the bowler go against the wishes of his Board, bowl this delivery and subsequently be reported within 12 months of the initial report, the issue would progress to Stage-Two of the ICC's process for dealing with bowlers with illegal bowling actions.

"This would result in this delivery being scrutinized by the ICC's own Bowling Review Group which has the power to impose a ban of 12 months on the bowler if his action is deemed illegal."

'No mercy for weak Zim'



AFP, Sydney

Australia leave for Zimbabwe Thursday trying to blot out the probable futility of the Test series that stretches before them.

Harare has been convulsed for weeks by unresolved warfare between players and officials and a boycott of the national team by 15 rebel cricketers at odds with the Zimbabwe Cricket Union (ZCU).

As the dominant force in world cricket, the Australians are more than likely going to face a second-string Zimbabwean team, which succumbed meekly by an innings and 240 to Sri Lanka in Harare earlier this month -- a match in which Sri Lankan spin wizard Muttiah Muralitharan set a new world record for Test wickets with 521.

Although the ZCU has sacked 15 rebels who have boycotted the national team, it has since indicated the door remains open for them to return.

Australian skipper Ricky Ponting said he was heartened by the reports, but told reporters Wednesday that his team was determined to maintain its high standards against whatever the quality of opposition.

"We still don't know who we will be playing, the events seem to be changing every day," Ponting said in Brisbane.

"We can't afford to worry about these things. It's completely out of our control.

"We just have to play the best cricket we possibly can and, if it's against a second-rate team, then hopefully we can finish the games quickly."

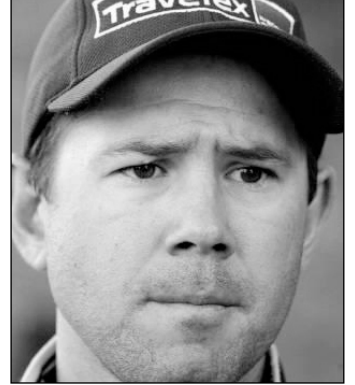
Controversy had struck the tour even before the latest unrest, with Australian leg-spinner Stuart MacGill announcing he would not be available for selection on moral grounds to tour the Robert Mugabe-governed republic.

"I have given this a lot of thought over a long period of time and personally do not believe the situation in Zimbabwe is such that I can tour at this stage," MacGill said late last

month. Senior batsman Darren Lehmann is another who has misgivings about touring, saying he would be lying if he said there were no concerns about going there.

Team coach John Buchanan said the Australian side, to play two Tests and three one-day internationals, would conduct their four-week tour with a clear conscience despite the fragile political climate in Zimbabwe.

Buchanan played down the concerns. "I wouldn't think there is any concern," he said. "Cricket Australia and virtually all the information we have from a security point of view has allayed anybody's fears.



RICKY PONTING

"I'm sure every player and all of us think about the issues and have come to our own conclusions but in the end we're invited there as cricketers."

It was reported here on Wednesday that Australian players' advocate Tim May had flown to Dubai in an attempt to convince the International Cricket Council to intervene in the Zimbabwe team crisis.

The Australian newspaper reported that May would meet ICC operations manager Dave Richardson in Dubai on Friday hoping the game's governing body could resolve the Zimbabwe situation.

Australia begin their Zimbabwe tour with a three-day match against Zimbabwe A on Monday.

The likelihood of the two Test matches being drastically lopsided raises the prospect that master leg-spinner Shane Warne could overtake Muralitharan's new world record.

Warne has 517 wickets and finished his comeback series in Sri Lanka following a year's drug ban with 26 wickets in three Tests last March.

AUSTRALIA Ricky Ponting (captain), Adam Gilchrist (vice-captain), Jason Gillespie, Matthew Hayden, Simon Katich, Michael Kasprovicz, Damien Martyn, Glenn McGrath, Justin Langer, Darren Lehmann, Shane Warne, Cameron White, Brad Williams.

Bowling actions top ICC agenda



AFP, London

Illegal bowling actions will be at the forefront of discussions at a two-day meeting of the cricket committee of the International Cricket Council (ICC) starting in Dubai on Thursday.

Also on the agenda for the 12-member committee, an advisory body chaired by legendary India batsman Sunil Gavaskar, are a report on umpires and match referees performances during 2003-04.

Plans for future technology trials, following on from the 2003 experiments in South Africa where umpires were given ear-pieces linked to stump microphones to help them rule on thin edges and special white markings in line with the leg stump to assist with lbw decisions, will be considered as well.

But it is the issue of illegal bowling actions, one of cricket's most intractable problems, which is likely to excite most interest.

The subject has been thrown into sharp relief by the controversy surrounding Sri Lanka off-spinner

WI spin great Alf no more

REUTERS, London

Alf Valentine, former West Indies spin-bowling great of the 1950s and 60s, has died at his home in Orlando, Florida at the age of 74.

The Jamaican formed part of a famed spin attack with Sonny Ramadhin and the pair became celebrated in a Calypso song "Those little pals of mine -- Ramadhin and Valentine."

At Lord's in 1950, they shared 18 wickets to fire the West Indies to their first Test victory in England, crushing the home side by 326 runs.

Valentine's combined figures for the two innings of 116-75-127-7 remain a record for the number of maiden overs in a Test and his victims included former England captain Len Hutton twice.

His prodigious left-arm spin was to trouble Hutton for the rest of the series which the West Indies went on to win 3-1, thanks also to the batting exploits of Frank Worrell, Everton Weekes and Clyde Walcott -- the three Ws.

Schools h'ball

FROM PAGE 13 tournament for boys and girls at the Dhanmondi Women's Sports Complex yesterday.

In the boys' group matches, Mirpur Bangla High School outplayed Radiant International School by 15-5 while Scholastica beat Banani Vidya Niketan by 13-6.

Bir Sereshtha Munsir Abdur Rouf Rifles College beat BIS by 13-4, Narinda Government High School defeated Dhaka Government Collegiate School by 13-7 and Rahmutullah Model High School outplayed St Jude's International School by 8-4.

In the girls' group, Scholastica recorded a massive 16-1 victory over Agrani Girls High School and Viquarunnisa Noon School and College registered a huge 14-1 win over Lake Circus High School.

Dhanmondi Tutorial beat Lalmatia Girls High School by 8-2 while Agrani Girls High School defeated Radiant International School by 3-1.

Bir Sereshtha Munsir Abdur Rouf Rifles College blanked Mohammadpur Preparatory by 2-0 while BIS beat Loreto School by one goal.

Serena sails into last 16



AFP, Rome

Top seed Serena Williams performed way below her best but still had too much quality for unseeded Spaniard Maria Sanchez-Lorenzo in their second round match at the clay court Rome Masters on Tuesday.

Williams, a six-time Grand Slam winner, won 7-5, 6-3 at the Foro Italico to claim a place in the last 16 where she will meet either Russian Vera Douchkevina or Dally

errors and that pretty much explains it all, but hey, at least I got through it," said the 22-year-old American world number seven, who pulled out ahead of her third round match in Charleston last month when her knee flared up again.

"I think I am playing pretty well and I'm practising very well. I was just a little off the pace in the match.

"I struggled today and hit a lot of loose shots, but I won and I'm very excited. Physically I feel fine, although I haven't played in a while, but all that matters is that I'm out here competing."

Williams, who beat Justine Henin-Hardenne in the final here

a 5-2 lead. A spirited comeback from Sanchez-Lorenzo drew her level, but she was unable to sustain the momentum and Williams held serve before a superb double-handed backhand smash ensured another break and the first set.

Sanchez-Lorenzo enjoyed an early break in the second set only for Williams to strike back immediately and forge 4-2 ahead.

Williams, whose sister Venus is not taking part here after injuring her ankle in the semi-finals in Berlin last week, held on to her serve and wrapped up the match in one hour and 25 minutes.

In the day's only other second round match, 17-year-old Maria Sharapova knocked out sixth seed Elena Dementieva in an all-Russian clash.

Sharapova said she never looked back after a positive start. "I was dictating most of the points from the beginning of the match and I started to feel really confident," she said.

"I attacked her serve quite well and when the points got really close, I thought mentally she was a little bit down, and I took advantage of that."

The four other seeded players in first round action all advanced to the next round.

Argentine 12th seed Paola Suarez beat Colombian Fabiola Zuluaga, who was forced to retire due to injury, Israeli 16th seed Anna Smashnova-Pistolessi defeated Spain's Magui Serna and Swiss 11th seed Patty Schnyder overcame German Anca Barna.

Spanish 13th seed Conchita Martinez, a quarter-finalist at the French Open last year and a four-time winner in Rome, ousted Yuliana Fedak of the Ukraine.

Croatian Karolina Sprem, who was 3-0 up in the deciding set of her third round match against Venus Williams in Berlin last week before losing to the American, secured a place in round two with a straight sets victory over Daniela Hantuchova, a quarter-finalist at the 2003 Australian Open.

Venezuelan Maria Vento-Kabchi beat Czech Klara Koukalova and will play American fifth seed Jennifer Capriati in round two, while Italian wildcard Maria Elena Camerin defeated the out-of-form Serbian Jelena Dokic, a Wimbledon semi-finalist in 2000 when she represented Australia.

In the day's late match, another Italian, Flavia Pennetta delighted the home crowd by beating Laura Granville of the United States in straight sets.



American Serena Williams in action against Spaniard Maria Sanchez-Lorenzo at the Rome Masters tennis tournament on May 11.

Randriantefy of Madagascar, who played on Wednesday.

Playing in only her fourth tournament since taking eight months off after knee surgery and given a bye into the second round, Williams looked rusty but was happy with her level of fitness.

"I made about 1,000 unforced

two years ago, began sluggishly and Sanchez-Lorenzo made the most of her opponent's slow start, breaking in the opening game and holding serve for a 2-0 advantage.

Sanchez-Lorenzo had double break point in the third game, but the 26-year-old failed to take her chances and Williams stormed into

Federer survives early exit



AFP, Hamburg

World number one Roger Federer overcame a scare to survive a formidable first hurdle in the fifth Tennis Masters Series tournament of the year here on Tuesday.

Federer found himself 3-4 down in the final set against Gaston Gaudio before squeezing through 6-1, 5-7, 6-4 in a match played under the tented centre court roof on a damp and drizzly day.

For a while it seemed that the all-court game of the brilliant Swiss player would overwhelm the Argentine claycourt expert, but Gaudio began to make Federer play longer rallies more frequently in the second set.

He established a 3-0 lead, lost it, and then made another hard-working push to level the match, and made a second recovery from 0-2 down in the final set.

It was then that Federer cleverly

found a way to make his all round skills count.

He had Gaudio at 30-40 at three-all, only for the unseeded player to escape, but when Federer earned two break points at four-all he converted the first of them, then serving boldly out for the match, finishing with an ace.

"These are matches you have to win in heavy conditions from the baseline," said Federer.

"I don't have a big enough game with my serve to get cheap points.

"So I have to have a good game plan and hit a lot of balls. I definitely have to mix it up because I am not

going to rally 20 shots and my opponents know it.

"I try to be aggressive in the first few shots and then start to grind it out. It's difficult because it's really heavy out there and there are a lot of bad bounces. But today my plan worked and I'm pretty happy with the way I played."

Later Carlos Moya, the seventh-seeded winner of last week's Masters Series tournament in Rome, survived a set point against him in the first set and single degree night-time temperatures to beat his fellow Spaniard David Sanchez 7-5, 6-4.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes solution time: 25 mins.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with numbers 1-57 and letters M, P, B, W, L, Z, U, B, A, B, J, B, Z, E, T, O, Y, J, S.

CRYPTOQUIP MP B W L Z U B A B J B Z E T O Y J S B F L T S A L O Y S U M J Z , R L T Q W M S F Y R B Q Q Y W B F L J Y L P R L J S Y J S M L J ? Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I FOUND A RATHER CUTE NOTE POSTED AT THE TAILOR'S SHOP: "CLOSED FOR ALTERATIONS." Today's Cryptoquip Clue: J equals N

U-turn for GP

FROM PAGE 13 Naimur at square-leg off left-arm spinner Saifulah Khan Jem, who eventually finished with four for 26.

Off-spinner Naimur Rahman dealt the vital blow when he bowled Bangor round the legs to reduce GrameenPhone to 89-4. Bangor hit five fours and a six.

SCORECARD Scoreboard of the GrameenPhone Corporate Cricket League (Cup) match between Bashundhara Group and GrameenPhone at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday:

Table with columns: BASHUNDHARA, Nafees lbw b Monjurul, Saideep lbw b Bashir, Al-Shahriar lbw b Bangor, Akram c Mahmudullah b Enamul Jr, Naimur b Enamul Jr, Sabbir b Bashir, Enamul run out, 22, Hasibul st Nuruzzaman b Bashir 1, Shahajada b Monjurul 0, Shaahin not out 1, Saifullah run out 0, Extras: (lb-2, nb-3, w-21) 26, Total: (All out in 49.2 overs) 233, Fall of wkts: 1-11, 2-75, 3-111, 4-179, 5-184, 6-230, 7-230, 8-231, 9-233, 10-233, Bowler O M R W

Table with columns: Manjurul, Munir, Mahmudullah, Enamul Jr, Bangor, Bashir, 8 1 16 2, 5 0 31 0, 6 0 32 0, 10 0 50 2, 7 0 56 1, 9.2 1 30 3

Table with columns: GrameenPhone, Anisul b Shahajada, Jewel c Shahin b Shahajada, Bangor b Naimur, Tushar c Naimur b Saifullah, Nasirul c Shahriar b Enamul, Mahmudullah c Sandeep b Saifullah, Bashir lbw b Sabbir, Nuruzzaman c Naimur b Saifullah, Munir b Enamul, Enamul Jr b Saifullah, 16, 6, 47, 10, 17, 13, 19, 19, 4, 2, 1

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W, Hasibul 7 0 23 0, Shahajada 7 1 31 2, Naimur 6 1 22 1, Enamul 10 0 38 2, Saifullah 7.2 0 26 4, Sabbir 9 0 28 1, Result: Bashundhara won by 60 runs.

Farooque & Wahid Picwic Bridge Club champs

SPORTS REPORTER

Farooque Hussain Khan and MA Wahid of Picwic Bridge Club clinched the Picnic Bridge Club title at the Bangladesh Bank Club premises in Motijheel recently.

A total of 24 pairs took part in the competition.

Captain (rtd) Syed Sujauddin Ahmed and Hashinur Rahman Tutul lifted the second position while Sheikh Aminur Rahman and MA Latif pair became third.

Anwar, Prithul in singles final

SPORTS REPORTER

Anwar Hossain and Prithul Mandal moved into the boys' singles (Under-17) final of the National junior tennis championship winning their respective semifinals at the Ramna Tennis Complex yesterday.

Anwar eliminated Shahnewaz Ahmed 6-3, 2-6, 6-3 while Prithul ousted Ranjan Ram 6-4, 1-6, 6-4.

In the boys' U-13 competition, Raihanul Haque stormed into the final with a 6-3, 6-3 win over Rajan Ram.

Large empty rectangular box, likely a placeholder for an advertisement or additional content.