



PHOTO: STAR

## Ponting full of hope

AFP, Mumbai



Fit-again Australian captain Ricky Ponting said Saturday his team had a chance of winning the first Test series in India in more than three decades after gaining an early lead.

"We are now in a good position leading 1-0 and hope to win the series in India for the first time in 35 years," Ponting told reporters after arriving here.

Australia last won a Test series in India in 1969.

The tourists, currently led by Adam Gilchrist, gained the lead following their 217-run victory in the opening Test of the four-match series at Bangalore. The second Test ended in a draw at Madras and the third starts at Nagpur on Tuesday.

But Ponting will play only the

fourth and final Test after recovering from a thumb injury, sustained during the Champions Trophy semifinal against England at Edgbaston last month.

"I'm excited to be back as I'm fit to play the fourth Test," he said. "I'd like to utilise the time before the fourth match to be with my teammates and do some practice to be match-fit."

The fourth Test begins at Mumbai on November 3.

He said the injury had also dashed his hopes of putting in a better batting performance in India after his dismal run on the last tour in 2001 when he could score just 17 in five Testinnings.

"I had a pretty ordinary series in 2001 and I was hoping to set it right this time, but unfortunately the injury kept me out of action for the first three matches. I now have only one Test to do so," he said.

The Australian captain welcomed batting superstar Sachin

Tendulkar's return to the Indian squad, saying his team would like to be judged by winning against the best.

"It's good for India that he (Tendulkar) is fit," said Ponting.

"It's also good for us as we want to beat the full-strength Indian side and want to be judged against the best."

Tendulkar, who missed the first two Tests due to an elbow injury, was Saturday declared fit for the remaining matches of the ongoing series.

Ponting lauded stand-in captain Gilchrist for leading the side remarkably well in the first two matches, saying he was happy with the way the series was heading.

"He has executed the plans very well," said Ponting.

"We played tough and disciplined cricket in Sri Lanka before this tour and would like to continue in the same vein here."

Ponting will play only the

## Woolmer blames it on too many ODIs

Cricket

AFP, Faisalabad

Pakistan's English coach Bob Woolmer Saturday sought to explain away Pakistan's poor performance in the opening Test against Sri Lanka as the home team tottered on the brink of defeat.

The Pakistani team went through "an extraordinary schedule of 16 one-day matches in a row with no domestic four-day cricket for the players and that didn't help", said Woolmer, whose first Test as coach has been disappointing.

He however insisted he was not trying to put up an excuse for the lacklustre performance by the home team in the Test.

"We have had enough bad sessions to be on the wrong side of this game. Our batting was disappointing in the first innings, to say the least, and Jayasuriya played magnificently (even though) we bowled well in the morning," said Woolmer.

Pakistan closed the fourth day of

the first Test on a precarious 114-4, chasing a world record equalling 418 to win after Sri Lanka mustered 438 runs in their second innings spiced with a masterly 253 by

the 56-year-old Woolmer, who played 19 Tests for England before coaching South Africa between 1994-99, took charge in June this year after Pakistan great Javed Miandad's was replaced following home defeats against arch-rivals India in April.

"The fact (is) that this is the first Test since April this year, so we have to get around that and do better than that in future," said the coach.

"I would like to see more Tests in the general programme, surely there should be three or four Tests and then five one-day internationals so that players can alternate in a better way."

Pakistan failed to seize the initiative after bowling Sri Lanka out for 243 in the first innings as they managed just 264 in reply which proved short.

"We should have got more runs in the first outing and we all accept that. As a team we had a long discussion after the day's play and we will try to put it right," said Woolmer, under whom Pakistan have won 11 of the 16 one-day games.

"It's going to be tough work to

save the game but we will have a go."

As Woolmer observed that Bangladeshi batsmen were too impatient in the first Test that led to their downfall.

"They lack patience. Their shot selection was poor also and they let the opposition dictate the terms.

They should have realised that one has to keep the scoreboard ticking too. They can take lessons from the way (Brendon) McCullum and (Jacob) Oram did the job for us," said Astle.

### Chess Olympiad

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Ziaur Rahman drew with IM Friedrich Volkmann, IM Reefat Bin Sattar split point with IM Martin Neubauer and IM Enamul Hossain Rajib shared point with IM Oliver Lehner.

The women's team also won their board when they beat Guatemala 2.5-0.5. International Women Master Rani Hamid beat Carolina Silvia Mazariegos, Zakia Sultan beat Vanessa Karla Monterroso, Nazrana Khan Eva drew with Lisette Dina Castillo.

After this round, men's team collected 14.5 points while women team raised their tally to nine.

Sanath Jayasuriya.

The home team faces a daunting task of either scoring 304 runs on Sunday to win or play out 83 overs to draw the Test.

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get the game but we will have a go."

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