

WA wallop Pakistan

Cricket

AFP, Perth

Pakistan suffered a demoralising defeat Saturday in their only major warm-up game before the first Test against Australia next week...

The scheduled four-day match lasted less than three as the Pakistani batsmen crumbled against the home side's pace attack...

In the end Pakistan could reach only 174 in their second innings, setting Western Australia 33 to win -- a target they reached without loss.

Opener Imran Farhat, Younis Khan and skipper Inzamam-ul-Haq all failed miserably in both innings...

Three players, including Younis, finished with ducks. Opener Salman Butt was again the only bright spot in a second-rate batting performance...

Yousuf Youhana contributed a solid 32 from an unbeaten 35 came from Abdul Razzaq.

The visitors had scored just 262 in their first innings and Western Australia replied with 404 for nine declared.

Apart from leg spinner Danish Kaneria, who toiled hard to extract something from a wicket known for pace, and short periods of genuine speed from Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Sami, Pakistan's attack showed little to console supporters.

The result followed a 10-run loss to a Western Australian Second XI in the opening three-day match of the tour and an impressive one-day win over a makeshift Cricket Australia Chairman's XI.

Just as worrying for Pakistan was their capitulation to a little-known pace bowler, Brett Dorey. In only his third first-class match he took 5-41 from 19.2 overs to add to his first innings figures of 3-38.

He was well supported by fellow quick Ben Edmondson who grabbed 3-38.

While Butt has shown some impressive form so far on tour, his likely opening partner Imran has not.

He was dismissed for five on Saturday after being caught by Murray Goodwin at third slip off Dorey, who had also trapped him low for eight in the first innings.

It was Imran's fourth failure of the tour after 10, 0 and 25 in previous innings.

His captain Inzamam fell for just 14 to add to his paltry four in the first innings.

The burly Inzamam sauntered to the wicket after Younis had gone for

a duck, leaving Pakistan in deep trouble at 31 for two.

Sixteen minutes, 15 balls and 14 runs later he walked back head bowed, after his attempted on-side drive off Ben Edmondson was caught brilliantly in the gully by Shaun Marsh.

At that stage Pakistan were 45 for three and the captain had made just 34 runs in the three innings he has played so far on tour.

At lunch Pakistan were still 37 behind the home side's first innings tally with four wickets down.

Despite a brief flicker of resistance from Yousuf and Shoaib Malik, Pakistan lost their last six wickets after the interval for just 69 runs.

Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer conceded that on current form his team did not look capable of beating anyone.

But Woolmer said he had seen the Pakistanis go through slumps before and there was too much talent in the squad to write them off before their three-Test series begins.

"Obviously we don't look as though we are going to beat the Australians -- we don't look as though we can beat anyone at the moment," he said.

"But I've seen the Pakistan side play like this and I've seen them come right, so I know that they can change. I know that they are good performers and I know they are fighters and I know they will fight."

B'DESH-INDIA 2ND DAY SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the second day of the first Test between Bangladesh and India at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka on Saturday:

INDIA: First Innings 184 (Ashraf 60 not out, Rafique 47, Manzarul 24; Pathan 5-45, Kumble 2-45, Zaheer 2-51)

INDIA: First Innings Gambhir run out 35, Sehwal lbw Baisya 13, Dravid b Mashrafe 0, Tendulkar not out 159, Ganguly b Baisya 71, Laxman lbw Rafique 32, Karthik c Mashrafe b Mushfiq 25, Pathan c Mushfiq b Rafique 5, Kumble not out 0, Extras: (b-2, lb-6) 8

Total: (For 7 wks in 95 overs) 348

Fall of wickets: 1-19, 2-24, 3-68, 4-232, 5-291, 6-339, 7-348

Bowler O M R W Baisya 20 4 78 2, Mashrafe 22 7 80 1, Mushfiq 15 4 70 1, Rafique 28 8 65 2, Manzarul 10 1 47 0

Toss: India. Umpires: Jeremy Lloyds (England) and Aleem Dar (Pakistan).

Drop catches

FROM PAGE 13 Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez has voiced confidence he can keep his most valuable asset, England midfielder Steven Gerrard, at the club for the peak years of his career.

Shrugging aside fresh speculation that Gerrard could be on his way to Chelsea in the summer, Benitez insisted that Liverpool were laying the foundations for the success which will keep Gerrard in his hometown.

"Always when you are manager of a team you think your players are the best in the world. And Steven is the best in the world for me," the Spaniard said.

"He is a very good player but I still think he can be better. If he continues to work like he is now, he will be better."

"And I am sure that at the end of his contract here, even 10 years from now, I think he will be a better player and still be here. I am confident that he will be here for 10 years."

He added: "Steven is a Liverpool supporter, a good professional, a good player, he trains very well and is working hard."

"He is scoring goals for us and the most important thing is that he wants to win with Liverpool, so we both have the same idea."

The famed Australian may claim in his words that 'ground fielding was excellent' but what's the point if the slippers keep on slipping up time and again.

Mashrafe roars

FROM PAGE 13 Mashrafe sounded dejected for obvious reasons.

"It was a certainly a dream come true getting the wicket of my favourite batsman (Dravid). But things did not go my way later on although I was really enjoying bowling after a long absence," Mashrafe told reporters at the end of day's play.

"May be I was unlucky not to get a few more wickets but I am happy that I found my rhythm in my comeback match."

Responding to a question from an Indian journalist, the Narail Express said that he was not scared to bowl against world-class batsmen like Tendulkar, Dravid or the dashing Virender Sehwag.

"It didn't bother me who I was bowling at rather I concentrated on line and length," he said.

As hungry

FROM PAGE 13 FEATURES in almost everybody's Dream XI.

The soft-spoken Tendulkar, also regarded as the best one-day player ever, is very conscious of his place in cricket history.

Don Bradman, watching him in full flow a few years ago, remarked that Tendulkar's style was similar to his own -- a great compliment for any cricketer and one that Tendulkar is known to cherish above all.

He has, however, become more conservative in his shot selection in recent years, cutting down on the uninhibited stroke-play that marked his early career.

Some experts feel that his magic, which was not only about how many runs he scored but how he scored them, is waning.

Tendulkar agrees his batting has changed.

He has abandoned his booming drives and vicious pull shots, relying on flicks and deft touches. He is content with milking the bowling rather than pulverising it.

The Mumbai batsman says it is a sign of maturity. His fans say the new approach is simply not Tendulkar.

But the biggest problem has been a recent spate of wear and tear injuries in his back, toe, finger, ankle and elbow.

Despite all the problems and recent criticism, Tendulkar has a Test average of 85 this year, the best for any Indian.

Experts may have a point when they say Tendulkar is no longer as dominant as he once was, but numbers show he still has a lot left in him.

MU want Arsenal's help

Football

REUTERS, Manchester

Manchester United are hoping arch-rivals Arsenal can do them a favour by putting the brakes on Chelsea's title surge at Highbury on Sunday.

Fourth-placed United play at Fulham on Monday and will have the chance to close a nine-point gap on Premier League leaders Chelsea if they fail to beat Arsenal.

"One of the top three are going to drop points, maybe two of them, so we have to make sure that if they draw we capitalise," United defender Phil Neville told reporters on Friday.

"I think in an ideal world a draw would be the best result so we can get closer to both."

"If not, then probably an Arsenal

victory so we can get closer to Chelsea too, because they are the team that's out in front at the moment."

United manager Alex Ferguson is also looking for Chelsea, who have lost just once in the league this season, to slip up.

"They have a big squad and their form is good at the moment," said Ferguson. "They have not had a blip and we hope that at some point they are going to get a blip and hopefully at that time we can capitalise on it."

"We've been buoyed by our own form over the last few weeks and we know this is an opportunity with Chelsea and Arsenal playing each other."

"But it's very early to look upon it as conclusive in terms of who's going to win the league. I think three or four teams are still in it."

"We had a situation like this a

couple of years back and then it frittered away to two, Arsenal and ourselves again.

"It could very well happen again, but at the moment it looks as if three teams in particular are going to contest it."

United go to Fulham on the back of four straight league wins, although a below-strength side were beaten by Fenerbahce in the Champions League on Wednesday.

"Winning games, scoring goals and keeping clean sheets breeds confidence and we are playing like a team with a lot of confidence at the moment," he said.

Striker Ruud Van Nistelrooy is doubtful for United with a calf injury, while Wes Brown was being missed, along with Louis Saha and Kieffer Moore, after sustaining an Achilles tendon injury in Turkey on Wednesday.

Best of Gerrard yet to come

Football

AFP, Liverpool

Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez has voiced confidence he can keep his most valuable asset, England midfielder Steven Gerrard, at the club for the peak years of his career.

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The famed Australian may claim in his words that 'ground fielding was excellent' but what's the point if the slippers keep on slipping up time and again.

Benitez's bullish assessment of the prospects of Liverpool hanging on to Gerrard came after Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho reiterated his admiration for the midfielder.

Chelsea came close to signing the 24-year-old in the summer before Gerrard finally agreed to sign a new long-term contract at Anfield.

But speculation over his future was reignited earlier this week by a warning from Gerrard that he would be ready to leave his hometown club if they do not quickly emerge as a side capable of challenging for major honours.

"Liverpool is lucky to have such a fantastic player," Mourinho said.

But when asked if that meant he would consider a bid in January, he replied: "No. In January, as long as we don't have any big injuries, the market can be open but it is closed for us."

Mourinho declined however to rule out coming back with a fresh bid to secure Gerrard's services next summer, saying it was too early to speculate on what might happen then.

Chelsea would have to break the British transfer record to sign Gerrard and they would almost certainly face competition from Manchester United, whose manager Alex Ferguson is an equally enthusiastic admirer of the player.

Liverpool chief executive Rick Parry insisted that Gerrard would

not be sold. "We have no intention of letting him go, ever," Parry said. "And I mean ever. We have no intention of selling him under any circumstances."

Gerrard's value has been boosted by the inspirational performance which led Liverpool to a famous victory over Olympiakos in midweek, booking their place in the knockout stages of the Champions League.

Parry has already spoken to Gerrard about his pre-game statements and believes the club, player and Benitez are all pulling in the same direction.

"What Stevie said the other day merely reflects the same sentiments that both he and I expressed after all the speculation about Chelsea last summer," added Parry.

"His ambition and hunger for success is exactly the same as mine and Rafa's. I have spoken to Stevie about the way things are developing and I understand and totally respect what he wants from his career."

"He wants to win the game's top honours and if we can deliver that, I am convinced he will remain a Liverpool player."

"The manager has a record that no one in Europe can better over the past three years. What did he come to Anfield for? It wasn't with the aim of finishing fourth."

Mourinho in awe of Adriano

AFP, Lisbon

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho heaped praise Saturday on Inter Milan's Brazilian striker Adriano, predicting the player will soon become the world's greatest striker.

"It seems obvious that Adriano is the striker of the next few years because of his efficiency, technical capability, his almost above human physical capacity, his dominance of different stages of the game, and his aggressive and competitive mentality," he wrote in his weekly commentary in Portuguese sports daily Record.

"Ronaldinho is Ronaldo and will continue to be so but Adriano will become the great striker of world football," the Portuguese coach added.

Adriano scored a hat-trick in the first half of Inter Milan's 5-0 win against Messina last weekend.

The Brazilian is currently the Italian league's top scorer with 13 goals.

Real days ahead, says Figo

Football

AFP, Lisbon

Real Madrid's Portuguese star Luis Figo said Friday the Spanish giants are getting back on track after a slow start to their campaign this season.

"At this moment the team has been getting better and I think the tendency is for this to continue," he said in an interview with state television RTP.

"Last year we started well, we had eight fantastic months and then when it was decision time things did not go as well as they could. I think it is better to start slowly and end well," he headed.

Real, one of the richest clubs in the world, ended last season with a record run of five straight league defeats, and the team has been in inconsistent form at best this campaign.

No other club will do for Giggs

Football

AFP, London

Unsettled Manchester United star Ryan Giggs has said that a move from the Red Devils to any other club would be a step down.

The future career of Giggs at Manchester United has been up in the air after the Welsh winger turned down a one-year extension to his current contract, which expires in 18 months' time.

"I have always said leaving Manchester United would represent a step down and I still believe it," said Giggs.

"I want to stay here as long as possible but people are speculating because I am having talks about my contract."

"That is something I have come to live with, the club are used to it too and those are the only two parties that matter."

Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson confirmed that Giggs remained an integral member of his squad.

"When Ryan is fresh, he is a phenomenal player and we saw that last Saturday," during United's 3-0

win over Southampton, said Ferguson.

"On that form, we are a different team."

"When you are negotiating any contract with a player in their 30s, you obviously have to guard against the age factor. There is nothing new in that."

"We did it with Teddy Sheringham and every other player who comes into that category."

"Ryan's contract does not expire for another 18 months, we have offered him an extension and we will take it from there," said Ferguson.

Magura soccer

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardi (HSS) College Ekadosh blanked Sreerampur Sporting Club 2-0 in the Shaheed Mukul Smriti Football League at the Magura Government College playground yesterday.

Ersad and Shaheed scored one goal each for the winners in the first half.

Muslim Sporting Club will take on Parnandual Ekadosh today at the same venue.

France to make Euro 2012 bid

AFP, Paris

France are set to make a bid to host the 2012 European football championships, the national football federation president Claude Simonet said on Friday.

Simonet said he wanted to make clear the federation's desire to host Euro 2012 without in any way detracting from France's bid for the 2012 Olympics Games.

"As a precaution, we are telling the European football body UEFA of our interest," said Simonet at the federation headquarters. "If France were not chosen to host the Olympics, it would be good to still have the chance to host a major sporting event that year."

"We are certainly not competing with the Olympic bid."

France will have to provide UEFA with a completed bid dossier by July 21 next year, though Simonet added should Paris be awarded the Olympics a couple of weeks earlier, the French football federation would probably end its interest in hosting Euro 2012.

The Euro 2012 hosts will be chosen in December 2006. Other countries to have shown interest include Italy, Greece, as well as joint proposals from Croatia-Hungary and Ukraine-Poland.



Did U Know?

India's Irfan Pathan is now the fourth Indian bowler to claim five wickets in an innings at Dhaka, joining Subhash Gupte (5/18 v Pakistan in 1954-55), Ghulam Ahmed (5/109 v Pakistan in 1954-55) and Sunil Joshi (5/142 v Bangladesh in 2000).



Talk Turkey



Anil Kumble

(Indian leg-spinner) "It's definitely a kind of a relief to get there. I was really happy that I could get to 434 at Eden Gardens (against South Africa). It was a really special moment - my family was there, my wife was there. She couldn't travel here, but it's a nice feeling to get to 435."



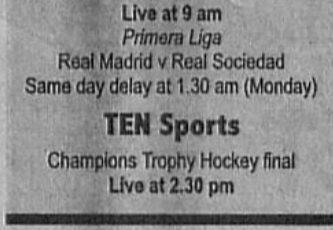
What to Watch

BTV & ESPN First Test Bangladesh v India Day 3, live at 9.30 am

ESPN English Premier League Aston Villa v Birmingham City Live at 7 pm Arsenal v Chelsea Live at 10 pm Final score Live at 12.05 pm

STAR Sports Football Extra Live at 9 am Primera Liga Real Madrid v Real Sociedad Same day delay at 1.30 am (Monday)

TEN Sports Champions Trophy Hockey final Live at 2.30 pm



RU cricket

Statistics Department defeated History Department by 34 runs and Chemistry Department won three wickets against Botany Department in the inter-department cricket tournament of Rajshahi University yesterday.

Winning the toss, Statistics decided to bat first and made 157 for six in 25 overs. Adnan top-scored with 69.

In reply, the History students scored 123 for six wickets in 25 overs.

In the other match, Botany made 135 before being all out in the stipulated 25 overs.

Chemistry reached the target in 24 overs with three wickets to spare.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers.

CRYPTOQUIP RQIV J SJVXJCPP LINPTIY DAA. D GQDVS GQI UCPLAIT TDXQG RIAA LI AIJUDVX YDNSVIYY. Saturday's Cryptquip: IF A PLUMBER DECIDES TO GO FOR SOMETHING RISKY, COULD YOU SAY HE TAKES THE PLUNGER? Today's Cryptquip Clue: A equals L today's Cryptquip Clue: A equals L

'Don't write 'em off'

Cricket

AFP, Perth

Retired fast bowling great Dennis Lillee warned that Pakistan were a team that produced their best in big matches and despite lacklustre form on the current tour of Australia they could not be written off.

Pakistan take on Australia in three Tests, with the first starting at the Western Australian Cricket Association Ground in Perth next Thursday.

"I think that the Pakistanis are always a team that save their best until it's an interesting game," Lillee told Perth radio station 6PR.

"I don't see it as something they do on purpose -- you can't take too much notice of their training and lead-up games."

Pakistan were beaten by 10 runs in a three-day match against a

Portsmouth eye Strachan

Football

AFP, London

Managerless Portsmouth could be on the point of turning the tables on Premiership arch-rivals Southampton by appointing former Saints boss Gordon Strachan to the position.

Pompey management, players and fans were shocked last week when Harry Redknapp took over as coach at Southampton a fortnight after leaving Fratton Park.

And with the search on for a new manager, Portsmouth chairman Milan Mandaric has said that he would be keen to see the highly-rated Strachan take over.

"We would like to appoint a British manager and Gordon is on top of that list as far as I am concerned," Mandaric told the Daily Express.

"I definitely want to talk to him and find out his situation and whether he would be prepared to join us."

Arsenal midfielder Edu said he was flattered to have been linked with Barcelona but indicated he was happy to remain a Gunner if he had the chance of regular first-team football.

Edu told Spanish sports daily AS that talks with Arsenal coach Arsene Wenger had come to a halt "mainly because of my indecision."

Wenger has reportedly told the player to make up his mind one way or the other by January as his contract runs out at the end of the season and he faces being left on the sidelines unless he makes a decision.

Sunil wishes

FROM PAGE 13 His 361 minutes vigil at the crease tested the elbow thoroughly.

"It's been tested, I just have to wait and see how it feels tomorrow. The physio thinks it is going to be stiff in the morning. I hope it doesn't get so. I've been through this before and learnt to deal with this," said Sachin.

Tendulkar dedicated his success to his family members who stood by him all through his long career.

"I am extremely happy. I am thankful to my family, father, mother, brothers and sister. My beginning in cricket was at the age of 11, when I used to stay with my aunt and uncle. I cannot forget that. My success is a combination of all these," he remembered.

"The first person I would thank is my father, I looked up and thanked him. What I am today is because of him. I am sure he would have been a happy man today," said Sachin.