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Did U Know?

In the 1996 world cup West Indies bowled out Kenya for 166. Kenya came back to bowl out West Indies for 93, and take home a very memorable victory.



Brian Lara
(West Indies cricket captain)
"He'll be an ageing fast bowler coming in to bowl on really nice batting tracks in the Caribbean."
While advising Australia pace bowler Glenn McGrath, who will be 35 next month, to think twice about playing in the 2007 World Cup.



What to WATCH
BT
Bangladesh v Zimbabwe
First One-day International
Live from 1:00 pm

ESPN
Bangladesh v Zimbabwe
First One-day International
Live from 12:50 pm
Highlights at 12:30 am (Friday)
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30 pm

STAR Sports
Australian Open
Men's/Women's Second Round
Live from 6:00 am
Sportsline
Sports News
Live at 8:00 pm
Exeter City v Manchester United
FA Cup, 3rd Round Replay
Live at 1:30 am (Friday)

Elena on course for 3rd double

SPORTS REPORTER
Elena Tcherniakova of Russia has reached the girls' singles semifinal and the doubles final in the 19th GrameenPhone International Junior Tennis Tournament yesterday.

The 14-year-old Elena, who has already won double crowns in the BKSP and Rajshahi legs, beat girls' top-seed Chan Venise of Hong Kong 7-6, 6-2 in the quarterfinals at the Ramna Tennis Complex.

Pairing with Hasanova Elina of Azerbaijan, Elena outplayed Shivika Burman (India) and Panchanok

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GP Pacer Hunt final Jan 26

SPORTS REPORTER
The national final of the GrameenPhone Pacer Hunt programme will be held at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on January 26.

The 25 finalists, who all bowled at the speed of at least 78mph during the trials, have been requested to report at the venue on January 25 at 3pm.

Time for fireworks

SPORTS REPORTER



After an absorbing five days of cricket in the drawn second Test, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe turned up for some light practice at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday ahead of today's first one-day international of the five-match series.

Tigers captain Habibul Bashar said his side was brimming with confidence after a historic first ever Test series win against the tourists and wanted to carry on the form to the ODIs even though there was hardly any time to adjust with just a day's break between the last Test and the first ODI which will be a day-night affair.

"It is very difficult for the boys to shift their concentration to the shorter version within a day. But I must say we are very confident of keeping the momentum going. We want a clean sweep in the series," said Bashar.

"I think we are now fully capable of handling any kind of pressure. The first Test win was a real morale booster for us and the fight back in the second Test completely changed our attitude," added Bashar.

Coach Dav Whatmore arrived at practice a little early with the four players called up for the ODIs - all-rounder Khaled Mahmud, batsman Alok Kapali, left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak Raj, pacer Nazmul Hossain and left-arm spinner Manzarul Islam Rana, who was in the 13 for the Test series but did not play a match.

Rest of the players joined in after an hour and practiced under floodlight.

Bashar was expecting a tougher Zimbabwe in the one-day series. "They have some good all-rounders and I think another plus point is their athletic fielding. We have to be at our best to make another history. That is why it is important to set the tune from the first match."

The Bangladesh captain felt that the team has continued to improve since their victory against India in the second ODI on December 26.

"We not only won one match against India but also showed impressive batting in the other two games of that series. The most positive aspect to come out of our cricket over the last few weeks has been the resolution shown by the batsmen," said Bashar.

Despite the Test series defeat, Zimbabwe captain Tatenda Taibu was upbeat about his side's prospects in the ODIs.

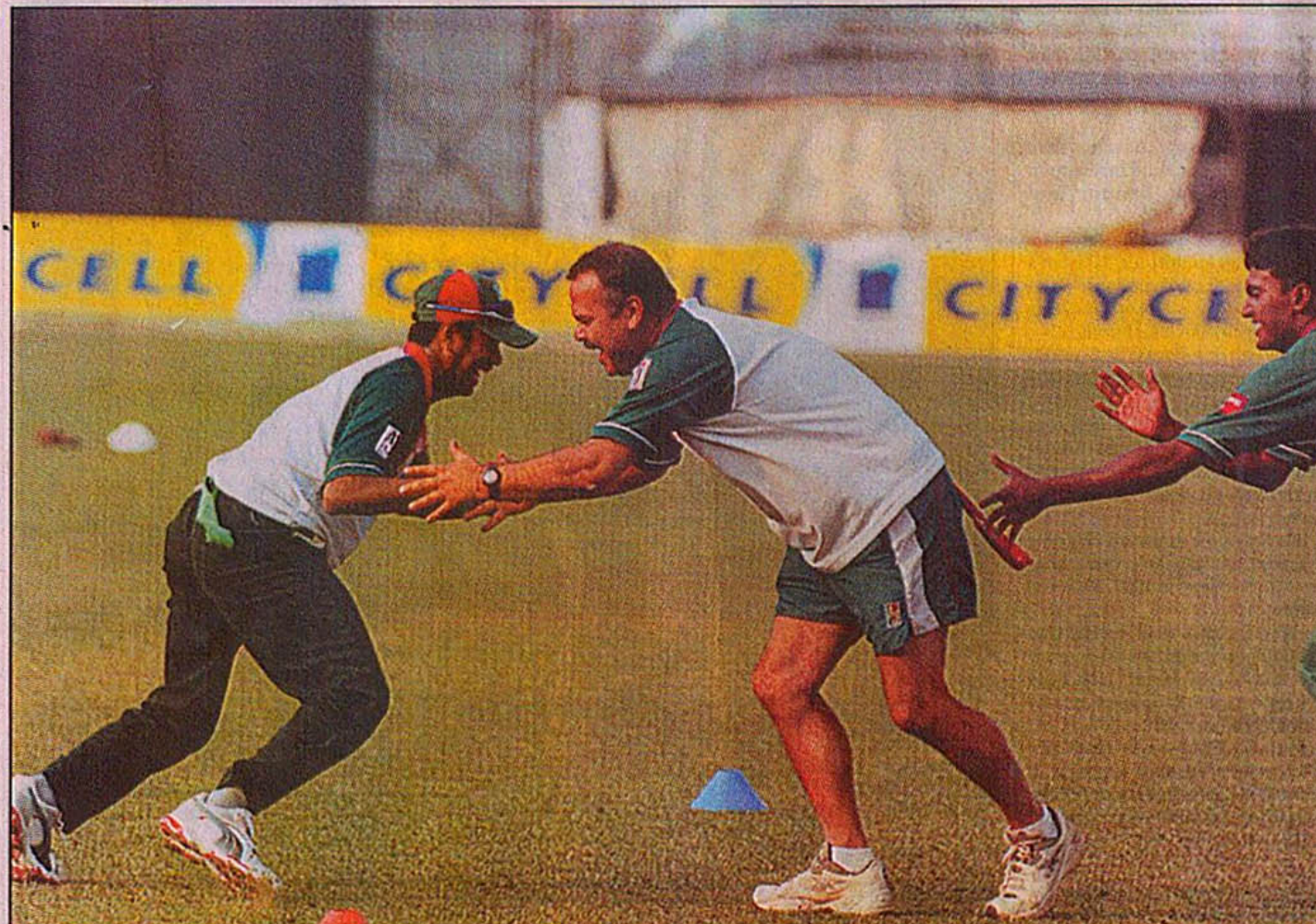
"I don't agree that they (Bangladesh) finished the Test series with an upper-hand. We dominated the second match and they had to ensure draw from behind. I am happy that our young side is improving in every game," said Taibu.

"We will go for a win and I believe my young side is very much capable and determined to pull it off. I think we are a much better one-day side because we have some quality all-rounders," added Taibu.

The Zimbabwe skipper, who led his side by example in the Tests, said that they will take inspiration from the ODI series against England at home in November last year.

"Considering our strength, we had a good series against England and I am sure it will help us to play better cricket against Bangladesh. We played four one-day matches against a strong England and in every match we showed our potential," Zimbabwe coach Phil Simmons meanwhile expressed his displeasure at the tight scheduling.

"I'm not happy with a day's break before another series which is a totally different ball game. It is not ideal for players," said the former West Indies batsman.



WHERE HAD YOU BEEN? Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore (C) tries to catch Alok Kapali (L) during a warming up drill at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Sania's date with Serena

Australian Open

AFP, Melbourne

Serena Williams had a stroll in the sunshine at the Australian Open on Wednesday as teenage rival Maria Sharapova and second seed Amelie Mauresmo were made to sweat.

Former world number one and 2003 champion Williams gave glimpses of why bookmakers have installed her as favourite for the women's singles with a 6-3, 6-0 dismissal of Madagascar's Dally Randriantefy.

As is often the case, Williams showed little consistency, dictating the proceedings with 18 unforced errors against nine from her opponent, but hitting 38 winners against just three from Randriantefy.

"It's definitely getting better and better with each match," Williams

said. "I'm feeling really good physically. I'm really proud of how I'm doing, how I'm feeling and I'm really excited that I'm feeling so well."

Williams now plays teenager Sania Mirza on Friday, who made history by becoming the first Indian woman to reach the third round of a Grand Slam.

The 18-year-old from Hyderabad, ranked 166th in the world, confounded the form book to defeat Hungary's Petra Mandula 6-2, 6-1 in less than an hour.

Mirza, playing in her first Grand Slam event, can't wait for her date with Williams. "I'm really looking forward to finding out how hard she hits the ball," she said.

But while Williams and Mirza were in cruise control, it was a different story for Wimbledon champion Sharapova and world number two Mauresmo.

Siberian-born Sharapova looked in danger of wilting in the hot house heat of her match against American

journeywoman Lindsay Lee-Waters. In the end Sharapova's class told and she prevailed 4-6, 6-0, 6-3.

The 17-year-old prodigy couldn't hide her relief after securing the win, which sets up a third-round meeting with China's Li Na on Friday.

"It was an amazing match. Both of us gave it all we've got, in the third set we just fought for every single ball," Sharapova said. "In the end it was just a matter of a few points."

Mauresmo had earlier struggled against Russia's Dinara Safina, going a set down before finally winning 2-6, 6-1, 6-0.

Elsewhere, Russian star Svetlana Kuznetsova briefly banished her Australian Open drugs nightmare with a dream performance to reach the third round.

The fifth-seeded US Open champion was never tested by Marion Bartoli of France and wrapped up a 6-2, 6-0 victory in just 40 minutes at



Sania Mirza of India is nicely poised as she executes a return against Petra Mandula of Hungary in their second round match of the Australian Open in Melbourne yesterday.

ICC makes rankings official

AFP, London

The International Cricket Council (ICC) announced Wednesday it was giving official status to the system of player, Test and one-day rankings devised by former England captain Ted Dexter.

Widely accepted for more than a decade as an accurate indication of ability, the key aspect of Dexter's system is that it takes account of the quality of opposition a player is up against.

Thus, unlike traditional averages, runs or wickets taken against Australia - the world's best side - count for more in the rankings than those taken against a weaker nation such as Zimbabwe.

In a statement ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed said: "The ICC has today (Wednesday) taken over ownership of the rankings produced by Ted Dexter Associates and sponsored by PwC."

"We have been looking to develop an official system of player rankings for some time and having studied a range of options we are of the view that these rankings provide the truest reflection of the relative merits of international cricketers."

Dexter, a dashing England batsman during the late 50s and early 1960s, whose company will continue to be involved in the on-going maintenance of the rankings, expressed his delight that the system had been officially recognised.

SEE PAGE 14 COL 3

Tsunami match at The Oval in June

AFP, London

A one-off Twenty20 match between Asia and an International XI in aid of the Asian Tsunami disaster appeal will take place at Surrey's Oval ground on June 20, the English county announced Wednesday.

Surrey said all profits from the match would be donated to the appeal.

Earlier this month a one-day international between Asia and the Rest of the World at the Melbourne Cricket Ground raised 11 million dollars for victims of the tsunami, which killed an estimated 168,000 people and caused widespread devastation after sweeping through Indian Ocean coastlines on December 26.

Surrey said ground sponsors Brit

SEE PAGE 14 COL 7

Pakistan walk past WI

AFP, Brisbane



Pakistan's game plan paid off Wednesday when they defeated the West Indies by six wickets in their tri-series one-day

cricket match at Brisbane's Gabba ground.

Inspired by a flawless 124 from wicketkeeper turned opener Kamran Akmal, Pakistan reached the 274 runs needed for victory with the loss of just four wickets and three overs to spare, for their first victory in the competition which also includes Australia.

The win was achieved without key paceman Shoaib Akhtar, who went off with a suspected torn hamstring after bowling just 2.5 overs.

Pakistani captain Inzamamul Haq had hoped to win the toss and use Shoaib to put early pressure on

the West Indian batsmen, in what were expected to be humid conditions.

Conditions offered the bowlers far less swing than expected and the West Indies reached a total of 273 for 5. But Kamran, 23, also prospered when his turn came, making his first one-day century.

Pakistan, whose batting has been inconsistent throughout their Australian tour, lost the normally solid Salman Butt for 10 and Mohammad Hafeez for two to be 35 for 2 in the eighth over.

But they fought back through Kamran and Shoaib Malik, who scored a run-a-ball 60 before nicking left-arm paceman Ian Bradshaw to wicketkeeper Courtney Browne.

Inzamam's return to form continued. He added an unbeaten 62 to the 68 he made in the tourists' opening tri-series match against Australia in Hobart on Sunday.

West Indian captain Brian Lara conceded later that his batsmen had not taken full advantage of the spinners. "Unfortunately 273 wasn't enough... we have got some lessons to learn but we will go forward from here," he said.

For the West Indies, yet to record a win in the competition, the return to the opening position of all-rounder Chris Gayle with 82 was a welcome sign but there was a downside.

Gayle overcame a shoulder injury to play but appeared to aggravate the problem and could not bowl. He is in doubt for the West Indies' next match against Australia in Brisbane on Friday.

Shoaib is also unlikely to be fit for Pakistan's next match against Australia in Sydney on Sunday.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard of the triangular VB Series one-day international
SEE PAGE 14 COL 1

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