



Did U Know?

Margaret Court holds the record for the most successive Australian Open women's singles titles, claiming seven between 1960 and 1966.



TALK TURKEY



Paolo Maldini
 (Classy Italian defender)

"He was the greatest and the most sincere -- a model of behaviour on the pitch. He respected everybody, from the champions to the run-of-the-mill players. He also took a lot of hard tackles and never complained. But the attackers of today -- Mama Mia!"

On Diego Maradona.



What to WATCH

ESPN
 VB Series
 Australia v West Indies
 Live at 9.10 am
 Fifth Test

South Africa v England
 Day One, live at 5 pm
 Sportscentre
 Live at 9.30 pm

Jan 22
 Fifth Test
 South Africa v England

Day Two, live at 2.30 pm
 English Premier League

West Brom v Man City
 Live at 11.10 pm

Jan 23
 VB Series
 Australia v Pakistan
 Live at 9.10 am

Fifth Test
 South Africa v England
 Day Three, live at 5 pm

STAR Sports
 Australian Open tennis
 Live at 6 am

Australian Open tennis
 Live at 2.30 pm

Jan 22
 English Premier League

Everton v Charlton
 Same day at 11 pm

Jan 23
 Primera Liga
 Barcelona v Racing Santander
 Live at 1 am

Watch out for Murali during World Series

AFP, Christchurch

Sri Lankan spin star Muttiah Muralitharan promises to unleash his full repertoire, including the infamous doosra, in the one-day cricket series between a World XI and New Zealand starting here Saturday.

"Nobody from ICC (International Cricket Council) has told me not to bowl it. I can bowl whatever I want, but if I get reported again I will have to go to another hearing," he said on arrival here Thursday for the series which does not carry official one-day international status.

Last month, he was reported for chucking his doosra -- a legspinner bowled with an offspinner's action -- and warned he could be banned for a year if he continued to bowl the ball with a 14 degree bend in the elbow, well above the permitted five degrees for spin bowlers.

The ICC meanwhile looks set to change the rules which could see the doosra permitted once again with a meeting next month expected to approve a recommendation that all bowlers be allowed a 15 percent bend in the arm.

Muralitharan welcomed the move.

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Third seeded Australian Lleyton Hewitt celebrates winning a point against James Blake at the 2005 Australian Open yesterday.

Return tsunami game Feb 13 at Kolkata

AFP, Kolkata

Kolkata will host the second tsunami relief charity one-day international between an Asian XI and a World XI, a top cricket official announced Thursday.

The Indian government has given us the tax exemption that we had requested... and the match will be held in Kolkata on February 13," Asian Cricket Council chief Jagmohan Dalmiya said.

The first match was held at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on January 10, raising an estimated 11 million US dollars.

The venue of the second match had not been announced pending the tax waiver from gate receipts by the Indian government, which was a condition set by the International Cricket Council.

"The Finance Ministry wanted a trust to be formed to organise the match and we have now formed a charitable trust only for the purpose of organising this match," said Dalmiya.

The Gaddafi Stadium at Lahore in Pakistan and Dhaka's Bangabandhu National Stadium were the

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THE BIG ONE! Bangladesh wicketkeeper Khaled Mashud breaks the stumps with Zimbabwe skipper Tatenda Taibu out of his crease during the first ODI yesterday.

Holiday-style cricket

SPORTS REPORTER



With the nation starting to enjoy a four-day holiday for Eid-ul-Azha, the second most important occasion for Muslims the world over, a rush for home has swept all over the city. People have been jumping at all modes of transports to reach their near and dear ones.

And the Bangladesh cricketers, playing their first of the five-match one-day series against Zimbabwe at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday, were no exception.

The urgency for enjoying the short break after the gruelling two-match Test series that Habibul Bashar's men won 1-0 was evident when they were set a challenging total of 252 by Zimbabwe.

Batsmen apparently threw their wickets one after another. It all started with opener Nafees Iqbal, fresh from his century in the second and final Test at the same venue, unnecessarily charging down the

track to hit Panyangara out of park even after runs were coming thick and fast.

His partner Rajin Saleh played some delightful strokes to race to 40 but paid the price for playing one too many adventurous shots. Skipper Habibul Bashar also started brightly before perishing to self-inflicted pressure.

Not only that Bangladesh players were also in a hurry when it was their turn to bowl after the visiting captain Tatenda Taibu won a good toss and rightly chose to bat. Amazingly, the Tigers finished their quota of 50 overs with 23 minutes still left on the clock. It was certainly a big improvement after their slow over-rate at the same venue during the famous win over India last month.

Bashar's match fee was deducted because of that, but the speed with which Bashar finished his bowling in the Zimbabwe innings, certainly will not earn him any prizes.

Bangladesh eventually ended up 22 runs short of their target thanks to some enterprising knocks from

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India name tour venues

PCB reserves comments until probe report



Cricket

AFP/REUTERS, undated

Pakistani cricket chiefs said Thursday they had to wait for a report before clearing the riot city of Ahmedabad as one of the venues for the national team's first full tour of India in six years.

"I will not comment on any venue like Ahmedabad, or any other city for that matter, until our team gives us a report," Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) spokesman Abbas Zaidi told AFP.

India has proposed the major western city of Ahmedabad -- where at least 2,000 people were killed in bloody Muslim-Hindu religious riots in 2002 -- as one of the Test venues for the tour starting next month.

Pakistan is predominantly Muslim, as were those who died at Ahmedabad, while India is majority Hindu.

"We are still waiting for an official

announcement from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and would clear the itinerary only after our two-man venue inspection committee gives us a report by next week," Zaidi added.

PCB official Zakir Khan will accompany police official Sohail Khan to India and inspect all the venues before submitting a report by next week.

The Pakistani team are due to arrive in India on February 25 to play three Tests and five one-day games.

BCCI sources told AFP in New Delhi that Madras has been kept on stand-by if either government objects to Ahmedabad as a venue for security reasons.

The proposed venues for the five one-dayers are Kochi, Visakhapatnam, Kanpur, Jamshedpur and New Delhi.

Mohali, in north India, and the southern metropolis of Bangalore will host the other two Tests.

The itinerary with dates will be announced after the government clears the venues," said BCCI secre-

tary Karunakaran Nair, adding match dates announced last week were also subject to changes.

"We have a policy to rotate matches among all the nine Test venues in India and it is Ahmedabad's turn to host one now."

"As far as we are concerned, it is okay," Kamal Morarka, chairman of the BCCI fixtures committee said. "It is up to the government to consider since it is an India-Pakistan matter."

According to the tentative schedule, the tour will break ground with a three-day match in the northern hill resort of Dharmsala on February 27, followed by three back-to-back Tests. The resort hosts the Tibetan government in exile.

Pakistan will also play a one-day warm-up match at an undecided venue between the Tests and limited-overs series.

The tour is slated to end on April 9.

Major cricket venues such as the Eden Gardens in Kolkata and Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium do not feature in the proposed itinerary.

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1ST BD-ZIM ODI SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the first CityCell day-night one-day international between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka on Thursday.

ZIMBABWE

Matsikenyeri b Mahmud	33
Rogers c and b Nazmul	1
Ebrahim lbw b Baisya	1
Masakadza b Mahmud	54
Taibu run out (Saleh/Mashud)	58
Chigumbura c Mashud b Razzaq	28
Panyangara not out	16
Uteywa lbw b Nazmul	6
Hondo not out	7
Extras: (lb-1, lb-1, w-2, nb-2)	6
Total: (For 8 wkts in 50 overs)	251
Fall of wickets: 1-3 (Rogers), 2-14 (Ebrahim), 3-84 (Matsikenyeri), 4-107 (Masakadza), 5-172 (Taibu), 6-188 (Taylor), 7-226 (Chigumbura), 8-236 (Uteywa)	
Did not bat: Mpofu.	
Bowler	O M R W
Baisya	6 0 27 1
Nazmul	7 0 35 2
Razzaq	8 1 51 1
Mahmud	10 1 50 0
Kapali	10 0 40 0
Aftab	4 0 20 0
Saleh	5 0 26 1

BANGLADESH

Saleh c Matsikenyeri b Mpofu	40
Iqbal c Hondo b Panyangara	12
Bashar c Matsikenyeri b Uteywa	39
Ashraful c Masakadza b Uteywa	42
Aftab c Rogers b Hondo	1
Kapali c Taibu b Hondo	4
Mashud c Masakadza b Hondo	3
Mahmud run out (Chigumbura)	34
Baisya not out	33
Razzaq b Panyangara	0
Nazmul run out (Panyangara/Taibu)	2
Extras: (lb-3, w-9, nb-7)	19
Total: (All out in 48.1 overs)	229
Fall of wickets: 1-34 (Iqbal), 2-70 (Saleh), 3-119 (Bashar), 4-128 (Aftab), 5-162 (Kapali)	

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Aussies stronger today

AFP, Brisbane

World champions Australia, seeking a third straight win and a place in the finals of the triangular VB Series competition, will turn to their heavy hitters when they meet West Indies on Friday.

The West Indies face a daunting task in securing their first win as the Australians welcome back the powerful opening combination of Matthew Hayden -- who was rested for the first two matches -- and Adam Gilchrist, who missed one match with a knee injury.

They are also contemplating bumping out-of-form but renowned one-day slogger Andrew Symonds up the order at Brisbane's Gabba ground in an attempt to make the most of his power-hitting.

The Australians have a wealth of talent to call on, with Michael Clarke -- the fill-in opener for Hayden in the last two matches -- dropping back to the middle order after impressive innings of 66 and 97.

The boost in strike power won't just be limited to the batting, with pace bowler Jason Gillespie shrugging off a calf strain and cleared to play.

Selectors must also decide whether to use all-round Shane Watson in place of the in-form spinner Brad Hogg in a four-pronged pace attack.

For the West Indies, winless after matches against Australia and Pakistan, the situation is far bleaker.

All-rounder Chris Gayle further aggravated shoulder tendonitis during their six-wicket loss to Pakistan on Wednesday and may not bowl again on tour.

Dwayne Bravo, a surprise omission on Wednesday, is likely to return to bolster the attack.

Symonds enters the day-nighter desperate for runs after scoring four ducks from his last five innings for Australia, dating back to September.