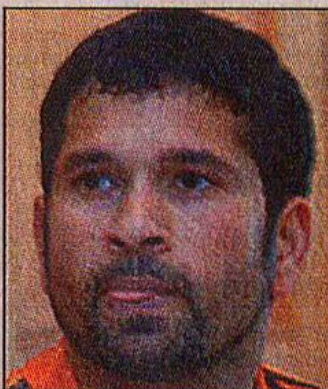




Did U Know?

Bangladesh's victory against India on December 26, 2004 was their first on home soil. It was their 100th ODI.



Sachin Tendulkar

(Indian batting maestro)
"I want to say again that the weight of my bat has nothing to do with my injury. A lot of people have been saying that but they don't know much about the game."
Dismissing theories behind his bad back.



What to Watch
BTV
Third ODI
Bangladesh v Zimbabwe
Live at 8.50 am
ESPN
VB Series
Australia v West Indies
Live at 9.10 pm
Football Focus
Repeat at 6.30 pm
Sportscentre
Live at 8.30 pm
STAR Sports
Australian Open
Men's/Women's singles quarterfinals
Live at 6 am and 2.30 pm
Sportsline
Live at 7.30 pm

GP pacer hunt final today

SPORTS REPORTER

The national final of the Grameen-Phone pacer hunt programme will take place at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

Led by former national coach Sarwar Imran, a committee of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has conducted the programmes in eleven different zones across the country to select 25 fast bowlers for the final phase.

"Our main aim is to unearth some real quick bowlers who will be able to serve the national side as backup bowlers within two or three years," said Imran.

Tickets go on sale tomorrow

BSS, Dhaka

Tickets for the last two one-day internationals between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe will be sold at all branches of ONE Bank in Dhaka from Thursday.

The fourth and the fifth matches will be held at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on January 29 and 31.

Tickets will also be sold at a special booth at the Bangabandhu Stadium from Friday for the convenience of fans. The booth will remain open from 10am to 1pm.

Inspiration 100th ODI

SHAHIDUL ISLAM, Chittagong

Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar wants to draw inspiration from their famous victory in the 100th ODI against India last month to bounce back against Zimbabwe.

The 32-year-old also said the third one-day of the five-match series at the MA Aziz Stadium today was going to be a 'do or die' battle because the home side was trailing 2-0.

"I'm not thinking about the series right now but the match tomorrow. If we win this we have a chance to make a comeback," said Bashar at the Agrabad Hotel, where both teams are staying.

The champion batsman of the country wished his team showed a similar performance as they did against India in Dhaka for their first win on home soil.

"That was our best performance in recent times. But we couldn't carry that sort of form against Zimbabwe yet," he observed.

The Bangladesh captain was unhappy at the performance of the middle-order, which disappointed in the first two games.

"They let us down and haven't

done justice to their talent so far," said Bashar without mentioning names.

Smarting under a 31-run defeat on Monday, most of Dav Whatmore's charges stayed away from any outdoor training. Only five players including three cricketers -- Alok Kapali, Nazmul Hossain and Abdur Razzak, who were rested for the second game, took part in an hour-long practice in the morning.

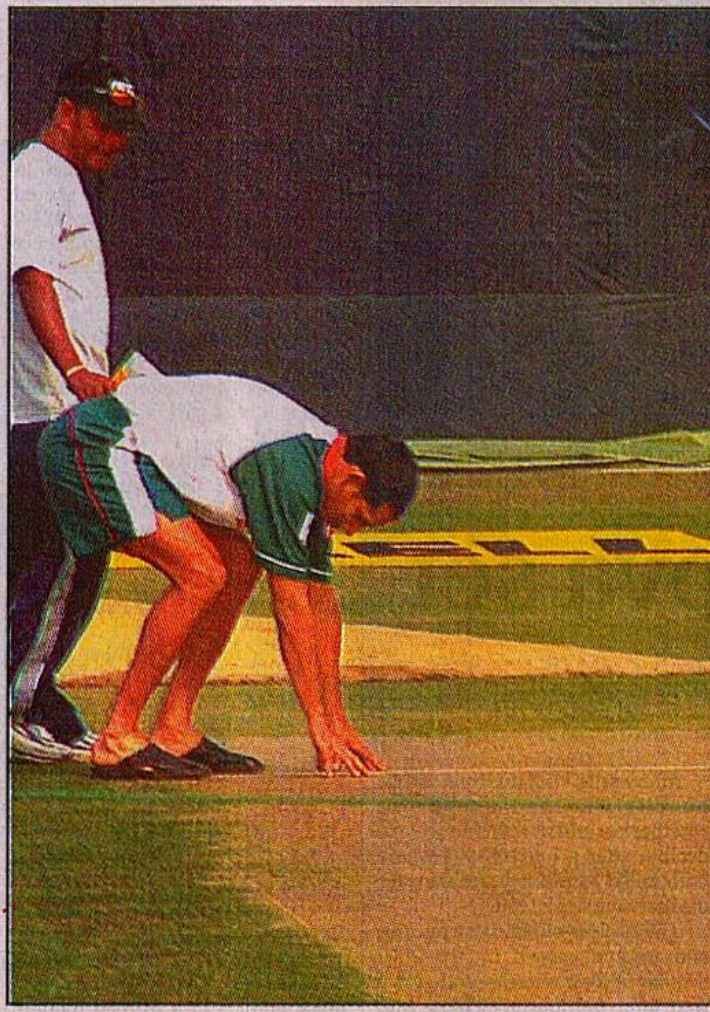
Whatmore also was not pleased with the Tigers' effort so far in the one-dayers after doing so well in the two Tests that they won 1-0.

"We couldn't play up to our expectation. They (Zimbabwe) certainly played much better cricket than us and won," said the 50-year-old.

"The Zimbabweans showed all the tenacity and determination and they won accordingly. My players lag behind in this respect. Moreover, our boys made the job tougher and virtually impossible for being too cautious in their approach," said the Sri-Lankan born Australian while reflecting on the two defeats in Dhaka and Chittagong.

Zimbabwe coach Phil Simmons was upbeat ahead of tomorrow's match.

SEE PAGE 14 COL 5



THIS IS WHAT IS NEEDED: Coach Dav Whatmore (R) himself bowls in the nets while captain Habibul Bashar inspects the pitch during Bangladesh's practice session at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday. The Tigers take on Zimbabwe in the crucial third ODI here today.



PHOTOS: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIDDER

Rafique return on the cards

SPORTS REPORTER

Veteran left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique, who has missed the first two ODIs of the five-match series against touring Zimbabwe because of a strained hamstring, is likely to return to the squad for the last two matches.

Chief selector Faruque Ahmed said yesterday that he would meet his three fellow selectors today in Chittagong after the third game to select a 14-member squad for the last final two encounters.

"There is every chance of seeing Rafique back in the squad for the last games because he is now fit to play. Some other changes can't be ruled out but everything will be decided in tomorrow's meeting," Faruque told the Daily Star Sport.

Faruque also said that they were thinking of retaining left-arm spinner Enamul Haque Jr although he has been named captain of the Bangladesh A team which is scheduled to leave Dhaka on January 30 for tours to the UAE and Zimbabwe.

Bangladesh, trailing 2-0 in the ODI series, play the last two matches at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on January 29 and 31.

"Every match is important for us and that's why we will try to field our best side in the last two matches. Of course Enamul is an important member of the side and if he is selected for the last two games, he

SEE PAGE 14 COL 1

Weather worries Lara

AFP, Adelaide



The West Indies headed into Wednesday's triangular VB Series match against Australia fearful that foul weather might again thwart their chances of earning a crucial victory.

Captain Brian Lara said the match was a do-or-die fixture for his side, who are seeking to overcome Pakistan and gain a place in the finals of the limited-overs competition against Australia.

Lara said his bowlers needed to repeat their wicket-taking start from the previous encounter between the two sides in Brisbane last Friday.

In that match the Australians were on the ropes at 43 for 5 in reply to the West Indies' 263 for nine when the match was abandoned because of heavy rain.

"It's important that we try to maintain that focus and make sure that we get early wickets," Lara said.

But with showers and possible thunderstorms forecast for the Adelaide Oval clash on Wednesday, it may well be Australia's third straight rain-affected match.

Their nine-wicket win over Pakistan in Sydney on Sunday was also interrupted by rain.

"It seems to be following us everywhere at the moment," Australian captain Ricky Ponting said.

"It will be frustrating if the rain does come and the storm hits, but you can't predict those things."

Ponting said Australia's batsmen needed to reassert themselves after the poor start against the Windies in Brisbane.

"They're obviously coming out of that game talking pretty confidently, so we have to make sure that we switch on again tomorrow," he said on Tuesday.

The Australians also have other concerns over the poor batting form of opener Matthew Hayden and big-hitter Andrew Symonds.

Ponting admitted he was concerned about Symonds form which has seen him make five ducks in his last six innings.

"He's probably a little bit worried about the way he's travelling, or... how few runs he's got," Ponting said.

But Ponting was confident of a return to form was imminent.

"It's just going to take him to spend a bit of time at the crease, everything will come back to him again and you'll see him start playing the cricket we know he can play," he said.

As for Hayden, Ponting said every batsman suffered a downturn in form at some point.

"He's a bit the same as Symo (Symonds), I guess, he's in a little bit of a rut, we've all been in there," he said.

SEE PAGE 14 COL 1

Mohali venue impresses Pak officials

REUTERS, Chandigarh

Pakistani officials, in India to assess match venues ahead of next month's Test tour, have said they are satisfied with security arrangements in the northern city of Mohali.

Zakir Khan, a general manager of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), and Sohail Khan, Lahore's superintendent of police, arrived in India on Monday for a five-day visit.

Mohali has a fine stadium and we have no concerns," Zakir Khan told reporters on Tuesday after they inspected the ground.

However, the main bone of contention is expected to be the Test venue in Ahmedabad, the major city in the western state of Gujarat. The state was rocked by India's worst communal riots for a decade in 2002.

The Pakistan squad is scheduled

SEE PAGE 14 COL 7

England set 185 to win



AFP, Centurion

AB de Villiers and Jacques Kallis hit centuries before South Africa declared on the fifth afternoon of the fifth and final Test at Centurion Park Tuesday, setting England to make 185 to win in 44 overs.

South Africa need a win to square the series while a draw will give England a 2-1 win.

De Villiers, 20, made 109, his maiden Test century, while Kallis, South Africa's top scorer in the series, finished unbeaten on 136 before South African captain Graeme Smith declared on 296 for six.

De Villiers and Kallis scored freely on the final morning, enabling Smith to make at least a token attempt to win the match.

South Africa added 237 runs in 54

overs Tuesday to back up Smith's claim that his team would "give it our all" in an effort to force a result in a match affected by rain.

De Villiers and Kallis put on 227 for the third wicket in 224 minutes off 324 balls.

After making 92 in the first innings, De Villiers became the third youngest South African to make a Test century, after Graeme Pollock and Tuppy Owen-Smith.

De Villiers and Kallis both took 164 balls to reach their hundreds. It was Kallis' 20th Test century, just one short of the South African Test record.

South Africa started their second innings with a deficit of 112 but De Villiers took them into the lead when he pulled Matthew Hoggard for six.

De Villiers and Kallis scored freely on the final morning, enabling Smith to make at least a token attempt to win the match.

Kallis took his total of runs in the series to 625.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at tea on the fifth and final day of the fifth and final Test between South Africa and England at Centurion Park on Tuesday:

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 247 (De Villiers 92, Rudolph 33, Smith 25, Boucher 25; Flintoff 4-44, S Jones 4-47).

ENGLAND: First innings 359 (Thorpe 86, Flintoff 77, G Jones 50, Strauss 44, Giles 39; Nel 6-81).

SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings (overnight 59-2)

De Villiers c Hoggard b S Jones 109
Gibbs c G Jones b Flintoff 4
Hall b Flintoff 9
Kallis not out 136
Smith c sub (Collingwood) b Harrison 3
Rudolph b Harrison 2
Boucher c Thescothick b Hoggard 6
Extras: (b-2, lb-14, nb-9, w-2) 27
Total: (For 6 wks dec) in 73 overs) 296

SEE PAGE 14 COL 1

Federer blows Agassi away



AFP, Melbourne

Roger Federer sent out a chilling warning to his title rivals with a straight sets demolition of Andre Agassi to charge into the semifinals of the Australian Open on Tuesday.

The world number one stretched his unbeaten match streak to 26 as he put the four-times winner and eighth seed to the sword, 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 in 1 hr 39 min.

Federer, who hasn't lost against a top-ten player in 24 matches since October 2003, was irresistible as he tore apart the eight-time Grand Slam champion to set up a semifinal Thursday with Russian Marat Safin, whom he beat in last year's final.

Safin cashed in as the Australian Open went indoors Tuesday crushing Slovakian practice partner Dominik Hrbaty.

He centered to an easier than expected straight sets victory, 6-2, 6-4, 6-2 in just 1 hr 30 min, in a match played under a closed roof amid sweltering temperatures in Melbourne.

Safin, two days ahead of his 25th birthday, had too much raw power for out-gunned Hrbaty in what was his easiest win over the Slovakian in 13 meetings. He has now edged ahead 7-6 in career head-to-head.

It was Safin's first semifinal appearance since last year's Australian Open after first-round

exits at last year's Wimbledon and US Opens and third round demise at Roland Garros.

He has now made six Grand Slam semifinals for a win in the 2000 US Open and final appearances here last year and 2002.

Federer, the 23-year-old Swiss ace, once again showed why he is in a class of his own as he closes in on his fifth Grand Slam crown and third in a row.

"I played a fantastic match today

SEE PAGE 14 COL 2

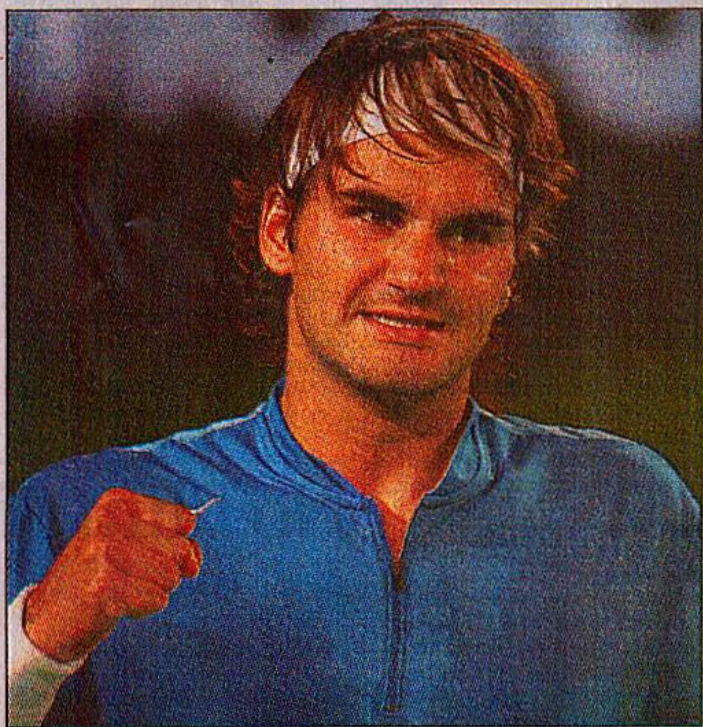


PHOTO: AFP

SWISS PRECISION: World number one and defending champion Roger Federer pumps his fist after defeating Andre Agassi in Melbourne yesterday.

Cric Freak

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