

BJMC national cycling champs

SPORTS REPORTER

BJMC became champions in the 29th National Cycling Championships when the three-day meet ended yesterday in Khulna.

BJMC secured 12 gold, 5 silver and five bronze medals while Ansar & VDP finished runners-up with five gold, 11 silver and 9 bronze.

Bangladesh Rifles captured four gold, five silver and two bronze medals to end third.

A boost for Kiwis

CRICKINFO

The New Zealand camp has received a boost with the news that both Daniel Vettori and Jacob Oram may regain their fitness in time for the series against Australia, which starts later this month.

Both Vettori and Oram had sustained back injuries -- Vettori's problem surfaced during the second one-day match between New Zealand and the FICA World XI, while Oram hurt a bone in the region. Tests revealed, however, that Vettori had probably only damaged a tissue, while Oram's injury wasn't a stress fracture, as originally feared, but a stress reaction.

Commenting on the injuries, Lindsay Crocker, the New Zealand general manager, told: "He (Vettori) bowled today and felt good. We will continue to monitor his progress during the week and if he continues to improve he will play for Northern Districts on Sunday.

"Jacob will continue to undergo treatment and should return to batting following a couple of pain-free weeks before progressing to bowling. We are cautiously optimistic about the return of both players and will work with our medical advisers to ensure they are fit before their return to cricket."

Australia's tour of New Zealand will consist of five one-day internationals, three Tests and a Twenty20 international. The ODI series begins on February 19, while the first Test will begin three weeks later.

Pieter-ton

FROM PAGE 13 England picked an unchanged team for the day-night match. Although teams chasing targets have a good record in Bloemfontein, and England have been better at chasing than defending, it was a surprising decision by South African captain Graeme Smith to field and not to take advantage of ideal batting conditions. South Africa have lost 11 of their last 12 one-day internationals.

SCOREBOARD table with columns for batsmen, runs, and bowling figures.

Bowler table with columns for bowler, overs, runs, and wickets.

I'm no Gilchrist: Jones

Cricket

REUTERS, Bloemfontein

England wicketkeeper Geraint Jones said on Tuesday he would not try to emulate Adam Gilchrist in his new role as a one-day opening batsman.

Captain Michael Vaughan said after England's victory over South Africa in their first one-day international in Johannesburg on Sunday that he wanted Jones to establish himself as an opener in the same manner as the Australian.

But Jones told reporters in Bloemfontein on Tuesday: "There's only one Adam Gilchrist and he's set a real tough benchmark for wicketkeeper/batsmen. "If I try to live up to him then I'll

land myself in trouble. I just have to play my way."

Gilchrist, one of the most feared batsmen in world cricket, averages 35.65 in 202 one-dayers, scoring at almost a run a ball. Jones has only played 17 matches, averaging 30.22 at an almost identical scoring rate.

The 28-year-old said he was looking forward to his new role.

"It's a spot that's quite well-suited to my game and my attacking instincts. You need to take good advantage of the first 15 overs and that's when the cut and pull shots get you boundaries. It suits my game.

"I quite like batting straight after I've kept because I've watched the ball closely for 50 overs and I'm pretty focused."

Jones confirmed that he would

open throughout the seven-match series.

"The captain told me that it was not a Christmas present, they're looking at me opening for a long time," he said. "I've been told I'll have a good spell there and I can get my head around the job for this whole series."

His first priority will be to adjust his attacking instincts to the white ball, which often moves around significantly in South Africa.

"You've got to know which balls to go for. You have to be a bit wary, it's not crash, bang, wallop all the way through. The important thing is that I don't get too caught up in the job, the boundaries will come naturally for me.

"And there's no extra pressure to hit boundaries because Marcus Trescothick is a proven one-day opener and he does it so well."

SE warns sport bodies

Cricket

AFP, London

Sport England (SE), the body which distributes lottery and government funds, warned Tuesday it was looking for value for money after announcing a 315 million pounds package for the next four years.

The organisation's chief executive Roger Draper said: "There has been a lot of excuses and people are running out of them.

"In recent years, sport has come from the well-meaning volunteer running it on an amateur basis to a multi-million pound industry.

"We have got to make sure there are clear targets and we, as one of the biggest investors in sport, are getting bang for our buck from our investment."

The Football Association will receive almost 58 million pounds (109 million dollars) over the next four years, the England and Wales Cricket Board 18.3m pounds (34.4m dollars), the Rugby Football Union 17.3m pounds (32.5m dollars) and the Amateur Swimming Association 17.8m pounds (33.5m dollars).

Meanwhile Sport England are set to inject 16.5m pounds (31m dollars) into tennis over the next four years.

The Lawn Tennis Association, one of Draper's former employers, has been repeatedly criticised for its failure to unearth a homegrown Grand Slam champion despite banking more than 20m pounds (37.6m dollars) a year from its share of profits at the Wimbledon Championships.

No British woman has won a major singles title since Virginia Wade at Wimbledon in 1977 while the drought for the nation's men extends nearly 70 years to 1936 when Fred Perry won the last of his three Wimbledon singles titles and his second US Open.

But Draper insisted: "Our focus with tennis is going towards changing the culture at the grass roots level.

"That means mini tennis and inner city tennis and getting tennis coaches on the ground. But within this plan we have shifted to holding the governing bodies more accountable for their key targets, including results.

"The LTA have got some very ambitious targets in terms of the amount of men and women being in the top 100 in the world.

"They have got a pool of talent coming through, Andrew Murray -- number one junior in the world and winner of the (junior) US Open and he's doing extremely well." Draper promised increasing

funding for Olympic athletes and reiterated his personal enthusiasm for London to stage the 2012 Games.

But he said Sport England's focus would be on developing the grassroots infrastructure of clubs, coaches and volunteers as well as backing individual competitors.

"The Olympic bid is imperative to getting funding, but it's not the be-all and the end-all," said Draper.

"If we don't win the bid we have got to continue to invest in sport. We are a passionate sporting nation.

"If we did get the Olympic bid, and we believe we have a very strong chance, it would be the catalyst for more investment in sport generally.

"In turn that will mean more focus on some of the Olympic sports that don't have the profile already.

"Sport hasn't been taken as seriously as it should have been in the past in terms of investment, the profile has always been there.

"But if we win the bid we have got to invest because we want to deliver success and want to get the nation inspired to do sport. But if we don't, let's make sure we still win medals in Paris, Madrid or New York.

"The infrastructure is the main goal. There will be future Olympic bids, future World Cups and it's a huge challenge but we want to get the nation active and successful."

Sao Caetano in hot waters

AFP, Sao Paulo

Sao Caetano club president Nairo Ferreira and doctor Paulo Forte have been charged with homicide after the death of fullback Serginho last October, Brazilian press reported on Tuesday.

Serginho, 30, collapsed in the 14th minute of the second half of a match between Sao Caetano and Sao Paulo on October 27 and was taken to hospital where he died.

The autopsy on Serginho showed his heart weighed 600 grammes, three times the weight of a normal heart.

Prosecutor Rogerio Leao Zagallo presented a 20-page document to Sao Paulo judge Cassiano Ricardo Zorzi Rocha on Monday and Ferreira and Forte risk prison sentences of up to 30 years.

Zagallo accused them of not following up medical evidence from February last year that Serginho should have quit the sport because of heart defects but instead allowed him to play 50 matches in three competitions.

"We did not expect such a penalty. We are very sad," Kop was quoted by the agency as saying.

Ayhan, who broke down in tears after hearing the verdict, sufficed by saying she was very upset.

Ayhan, one of Turkey's few hopes for Olympic gold and the reigning European 1,500m champion, withdrew from the Athens Games with a hamstring injury, but the Turkish media reported at the time that the real reason for her pullout was a doping scandal.

Newspapers had claimed that Ayhan had shied away from a doping test and had tried to submit someone else's sample.

Kop and Ayhan have insistently denied the reports, but have acknowledged problems in the collection of urine samples prior to the Athens Games.

Kop announced that he had argued with representatives of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) when they visited Ayhan's camp several times for tests.

He argued that a row erupted when a male WADA official insisted on accompanying Ayhan into the bathroom where she was to give a urine sample and Kop resisted the move on the grounds that it was against the rules.

Ayhan became a national hero after emerging from relative obscurity to win the European title in Munich in 2002. She won the silver medal in the world championships the following year.



Russian ace Maria Sharapova executes a return against Maria Vento-Kabchi of Venezuela during their Pan Pacific Open match in Tokyo on February 2.

NZ-SL series rescheduled

AFP, Wellington

A Test series against Sri Lanka postponed after the Indian Ocean tsunami has been rescheduled for April, New Zealand Cricket said Wednesday.

NZC chief executive Martin Snedden said Sri Lanka would play the Black Caps in two Tests beginning in Napier on April 4 and Wellington on April 11.

"We chose the two venues that we believe will offer the best test cricket conditions at this time of year," Snedden said in a statement.

The Sri Lankans were set to commence a full schedule of Test and one-day internationals against New Zealand when the tsunami hit their homeland on December 26 last year.

Following the disaster, the side returned home at the request of Sri Lanka Cricket.

In the absence of Sri Lanka, New Zealand hosted a series of three one-day matches between the Black Caps and a Rest of the World XI which raised more than one million dollars (710,000 US) for tsunami victims.

Sri Lanka will also play a first-class warm-up match from March 28-30.

Ayhan banned for two years

AFP, Ankara

Turkish athlete Sureyya Ayhan was banned for two years on Tuesday for violating anti-doping procedures in a test before the Athens Olympics last year, the Anatolia news agency reported.

Ayhan's coach and husband Yucel Kop announced after the hearing in Ankara that they would appeal against the ban handed down by the disciplinary board of the state-run directorate of sports, the report said.

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PAN PACIFIC OPEN

Sharapova in last eight

Tennis

AFP, Tokyo

Wimbledon champion Maria Sharapova needed some time to get used to the fast indoor surface here before overpowering Venezuela's Maria Vento-Kabchi at the Pan Pacific Open tennis tournament on Wednesday.

The 17-year-old Russian starlet, semi-finalist at the Australian Open last week, had to come back from a service break down twice in the first set and missed three set points before scoring a 7-6 (7/3), 6-0 win.

US Open champion Svetlana Kuznetsova of Russia, who played a first-round bye with other top three seeds, also overcame a slow start to beat Marie-Gayane Mikaelian of Switzerland 6-3, 6-1 for a place in the quarter-finals.

"We don't play on this surface so much in a year, so I think it takes time to be able to perform your best when you have such a short period of time. It's difficult," said Sharapova, second seed here.

"But it definitely suits my game, because the bounces are low and you can get a lot of advantage from the serve. But I just need a little bit more time to prepare after the Australian Open where you are coming off the Rebound Ace. It's totally an opposite surface."

Vento-Kabchi, ranked 50th against Sharapova's fourth, used her accurate placement to counter-attack the Russian, who tried to finish a point by hitting her signature hard-hit winners from the baseline.

But Vento-Kabchi hit too many double faults to lose the second and sixth games, allowing Sharapova to get into her rhythm afterwards.

Sharapova misfired her shots on

her first set point in the 10th and another two in the 12th, but made no errors in the tie-breaker, choking up a 6-3 lead to finish with a forehand service return winner.

Everything went perfect in the second set with Sharapova hitting better serves and returns, and completing her three service games with an ace for a total of eighth -- five of them in the second set.

"I've only played on this surface for the last two days, so I don't think I had the best possible preparation I could have had. Your opponent has already played (a match) on the surface and has a good feeling for it," said Sharapova.

"In the first set, I made too many errors than I should have, but she (Vento-Kabchi) played a solid game, so I just picked up my level in the second set," the Russian said.

THAILAND OPEN

Dokic, Bartoli break down

Tennis

REUTERS, Pattaya City

Second seed Marion Bartoli of France and former Wimbledon semi-finalist Jelena Dokic both retired from the Thailand Open on Wednesday.

Bartoli, suffering from severe abdominal illness, looked close to collapse and was taken from the court in a wheelchair after dropping the opening set 6-4 to Magui Serna.

Dokic quit with a groin strain after falling behind 7-6 (7-1) 1-0 against Alyona Bondarenko from Ukraine.

The tournament lost its main drawing card on Tuesday when Martina Hingis, on a comeback to the sport, was beaten in the first round.

In Wednesday's second round

action, Bartoli swept the first four games against Serna, playing aggressively and not allowing her Spanish opponent to settle.

But she left the court when Serna had pulled back to 4-3 and after returning and receiving ice and massage treatment she could barely compete.

Dokic had hopes of resurrecting a career that has seen ranking drop from 12 to 126.

Having hit 12 double-faults and shared 102 unforced errors in winning her first round match, she was equally erratic.

There were glimpses of what made the troubled Serbian such a potent force at one time, but she lacked consistency in the rallies and her serve was once again a liability.

After serving for the set at 6-5 she made little effort in the tiebreak, winning just one point, and after dropping her serve with a

ninth double fault to begin the second set she decided that she could not continue.

Despite her career collapsing in such dramatic fashion, losing nine consecutive first round matches to end her 2004 season, Dokic is determined to fight her way back.

"For now I'll play small tournaments," she said. "I want to get some matches, get myself back. I'm a long way from where I was and where I want to be so it will take a while."

Murali heart

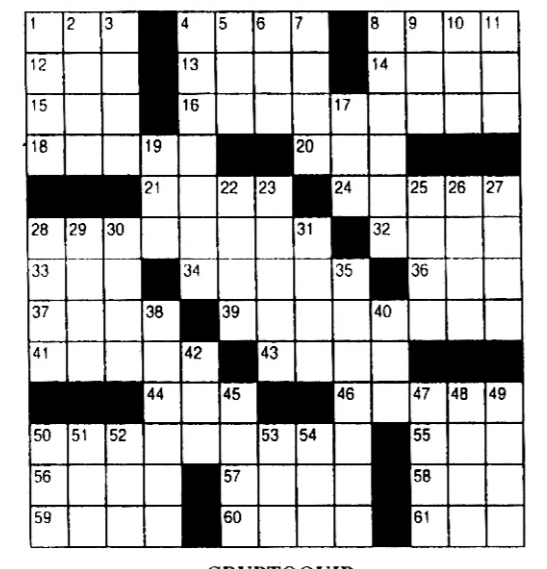
FROM PAGE 13 fiancee as a "very humble person."

"I am not an avid cricket fan, but will probably have to get more used to watching it."

Muralitharan is the second highest wicket-taker in Test cricket after Australia's Shane Warne with 532 wickets from 91 Tests at an average of 22.86 runs.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 44 Symbol of intrigue 46 Winger or Messing 50 "Miracle hamperer" 8 Advertis- ing award 12 Privy actor 13 Beige 14 Patronize the library 15 — Jose 16 Bubbly 18 Pond 20 Ms. Sills, to pals 21 Parent sharers 24 Rodeo cry 28 Lumbago 32 VCR descendant 33 Cretan mountain 34 London news- paper 36 Shriner's chapeau 37 Ethereal 39 "Common Sense" man 41 Knapsack part 43 Dark, filmwise



CRYPTOQUIP Z R Z H I Z G O G L Q O I D E L M L D T V L U O H Q K M O I J , M I U O Z G T E E O G G R T D D K D Z R W O J Q K G V Z H Z W G ? Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I REALIZED THAT SOMEONE TEACHING A LAMAZE CLASS MIGHT BE CALLED A LABOR LEADER. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: E equals C The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.