

## Vaughan makes no excuses

BBC ONLINE, Cape Town

Captain Michael Vaughan admitted England were under-par in all facets of their game as they slipped to a 108-run defeat to South Africa in Cape Town on Saturday.

"We weren't quite on our game in all three departments and South Africa fully deserved their victory," he said.

England have played four matches in what Vaughan called a "hectic week".

But he added: "There's no excuses -- we must come back on Wednesday and try and play a little bit better and put them under some pressure."

Kevin Pietersen, who hit a defiant 75, pointed the finger at England's bowling at the death, and the inability of team-mates to stay with him.

"They scored 60-odd in the last five overs and I don't think we got our workers quite as we discussed."

"And we didn't get any partnerships going, which you need chasing a big total," he said.

"We've got three games to go so we just have to keep the momentum going and we could still nip the series."

## Ahmedabad

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reports that the decision was politically motivated.

"We decided to request the change only after receiving a report from our venue assessment committee, which recently toured India," said PCB spokesman Abbas Zaidi.

Pakistan are due to play three Tests and five one-day games as well as two side matches on their first full tour of India in six years. They played a commemorative one-day match in India last year.

"In making the request the PCB wishes to preserve and strengthen the bilateral relations that have been enhanced at the public and government level after the resumption of ties between the two countries," said Zaidi.

The governments of nuclear-armed rivals India and Pakistan are engaged in a tentative, year-long peace process that has seen increased political, social and cultural contacts.

"The PCB contradicts reports suggesting any motive other than security -- such as people saying it may be political or anything -- in making this request for change and maintains that the venue issue should be amicably resolved," said Zaidi.

Mohali, in north India, and the southern metropolis of Bangalore are the other two proposed Test venues.

Pakistan was expected to reject Ahmedabad after Pakistan's foreign ministry and ministry of sports and culture also raised concerns. Madras is the likely replacement if the Indian cricket authorities accept the request.



PHOTO: COURTESY  
District Commissioner of Narayanganj SM Harun-ar Rashid (C) seen here with participants of the Narayanganj Rifle Club Annual Badminton Competition 2005 yesterday.

## Lee targets Tests

### Cricket

CRICINFO, Sydney

Australian fast bowler Brett Lee, the player of the VB Series, hopes his brilliant one-day form and a strong start to the New Zealand tour will earn a Test recall.

Lee's opening spells and 16 series wickets were major reasons for Australia's trophy-winning success and his speed worried top-order batsmen throughout the tournament.

"My long-term goal is definitely to get back into the Test team," Lee

said after taking 1 for 31 in the second final against Pakistan.

"I do want to play Test match cricket. Hopefully I can use these one-day matches to try and push for that selection."

Michael Kasprowicz has kept Lee out of the side for nine matches since his return from ankle surgery and will need to continue his superb 2004 form to hold his place.

"It's probably the best I've ever felt," Lee said. "I've finally got my left ankle right, there's no pain there and to bowl without any pain or discomfort is the most amazing feeling."

Glenn McGrath, Lee's opening partner in the two finals, also said he

was in tip-top shape and considered extending his career.

"I can't remember feeling this good for years," he said.

"Maybe I set my goals a bit low when I said the 2007 World Cup, I think I've got plenty of years in me yet."

Lee, who was also warned for a full toss above waist height, talked down the two similar deliveries he received from Abdul Razzaq in the first innings. "He's the type of guy that never means to bowl beamers," Lee said. "It was quite slippery out there. I looked at the footmarks and he was sliding two or three inches."

Lee said the pair chatted after the game and "that's the end of it!"

## Simmons slams critics

### Cricket

CRICINFO, Harare

Zimbabwe coach Phil Simmons has dismissed criticism aimed at him following the 3-2 one-day series defeat by Bangladesh and said that the loss was a result of complacency on the part of the players and the technical team.

Simmons was lambasted by Richie Kaschula, a member of the national selection panel and a former national player, in the aftermath of the defeat.

"Phil must be held responsible for what has been happening in Bangladesh," Kaschula said.

"Phil was left in charge and we, as selectors, are not happy with

what has been happening. Phil was in charge of the team and he was doing his own things in selecting the teams that played, ignoring some of the things we told him."

But Simmons mounted a spirited defence on his return to Harare.

"We played beyond expectations in the first two games and I think when we took the 2-0 lead in the one day series against the hosts the guys were surprised by the results and that led to the guys being excited," he said.

"I think I was also excited by the result that the guys had posted and we seemed to have lost direction. Because of that and I believe that is where we got it all wrong."

"The batsmen let us down in the third game and that was the major

## Hayden vows to return

CRICINFO, Queensland

Matthew Hayden will play his first game for Queensland in more than a year when he returns with Michael Kasprowicz for the ING Cup match against South Australia at the Gabba on Friday.

After being replaced by Michael Clarke and Brett Lee for the VB Series finals, the pair asked Cricket Australia for permission to play in the lead-up to Australia's tour of New Zealand.

Hayden was dropped as Australia's one-day opener after managing 42 runs in four VB Series innings and vowed to return to the side with a "platter" of domestic runs if required. Graham Dixon, the Queensland Cricket chief executive, said Hayden and Kasprowicz were due to be rested under Cricket Australia's player management plan.

"Players who are involved in both forms of the game had been penciled in to have a break this week ahead of the New Zealand tour," he said.

"It will be great to welcome them back." However, Hayden and Kasprowicz were expected at the Gabba on Friday as part of the 10th anniversary celebrations of the state's first Sheffield Shield winning team in 1994-95. The Bulls have already booked their place in the ING Cup final and will play either Victoria or Tasmania on February 20.

Queensland will finalise their squad after Australia's touring party is announced on Wednesday, but expect to miss the injured trio of Andrew Symonds (Achilles tendon), Shane Watson (side strain) and Martin Love (hand). Symonds was hurt while making 91 in the first final against Pakistan. Watson left the field after bowling 3.5 overs in the second match and Love split the webbing between his left index finger and thumb while fielding during yesterday's 138-run loss to Victoria.

"I just seem to bring up my level when I play here, I don't know what it is, but I'm always determined," said Sharapova after winning the Pan Pacific Open by beating world number one Lindsay Davenport 6-1, 3-6, 7-6 Sunday.

"I've such great memories here.

When I'm coming back, I feel inspired to win and fans are so amazing to me. They definitely raise my game as well."

"I remember winning my first title

when I was 14 years old in Gunma,

and here I won a Tier I on the professional tour, so without you (the

fans), I wouldn't have been here. I can't wait to be back."

Fresh from her victory in Tokyo, Sharapova was due to make her first appearance at the 585,000-dollar Paris Indoor Open starting Monday.

Sharapova captured her first career WTA singles and doubles titles at the Japan Open in October 2003 and defended the singles last year. She also won her first professional title in the ITF Circuit series in Gunma, north of Tokyo, in 2002.

However, the 17-year-old's surge to the top of the world has forced her out of this October's Japan Open because her ranking is too high.

The WTA rules prohibit the top 20 "Gold Exempt Players," who can attract major crowds to a tournament, from taking part in a smaller event when a higher-paying contest is going on the same week.

Sharapova has to put priority on a Tier II event in Germany (650,000 dollars) over the Tier III (170,000 dollars) Japan Open the same week in October.

To say nothing about the 140,000-dollar Tier IV Korea Open a

week earlier, where Sharapova as the inaugural champion pulled in an unusually large audience for tennis in South Korea. This year, a 585,000-dollar Tier II event is going on at the same time in Luxembourg.

The Japan Open organisers have already abandoned the idea of inviting Sharapova to Tokyo in October, while Sharapova has already set her sights higher.

"I always wanted to achieve being number one in the world and I always wanted to win Wimbledon, but it takes hard work," said Sharapova.

"It's always tougher to maintain being in the top five in the world than getting into them, just because everybody else is very hungry to be at the same position."

"After winning Wimbledon, I expected everyone to know that I was a top player, that a lot of people wanted to beat me."

"But I love these kinds of challenges in which people really, really want to beat you, and I love beating them, so it's a nice game," added Sharapova.

## Malisse makes his mark

AFP, Delray Beach

Belgian Xavier Malisse finally captured his first ATP singles title Sunday, defeating Czech Jiri Novak in the final of the 380,000-dollar Millennium International tennis tournament.

Malisse, the third seed, downed the second-seeded Czech 7-6, 6-2, earning his first career singles title in his seventh career final.

"It was a feeling of disbelief because you can't believe it happened," Malisse said. "It's been a long time in coming."

Malisse is the first player since France's Cedric Pioline to go winless in as many as six finals before winning his first ATP title. Pioline lost his first nine finals before winning at Copenhagen in 1996.

"When I went on the court today it didn't matter if I had 15 titles, it's what I do today that counts," Malisse said. "Fortunately, today was the day."

It was the 24-year-old's third appearance in the final at this event, after runner-up finishes in 1999 and 2001.

Novak, 29, had won 17 of his last 20 matches, a stretch that included tournament victories in Basel and Tokyo last year.

Novak broke Malisse in the fourth game of the match, but Malisse broke back in the ninth game before prevailing in the tie-breaker.

## Tokyo close to her heart

### Tennis

AFP, Tokyo

Wimbledon champion Maria Sharapova can't wait to be back in Tokyo, where she won her first

professional title, first WTA titles and

this weekend triumphed at the Pan Pacific Open.

But success has caught up with her and it will be at least one year before the skyrocketing Russian starlet is eligible to play again in her favourite city.

"I just seem to bring up my level when I play here, I don't know what it is, but I'm always determined," said Sharapova after winning the Pan Pacific Open by beating world number one Lindsay Davenport 6-1, 3-6, 7-6 Sunday.

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Xavier Malisse of Belgium returns the ball to Jiri Novak of the Czech Republic in the final of the Millennium International Tennis Championships at the Delray Beach Tennis Centre on February 6.

## Paris stands out so far

### OLYMPICS

REUTERS, London

finished first only once in the final round of voting by IOC members.

Atlanta won the right ahead of Athens to host the 1996 Olympics and Sydney edged out Beijing for the 2000 Games.

Rome were favourites to host last year's Games but lost in the final round to Athens. In 2001 Beijing, by this time the clear favourites, gave some relief to the bookmakers by winning the power of its shots proved decisive.

"I'm delighted to have won against such a good opponent in a tournament of this importance," Soderling said afterwards. "I was really on form, my service was good and I really liked playing on the synthetic surface."

In addition the city started its campaign early after losing out in the 1992 and 2008 campaigns.

London is currently second in the betting, partly because of its new, high-profile bid head Sebastian Coe, twice the Olympic 1,500 metres champion and now a council member of the world governing athletics body.

Madrid, which received a favourable report from the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) initial evaluation, is third followed by New York with Moscow trailing in fifth.

The 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester showed Britain could stage a successful multi-national event but to the sceptics, who recall the Pickett

lock fiasco, the London bid still seems longer on promises than performance.

Madrid, the first venue on the IOC evaluation team's six-week tour of the five candidate cities which began on Thursday, has presented an excellent technical bid and enjoys enthusiastic public and government support.

Its problem may be that while the summer Olympics have not been held in France since 1924 or in Britain since 1948, Barcelona hosted the 1992 Games.

New York organisers have stressed the city's ethnic diversity which they say will ensure all venues will be filled.

"New York is a magnet for dreamers, it is the most competitive place in the world," said bid leader Dan Doctoroff, the city's deputy mayor, in London last week.

Last in the betting by some distance is Moscow, host of the 1980 Games which were weakened by U.S.-led boycott after the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in the previous year.

If successful, Moscow bid officials plan to revive the 1980 venues for a new generation.

Moscow will probably be eliminated in the first round. Then the complications begin.

If Moscow plans to bid again for the 2016 Olympics, its supporters could switch to New York to try to prevent a European city winning the 2012 Games.

Madrid is the likeliest candidate to fall out next, leaving a three-way race between Paris, London and New York.

"Paris seems very safe," said Ed Hulse, editor of the independent Olympic website AroundTheRings.com.

"They staged the 2003 world track and field championships and they've got great venues like Roland Garros."

"London provides the best legacy and Coe is really engaged and passionate."

"Madrid has a great technical bid and transport system while Moscow is very low down and security will be an