

'Anil, Inzy vital'

JBBC ONLINE, undated

Former India all-rounder Kapil Dev says spinner Anil Kumble and rival batsman Inzamam-ul-Haq will be the key players in the Test series against Pakistan.

He told BBC: "I think if we look at bowling, a lot depends on Anil Kumble. If he gets going, then he could change the match within two hours."

"Similarly from Pakistan point of view, their skipper Inzamam holds the key."

"He has a good record against India, and in the conditions here, he could perform well."

Kumble took 10 wickets in an innings at Delhi when Pakistan last toured in 1998-99 and has a total of 37 wickets in six Tests against India's arch-rivals.

Pakistan captain Inzamam averages 34.66 against India, well below his overall career mark of 48.97.

But the 35-year-old hit a century in Pakistan's last Test victory over their neighbours, in Lahore last April.

He first match of the three-Test series begins in Mohali on Tuesday, and Kapil Dev believes that match will be crucial in setting the tone.

"I think the first five days of the series -- the first Test is very important," said the 131-Test veteran.

"On paper, one may say the Indian side looks better, but remember in actual match play, one brilliant performance can change the match."

"Both teams want the first Test to pass, so that they can study the other side, but to make the series interesting, attacking is the best policy at the moment."

And Kapil cautioned against making India favourites simply because of their star-studded batting line-up.

He added: "We have many big names, but it is crucial that the names should match their performance -- this is our biggest strength and weakness too."

"Sometimes when many big names are there, one thinks the other might steady the innings, but it does not happen always."

Inzamam

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Pakistani captain a happy birthday and the local Himalachal Pradesh Cricket Association cut a cake at the ground.

"I have never celebrated a birthday with such fanfare. I cut six cakes. I was overwhelmed by the warmth of the people," said Inzamam.

Pakistan will play three Tests and six one-day internationals on their first tour of India in six years.

It can be Sachin's

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front against a full-strength Indian attack because runs alone will help them keep pressure on the hosts.

The tourists' bowling attack appears weak on paper, especially after the withdrawal of key fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar due to a hamstring injury.

But the Indian captain said his team still cannot relax against Pakistan, which looked strong in Akhtar's absence.

"Pakistan are a good side and they have a lot of good players. We will have to do really well to win the series," he said.

The Pakistani captain believed his players were capable of raising their game against India and should not be underestimated.

"We want to make amends for last year's defeats," Inzamam said and praised the hard work done by the team's English coach Bob Woolmer.

"Our coach has helped change the attitude of the boys which is more positive and professional and I think they can handle the pressure of playing in India."

But the Test will be remembered as much for Tendulkar's twin feats -- if he achieves them -- as for the result.

Trouble in Windies

Cricket

AFP, Bridgetown

West Indies cricket was plunged into further turmoil on Saturday when world record-breaking skipper Brian Lara and six other players were threatened with the axe from the squad.

The West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) took the dramatic option to warn Lara, Ramnaresh Sarwan, Chris Gayle, Fidel Edwards, Dwayne Bravo, Dwayne Smith and Ravi Rampaul that they would not be selected for the squad as the contracts row which has rumbled on since December finally exploded.

Neither of the players will feature in the series against South Africa and Pakistan which get underway in the Caribbean later in March unless they give assurances over their individual deals to the board by March 11.

The decision, announced by WICB president Teddy Griffith, was taken because the seven players have personal sponsorship deals with telecommunications giants Cable and Wireless which could conflict with the board's main supporter, Digicel.

"The deal with Digicel is understood to be worth in the region of 20 million dollars over five years and the bombshell comes just a year before the West Indies are due to host the 2007 World Cup."

At the same time, the West Indies board is battling against crippling losses as well as the fall out from criticism of the alleged behaviour of some of the team on the recent tour of Australia.

"The world of sport is inextricably linked with commercial interests," said Griffith.

"It is fair to say that without significant support from sponsors, the

Pakistani fans arrive in India

AFP, Wagah

Hundreds of Pakistani cricket fans arrived in India on Sunday ahead of the opening Test on Pakistan's first tour of their fierce rivals for six years.

Nearly 750 men, women and children entered the northern Indian state of Punjab through the Wagah border crossing and were shown with flowers as they danced with Indian fans to drums and Punjabi folk songs.

"We do not have any relations in India. But we wanted to come here as I and my family were keen to see India, its cultural heritage, the farms and everything else," said Muhammad Asif, who came with his wife and son.

Several hundred more fans are expected to arrive in India Monday, including film and theatre stars, politicians, bureaucrats and others, according to those who arrived Sunday.

A special train service, the Samjhota Express from Pakistan, was cancelled on Saturday because of technical reasons, Indian officials said.

Many of the Pakistanis said they were visiting family members estranged by the 1947 partition of the two countries on gaining independence from Britain.

Cricket ties between the South Asian giants, disrupted since 2000 due to political tensions, were revived in March last year when India toured Pakistan for their first Test series since 1989.

Coach stands by Zim

Cricket

AFP, Cape Town

Coach Phil Simmons rejected calls for Zimbabwe to be stripped of their Test status despite the team suffering the humiliation of an innings defeat inside two days in the first Test against South Africa at Newlands Saturday.

Speaking after South Africa won by an innings and 21 runs with more than an hour to spare on the second day, Simmons said he disagreed with former Zimbabwe captain and coach Dave Houghton, who called for Zimbabwe to be dropped from Test cricket.

Citing catastrophic collapses in recent years by several teams, including Pakistan, the West Indies and England, Simmons said: "There was no talk about taking them out of Test cricket. It happens, teams get bowled out. If I didn't believe this team had the potential to improve I wouldn't be in this job."

Zimbabwe captain Tatenda Taibu also resisted Houghton's comments.

"Everyone's entitled to their own opinion," said the under-fire skipper.

Simmons, a former West Indies all-rounder, said Zimbabwe's defeat could be blamed on "one bad day" when both the batsmen and bowlers took a pounding from the South Africans Friday.

South Africa declared at their overnight total of 340 for three to set up the two-day win.

"It was a matter of pride. If you are humiliated like Friday you have

to bounce back. The players showed character today," said Simmons.

Taibu said Zimbabwe had shown improved form in making 265 in their second innings after being bowled out for 54 in the first innings. He singled out Dion Ebrahim, who made a defiant 72, Hamilton Masakadza, who scored 46 and shared a 98-run third-wicket stand with Ebrahim, and Andy Blignaut who hammered 61 off 58 balls before being last man out.

Blignaut and former skipper Heath Streak played in the match for the first time since being sacked, along with another 13 players after a selection row.

South African captain Graeme Smith said his players had produced a top effort to win so efficiently.

He admitted that hammering Zimbabwe did not give him as much satisfaction as beating a top nation but said South Africa took each Test match seriously.

"We have to," he said.

"Cricket doesn't allow you not to take anyone seriously. You still have to concentrate and produce good cricket, even if it (the opposition) isn't of the level of Australia or England."

Smith said the team had set a goal of winning as quickly as possible in order to give the players rest ahead of a tour of the West Indies which starts at the end of March.

"Two days was good going," he said.

Smith ducked questions about Zimbabwe's Test status.

"That's not my call, it's the International Cricket Council's call,"

Dhaka's double joy

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reply against the home side.

Sylhet, who began the second innings with a 197-run deficit, lost quick wickets to stumble to 104-3 as Barisal's first-innings hero Nadif Chowdhury captured two wickets.

The tourists closed on 127-3, still trailing by 70 runs, with his hopes to force a draw relying on Moniruzzaman, whose patient 51 off 130 deliveries featured with six boundaries, and Sadikur Rahman, batting on seven.

Earlier, Barisal were all out for 399 in their first innings after resuming on 282-5.

Opener Nasiruddin Faruk, overnight 133, added eight runs before being trapped lbw by Sadikur.

Barisal did not look like getting anywhere near the 400-mark when they were reduced to 308-8 but left-arm spinner Nadif, who has now taken seven wickets in the match, made a blazing 64 to frustrate the Sylhet attack.

The young batsman's entertaining 83-ball undefeated knock was laced with six fours and three sixes which helped the side add an invaluable 84 runs for the ninth wicket with Shahnewaz Shuvo (27).

Fall of wkts: 1-19, 2-76, 3-82, 4-87, 5-96, 6-159.

Bowlers

O	M	R	W	
Alamgir	17	1	73	3
Sumon	16	2	36	1
Saifullah	15.2	0	64	2
Forhad	8	5	15	0
Rafiqul	1	0	1	0

Result: Dhaka won by four wickets. Man-of-the-match: Khaled Mahmud.

CHITTAGONG-KHULNA CHITTAGONG: First innings 461

KHULNA: First innings (overnight 68-4)

Sadat c Gazi Salahuddin b Habib 19

Shafiq c Masum b Alamgir 0

Sajjad lbw b Habib 1

Monirul not out 87

Salahuddin lbw b Alamgir 0

Jamal b Habib 30

Asadullah c Rabbi b Habib 21

Salim c Salahuddin b Ehsanul 11

Manjulur c Nazim b Ehsanul 2

Dollar c sub (Hasan) b Ehsanul 0

Ziaur c Rabbi b Arafat 1

Extras: (b-5, lb-1, nb-3) 11

Total: (All out in 76.3 overs) 182

Fall of wkts: 1-19, 2-19, 3-29, 4-30, 8, 6-134, 7-169, 8-176, 9-176, 10-182.

Bowlers

O	M	R	W	
Alamgir	21	7	44	2
Habib	19	5	53	4
Faisal	9	4	14	0
Ehsanul	11	3	22	3
Yasin	11.3	6	33	1
Ilias	5	2	10	0

KHULNA: Second innings

Sadat c Masum b Ilias 55

Shafiq c Arafat b Ehsanul 1

Sazzadul batting 52

Salahuddin c Salahuddin b Ilias 4

Monirul batting 13

Extras: (b-17, lb-5, nb-1) 23

Total: (For 3 wkts in 45 overs) 148

Fall of wkts: 1-5, 2-66, 3-83.

Bowlers

O	M	R	W	
Ehsanul	4	3	6	1
Habib	4	2	7	0
Alamgir	4	0	19	0
Ilias	14	2	53	2
Faisal	12	6	22	0
Yasin	7	2	19	0

BARISAL-SYLHET SYLHET: First innings 202

BARISAL: First innings (overnight 282-5)

Nasiruddin lbw b Sadikur 141

Tariqul b Nabil 0

Imran c Shishir b Hasibul 49

Hannan c Tushar b Nabil 11

Shahid b Nabil 68

Nahidul lbw b Sadikur 5

Bashar b Hasibul 6

Mosharruf lbw b Hasibul 7

Nadif not out 64

Shuvo b Nabil 27

Sonnet c Ezzab b Hasibul 6

Extras: (b-8, lb-5, nb-1, w-1) 15

Total: (All out in 134.1 overs) 399

Fall of wkts: 1-0, 2-94, 3-105, 4-246, 5-277, 6-288, 7-298, 8-308, 9-392, 10-399.

Bowlers

O	M	R	W	
Hasibul	44.1	8	152	4
Nabil	42	13	98	4
Rezaul	15	5	30	0
Mawla	14	3	44	0
Sadikur	17	6	52	2
Ezzab	2	0	10	0

SYLHET: Second innings

Rahman c Shahin b Hannan 68

Moniruzzaman batting 51

Hasibul b Nadif 0

Madud lbw b Nadif 0

Sadikur batting 7

Extras: (w-1) 1

Total: (For 3 wkts in 47 overs) 127

Fall of wkts: 1-97, 2-98, 3-104.

Bowlers

O	M	R	W	
Sonnet	11	0	40	0
Shuvo	11	3	17	0
Mosharruf	5	1	31	0
Nadif	11	3	23	2
Hannan	7	4	10	1
Imran	2	0	8	0

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboards on the third day of the four-day National League fourth round matches yesterday:

RAJSHAHI-DHAKA

RAJSHAHI: First innings 140

DHAKA: First innings 135

RAJSHAHI: Second innings 179

DHAKA: Second innings (overnight 18-0)

Rashedul b Alamgir 6

Anwar c sub (Dola) b Saifullah 26

Mehrab Sr b Saifullah 43

Mehrab Jr c Rafiqul b Alamgir 6

Halim Shah lbw b Alamgir 4

Mahmud not out 54

Neeamur c Nuruzzaman b Sumon 37

Arafat not out 6

Extras: (b-2, lb-1, nb-5) 8

Total: (For 6 wkts in 57.2 overs) 190

EX-ENG CAPTAIN SHEPPARD DEAD

AFP, Liverpool

Former England cricket captain David Sheppard has died following a long battle with cancer.

The former Bishop of Liverpool and Labour peer died peacefully on Saturday, the eve of his 76th birthday.

Sheppard was one of England's finest batsmen of the 1950s.

Making his debut at Lord's in an innings defeat by West Indies in August 1950, he went on to make 21 further Test appearances, scoring 1,172 runs at an average of 37.80.

A former captain of Cambridge University, Sheppard twice captained his country, and in 1956 became the first ordained minister to play international cricket for England, scoring a hundred against Australia in that game which was dominated by Jim Laker's 19 wickets.

C'wealth Shooting

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Sheikh Akram Ali, vice-president of BSF, will accompany the team as manager.

Another five-member team will leave Dhaka on March 9 for the meet including armourer Intekhab Hamid and range officer Ishtiaque Ahmed.

Three skeet shooters -- Altamash Kabir, Mobarak Hossain Ratna and Nuruddin Selim -- are also making the trip at their own expense in a bid to get Olympic qualifying mark.

Rumi Smriti

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Chairman of Navana Group Shafiqul Islam Kamal and Dilruba Afroz, elder sister of Masud Ahmed Rumi who died on March 11, 2003, were present as special guests.

Former national table tennis player Julekha Rahman is sponsoring the meet.



Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation president Abu Solaiman Chowdhury is being introduced to the participants at the opening ceremony of the Rumi Smriti Open table tennis tournament at the NSC Woodenfloor Gymnasium yesterday.

Experience

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grassy wickets at home first before participating in competitions like the Duleep Trophy.

Ashraf ul also conceded that the pace bowlers could not exploit conditions tailor-made for them.

When asked about his own performance, the right-hander admitted that lack of concentration let him down.

"I had good starts in every innings but failed to carry on. Now I am looking forward to the ongoing National League to find form."

Bowlers power

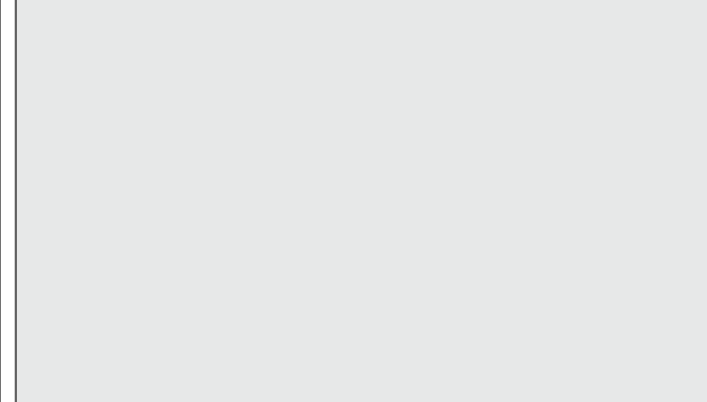
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overs (Raquibul 0, Dhiman 14, Tushar 11, Shamsur 59, Sanwar 7, Riyad 0, Mushfiqur 7, Wasel 7, Russel 41, Rajib 26, Enamul 3 not out, Strang 2-36, Macmillan 2-45, Mwayenga 2-24).

ZIMBABWE A: 168 all out in 48.2 overs (Duffin 22, Sibanda 14, Strydom 37, Nkala 18, Ewing 26, Strang 17, Russel 2-31, Rajib 2-33, Wasel 1-34, Enamul 2-29, Riyad 1-36).

Result: Bangladesh A won by 34 runs.

American Lindsay Davenport waves after beating Jelena Jankovic of Serbia at the Dubai Open final on Saturday.



Expecting me to win, based on the ranking and my experience, but once the match started and I saw how she was playing I knew it was anybody's match," said Davenport.

"I very much wanted to win my first title of the year. I never played my greatest here this week but I came through some difficult situations and hopefully winning this will give me a lot more confidence."

She succeeded because her superior weight of shot was slightly more effective than the superior movement of a wonderfully athletic opponent, and because she was slightly better able to find something effective when the match got tight.

Davenport also battled hard when it seemed she might have been weakening as a result of her illness the previous day - though she denied she was anything but 100 percent fit.

Davenport started well, producing a wonderfully disguised inside-out backhand serve to complete a break of serve in a long triple-deuce opening game.

Jankovic broke back at once but suffered another setback three games later when the six-foot two-inch Davenport's more powerful driving began to impose itself.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Stern disciplinarian?

4 Prohibit

7 Settle a debt

12 "Eureka!"

13 Shock's partner

14 Obliterate

15 Bak-sheesh

16 Filled to the brim

18 Millwau-kee

19 Andrea Bocelli renditions

20 100 centesimi

22 Cill

23 quantupled Broadway

27 Pump purchase

29 Ass or zebra

31 Duck

34 Hypnotized

35 Script text

37 Recyclable item

38 Show gumption

39 "Go, team!"

41 Safe-cracker

45 Custom

47 Chap

48 Spineless one

52 Resume

53 Like college

54 Sandra or Ruby

55 Shade provider

56 "— to the Church on Time"

57 Nevada town

58 Turn red? Sign

DOWN

1 "—"

2 Tex-Mex team!

3 Antic

4 Mexican peninsula

5 Edgar and Hugo

6 Altered recording

7 Look-alikes

idiomatic

8 Curve

9 Tie up the phone

10 Handle Time

11 — XING (road sign)

17 Macadamize

21 Nimble

23 Laugh-treat

24 Cover

25 Indivisible

26 Apiece

28 Com-mo-tion

30 Sine-non link

31 Toss in

32 Through

33 Galley implement

36 Seles competitor

37 Swindle

40 Tolerate

42 Surround

43 With festivity

44 Folklore figure

45 Steven-son villain

46 People in general

48 Leprechaun's dance

49 Prior night

50 Torched

51 Moon vehicle

Solution time: 25 mins.

CRYPTOQUIP

H Y C D H Y A H S Z E L M H T

A M J T V C A A C J L J A T

H O S Z E A I T Z V Z L A T: "A M J E T A"

D C V Z . A M J E T A T Z E S Z O ."

Yesterday's Cryptquip: WHICH PROMINENT SWORDSMEN SHOULD DWELL IN OMAN'S CAPITAL? THE THREE MUSCAT-EERS!

Today's Cryptquip Clue: M equals H

The Cryptquip 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.

RAHUL DRAVID V DANISH KANERIA

Dravid remains the key to India's fortunes despite the presence of Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly and Venkatsai Laxman. He provides solidity to the middle-order, having a sound technique and temperament. Nicknamed the 'Wall' for his solid defence against both pace and spin.

Keenly watched will be Dravid's performance against talented Pakistani leg-spinner Danish Kaneria, who has claimed he will target the Indians with new weapons. Kaneria will find pitches helpful, but will have to work hard for success against Indian batsmen, known for playing spin better than pace.

AND WHAT FANS WILL MISS

Sachin Tendulkar v Shoaib Akhtar: Millions of fans will miss a fascinating duel between star Indian batsman Sachin Tendulkar and Pakistan's injured key pacesman Shoaib Akhtar. Both have the charisma to draw people to the ground, Tendulkar with his amazing stroke-play and Akhtar with his thunderbolts. Their contests were always the talking point in the past. Even their no-contest this time has left fans wondering what might have been.

YOU-SUF YOUHANA V IRFAN PATHAN

Pakistan are banking on Youhana, a solid middle-order batsman capable of playing long innings. Temperament is his main virtue since he can cope with pressure better than many of his teammates.

Left-arm pacesman Pathan troubled Youhana on India's tour of Pakistan last year, especially with a delivery that nipped back into the batsman. Pathan, 20, has emerged India's main strike bowler who can move the ball both ways to make life uncomfortable for batsmen.

VIRENDER SEHWAG V MOHAMMAD SAMI

If there is an Indian batsman who can demoralise the tourists, it is Sehwag. The hard-hitting opener put the Pakistani attack to the sword last year when he became India's first and only triple-century in the first Test at Multan. Sehwag eases pressure on his teammates with breathtaking, uninhibited stroke-play.

Pakistani strike bowler Sami will have to bowl really well to curb Sehwag. The tourists will rely on Sami for early breakthroughs as they have already lost the services of Shoaib Akhtar due to hamstring injury. Not an easy task for Sami, who is himself returning from injuries.