REUTERS, Karachi

Pakistan's young all-rounder Shoaib Malik is confident he can resolve his team's chronic problem in finding reliable openers and take on England's fearsome pace attack in next month's test cricket series

Malik, 23, who has played nine tests and 102 one-day internationals, told Reuters he had the attitude and temperament to open against Steve Harmison, Matthew Hoggard and Andrew Flint off.

Coach Bob Woolmer has hinted that Malik will retain his job of opening the innings as he did in Pakistan's last test against West Indies in Kingston in May when he scored 64 in one innings.

"I am ready for the England pace attack. If my team needs me to open I have no problems with that," Malik said ahead of the England squad's arrival in Pakistan on Wednesday to play three tests and five

"I can adjust myself accordingly to the situation," said Malik who has four onedayhundreds to his credit.

The first test will be played in the central Punjab city of Multan from November 12.

Pakistan have not found reliable openers since the pair of Aamer Sohail and Saeed Anwar split up in early 2000

The problem appeared to have been resolved in the home series against South Africa in 2003 when Taufiq Umar and Imran Farhat put on three successive century opening stands.

They failed subsequently, however, and since Woolmer took over in June last year, Taufiq, Farhat, Salman Butt, Yasir Hameed, Shahid Aridi, Mohammad been juggled around as openers.

Malik said he was already practising against the new ball and was under no illusions that it would be an easy task $against \, the \, English \, bowlers.$

as a player and it will be no different against them. But as a professional you are expected to deliver for your country," He said he was ready to face the

"The pressure is there on you always

reverse swing art mastered by the English bowlers but felt they would struggle with $the Kookaburra\,ball\,on\,Pakistani\,pitches.$

"They used the Reader cricket balls in the Ashes series, which encourage reverse swing. In the end it all boils down to how hard you try in the middle. I have no doubt it is going to be tough as they will be going flat out," he added

Malik said he was also keen to contribute with his off-spin bowling as he was comfortable with his corrected action since being cleared by the International

Malik's bowling action was reported by ICC match officials during a triangular one-day final against Sri Lanka in Oct

He has taken eight test and 86 one-day

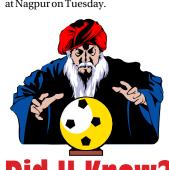
Lanka start off on wrong foot

AFP, Mumbai

Sri Lanka suffered a setback ahead of a one-day cricket series in India when they lost a practice match by three wickets here on Saturday.

The tourists scored 267-9 off their allotted 50 overs before a Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) President's team posted 268-7 to win the match with one ball to spare.

Sri Lanka will play seven onedayers against India, the first starting at Nagpur on Tuesday.



The word 'checkmate' in chess comes from the Persian phrase 'Shah mat,' which means 'the king is dead.





Jose Mourinho

(Chelsea manager)

"I knew I had to win or I would be under fire because Chelsea is Chelsea and everybody would be thinking about them failing again." Revealing his feelings after joining the club.



Barcelona's Samuel Eto'o (R) trying to outwit Osasuna's Punal at the Nou Camp- on Saturday.

PREMIERSHIP

Costly draw for MU

Football

AFP, London

Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson refused to blame his side's crippling injury list for the loss of two more valuable points following a 1-1 draw against Tottenham at Old Trafford.

The result left champions Chelsea eight points clear ahead of Sunday's match against bottom-of-the-table In Saturday's late match Charlton

moved into second place after coming from behind to beat faltering Portsmouth 2-1 at Fratton Park

Elsewhere Wigan's dream start to Premiership life continued with a 2-0 win over Aston Villa at Villa Park to lift Fulham paid tribute to their most

capped player Johnny Haynes, who died in midweek, with a 2-0 win over European champions Liverpool. And Arsenal continued their 100

percent home record with a 1-0 win over Manchester City at Highbury thanks to a Robert Pires penalty. In Saturday's early kick-off match Blackburn ensured Birmingham stayed

in the bottom three with a 2-0 win at Ewood Park. At Old Trafford, United got off to a dream start with Mikael Silvestre prodding home on seven minutes after England goalkeeper Paul Robinson

spilled a Ruud van Nistelrooy header. United were rampant in the early part of the game and Alan Smith brought a smart save from his former Leeds United team-mate with a left foot volley before Robinson also denied John

the break and the north Londoners came out firing on all cylinders.

Jermaine Jenas levelled matters on 72 minutes, scoring from a free-kick that left van der Sar rooted to the spot.

Despite slipping further behind Chelsea, Ferguson brushed aside concerns over his side's crippling injury "It's frustrating but you have to get

on with it," he said. "It is no problem for

us, we have young players thriving on the opportunity to play. Liverpool manager Rafa Benitez was despondent after watching his side fail

to score for fourth time in eight league "They created two chances and scored two goals, we created lots of

chances but didn't score," said Benitez. Collins John opened the scoring and Luis Boa Morte sealed the win deep into

Tony Warner produced a series of

sensational saves to keep the Fulham goal intact and leave the European champions still languishing in the bottom half of the table Arsenal captain Thierry Henry was

presented with a silver cannon by egend Ian Wright before kick-off to commemorate his record scoring feat of 187 goals - one more than Wright managed for the Gunners. The French talisman won the pen-

alty that Pires converted to give Arsenal their fifth home win of the season but was also involved in a bizarre incident that will hog the headlines. Pires turned from hero to clown

when trying to tee up Henry with a second penalty after David Sommeil brought down Dennis Bergkamp.

The Frenchman fluffed his pass hich would have been illegal anyway

leaving manager Arsene Wenger hemused.

"We got away with it. I don't think Robert's intention was a lack of respect it was just a bad decision," said the French manager on the day of his 56th "If it had finished 1-1 it would have

been a big mistake.

has been officially pardonned by At Villa Park Aaron Hughes put the Slovakia - for ending the then unified ball into his own net from a Henri Czechoslovakia's dream of playing in Camara cross in the first half and Alan the 1966 World Cup A superb goal by the Mozambique-Mahon rifled home a second after the born Eusebio - known as the "black

Blackburn moved up to ninth in the table after a scrappy encounter.

Paul Dickov's penalty shortly after million-strong country's hopes of half time and a Craig Bellamy second on participating in England. his return from injury saw Rovers to

On the south coast Portsmouth looked to be heading towards their first home win of the season when Dario Silva put them 1-0 up in the 14th minute. But second-half goals from Darren Ambrose and Dennis Rommedahl saw Charlton secure all three points.

Sunday's other matches see a northeast derby when Newcastle play Sunderland while in-form West Brom travel to Bolton and West Ham are at home to Middlesbrough

TOP SIX

English Premiership table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points);

	Chelsea Charlton Tottenham Wigan Man Utd	9 9 10 9	9 6 5 6 5	4 1 3	2 1 2 1	23 15 12 10 14	9 6 5 7	19 19 19 18
	Man Utd Man City	9 10	5 5	•	-	14 11	-	
- 1			_		_	_	_	_

'Akhtar at crossroads'

Cricket

Pakistan's tarnished bowling star Shoaib Akhtar faces a "make-orbreak" test of his fitness and commitment this week ahead of an allimportant home series against resurgent England. The 30-year-old known as the

Rawalpindi Express returned to Pakistan from Australia on Sunday amid a chorus of questions about his poor fitness record and attitude.

With his age he is at the crossroads," said former Pakistan captain $Imran\,Khan, a\,supporter\,of\,Akhtar.$

"I think the England series is a make-or-break for Akhtar. He is 30 so he has four years left in him but it is Akhtar who gives Pakistan the hope to win against England," said Khan, a renowned fast bowler in the 1970s and

Pakistan hopes Akhtar, who has 144 wickets in 36 Tests, proves his fitness in a practice camp this week and later in a trial match, to warrant a

Darren Lehmann. Andy Bichel was

voted the best domestic bowler;

Mick Lewis from Victoria was sec-

ond ahead of Shaun Tait. Stuart

MacGill was clearly regarded the

Ferguson was considered the most

promising batsman, his team-mate

Dan Cullen the most promising

spinner, Queensland's Mitchell

Johnson the most promising fast

bowler and another Queenslander,

Chris Hartley, the best young

umpire, was voted the best umpire

by the national team and Australia's

Simon Taufel was ranked second.

Billy Bowden, the New Zealand

umpire, was rated the worst.

Rudi Koertzen, the South African

South Australia's Callum

Lara most

FROM PAGE 12

best spinner.

selection against England in the first Test at Multan from November 12. Despite bowling some of the fastest

deliveries ever recorded in the game. Akhtar does not have an automatic place and faces tough competition from fit-again pace partners Mohammad Sami, Umer Gul and Shabbir Ahmed. His regular mid-series breakdowns

since 2000 have also damaged his chances. A hamstring pull ended his tour of Australia earlier this year and forced him out of away series in India and the West Indies. It took his tally to 35 Tests missed

out of Pakistan's 71 since his debut in Off the field he has been fined for

late night outings, while Worcestershire chairman John Elliott described him as difficult to handle during a stint at the county this year. But Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer.

who tried unsuccessfully to shorten Akhtar's bowling run-up last year, still figures him in his plans to outdo

"He is in our scheme of things

Davenport's

the question mark is whether he can last five days of a Test and 15 of the series," said Woolmer.

Rameez Raia, a former captain and ex-chief executive of the Pakistan Cricket Board, said Akhtar had a lot to

"It's up to Akhtar to prove everyone wrong, he should understand the importance of playing for Pakistan. If you play for your country you get all the accolades, all the endorsements and all the county contracts," he said.

"If you are not playing for your country your stature as a player goes

"There are always lots of expectations of Akhtar and he has got to prove a point to everyone against England and then against India," said Raja, who conducted an inquiry after Akhtar allegedly feigned injury last year. "It was the last Test against India

and there were complaints that Akhtar feigned injury so we had to conduct an inquiry," said Raja. The probe cleared Akhtar of the allegations.

"Akhtar has to get over all his problems, he has to, and I wish him all

because he is a genuine fast bowler but **Zurich Open**

Tennis

AFP, Zurich

Lindsay Davenport overcame Patty Schnyder 7-6, 6-3 to win the 1.3-milliondollar Zurich Open on Sunday, earning her sixth title of the season.

The 29-year-old American has now won 51 career titles, just two short of the 53 held by Monica Seles who is ranked eighth on the all-time winners list. It was also her fourth victory in

Zurich, where she has reached the final all six times she has played.

Davenport, who dined with Roger Federer on the eve of the final. "It's a great tournament to win. I always do well here and it's always nice to come back to a tournament like that. "But I didn't make it easy on myself,

"You never get sick of winning," said

flying back home from Germany and coming back late, and it almost back fired in the first round." Schnyder challenged well in front of

her home town supporters, but she was ultimately overpowered by top seeded Davenport, who forced her into numerous errors, especially on her backhand.

Primera Liga

Eto'o shapes Barca romp

Football

AFP, Madrid

Samuel Eto'o couldn't get the goals to help Cameroon to the World Cup finals two weeks ago but he hasn't stopped scoring since and he got a brace in Barcelona's 3-0 win over Osasuna on

The African Player of the Year produced Barca's opener less than two minutes after the break, heading home a corner by Ronaldinho His second came barely five minutes

later when he finished off a cross from Sylvinho, after a magnificent run by the Brazilian wing back down the left flank. Osasuna keeper Ricardo Lopez got a hand to Eto'o's shot but the former

now has eight goals to his name in as many league games this season. Frenchman Ludovic Giuly, who came on for Eto'o nine minutes from the whistle, completed the second half

scoring spree for the Catalan club three

Portuguese football legend Eusebio

panther" - against Czechoslovakia in a

Bratislava qualifier ended the 15

On Saturday, top government

official Eduard Kukan stood next to

Eusebio as he told reporters it was

affairs, to officially forgive Eusebio,

Former Benfica striker Eusebio,

who scored 1137 goals in his career,

rently close to qualifying for the 2006

World Cup finals in Germany and are

FC Bratislava in the Slovakian

league are also involved in the

West Germany's 1990 World Cup

winning captain Lothar Matthaeus

has been handpicked by FIFA to make

the group draw for the 2006 World

Germany host the World Cup,

running from June 9 to July 9, and

FIFA felt it was appropriate that an

icon such as Matthaeus, who has won

a record 150 caps for his country, was

given the honour of making the draw.

Matthaeus told Bild daily.

"It is a great honour for me,"

Cup finals in Leipzig on December 9.

set to play off against Spain.

Matthaeus to

Champions League.

make WC

group draw

time to forgive and forget.

for foreign affairs.

Eusebio

forgiven!

AFP, Bratislava

Manchester United player couldn't

keep the ball out of the net and Eto'o

Deco corner against the crossbar.

Barca move up to fourth, ahead of the eight games being played on Sunday, while Osasuna stay in second place but will almost certainly have been overtaken by several teams by the end of the weekend.

10 days, was that both Belletti and Deco were injured in the first half and limped UEFA Cup contenders Sevilla produced their best domestic performance

with three games looming up in the next

0 on Saturday. Goals from Adriano and Vincenzo

The reigning Spanish champions could have taken the lead after 25 minutes when their teenage Argentine international Lionel Messi headed a

Another good chance fell to Eto'o later in the first period but Osasuna manage to ride their luck until half time.

One negative note for Barcelona,

of the season to beat struggling Alaves 2-

Mareseca, the latter a penalty, got Sevilla three vital points to put their spluttering start to the season further

Jesus Navas went close early for Sevilla but they took the lead after 26 minutes when their Brazilian striker Adriano found the net after a neat pass from Maresca. Sevilla had further chances to add

to their tally in the second half before Mareseca got a controversial second goal from the penalty spot. Javier Saviola looked to have dived following a legitimate challenge by his Argentine compatriot Franco Constranzo.

League leaders Real Madrid face fifth-placed Valencia on Sunday

TOP SIX

Spanish football league table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against,

Real	7	5	0	2	17	6	1
Osasuna	8	5	0	3	9	8	1
Getafe	7	4	2	1	11	7	1
Barcelona	8	3	4	1	17	10	1
Celta	7	4	1	2	10	8	1
Valencia	7	3	3	1	12	10	1

Proteas go 1-nil up

with three balls remaining. **SCOREBOARD**

and New Zealand at Springbok Park in Bloemfontein on Sunday: NEW ZEALAND Fleming c Gibbs b Nel Astle c Boucher b Pollock

H Marshall lbw b Kallis McMillan c Prince b Kallis Oram run out (Smith) McCullum c Dippenaar b Nel Vettori c Prince b Nel Adams not out Mills not out Extras: (b-1, lb-11, nb-2, w-4) Total: (For 8 wkts in 50 overs) 249

172, 6-200, 7-204, 8-241 Did not bat: Bond. Ntini.

was invited to the Slovakian capital on semi-official business by the ministry Bowler Pollock 2 However his visit is being seen as 0 highly symbolic. Slovakia are cur-Langeveldt

M 50 38 2 0 28 0 0 46 0 48

Man-of-the-match: Justin Kemp. I Howell (South Africa).

Ricky's tip for Shane

behaviour.

before.

of announcing his availability only to be

Ponting also admitted in his new Symonds sent home after a late-night drinking binge forced him out the oneday match against Bangladesh in Cardifflast June.

Bangladesh stunned the cricket world when they beat the Australians by five wickets, winning only their 10th win in 108 one-day internationals at the

dreadful and embarrassing, and allrounder Symonds' behaviour as unacceptable after it became clear during the warm-ups that he was intoxicated.

Gilchrist saw Symonds hit the ground and suspected he was drunk. "When Gilchrist and I got to Symonds I did not beat around the

Matthaeus, 44, is coach of the Hungarian national team but will be rooting for his homeland Germany after Hungary failed to qualify for the

Asian Champions League final shifted to Jordan

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) on Sunday took the unusual step of moving the second leg of this month's Asian Champions League final from Saudi Arabia to neutral Iordan AFC officials said the October 31

Ittihad and UAE side Al Ain would go ahead in Amman instead of Jeddah because of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. The timing of the decision has raised eyebrows as both teams

booked their places in the final almost

game between Saudi holders Al

Saudi officials had requested the second leg be postponed out of respect for Ramadan, AFC officials The first leg will take place as

scheduled in Al Ain on October 26.

two weeks ago

Al Ittihad thrashed South Korea's Pusan I-Park 7-0 on aggregate while Emirates side Al Ain overpowered China's Shenzhen Jianlibao 6-0 over two legs in the semi-finals. Al Ain won the inaugural Asian

Champions League in 2003 with Al

Ittihad victorious last year.

through the covers and then chipped over the in-field for the winning single SOUTH AFRICA Smith b Adams

Final scoreboard of the first one-day international between South Africa

Vincent c Boucher b Ntini

"No one could possibly forget the goal which destroyed the dreams of 15 million people, but despite that goal I've decided, as minister for foreign

Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-18, 3-70, 4-97, 5-

South Africa substitutions: Boje for R 43 19

Result: South Africa won by two

Dippenaar lbw b Bond

Gibbs c Marshall b Bond

Kemp c Vincent b Patel

Pollock c Adams b Patel

117, 6-182, 7-247, 8-247

Extras: (b-1, lb-4, nb-1, w-13)

Total: (For 8 wkts in 49.3 overs)

Fall of wickets: 1-29, 2-34, 3-41, 4-85, 5-

New Zealand substitutions: Patel for

Kallis b Mills

Prince b Astle

Boie not out

Boucher b Vettori

Langeveldt not out

wickets. Umpires: S Bucknor (West Indies) and

you get back?' I responded. 'About 1.30,

hours after that, I found his claim hard

boil. I did not shout, but let Symonds

know exactly what I thought about his

be in the team to play Bangladesh.

Ponting told Symonds he would not

'Right,' was his response," writes

Ponting. "But he said it in such a casual

'see-if-I-care' way that it wound me up

even more. 'Don't encourage me,' I

disrespectful to himself, his team-

mates, his opponents and his country

by turning up to play a game in that

state, and I blurted out, 'He can go

home then!' to Gilchrist before heading

But rather than apologise to the

off to speak to (coach) John Buchanan."

coach at training, Symonds told him:

"I've played when I've been like this

"I was furious at a player being so

"Given the state he was in eight

Ponting described the defeat as

Ponting and vice-captain Adam

bush," Ponting writes. "His eyes looked puffy and I could smell alcohol on his breath. 'Were you out late last night having a drink?' I said.

"'Yes,' he replied. 'What time did

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer **ACROSS** 38 Winter 21 Computer 2 Green elongated 41 Spigot 22 Filch 43 Just out 3 Santa's 24 Witness McMahon 44 Bloodrunway 26 Close a 6 Suitable hound's 4 "Born 9 Squirrels' clue Free' hangout 45 Commen lioness 12 Entero-47 Computer 5 Strainer bacterium 6 Religious 49 Short 13 Vast retreat expanse shots 7 Look-14 Actress 52 Legal alikes, eagle 15 Yellowabbr.

16 Non-convertible? 55 "--- your 10 "Moon-18 Is partial old man!" struck" 56 Scratch subject 20 Architect (out) "Wham!" 57 Calyx leaf 17 Modestly 21 Perfordressed DOWN 19 Phanmance 23 Antipollu Height of

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1 Long-

popula

comedy

show,

CRYPTOQUIP ERWE ZAWETMAH

JNN-VWDDAMAC XRJNCMAD:

"ERA FMWEEQ FTDXR."
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF A BIG THICKSKINNED MAMMAL FELT IMAGINARY ILLNESSES, IT'S PROBABLY A HIPPOCHONDRIAC Today's Cryptoquip Clue: N equals L

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.

Posh expecting fourth?

David Beckham's Real Madrid team mates have sparked rumours that the England skipper's wife Victoria could be pregnant again.

The football stars were filmed by Spanish cameramen tossing David into the air, which is a tradition reserved for birthdays or the announcement of a pregnancy.

"A player is usually given the bumps before a training session after they tell the boss their wife or girlfriend is pregnant," a club source told the Sunday Mirror. "It's certainly not usual in training."

Victoria and David already have three children together, six-vear-old Brooklyn, three-year-old Romeo, and Cruz, who is eight months old.

A spokeswoman for Victoria has denied the reports. -- Internet Source

No Real-Becks talks

25

33

73

Real Madrid insisted Saturday they have not yet opened negotiations with England midfield star David Beckham over a new contract. The 30-year-old England captain

has two years remaining on his current

deal which runs until 2007 and the

club have not fixed a date to start

discussions for a new deal. The Spanish club said in a statement: "After recent news stories published in various international and national media sources, Real Madrid and David Beckham would like to

clarify the following points: "Up to this point there has not been any conversation between the club and the player about the extension of his contract, which ends in 2007.

"It is not true that the player has

asked for any type of contractual or financial improvement for the future and a date for discussions between the club and the player has not been established. "David Beckham has assured us

that he is happy in Spain and at Real

Madrid, Moreover, the club values the

excellent commitment and hard work of the player. Beckham, who joined the ninetimes European champions from Manchester United for 35 million euros in 2003, has seen a recent return

to form and insisted that he was keen

India not keen

on staying in Spain.

He also said the proposed match between Pakistan and India to raise funds for earthquake victims was not possible at the moment due to

tight schedule of both the countries. But he added that the match ould be held on the sidelines of the Asia Cup to be held in Pakistan next

Chunnu joins

person (Amirul Islam Babu) who has repeatedly let us down," Shah Alam told reporters. "It was not fair and I respect Salahuddin's decision to quit," he said adding that although he is the trea-

surer, he has not received vouchers of expenses of the BFF Shah Alam also handed over a letter to the BFF, officially requesting the president to allot him a separate

chamber to run his day to day work. The Alumni Association of BKSP (AAB) also criticised a BFF member humiliating star footballer Salahuddin and demanded punishment of the

person responsible.

ZTNN

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for