

Sadat whacks Zimbabwe A

SPORTS REPORTER

Opener Nazmus Sadat smacked an unbeaten century as Bangladesh A won the first one-dayer against their Zimbabwean counterparts by 26 runs at the Queen's Sports Club ground in Bulawayo yesterday.

The second string Bangladesh side, who drew the three-match four-day Test series 1-1, put up a challenging total of 266 for 5 in allotted 50 overs as 21-year-old right-hander Sadat scored 110 and his senior partner Nafees Iqbal contributed 54.

Captain Tushar Imran chipped in with 33 runs.

In reply, Zimbabwe A were bowled out for 240 runs. Chibhabha top-scored with 71 and Mawayo added 70.

Seaming all-rounder Forhad Reza celebrated his call-up to the senior side with three wickets for 31 runs while left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak also grabbed three for 43. Mehrab Hossain Jr and Sakib Al Hasan, the two occasional left-arm spinners, took one wicket each.

The second game of the five-match series will be held tomorrow at the same venue.

Lanka maul the Dutch

AFP, Amstelveen

Upul Tharanga top-scored with 72 as Sri Lanka piled up 313-8 in the second one-day international against the Netherlands here on Thursday.

The Sri Lankans had hit a one-day international world record total of 443-9 as they crushed the Dutch by 195 runs in the first encounter of this two-match series on Tuesday.

And although they couldn't quite match that feat this time, they were still in complete control again.

Sri Lanka recently completed a 5-0 one-day whitewash of England and were heavy favourites to continue their fine form against the Netherlands, one of the leading six Associate countries who are not a full Test playing nation.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on January 1 decided to award full ODI status to games involving Associate countries.

Sri Lanka, who rested Sanath Jayasuriya, won the toss and opening batsman Tharanga blasted eight boundaries in his 72 from 72 balls to get the tourists off to flier.

Tillakaratne Dilshan provided able support with 66 from 59 deliveries but, although the majority of his teammates got themselves in, no-one else managed to reach a half-century.

The Netherlands handed debuts to Pieter Seelaar and Eric Swarczynski but medium-pace Darron Reekers was the pick of his side's attack as he claimed three wickets.

Billy Stelling wasn't so fortunate as he conceded 91 runs from his 10 overs.



Did U Know?

Soviet defender Edouard Dubinski broke a leg during the 1962 World Cup match against Yugoslavia and later died of complications.



Angela Merkel (German Chancellor) "It's a pity. It was a great game." After losing the World Cup semi-final to Italy.

What to WATCH

STAR Sports Wimbledon Championships Men's Singles Semis Live at 4:30 pm



Spain's Rafael Nadal plays a drop shot against Finland's Jarkko Nieminen in the men's quarterfinals of the Wimbledon Tennis Championships in London on Thursday.

Nadal, Federer in semis



AFP, London

Rafael Nadal shrugged off a controversial doping storm to move closer to a dream Wimbledon title clash against Roger Federer with a 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 quarterfinal victory over Finland's Jarkko Nieminen on Thursday.

The 20-year-old Spaniard became the first French Open champion to reach the last four here in the same year since Andre Agassi in 1999 after a dominant victory over his fellow left-hander.

Nadal, the second seed, will now take on Marcos Baghdatis for a place in Sunday's final after the Cypriot knocked out 2002 champion Lleyton Hewitt.

The build-up to the match had been overshadowed by a newspaper report linking Nadal with the ongoing doping investigation which

had engulfed Spanish cycling. He has vehemently denied all allegations of wrong-doing and has already instigated legal action to clear his name.

Rain on Wednesday meant Nadal and Nieminen, the 22nd seeded Finn, had been forced to wait 24 hours to get their quarter-final underway, but the Spaniard was unperturbed, breaking to lead 3-1 in the first set with a vicious forehand crosscourt pass.

He had the opening set wrapped up after 40 minutes and it wasn't until the second game of the second set that Nieminen managed to carve out a break point.

On Wednesday, Roger Federer was handed the perfect platform for an assault on a fourth consecutive Wimbledon title when he eased into the semifinals while former champion Lleyton Hewitt crashed out.

Federer, who put out the dangerous Croatian Miro Ancic 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 in a sublime Centre Court demolition, was then buoyed by

seeing Hewitt knocked out by Marcos Baghdatis.

Federer will face Swedish veteran Jonas Bjorkman for a place in the final, boosted by having won all their previous three encounters and safe in the knowledge that his performance against Ancic was his best of this year's tournament.

Hewitt, the sixth seed, was subdued throughout the two and a half hour Centre Court clash and his service was broken in the opening game in each of the first three sets.

Bjorkman became the oldest Wimbledon semifinalist since Jimmy Connors in 1987 when he overcame Czech 14th seed Radek Stepanek in five gruelling sets.

The 34-year-old Swede saved a match point in a fourth set tiebreak before finally claiming a 7-6 (7/3), 4-6, 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (9/7), 6-4 victory after four hours and three minutes of play that was spread over nearly seven hours because of the two rain interruptions.

No Ashes for Vaughan



AFP, London

England captain Michael Vaughan has been ruled out of the Ashes tour of Australia after a fourth operation on his right knee, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) confirmed Thursday.

The Yorkshire batsman went under the knife on Monday still clinging to the hope that he could be fit in time to lead England on the tour, which begins in November.

But according to the BBC, the surgery revealed more extensive damage to the joint than expected - a development, which will intensify fears, that Vaughan's career could effectively be over.

However, after an ECB spokesman confirmed that Vaughan would miss the Ashes tour, David Graveney, England's chairman of selectors, told BBC Radio Five: "There is no suggestion that

Michael Vaughan's career is under threat."

Vaughan has not played for England since being forced to return home early from the tour of India in March.

He attempted a comeback for Yorkshire last month but the injury flared up again and he was advised that further surgery was necessary. Vaughan last year skipped England to their first series victory over Australia in nearly two decades and had been desperate to lead the side's bid to retain the Ashes.

The news that their 31-year-old captain is to miss the Ashes, which start in November, will come as a huge blow to England whose Test series triumph over Australia under Vaughan's captaincy last year was their first since 1986-87.

Vaughan's knee injury flared up again during Yorkshire's County Championship match away to Sussex at Arundel last month, where he was unable to field for much of the game.

That led him to see a new specialist where it was decided he needed an operation to repair damage to the articular cartilage in his right knee.

England have used four different captains since November 2005 and opening batsman Andrew Strauss is set to lead an injury-hit team in next week's first Test against Pakistan at Lord's.

But England hope all-round star Andrew Flintoff will return from an ankle problem to captain the team in the second Test at his Old Trafford home ground later this month and lead England in November's first Ashes Test at Brisbane.

Following the news that Vaughan had been ruled out of the Ashes, leading British bookmakers William Hill lengthened the price of England winning the series from 3/1 to 4/1.

Australia were shortened from 8/11 to 1/3 with a drawn series now offered at 5/1 while the hosts were 8/1 to whitewash England 5-0.

Pak deputy backs Asif



AFP, London

Pakistan vice-captain Younis Khan has backed Mohammad Asif to fill the gap left by injured paceman Shoaib Akhtar and Navedul Hasan in their forthcoming Test series with England.

And he offered hefty praise to Asif, saying the 23-year-old fast-medium bowler reminds him of Australia's Glenn McGrath.

"I wouldn't be surprised if Asif made a big impression on this England tour. We are obviously missing Shoaib (Akhtar) and also probably Naved for the first Test at least but Asif will make an impression, I'm sure."

"He is looking like a young Glenn McGrath at the moment. He is not 'very' fast but he's accurate, knows about line and length and has a good, mature cricket brain for a youngster."

Asif, who has gained experience of English conditions by playing county cricket with Leicestershire, has so far taken 25 wickets in five Test appearances at an impressive average of 20.

But he has a long way to go to match the feats of Aussie great McGrath, who has taken 542 Test

wickets, the most by a pace bowler, in 119 matches at just 21.55 apiece.

Nevertheless Asif could well feature at Lord's, where the first Test of a four-match series starts on July 13, with both Naved (groin) and Akhtar (ankle) currently sidelined.

Not that Pakistan are short of pace-bowling options with Umar Gul and Mohammad Sami both on target as Pakistan beat Leicestershire by eight wickets in a three-day tour match at Grace Road that concluded Monday.

"Umar Gul and Mohammad Sami are also looking very good, fit and confident. It shows that our squad is becoming stronger and that we can cope when key players are missing," Younis also told the Bigstarcricket.com website.

And the batsman, who made 55 not out in the second innings against Leicestershire, added he expected conditions in England at this time of year to favour Pakistan, unlike five years ago when they lost the first Test at Lord's by an innings and nine runs.

"The conditions are very good for us at the moment, which wasn't the case back in 2001 when we were confronted with a moist pitch at Lord's in the middle of May and were beaten by an innings after failing to come to terms with England's seamers," Younis explained.

English town relishes Perrotta double



AFP, London

A humble town in the north of England could be celebrating a World Cup double on Sunday when Italy face France in the Berlin final.

Italy midfielder Simone Perrotta was born in Ashton-under-Lyne, which is situated seven miles (11km) north-east of Manchester, as was England's 1966 hat-trick hero Geoff Hurst.

Perrotta's parents Francesco, who ran a pub in the town, and Annamaria emigrated to England in the early 1960s.

The family then returned to Italy in 1982, when Perrotta was just six, the year the Azzurri last won the World Cup.

"I have vague memories of England as a little boy," the 28-year-old Roma player told The Sun newspaper on Thursday.

"I remember the park and the garden and I also remember the school where I used to play football in the playground with my friends."

"Although my parents are Italian and I've spent most of my life in

Italy, I still feel I have a little bit of England in me.

"I was born there and I spent five years there. I only wish I could speak better English because, after so many years, I've forgotten how."

"I could have played for England and I remember my friends and family said I could, but there was no doubt in my mind I wanted to play for Italy."

Father Francesco said he remembered teaching his son how to play football on local parks.

"I took him to a park near Oldham," said Perrotta senior.

"He would watch me play for a local team called Jolly Milan, a team of Italians. That's why he wanted to play the game - it's in his blood."

The town, with a population of just 43,000, is ready to mark Perrotta's place in the World Cup final if the Italians win the trophy.

"We already have one World Cup winner in Sir Geoff Hurst so it would be great to have another one," town mayor Margaret Sidebottom told the Daily Telegraph.

"It's exciting to have a home-grown boy playing in the World Cup final. It doesn't matter that he isn't playing for England."

Real to fish in Juve pond



INTERNET, undated

Real Madrid have admitted that they will look to raid the Juventus squad if the Italian giants are demoted from Serie A this summer.

The Old Lady are facing the threat of relegation to a lower Division for their part in the Calciopoli scandal and the Spanish outfit are monitoring a number of their players, especially after Coach Fabio Capello left Turin for Real this week.

"Will we fish at Juventus should they be relegated? That is very probable seeing as that would force them to sell," new Madrid director

Franco Baldini told the AS newspaper.

Real have been strongly linked with the likes of Gianluca Zambrotta, Fabio Cannavaro and Emerson a player who followed Capello from Roma to Juve.

"I will help out Pedja Mijatovic," Baldini, who rejected a move to the Old Lady only last month, stated when asked about his duties with the outfit.

"I know the international transfer market very well and it will be my job to unearth new talents who have yet to emerge. As they will be young, they will be cheaper."

New Real chief Ramon Calderon has insisted that the outfit will sign Milan's Kaka, Cesc Fabregas of Arsenal and Chelsea

ICC rejects replay plea

AFP, London

The International Cricket Council (ICC) board rejected Wednesday a recommendation to trial the process of allowing players three appeals per innings to the TV umpire if they felt a decision made by an on-field umpire was incorrect during this year's ICC Champions Trophy.

The trial, which had been recommended by a slender 6-5 margin at the ICC cricket committee earlier this year, was rejected on the basis of the impact it may have on the authority of the umpire and the 'spirit of cricket'.

"The reservations expressed by the cricket committee when they recommended the player appeal measure were mirrored to a much greater degree by the ICC board in its rejection of the concept after extensive deliberation," said ICC president Hsan Mani.

"The board was concerned about the impact of the trial on the spirit of cricket and the effect it might have on the integrity of umpiring at all levels."

"It was also felt the ICC Champions Trophy was too high profile an event at which to undertake such a trial."

"As such, further discussions will now take place to see whether the concept can be tested at domestic level," Mani added.

Italy are top, says Thuram



AFP, Berlin

France will be going up against the best team in the tournament when they take on Italy in the World Cup final on Sunday, according to defender Lilian Thuram.

France's record cap winner, who plays his club football for Juventus, said after his side defeated Portugal 1-0 late Wednesday to set up the match in Berlin, that he has feared the Italians from the start of the finals.

"Of course I know all the Juventus players very well, they are very strong. It's going to be a tough game against Italy. They are without doubt the best team in the tournament," the 34-year-old said.

"From the start I thought they would go far as they are a very homogenous group of players. You can sense their solidarity."

"Once upon a time there were too many big egos in the Italian team, but now they work for each other and it is going to be very difficult for us."

Thuram, who was named man of the match for his superb marshalling

of the French defence which has conceded only two goals in six games, is one of five players who were part of the victorious French side in 1998.

He retired from international football after the French crashed out of Euro 2004 in Portugal only to return under the influence of close friend Zinedine Zidane who also returned to the fray as France struggled in the qualifiers for Germany.

"It's just crazy," he said. "I shouldn't even be here. I didn't want to come back but the coach convinced me to return against my better judgement and here I am once again in a World Cup final. Football is just wonderful."

WC BRIEFS

FROM PAGE 24 and according to FIFA some four in ten viewers are women.

But people in Turkmenistan have a little tougher.

Their country, one of the world's most closed societies, is the only one of FIFA's 207 member associations which does not receive the TV signal to broadcast the tournament directly into peoples homes, although some viewers have managed to catch games on Russian satellite TV.

THIRD EYE

FROM PAGE 21

Portugal pressed and their attacking midfield trio of Ronaldo, Deco and Figo constantly troubled the French defence, which was led by Makalele and Vieira. Lilian Thuram was impeccable as centre-half, hardly putting a foot wrong and Willy Sagnol and William Gallas looked the part as well, invoking memories of that superb French backline of 1998.

Zidane oozed class as usual while Malouda and Ribery looked lively. Thierry Henry, leading the line played well and bought his team a priceless penalty, courtesy of a theatrical fall after very little contact from Ricardo Carvalho. Yes, Henry had nutmegged Carvalho via a superb change of direction, but his elaborate tumble to the ground didn't win him too many fans. But in the Arsenal man's defence, we have seen penalties given for less (haven't we all?). Debateable penalty for France against Portugal? Ring any bells? It certainly did for the producers who immediately switched to footage of a very different looking Abel Xavier!

And up stepped who else but

Zidane to blast home past Ricardo who for all his wonderful exploits against England (seriously it was only English penalties he saved!) never had a chance of saving this one. 1-0 to the French and that was how it would end.

Portugal huffed and puffed and even dived for good measure but ultimately their best chance fell to Figo via a Barthez fumble from a Ronaldo freekick. Aside from that the Portuguese hardly created a chance and the lack of support to Postiga and Pauleta before him is a big concern. Deco looked short of his best and that may have proved a crucial undering. Cristiano Ronaldo is a wonderful talent, but that inexplicable habit of always releasing the ball late refuses to leave him. But the 21-year-old will have more World Cup's to showcase his worth.

Not so for old man Figo who was outmatched for most of the match by fellow Galactico Zidane, who continued his systematic annihilation of Real Madrid teammates. First Raul and Casillas then Carlos and Ronaldo and now Luis Figo. What's up next the magicians' sleeve?

Nesta out

FROM PAGE 21

Republic, on June 22, which has ended his tournament. Both Marco Materazzi and Andrea Barzaghi have stepped in for the defender since, with Materazzi again set to win the approval of boss Marcello Lippi at the weekend.

Portuguese dream

FROM PAGE 24

final having lost its previous seven matches against the French side, including losses in the 1984 and 2000 European Championships semifinals.

"I had started to believe we were invincible," said 41-year-old economist Carlos Ribeiro, who had a bottle of French champagne on hand to celebrate Portugal's victory. "At least the champagne can be saved for another day."

"The Portuguese dream is over," said sports daily Record on its online edition. "The dream has reached the end," echoed rival sports newspaper A Bola on its site.

Portugal will now travel to Stuttgart to face Germany on Saturday for the third-place World Cup playoff.