



England batsman Ian Bell sweeps one down to fine leg during their NatWest Trophy ODI Series clash against Pakistan at Sophia Gardens in Cardiff on Wednesday.

Dhoni doesn't mind a bit of tinkering

PTI, Chennai

Wicketkeeper-batsman Mahendra Singh Dhoni is fully in line with the team management's move to experiment with players' positions in order to have the best team fielded at the World Cup in the Caribbean next year.

"Experiments are in tune to get a final composition of players for the World Cup. In fact, we are also planning to prepare slower wickets, which will be closer to those in the West Indies and Sri Lanka, for the Champions Trophy," he said.

Dhoni said it was better to undertake various experiments now.

"We can't wait for the World Cup and then start experimenting," Dhoni said "in the West Indies, the wickets were slow and the ball was not coming on to the bat. It was not easy to play big shots. I hope it will hold us in good stead during the World Cup," he said.

Dhoni said the main focus at the ongoing training camp in Bangalore was on improving individual skills of the players.

"It's a one-to-one camp for specific training. Everyone (support staff) is there for the individual."

CA defends cancelling tickets

AFP, Sydney

Australian cricket organisers on Thursday defended a decision to cancel Ashes tickets sold for inflated prices over the Internet, saying they were trying to protect fans from scalpers.

Cricket Australia (CA) said it had invalidated 1,300 tickets to the upcoming series against England after hiring private investigators to identify tickets sold on Internet auction sites.

CA chief executive James Sutherland warned that his organisation would take a hardline against scalpers and fans should avoid buying from them.

Dhaka stun

FROM PAGE 21

planning and as a result gained more possession. But Noakhali, with six national players, had a few chances to score as well. Skipper Alfaz had two in as many minutes when, in the 59th and 60th minutes, he failed to beat the Dhaka keeper.

The final twist came in the 79th minute when Dhaka's Polo converted a penalty after Maruf was seen to have been fouled by Noakhali's defender Lincoln.

After the match, Dhaka captain Arif Chowdhury said: "We tried to play a very complete game and were confident to win this crucial match although we have no star players like them (Noakhali)."

"Our coach (Kamal Babu) had a big influence with his tactical decisions, especially when he fielded Belal after we went down 1-0."

But it was a different story with Noakhali manager Abdul Wadud Pintu who complained that the referee Azad Rahman "tried his best to send Dhaka into the final."

He, however, said that his team's poor performance was behind their defeat.

The second semifinal will also be telecast live on Bangladesh Television (BTV).

TEAMS

NOAKHALI: Aminul, Jewel, Monu, Emily, Masud, Ashraf, Mofazzel, Arman, Tito, Jalal, Alfaz, Shohag, Didar.

DHAKA: Al-Amin, Ramjan, SONY, Afzal, Murad, Polo, Arif, Moloy, Arafat, Shahadat and Ridon.

Bell tolls at right time

Cricket

AFP, Cardiff

England may have been saved by rain from an eighth straight one-day defeat against Pakistan but at least they had the consolation of seeing Ian Bell come good against an impressive attack in the opening match of this five-game series here at Sophia Gardens in Cardiff.

Bell's career-best 88 was the only significant score in England's total of 202 all out after they were made to bat first in overcast, pace bowler friendly, conditions in this day/night clash in the Welsh capital.

Jamie Dalrymple's 27 was England's next best score and, after rain between innings, Pakistan were well on their way to chasing down a revised target of 159 in 32 overs.

But, with the tourists 46 for one on seven overs, a second shower meant the game was abandoned as a no-result in what was the first senior England international against Test opposition ever staged in Cardiff.

"It tried to carry on my form from the Test matches and wanted to be positive -- it went pretty well today, I thought," Bell said.

"It was the kind of wicket if you were 50-50 forward or back there was plenty happening for the bowlers.

Bell dropped on nine at slip by Younis Khan and off a caught and bowled by leg-spinner Shahid Afridi on 68, rode his luck but was one of the few England batsmen

who looked like he had a method for facing fast bowlers Mohammad

Asif (three for 28) and Shoaib Akhtar (three for 45).

He may have batted in seven different positions for England since his debut two years and 19 matches ago but the 24-year-old Bell was in doubt that No 3 was his favoured position.

"That was probably the best I've played in one-day cricket for England," Bell told reporters after stumps here Wednesday, having faced 117 balls with 12 fours in an innings that bolstered his chances of appearing in next year's World Cup in the Caribbean.

"I tried to carry on my form from the Test matches and wanted to be positive -- it went pretty well today, I thought," Bell said.

"It gives you the opportunity to get yourself in a bit more -- and the type of player I am, that is a help to me. Then I can gradually score quicker and quicker," Bell said ahead of Saturday's second match of the series at Lord's.

Wednesday's outcome meant England, who during their current home season England had lost a Twenty20 and five full one-day internationals against Sri Lanka before Monday's Twenty20 defeat had avoided an eighth straight reverse.

"It's not the way we wanted to stop the run of defeats," Bell said.

"We believe we can compete with Pakistan in this series and we're excited about Lord's."

Nadal goes to Ground Zero

Tennis

AP, New York

For Rafael Nadal, playing at the U.S. Open also presents an opportunity to make an annual visit to ground zero.

The second-seeded Nadal had been in New York on vacation with his parents and visited the World Trade Center five months before Sept. 11, 2001. That memory draws the 20-year-old standout to the former World Trade Center site each year.

"I was (there) two days ago," Nadal said Wednesday, after he won his first-round match 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 over Mark Philippoussis, the 1998 Open runner-up. "The big hole is still there."

"I always remember when I was in the last floor of the tower. (I) remember the benches in front of the window. I was sitting for half an hour."

Aside from paying his respects by going to ground zero, being in New York for Nadal is all about improving his luck at the U.S. Open.

for the French Open and Wimbledon title in the same year.

Since the Open Era of tennis began in 1968, there's never been a time when three Grand Slams in the same calendar year featured the same two finalists.

Federer said it's too early to anticipate another Grand Slam championship encounter between the two.

"I'm more concerned about my path, trying to make it there," said Federer, who won a third consecutive Wimbledon title in July, and is in the hunt for a ninth career Grand Slam title here.

"I think the draws for both of us are pretty good. I don't think of playing him right now, not at all, because it's just too long of a road."

Top-seeded Roger Federer, the reigning two-time U.S. Open champion, breezed past No. 10 Wang Yeu-tzuou 6-4, 6-1, 6-0 in his opening match.

Nadal and Federer squared off against each other in the last two Grand Slams played, marking the first time in the Open Era that the same two men have met

Parreira - under whom he captained Brazil to the World Cup trophy in 1994 - on July 20 as the veteran coach paid the price for Brazil going out to France in the World Cup quarterfinals.

He next plays Tim Henman who easily won the battle of the British veterans in straight sets against Greg Rusedski.

Henman was philosophical about his chances.

"It's as tough a test as you can have," he said. "But it depends which way you look at it a tough draw or a great opportunity."

Safin, who has dropped outside the world top 100 after a dreadful year of injury and loss of confidence, looked something more like his old self as he raced to a 6-1, 6-1 lead over Robin Vik of the Czech Republic.

And even though he dropped the third 3-6, he gathered his forces again and took the fourth 6-3 for a second round clash with fourth-seed David Nalbandian who hit back from two sets down to defeat Michael Berrer of Germany.

There were wins also for rising Serb Ana Ivanovic who survived a mid-match wobble to oust Vera Dushevina of Russia 6-3, 5-7, 6-4 and for Victoria Azarenka of Belarus who defeated Russian 11th seed Anastasia Myskina 6-4, 6-2.

"I thought I was always in control because I always got to break

Brazil set

FROM PAGE 24

for my best game," he lamented. "Nobody is scared of me any more."

Hewitt trounced Albert Montanes of Spain 7-5, 6-4, 6-3 but admitted that he was still bothered by a troublesome knee injury that has seen him drop out of the world top 10.

"It's definitely not 100 percent," he said. "It was important just to get through today's match and hopefully no more damage was done. We'll see how it pulls up again tomorrow."

Mauresmo had looked as out of sorts as the weather on Tuesday as she went 2-5 down to German wildcard Kristina Barrois in the second set after winning the first 6-1.

But she was all business on the resumption and with Barrois helping her with a rash of mistakes she quickly put away the five games she needed to go through.

There were wins also for rising Serb Ana Ivanovic who survived a mid-match wobble to oust Vera Dushevina of Russia 6-3, 5-7, 6-4 and for Victoria Azarenka of Belarus who defeated Russian 11th seed Anastasia Myskina 6-4, 6-2.

"I'm still far away and looking

England stick to same side

BBC ONLINE, undated

England may not replace injured Steve Harmison for the remainder of the one-day series with Pakistan.

Fast bowler Harmison was ruled out of all five limited-overs matches because of a nagging back problem.

It was expected a replacement would be named from the 30-man provisional squad selected for the Champions Trophy.

But team spokesman James Avery said: "Unless there are more injuries they will probably stick with the same squad, certainly for the next game."

Test specialist Matthew Hoggard and uncapped Durham seamer Graham Onions would have been candidates had Duncan Fletcher and the selectors decided to bolster their options.

But England already have Stuart Broad, Darren Gough and Sajid Mahmood in the seam department, plus Jon Lewis, who did not feature in the opening game at Sophia Gardens.

Harmison had a scan after the Test series earlier this month having experienced pain while bowling.

"We don't need it," Federer said. "We will be the only sport who doesn't have it, and I think that's good about it. You don't need to be like the other sports."

WHO'S HE?

Ryan Sweeting played a game of fill-in-the-blanks after reaching the second round of the US Open when his opponent, 2004 French Open runner-up Guillermo Coria, quit with a right thigh injury.

The ATP Tour Web site doesn't have Sweeting's photo or much of any information about him, so he gladly provided plenty, from his date of birth (July 14, 1987) to his

OPEN SECRETS

AP, New York

Count Roger Federer among those against the idea of on-court coaching.

The women's tour is experimenting with the rule change, using it at a US Open tuneup this month in Montreal, where coaches wore microphones so TV viewers could hear the consultations.

Federer was asked about allowing coaches to help players during matches, a no-no in tournament tennis, after he opened his bid for a third consecutive US Open championship by beating Wang Yeu-tzuou of Taiwan 6-4, 6-1, 6-0 Wednesday.

Test specialist Matthew Hoggard and uncapped Durham seamer Graham Onions would have been candidates had Duncan Fletcher and the selectors decided to bolster their options.

But England already have Stuart Broad, Darren Gough and Sajid Mahmood in the seam department, plus Jon Lewis, who did not feature in the opening game at Sophia Gardens.

Harmison had a scan after the Test series earlier this month having experienced pain while bowling.

"We don't need it," Federer said. "We will be the only sport who doesn't have it, and I think that's good about it. You don't need to be like the other sports."

WHO'S HE?

Ryan Sweeting played a game of fill-in-the-blanks after reaching the second round of the US Open when his opponent, 2004 French Open runner-up Guillermo Coria, quit with a right thigh injury.

The ATP Tour Web site doesn't have Sweeting's photo or much of any information about him, so he gladly provided plenty, from his date of birth (July 14, 1987) to his

height (6-foot-4). He was born in the Bahamas and moved to Florida when he was 12. So while he's already played in the Davis Cup for the Bahamas, he says he's now keen on joining the US team, because he's a citizen.

Sweeting is ranked 495th and got into the Open with a wild card from the U.S. Tennis Association. Depending on how things go in New York, he'll decide whether to turn pro or return to the University of Florida for his sophomore year.

Coria was hurt in the third game of the match, and quit after five games.

"I wish we could have played the whole match out and seen what would have happened," Sweeting said.

NOT HIM AGAIN

Tim Henman's victory over fellow Briton Greg Rusedski earned him another Grand Slam meeting with Roger Federer.

Henman lost to Federer in the second round at Wimbledon, and they'll square off at the same stage at the US Open.

"It's as tough a test as you can have. But it depends which way you want to look at it. Do you want to look at it as a tough draw or a great opportunity?" Henman said after his 7-6 (4), 6-2, 6-3 win over past Davis Cup teammate Rusedski, the 1997 Open runner-up.

"I was watching golf the other day," Henman added. "One of the golfers said, 'Tiger Woods is the best in the world, but he's beatable. I think that's what's with Roger. ... You hope he has a bit of an off day."

BEING BETHANIE

Known for her kooky outfits, Bethanie Mattek looked more suited for the Roman Open than

the US Open.

Fined for wearing an argyle cowboy hat at last year's Open, she showed up this time in beige, a loosely draped top that resembled a toga.

Mattek also brought back her knee-high socks -- these were also beige; she wore pink at a tournament two weeks ago.

Mattek won't get a chance to replace her outfit this week. She lost to Daniela Hantuchova 7-5, 6-3 Wednesday.

Born in Minnesota, Mattek moved toward more outlandish fashions when she lived in Miami. She once wore a leopard-print dress at the US Open, and sported a tube top over a halter-top this year at Wimbledon.

BLAKE ON BOOK

James Blake isn't