

## Lara on the mend

PTI, Ahmedabad

Injured West Indies captain Brian Lara was fighting to get fit for Thursday's Champions Trophy encounter against India although the team management was expecting the batting superstar to recover in time for the crucial match.

Lara, who did not come on to field during his team's outing against Australia on Wednesday after sustaining a freak back injury, skipped the net session here during the day.

Instead, the legendary left-hander took some rounds of the Motera stadium with the team physio and also did some light exercises.

However, West Indies media manager Imran Khan said the champion batsman should be able to play in the match against the home side.

"He is receiving treatment from the physio. And we expect that he will be fit in time for our match against the hosts," Khan said.

While explaining Lara's absence during the three-hour net session, Khan claimed that it had been decided beforehand that only half of the team would do the net routine on Sunday.

## Bell firm on bowlers

BBC ONLINE, undated

England batsman Ian Bell has played down concerns over strike bowlers Andrew Flintoff and Steve Harmison ahead of the Ashes.

Flintoff has yet to bowl competitively after ankle surgery, while Harmison was heavily punished in Saturday's ICC Champions Trophy defeat to Australia.

Bell told BBC Five Live: "We know Fred is getting himself back and he'll be ready, and the same with Harmy.

"Those guys are big-match players and they will be firing and ready to go."

Harmison, who also struggled for rhythm in England's first Trophy match against India last Sunday, saw his 29 deliveries hit for 45 runs in the six-wicket loss to the Aussies in Jaipur.

The Durham bowler was not the only England player deserving of criticism after they were bowled out for 169, Australia getting home with 13 overs to spare.

But Bell defended the policy of using big-hitters Flintoff and Kevin Pietersen in the top four, with an eye on next year's World Cup in the West Indies.

"In one-day cricket if you don't bat through your 50 overs you're going to be in trouble," he told the Sportsweek programme.

"We've fallen short twice and that's a major problem, especially out here in India.

"The batting hasn't really fired but in terms of the World Cup the wickets in the West Indies are going to be similar to here," he explained.

"We've got to get our big hitters in, our best players in."

Bell made 43 in an opening stand of 83 with Andrew Strauss on Saturday.

He hinted England had seen a chance to exploit veteran bowler Glenn McGrath as he takes time to return to form after time away from the Aussie side because of injury and family reasons.

"He's coming back from injury, game by game he's going to get better but Strauss put him under pressure from ball one," he added.

"I guess that's what we're going to have to do in Australia, try and carry on what we did on Saturday."

## Gayle unhappy

**FROM PAGE 17** after West Indies stunned world champions Australia in a Champions Trophy match in Mumbai on Wednesday.

"I'm unable to speak about it any real detail as I might be fined again and go home with no money! But I would just say that I was disappointed by the fact I was fined 30 per cent of my match fee and that we should both have been in the meeting together but they were conducted separately," Gayle said in a column on a cricket website.

Gayle said it had all started off a joke which became a "bit more heated".

"Everything started off as a joke and then things became a bit more heated, but that's all part of the game between two competitive teams. I don't think I crossed the line that night as was suggested but I've had to accept my punishment and I will move on and try to forget it." Gayle also said the victory against Australia had given the team a big boost, but India, whom they play next, would prove to be "tougher" opponents.

"The India match we have next though will be even tougher as they are in their home conditions and will have a very passionate crowd supporting them. We've been here before and know how intimidating the pressure can be for an opposing team taking on India in India," he said.



PHOTO: AFP

Slovak star Daniela Hantuchova is ecstatic after defeating Russia's Svetlana Kuznetsova in the Zurich Open semifinal in Zurich on Saturday.

# Maria reaches final



AFP, Zurich

US Open champion Maria Sharapova overcame a warning for coaching to beat Katarina Srebotnik 7-6, 6-2 to reach the final of the Zurich tournament on Saturday.

The Russian second seed will face Daniela Hantuchova in the final after the leggy Slovakian defeated Russian third seed Svetlana Kuznetsova 6-4, 6-2.

Sharapova received a warning for coaching after dropping serve in the second set, but she responded by taking control of the rallies and winning the final three games, breaking for 4-2 and the match by forcing backhand errors.

"Definitely a step up from my previous matches," said Sharapova.

"I felt I was in control, I was moving better, definitely played the big points good. Even though I got broken I felt like I was in control."

Srebotnik provided dogged resistance, and neither player faced a break point until 4-4 in the first set, when the Slovenian played a poor game and surrendered her serve to

love with a netted forehand.

But Sharapova failed to capitalize, dropping her own serve to love with a succession of errors, and she then had to fight off a set point at 6-5 with an ace.

Sharapova always looked the more comfortable player in the tiebreak, securing it with her sixth ace, and she then took a 2-0 lead in the second set against a disappointed opponent.

But Srebotnik quickly recovered her composure, and a Sharapova double-fault followed by a backhand error earned her the break back at 3-1 before the Russian imposed her greater range on the semifinal.

Hantuchova took advantage of an under-powered Kuznetsova, the Russian third seed, 6-4, 6-2 to reach the final.

Kuznetsova received treatment to the big toe of her right foot when down 4-2 in the second set, but that failed to divert the unseeded Slovak from her quest to reach her first final since Los Angeles in August 2005. Hantuchova always held the upper hand, and her consistency was in stark contrast to Kuznetsova, who struggled to find any rhythm or way to unsettle the Slovak.

Hantuchova broke to lead 2-1,

and although Kuznetsova recovered the break in the eighth game she double-faulted to drop serve a second time and allowed her opponent to serve out the set.

A break for 2-1 quickly gave Hantuchova the advantage in the second set, and a forehand error from Kuznetsova at 4-2 gave Hantuchova a further and decisive break.

"I didn't do much wrong," said Hantuchova.

"I just tried to follow my plan from the beginning to the end, and when I missed some shots it didn't bother me. I just kept going, and here I am." Hantuchova received a painful injury when Mary Pierce hit her with a ball during a doubles match early in the week, and it almost forced her out of the singles competition.

"It was really hurting me, and I wasn't sure if I was going to be able to play," said Hantuchova. "In the first two days it was not really fun because I couldn't really get up on my serve and stretch."

## Shoaib and Asif chargesheeted

PTI, Islamabad

A Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) appointed drug tribunal has formally chargesheeted bowlers Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif after conducting its first hearing in Lahore.

"Both the fast bowlers who tested positive of using performance enhancing drugs were charged with violation of Board's laid down policies against the use of drugs," local daily 'The News' quoted a PCB official as saying.

Noted lawyer Shahid Hamid, along with another member of the committee and former cricketer, Intikhab Alam heard the players separately before handing over the chargesheets.

"Both narrated their side of stories separately. They were given the chargesheet and have been asked to submit in writing their report in the next meeting," the official said. However, head of the inquiry committee, Dr. Waqar Ahmad could not attend the meeting on Saturday due to cancellation of his flight from Islamabad. The meeting was chaired by Hamid in his absence, the report said.

Hamid declined to give any timeframe for completing the the inquiry. "We will give a fair chance to both the players and then submit our report to the PCB," he said.

The next hearing has been scheduled after the Eid holidays on October 26.

During the hearing, the two players reportedly pleaded their innocence and requested PCB to get their B samples testes.

Shoaib and Asif were called back from India, where the team is currently playing in the Champions Trophy, after it was revealed that they had tested positive for nandrolone, a banned steroid.

## Arthur slams Mumbai pitch

PTI, Ahmedabad

South Africa on Sunday attacked the Brabourne Stadium pitch in Mumbai once again, saying one-day cricket could not afford a track that behaved so differently in the two sessions.

"In one day cricket you cannot have a game of two halves. You cannot have a pitch which behaves decently in the first 50 overs and then behaves poorly in the other half," South Africa coach Mickey Arthur told mediapersons here.

South Africa had gone down to unfancied New Zealand on a dustbowl of a track to start their ICC Champions Trophy campaign on the wrong note.

The Brabourne pitch has also been criticised by other captains for its uneven and unpredictable bounce and the slowness of the track.

After drawing flak all-round, the authorities at Brabourne used glue to tighten the grip of the wicket.

Arthur said "unfortunatley, it (use of glue) happened after our match. It was the way the pitch behaved in the second innings of our game against the Kiwis that prompted the decision".

The coach also conceded that it would have benefitted his side if it had opted to bat first on the wicket.

"After winning the toss we squandered the advantage by deciding to field. We probably should have batted. But we had gone in with all the local info about the ground," said the 38-year-old coach.

## Udinese hold

**FROM PAGE 20** point Siena gained made up for the one they had deducted earlier this week for their failure to make an income tax payment on time.

Palermo, who also have 12 points, can join Inter at the top of the table if they win away to AC Milan in the day's late match at the San Siro. Parma won for the first time this season, edging Ascoli 1-0 thanks to Igor Budan's early goal.

The match between Fiorentina against Reggina -- who were both found guilty of match-fixing and had to start on minus 19 and minus 15 points respectively -- ended in a comprehensive 3-0 win for the Florence club.

Adrian Mutu, Mario Santana and Manuele Blasi scored Fiorentina's goals in a one-sided contest.

Catania won 3-1 against Lazio despite playing behind closed doors at a neutral stadium. The Sicilian club were forced to play at Lecce as punishment for the unruly behaviour of their fans earlier this month.

Pellissier gave Chievo the lead at Roma after a defensive mix-up between keeper Alexander Doni and Christian Chivu, before Totti's cool finish restored parity for the 2001 champions.

Roma defenders Matteo Ferrari and Christian Panucci both had headers cleared off the line, and Panucci had a goal disallowed for offside.

# Pervez spoiling cricket?

AFP, Karachi

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf is used to domestic opposition but he has recently faced a different type of criticism -- for harming his country's cricket fortunes.

After two months of crisis ending in a doping scandal, some experts say that Musharraf, the chief patron of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), should be stripped of his ability to personally appoint the chairman of the board.

The call is led by cricketer-turned-lawmaker Imran Khan, a persistent opponent of Musharraf who complains that the military ruler runs both the nation and the cricket board undemocratically.

"The country is run without a constitution and so is cricket. It is so unfortunate that the president of Pakistan appoints the head of cricket, who is not accountable," said Imran, a former star all-rounder.

Pakistan's latest controversy erupted last week when two of its premier fast bowlers, Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif, were sent home from the Champions League in India after testing positive for the steroid nandrolone.

Less than two months earlier, Pakistan forfeited the Fourth Test against England at The Oval after Australian umpire Darrell Hair accused the team of ball tampering and captain Inzamamul Haq kept them off the field.

Inzamam was subsequently cleared of tampering but was banned for four one-day internation-

als for bringing the game into disrepute. It was the first forfeit in the 129-year history of Test cricket.

His replacement, Younis Khan, publicly refused to lead the team as a "dummy captain" and Mohammad Yousuf was appointed skipper.

But then PCB chairman Shaharyar Khan resigned and his replacement reappointed Younis as captain.

Last week, a prominent legal expert lodged a petition with the Supreme Court to challenge, among other things at the PCB, the appointment of Nasim Ashraf -- a doctor and magistrate -- as the new chairman.

Ashraf "doesn't know anything about cricket," said Farooq Hassan, a specialist in international law and former advisor to four Pakistani prime ministers including now exiled Benazir Bhutto.

Musharraf -- who speaks of his love for cricket in his recent memoirs "In The Line Of Fire" -- was quoted as saying that he picked Ashraf because he was a close friend and had a "bold" personality.

The president has been PCB patron since he overthrew prime minister Nawaz Sharif seven years ago. Sharif had suspended the PCB's normal constitution in July 1999, and Musharraf has since appointed four different heads of the PCB.

Musharraf has even espoused "cricket diplomacy" with rival India -- although when invited to New Delhi in April 2005, he says in his memoirs, he had to curb his instinct to "jump out of my seat shouting and clapping" when star batsman

Shahid Afridi hit the Indian bowlers around the park.

Cricket and politics are therefore inextricably linked in Pakistan -- but they also both arouse fiery passions among millions of people and cannot be ignored by the country's leadership.

Sirajul Islam Bukhari, secretary of the influential Karachi Cricket Association since 1983, called for the PCB to be set up with a council of members from 12 different cricket associations around the country and three board officials.

"The PCB was formed in 1948 but Field Marshal Ayub Khan (Pakistan's first military ruler from 1958-1969) started to nominate its head and since then this trend has continued," said Bukhari.

Despite the recent chaos, Pakistan surprisingly beat Sri Lanka by four wickets in their opening Champions Trophy match in the Indian city of Jaipur on Tuesday.

"It's amazing that we are still a top world team despite lacking a system. Think of it, if we had a good system we could be like Australia, world-beaters all the time," said fan Khurram Ali.

"When the game is run without planning, crisis will be there. Our first class cricket system is faulty and the team just thrives on natural talent," added Imran Khan, who led Pakistan to its only World Cup win in 1992.

# Probe moves to UK



AFP, London

Suspicions of match-fixing during England's hosting of the cricket World Cup in 1999 have led Indian police to Britain only days after they formally questioned South African batsman Herschelle Gibbs.

Delhi police are probing whether matches held in England were fixed by gambling syndicates and have requested the assistance of Scotland Yard.

Video footage of South Africa's matches during the 1999 tournament and the UK bank accounts and telephone records of disgraced South African cricketer Hansie Cronje have been requested by the Delhi investigators.

Cronje, the now deceased South Africa captain, became a pariah in April 2000 when he admitted accepting bribes from gambling syndicates.

Before being banned for life and later dying in a plane crash, he was the subject of the King Commission set up by South Africa to investigate the bribery claims.

However the King Commission did not focus on any of the matches in the 1999 World Cup.

Of particular concern is Bangladesh's defeat of Pakistan in a group game, although claims have also surrounded South Africa's loss to Zimbabwe and a second phase match between India and Pakistan. Zimbabwe and Bangladesh won when their oppo-

nents had already assured qualification.

According to The Sunday Times, the Indian investigators are focusing on the dealings of Cronje and Sanjeev Chawla, an Indian national living in London.

Tapped telephone conversations between the two men in 2000 led Delhi police to believe that Chawla was negotiating with Cronje to fix South Africa's matches in India.

During the King Commission Cronje admitted accepting bribes from gambling syndicates to help to fix matches and individual batting scores, notably an 8,000 pounds fee to ensure his team lost a one-day international against India in Nagpur in March 2000.

Gibbs, his opening batsman, later admitted having agreed to accept 8,000 pounds in exchange for scoring 20 runs or less and was banned for six months.

Gibbs, who is back playing for South Africa, was formally questioned by Delhi police this week however it is believed he has not told the police anything new.

Asked if he knew whether Cronje fixed the matches in Britain, Gibbs said he did not know but admitted that Cronje had lied when he told the King Commission that he had never approached teammates to throw a game for cash.

Concerning the 1999 tournament in England, detectives believe that earpieces and microphones worn by Cronje and other players provide evidence that South Africa's match against India

at Hove, won by South Africa, was fixed.

In a letter to be sent via the Home Office, the police refer to the match as a "curious incident" and ask if International Cricket Council officials had raised the issue at the time.

## Asif on shortlist

**FROM PAGE 17** (ENG), Monty Panesar (ENG).

**CAPTAIN OF THE YEAR:** Ricky Ponting, Rahul Dravid (IND), Michael Vaughan (ENG), Mahela Jayawardene.

**WOMAN PLAYER OF THE YEAR:** Karen Rolton (AUS), Anjum Chopra (IND), Katherine Brunt (ENG).

**SPIRIT OF CRICKET:** India, England, New Zealand, Sri Lanka.

**BEST UMPIRE OF THE YEAR:** Aleem Dar (PAK), Rudi Koertzen (RSA), Simon Taufel (AUS).

## BCB's 25

**FROM PAGE 17** Rahman (Chittagong), Shahriar Rubayet (Metro Blue) and Mohammad Sentu (Dhaka Div); (spinners) Safique Islam (Chittagong), Nazmus Sakib (Khulna), Minhaz Reza (Rajshahi), Monir Hossain (Metro Blue), Mohammad Isak (Metro Blue) and Arjun Kumar (Dhaka Division); (wicketkeepers) Imranul Haque Riyad (Chittagong) and Atiq Imran (Dhaka Div).

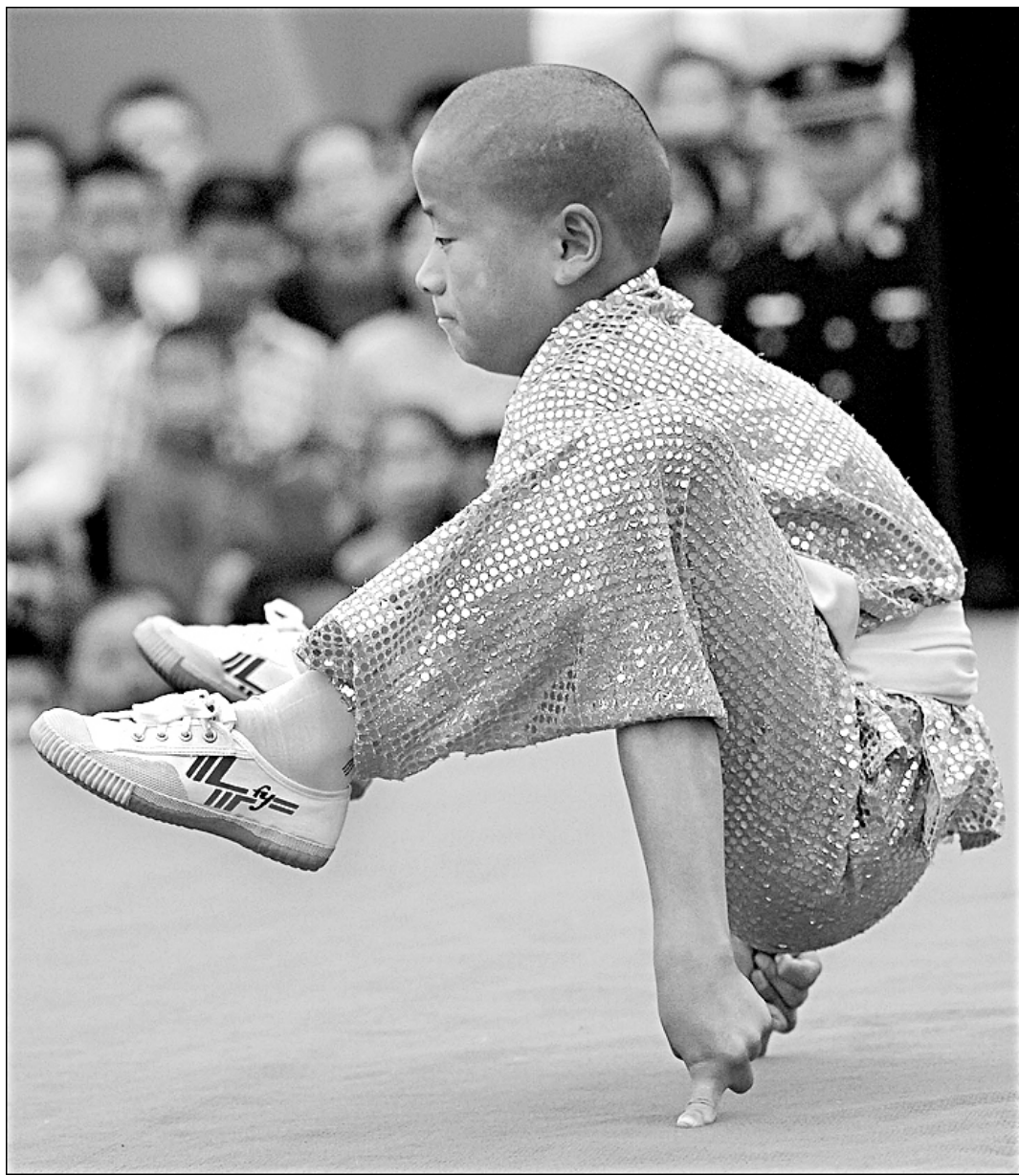


PHOTO: AFP

**AMAZING BALANCE:** A young Chinese kungfu performer shows off his skills at a fair in Hefei, central China's Anhui province on Saturday.



AFP, Jaipur

England captain Andrew Flintoff has brushed off suggestions his side will be under pressure going into next month's Ashes series after losing to Australia in the Champions Trophy tournament here.

England's chances of qualifying for the semifinals virtually ended on Saturday when they crashed to a six-wicket defeat against their Ashes rivals in the day-night game.

This was their second successive defeat in the four-team Group A, having already lost to India in the opening match. They will now clash with the West Indies in their last league game at Ahmedabad on October 28.

India and the West Indies have one win apiece from one game, and Australia one from two matches.

"We took this match in isolation, as a must-win game for both the sides to stay in the tournament," said Flintoff.

"One thing in the build-up to the game was people trying to link it to the Ashes series, but the Ashes start (in Brisbane next month) when we go to Australia."

England were comfortably placed at 83 for no loss before being dismissed for a paltry 169. They then grabbed three early wickets before running into Damien Martyn, who steered Australia to victory with a solid 78.

Flintoff conceded his young side needed to improve considerably if they wanted to give a good account of themselves in coming months.

"It is an exciting time in one-day cricket .. first Australia and then the World Cup (in the Caribbean next year). But we need to improve," said Flintoff.

"It is a young side. We have to step up as a team if we have the aspirations of doing well later in this winter."

Australia captain Ricky Ponting said he was not worried about ace fast bowler Glenn McGrath's indifferent performance against England.

The Aussie paceman gave away 27 runs in his first four overs before coming back strongly to finish with 2-36 off nine overs as a first-change bowler.

"You don't end up having a lot of concerns about one of the greats of the game that Glenn is. He delivers an honest performance every time he takes the field," said Ponting.

"He is fulfilling a different role at the moment -- bowling first change, something he has done for only half-a-dozen times in his career. So he is probably still learning the role."

Ponting lauded pacemen Shane Watson and Mitchell Johnson, and middle-order batsman Martyn, saying the trio did a commendable job.

"The bowlers did a tremendous job in the middle of the innings. Watson and Johnson were outstanding," said the Australian skipper, whose team were under pressure after losing to the West Indies in the opening match.

England made an impressive start before floundering against Watson (3-

16) and Johnson (3-40). Martyn then completed the job under lights with a fluent knock after Australia had been struggling at 34-3.

"It was a great performance. We did not get off to a great start with the ball or bat and it ends up being a very comfortable win. We have worked hard from the time we have been here," said Ponting.

Australia will clash with India in their final league game at Mohali on October 29.

## Bench heavy

**FROM PAGE 20** The Arsenal striker believes McClaren should give his former captain a confidence boost by selecting him for the England set-up.

Henry said: "Steve McClaren has a very difficult job. One of the most difficult jobs in the world.

"But David is a great player and a great guy. I believe he still has so much to give England and it would be a shame if he does not get another chance."

## Jose all praise

**FROM PAGE 20** from troubled Paul Robinson in goal for England.

"David James has been fantastic -- he's like an 18-year-old in training," said Redknapp.

"He should still be knocking on the England door. Paul Robinson is a good goalkeeper but if you look at the other lads, they are all out on loan. He'll play for another five or six years in my opinion."