

Ganguly praised

REUTERS, Nagpur

Indian opener Sourav Ganguly's match-winning effort on his return to the one-day arena after a 16-month hiatus elicited praise from both the West Indies captain Brian Lara and the home skipper Rahul Dravid.

The 34-year-old left-hander struck a sparkling 98 on Sunday to help his side register a 14-run victory against the visitors in the first one-day match of the four-game series.

"He's a player of high class and you expect performances like that from him," Lara told a news conference.

"We know he's eager to get back and you got to give him all the credit. He's mentally strong and to come back and do well shows he's very capable.

"Batting out there he showed how eager he is. But unfortunately Ganguly didn't get a hundred."

Ganguly was run out by Dwayne Smith with a direct hit from short mid-wicket.

Ganguly returned to the one-day side on the strength of his performances in the Test series in South Africa where he was the most successful Indian batsman with 214 runs.

It marked a tremendous comeback for the Kolkata batsman after the selectors appeared to have called time on his career when they sacked him as skipper and one-day player in October 2005 because of a batting slump and a row with coach Greg Chappell.

David spoke highly of the openers Ganguly and Gautam Gambhir, who laid the platform for a commanding total with a 144-run stand.

"(It was a) very good innings. Both (were) coming back after long time. A great sign. (They) stayed at the wicket." I

Ganguly

FROM PAGE 17 number-three position. Tendulkar contributed 31 before being trapped leg-before by Gayle.

Ganguly looked set to complete his 23rd one-day century when he was run out following a superb piece of fielding by Dwayne Smith, who picked the ball cleanly and hit the stumps at the non-striker's end.

Runs continued to flow after Ganguly's dismissal as Dhoni and David dominated the attack in the closing overs.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the first one-day international between India and the West Indies in Nagpur on Sunday:

INDIA				
Gambhir c Samuels b Gayle	69			
Ganguly run out	98			
Tendulkar lbw b Gayle	31			
Dhoni not out	62			
Dravid not out	54			
Extras: (b-5, lb-8, w-11)	24			
Total: (For three wkts in 50 overs)	338			
Fall of wickets: 1-144, 2-214, 3-219.				
Bowler				
O	M	R	W	
Bradshaw	6	0	43	0
Taylor	10	0	71	0
Samuels	10	0	53	0
Powell	5	0	32	0
Gayle	9	1	51	2
Bravo	4	0	41	0
Smith	6	0	34	0

WEST INDIES

Gayle c David b Harbhajan	52			
Chanderpaul not out	149			
Morton b Harbhajan	8			
Samuels b Zaheer	40			
Lara st Dhoni b Tendulkar	31			
Bravo c Dhoni b Zaheer	17			
Smith b Agarkar	1			
Ramdin c Gambhir b Sreesanth	7			
Bradshaw run out	0			
Taylor not out	1			
Extras: (lb-8, nb-5, w-5)	18			
Total: (For eight wkts in 50 overs)	324			
Fall of wickets: 1-80, 2-102, 3-175, 4-241, 5-264, 6-269, 7-304, 8-319.				
Bowler				
O	M	R	W	
Zaheer	10	2	48	2
Sreesanth	10	0	79	1
Agarkar	10	1	75	1
Harbhajan	10	0	60	2
Tendulkar	10	0	54	1

Result: India won by 14 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Shivnarine Chanderpaul.

Toss: West Indies

Umpires: Billy Bowden (NZL) and Suresh Shastri (IND)

Second one-dayer: At Cuttack on Wednesday.

'Black Widow'

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"For me, this relationship so far is great. For the last year-and-a-half, I'm playing my best tennis. So these comments didn't (relate to) our relationship."

He said the timing of his injury was a coincidence.

"When I spoke to my doctor and asked what should be the reason for it, he said 'you can have it already for a couple of years,'" Stepanek said.

"Suddenly, there is a million things that can bring up your injury and affect my right hand.

"So it is nothing to do with the private life or anything else."

When asked about the "Black Widow" tag before the tournament started, Hingis tersely refused to comment.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Juventus legend Alessandro del Piero (C) receives a model of the new Fiat 500 car from Fiat Marketing Director Luca de Meo (R) as club President Giovanni Cobolli Gigli holds a plate referring to Del Piero's 500th game for Juventus prior to their match against Bari at the Turin Olympic Stadium on Saturday.

Del Piero inspires Juve



Football

AFP, Rome

Alessandro Del Piero was bursting with pride after making his 500th appearance for his beloved Juventus on Saturday.

The 32-year-old striker marked his special day by scoring Juve's third goal – his 204th for the club – with a typically cool finish in a 4-2 win over Bari which left them two points clear at the top of Serie B.

Del Piero, who has been with the Turin side since 1993, is now third behind Gaetano Scirea (552) and Giuseppe Furino (528) in the list of players to have made the most Juventus appearances.

"Something great happened to me today," said Del Piero, a World Cup winner with Italy last year.

"The only ones in front of me are two great idols, Scirea and Furino,

and I am very proud to have reached this milestone and to have sealed it with a goal."

Juventus coach Didier Deschamps was delighted to see his captain mark the occasion by getting on the scoresheet.

"Alessandro moved well and did great things all afternoon, and then rounded it off with a good goal," said the Frenchman, who played alongside Del Piero when Juventus won the 1996 Champions League final against Ajax.

"It was a goal and a performance fit for the occasion."

Furino, now 60, paid tribute to Del Piero before kick-off.

"He is a man who compliments the Juventus mentality in terms of his style and behaviour," he said.

"I'm not surprised he has reached this milestone and he deserves all the success he gets."

Del Piero was one of the few stars to stick by Juventus when they were

relegated from Serie A last summer for their role in the Italian match-fixing scandal.

The club were also given a nine-point penalty this season, but despite their handicap they seem set for a swift return to the top flight.

Former Italy coach Marcello Lippi, who stood down after the Azzurri triumphed in Germany, said Del Piero's name is synonymous with Juventus.

"When anyone thinks of Juve, they think of Del Piero. He is one of the few real symbols of Italian football; he is a leader and has an immensely tough character, he demonstrated that at the World Cup.

"He stayed with Juventus after they were relegated and is a shining example to the rest of the squad."

In addition to the 1996 Champions League trophy, Del Piero has also won five Serie A titles (1995, 1997, 1998, 2002, 2003) in his time at Juventus.

Champion

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out of any tournament, even more in a Grand Slam," said Mauresmo. "But I am going to go back on the court, go back to work, and that's obviously what I need."

Kuznetsova, troubled recently by a respiratory problem, dropped serve five times against Peer. But she said her problem was concentration.

"I think it's mental," said Kuznetsova, the 2004 U.S. Open champion. "I was thinking about different stuff – not like, 'What am I going to eat for dinner' – but about what's going on on the court. I wasn't 100 percent there in my mind."

Peer spent time in her offseason fulfilling mandatory military service in the Israeli army.

"I feel like I'm on a soccer field," Peer said of the noisy crowd. "It will be the first time for me to get to a quarterfinal in a Grand Slam, so I had nothing to lose"

4 Bangladeshis in 2nd place

SPORTS REPORTER

Grandmasters Ziaur Rahman and Niaz Murshed and fellow Bangladeshis IM Enamul Hossain Rajib and IM Abdullah Al Rakib earned seven points to share the second place with eight others at the end of the ninth round of the 5th Parsvnath International Open Chess Tournament yesterday in New Delhi.

In the 9th round at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, Zia drew with joint-leader GM Adly Ahmed of Egypt while Niaz outplayed IM Roktim Bannerjee of India.

In other games, Rajib beat IM Sriram Jha of India, Rakib beat Sarwat Walaa, Javed beat IM Vijayalakshmi, Sohel drew with IM Prakash, Nasir lost against Arun, Taibur beat Debashish, Debraj beat Eswar, Ali drew with Kantilal, Lavlu beat Panaiaappan, Parag beat Saket and Liza beat Wakar.

Javed, on 6.5 points, was followed by his Bangladesh teammates FM Talbar Rahman, Debaraj Chatterjee, Sohel Chowdhury and Saif Uddin Lavlu – all on six points.

GM Alexie Dreev of Russia, GM Adly Ahmed of Egypt and local players G Rohit and Adibhan were sharing the top spot with 7.5 points each.

England one

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He said: "They can do well in one-day cricket if they get their heads right and find a format to play the game.

"I think there is enough talent in this team to do well in one-day cricket."

Ganguly, who hit 98 in India's 14-run win over West Indies on Sunday, is however concerned about the personnel in the England team.

He feels the absence of Marcus Trescothick could hurt the team and says Usman Afzaal, not even named in England's initial squad of 30, should be playing.

"I played with Usman at Northampton last year and he looks a very talented player," said Ganguly.

"I'm sure if he gets an opportunity for England he will do well for the country.

"I feel he's got a lot of ability. He can be it the ball, he's a clean striker of the ball and can be a strength to English cricket."

Afzaal, 29, played in three Tests in the Ashes series of 2001 but has not featured in a one-day international. He hit 319 runs at an average of 63.8 in the Pro40 League in 2006.

Eight reach main draw

SPORTS REPORTER

Eight players qualified for the main draw of the 5th BKSP International Junior Tennis Championships at the Savar sports institute yesterday.

In boys' singles, Max of Great Britain, Sitaram of India, Kim of South Korea and Indian player Christopher qualified for the main draw while Dutch players Vilaar and Schuur and Belgians Meuleman and Schrl-Urs made it to the girls' singles main event on the second day of the tournament.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Tennis Federation (BTF) president AMM Nasir Uddin officially declared the meet open yesterday. BKSP's DG Brig Gen M Najib Hasan, tournament director Faruqui Islam and BTF general secretary Sanaul Haque were also present.

A total of 60 boys and 25 girls from 14 countries including the hosts are taking part in the event.

Sharapova

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topped the rankings in August 2005, has enjoyed the honour for seven weeks.

Kim Clijsters, Martina Hingis and Serena Williams are the only other remaining women at the Melbourne Park event to have held the top ranking.

Kabaddi team

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Stadium from the government last year, the BKF has yet to provide the mat for its players, who had to remain satisfied with bronze medals in the 10th South Asian Games and the Asian Games last year.

Jalil told that playing in two international meets, the SA Games and the Asian, recently will boost the team's confidence.

"If we can avoid India in the knockout phase, we hope to reach the final. And we are confident that we will beat Pakistan this time," said Jalil.

Bangladesh lost to eventual silver medalists Pakistan in both the Games while India are the undisputed king of the game.

"We could have said more had we known the draw," the coach added.

The participating teams: Canada, West Indies, Australia, Germany, England, Kazakhstan, Iran, Thailand, Japan, Nepal, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Malaysia, Bangladesh and India.

BANGLADESH SQUAD

Ziaur Rahman (captain), Mojammeel Haque, Mosharraf Hossain, Abu Musa, Abdur Rouf, Kamal Hossain, Raju Ahmed, Al Mamun, Tariqul Islam and Badshah Mia.

Australian Open

AP, Melbourne

David Nalbandian has developed a habit he'd like to kick at this Australian Open.

For the second time in three rounds at the season's first major, the 25-year-old Argentine has had to save match points in the third set before advancing in five sets.

Nalbandian was trailing Frenchman Sebastian Grosjean 4-5, 0-40 in the third set Saturday before he came back to win the game, saving three match points to force a tiebreaker. The eighth-seeded Nalbandian, a 2002 Wimbledon finalist and a semifinalist here last year, eventually won 5-7, 4-6, 7-6 (4), 6-4, 6-1 to advance to the fourth round.

"Honestly, I prefer winning in three sets," he said. "It's not that simple. Sometimes matches are more complicated.

"It's difficult to come back. It's not always you can do that. When you are three match points down, anything can happen. You just miss one or he can play a good point,

SECRETS

and that's it."

TROPHY HOG: Roger Federer is so good that a couple of his U.S. rivals want to team up against him.

When fifth-seeded James Blake beat Robby Ginepri 7-6 (7), 7-5, 6-2 in the third round Saturday, the two players, good friends off the court, met at the net and joked about a shared goal.

"He said to me, 'Let's get a Grand Slam,'" Blake said. "Roger has been hoarding them all in Switzerland. We'd like to get one back in the States. That means a lot to me that he really thinks of us as a team."

Blake, who had a career-best season in 2006 with five ATP finals and a quarterfinals appearance in the U.S. Open, only could face the top-seeded Federer in the final if both players win through their sides of the draw.

Blake plays Chilean Fernando Gonzalez in the fourth round, while Federer faces Serbian Novak Djokovic.

DAVIS CUP? NYET: Nikolay Davydenko, top ranked among

Russians, won't be going to Chile for the Davis Cup next month and is not saying why.

The Ukrainian-born No. 3 Davydenko, who played a key part in winning the trophy for his adopted country last year, was prickly Saturday when asked about the first-round clay-court tie scheduled for Feb. 9-11.

"I don't play Davis Cup," Davydenko said after advancing Saturday to the fourth round of the Australian Open with a 7-6 (1), 6-2, 6-2 win over Fabrice Santoro. "No questions about Davis Cup."

A journalist persisted, "We are from Chile and we need to know why you don't go."

"I don't know. Just because I don't go, OK," said Davydenko.

Neither side has announced its teams for the match in La Serena, Chile. But Davydenko, who lists clay as a favourite surface, suggested Russia would do fine without him if Marat Safin went.

"I just think Marat can win also without me against Chile," he said.

Australia keep winning

FROM PAGE 17

Zealand, left Kiwi captain Stephen Fleming wondering what might have been.

"You can almost see it and feel it, if you put those chances away then we had a great opportunity but good teams don't give you a second chance, that is what we have learnt the hard way," he said.

The Kiwis were themselves in great trouble after winning the toss and electing to bat, but McMillan rode his luck and came to the rescue.

McMillan's lusty 89 enabled his side to recover from 136 for seven to post a competitive total despite only lasting 47.4 overs.

The 30-year-old McMillan, who is batting for a place at the upcoming World Cup in the West Indies, was at his feisty best as he frustrated the Australian attack after benefiting from an early umpiring error.

McMillan was just one, and the score 59 for four, when he clearly edged a Glenn McGrath delivery through to wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist, but was given not out.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the triangular one-day series match between Australia and New Zealand at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday:

NEW ZEALAND				
Fleming c Hussey b Clark	12			
Astle c Gilchrist b Lee	0			
Marshall c Gilchrist b Lee	0			
Taylor c Hussey b Clark	26			
Fulton c Hayden b Clark	19			
McMillan c and b McGrath	89			

McCullum lbw b McGrath	15			
Vettori c Ponting b Clark	6			
Franklin c Hayden b McGrath	18			
Gillespie not out	6			
Mason b Bracken	4			
Extras: (b-2, lb-12, w-5, nb-4)	23			
Total: (All out in 47.4 overs)	218			
Fall of wickets: 1-5, 2-7, 3-38, 4-53, 5-84, 6-126, 7-136, 8-193, 9-205, 10-218.				

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Lee	10	1	43	2
Bracken	8.4	2	33	1
McGrath	10	1	24	3
Clark	10	1	54	4
Symonds	8	0	44	0
White	1	0	6	0

AUSTRALIA

Gilchrist c McCullum b Franklin	3			
Hayden c Taylor b Mason	0			
Clarke c Taylor b Vettori	75			
Ponting lbw b Mason	5			
Symonds b Vettori	38			
Hussey not out	65			
White c Fulton b Gillespie	5			
Lee c Marshall b Gillespie	2			
Bracken c Taylor b McMillan	14			
Clark not out	1			
Extras: (lb-6, w-4, nb-6)	16			
Total: (For eight wkts in 48.4 overs)	224			
Fall of wickets: 1-6, 2-6, 3-17, 4-77, 5-167, 6-175, 7-198, 8-217.				

STANDINGS					
Team	P	W	L	NR	BP Pts
Australia	4	4	0	2	18
England	3	1	2	0	4
N Zealand	3	0	3	0	0



PHOTO: COURTESY

Officials and players release balloons to mark the official inauguration of the 5th BKSP International Junior Tennis Championships at BKSP yesterday.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

1 Answer, "Jeopardy!" style	in small droplets	1 More than enough	finest hour"
37 Canto		23 Pedestal occupants	
4 Brooks or Blanc	38 Use a teaspoon	2 Bullock-Reeves movie	24 Cacophony
7 Bakery lure	39 Scull need	3 Uniform color	25 Perfume-label word
12 Speedometer abbr.	41 Ooze slowly	4 Sail support	26 Performance
13 Do some downsizing	45 Kate's sitcom pal	5 Pro	28 Elev.
14 Tropical tree	47 Quilters' get-together	6 Bounds	30 Keatsian opus
resin	48 16-Across' mates	7 Rue	31 Tee precursor
15 Shell-game need	52 Raw rock	8 Baby shad	32 Likely
16 Popular pasta	53 Song of yesteryear	9 Make a choice	33 "Lanka"
18 Albanian money	54 Swiss peak	10 Tumbler's surface	37 S.O.S. competitor
19 Albanian money	55 Pinch	11 Frazier foe	40 Soothe
19 Reservation residence	56 Tasteless	17 Jazz saxophonist	42 Black board?
20 Make a long story short	57 Thither course"	17 Jazz saxophonist Stan	43 Goosebump-raising
			44 Incubator noises
22 Queue after Q			45 Sleeping
23 Notion			46 "Stump the Schwab" network
27 Chapeau			48 Horde
29 Heavenly band			49 Blueprint addition
31 Arts supporter			50 Oklahoma city
34 Treat for Homer Simpson			51 Stannum

Solution time: 25 mins.

ESP	GASH	SWAP
LEA	QUART	ALAO
LEITWOLD	QUART	ALAO
SON	FRITTER	
DOWNEY	ALL	
IDO	DAY	KICKY
DORM	MAY	TUNA
ORDER	KITT	SEW
DO	SEW	
TAXICAB	ROW	
AURA	BZZZARD	
GAT	BEZAR	RID
STYE	LYNN	DOT