

## DIV 1 CRICKET Players still looking

SPORTS REPORTER

The players' transfer of this season's First Division Cricket League got off to a quiet start as only a few teams took part in the bourse at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

There was a contrast among the players, as only a few put pen to paper with their teams while the majority who showed up from different parts of the country were frantically looking for a team.

Several cricketers were seen with their kits, having just arrived in the capital but with their fate hanging in the balance. The delay in transfer dates has been blamed for their problem.

"We came here from Comilla but my old club refused to keep me. I have approached several (club) officials but none have responded kindly," said one cricketer requesting anonymity.

The advent of 'cheap' and 'free' players have also affected this year's transfers as most clubs now look for young, upcoming players rather than players who would ask for bigger financial packages.

Meanwhile, Jatrabari were among the first teams to make it to the big bowl, signing up a number of players while Surjo Torun signed allrounder James Moballik and batsmen Ujjal and Shakil from newly promoted Premiership side Partex.

Lalmatia, Uttara Sporting and Eskaton signed a few players apart from newly promoted Sadharan Bima.

The transfers will continue today and will end tomorrow evening.

## Gibbs learns fate today

BBC ONLINE, undated

South Africa batsman Herschelle Gibbs is expected to find out on Thursday whether his two-Test ban for making racist comments will be upheld.

Former Australia captain Richie Benaud heard his appeal via telephone on Wednesday and must make a decision by the following day.

The teleconference also involved Gibbs, ICC match referee Chris Broad and their legal representatives.

The third Test against Pakistan begins in Cape Town on Friday. Benaud, one of the longest-serving members of the ICC Code of Conduct Commission, has the power to increase or decrease Gibbs' ban and his decision is final and binding.

Gibbs' comments were allegedly made after teammate Paul Harris was verbally abused by members of the crowd who were supporting Pakistan in the opening match at Centurion.

He was found guilty of "language or gestures that offends, insults, humiliates, intimidates, threatens, disparages or vilifies another person on the basis of that person's race, religion, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin".

He played in the second Test, which Pakistan won to level the series at 1-1, pending his appeal hearing.

## Bangladesh drub

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The kabaddi team is being barred while the squash, tennis, and cricket teams come over all the time," Gehlot said.

The two countries generally do not issue visas to the other's serving military officers.

**Pool A:** India, Kyrgyzstan, Sri Lanka and Turkmenistan.

**Pool B:** Iran, Nepal, United Kingdom and South Korea.

**Pool C:** Bangladesh, Thailand, Japan and Afghanistan.

**Pool D:** Pakistan, Malaysia, West Indies and Italy.

## Sheva sends

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Wycombe had only themselves to blame though as midfielder Tommy Doherty's careless pass gifted possession to Shevchenko, who gratefully accepted the chance to surge into the penalty area and slide his shot past Batista.

Chelsea's defence has been much-maligned in recent weeks and they were exposed when Doherty swung in a cross moments after Shevchenko's goal, but Tommy Mooney could only scuff his far-post shot wide.

That was a rare intrusion into the Chelsea area for Wycombe and their task was made almost impossible just before half-time.

Michael Ballack lifted a pass over the visitors' defence and Shevchenko sprinted clear before stabbing a clinical strike into the net from 12 yards.

Any doubts that Chelsea would clinch a second League Cup final appearance in three years were erased when Shevchenko set up his side's third goal in the 69th minute.

He lofted a long ball forward and, as Batista charged out of his goal, Lampard chipped over Sam Stockley and knocked the ball into an empty net.



PHOTO: AFP

Spaniard Rafael Nadal cuts a worried figure during his quarterfinal loss to Chilean Fernando Gonzalez in the Australian Open in Melbourne on Wednesday.

# Akhtar fined in Woolmer row

Cricket

PTI, Karachi

Pakistan express fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar was fined of 2,500 dollars for his alleged misbehaviour with coach Bob Woolmer, who had threatened to resign if disciplinary action was not taken against the speedster.

Team manager Talat Ali imposed the fine on Akhtar only after Woolmer's threat, a Pakistani newspaper reported on Wednesday.

Woolmer had threatened to resign if no action was taken against Akhtar who, he claimed, had misbehaved with him on the second day of the second Test against South Africa at Port Elizabeth, Urdu daily 'Express' said.

"The altercation occurred on the ground before the start of the day's play and carried into the dressing room after Akhtar informed the

management that he could not bowl on the second day due to a hamstring problem," the report said.

"When Woolmer learnt about this, he pointedly told Akhtar that if he was not fit he should not have come to South Africa and his absence in the middle of the match would create a lot of problems for the team. This incensed Shoaib who had a war of words with the coach," the report said.

Woolmer is reported to have told Ali that he was going to resign if the matter was not investigated into.

Ali, a former Test player, asked all the other players about the incident and although many of them wanted Akhtar to be forgiven, the team manager decided to fine the bowler.

Akhtar will return home on Friday after obtaining permission from the Pakistan Cricket Board to remain in Johannesburg for two days on personal expenses.

## Prithul reaches semis

SPORTS REPORTER

Local boy Prithul Mondal moved to the semifinal of the boys' doubles competition with his partner Huang of Chinese Taipei when they defeated the Indian pair Sidhu and Priyank 6-3, 6-2 in the fifth BKSP International Junior Tennis tournament in Savar yesterday.

But the all-Bangladeshi duo Islam and Mazharul were knocked out by South Koreans Seo and Kim 6-2, 7-6.

In the boys singles, Iyen Venkat and Marquis Christopher of India and the Philippines' Ralph Kevin Barte all moved to the semifinals while in the girls' singles, Dutch girls Demie Schuurs and Yvette Veaan and Kyra Shroff of India moved to the semifinals.

## Canada beat Kenya finally

CRICINFO, undated

Canada pulled off an excellent 69-run win over Kenya, the form team of the tournament, dismissing them for just 144 in the sixth and final match of the ICC Tri Series at Mombasa.

Despite the result, which gave Canada their only victory, Kenya won the tournament.

Chasing 214, Kenya's top-order wobble was steadied by Ravi Shah who came to the crease with his side in trouble at 13 for 2. Shah is in form, too: prior his fighting hundred against Scotland, he struck a fluent fifty and Wednesday continued that same excellent form with a well-compiled 48.

**BRIEF SCORES**  
**CANADA:** 213 for 9 in 50 overs (Samad 50, Davison 38)

**KENYA:** 144 all out in (Shah 48, Sandher 3-24)

**Result: Canada won by 69 runs.**

## Clijsters outlasts

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down, abtscratchy," Sharapova said.

"Against a girl like that who gets a lot of balls back, it's just a matter of who can be a little bit smarter, who can get an extra ball back, who is a little tougher.

"I thought I did the job really well today.

Sharapova committed 41 unforced errors and six double faults in a tightly-contested match and acknowledged she too would have to improve against Clijsters.

"I'm looking forward to a really tough match in the next round but definitely have to step it up and I hope I can go all the way this year and win it," she said.

Two-time champion Serena Williams, unseeded here after an injury-hit 2006, and Czech tenth seed Nicole Pietrangola play each other in the other semifinal, also on Thursday.

# Rudolph puts SA aside

Cricket

AFP, London

South Africa batsman Jacques Rudolph is to put his international career on hold to play cricket for Yorkshire after signing a three-year contract with the English county.

Yorkshire have already signed their two permitted overseas players for the 2007 season in Australia fast bowler Jason Gillespie and Pakistan batsman Younis Khan.

However, under the controversial Kolpak ruling, Yorkshire believe Rudolph, 25, will be classed as a 'home' player and be available for selection when the English season starts in April.

"I am very proud to be a Protea and to represent my country. I will, of course, continue playing domestic cricket with the Gestetner Diamond Eagles as a Kolpak player," middle-order batsman Rudolph said in a statement Tuesday.

"This was not a decision to take lightly, and I discussed the matter fully with (national coach) Mickey Arthur and (convener of selectors) Haroon Lorgat.

"We have all agreed with my view that this experience would be good for my cricket," the left-hander added.

In 35 Tests Rudolph has scored

2,028 runs including a best of 222 not out on debut against Bangladesh in Chittagong in 2003.

Rudolph made his decision after being overlooked by South Africa in favour of Ashwell Prince and Hashim Amla.

However, Cricket South Africa (CSA) officials believe Rudolph could yet return to international cricket following his spell at Yorkshire.

"CSA has nurtured Jacques's talent since he was a teenager, and we regard him as one of our national assets," said CSA chief executive Gerald Majola.

"However, he is only 25 and the general view is that with this added experience in county conditions he will become a more rounded player.

"We wish him all the best and are confident that he will return as an even better cricketer."

Rudolph's most recent international appearance was against Sri Lanka in August and this could yet cause a problem with his registration.

Under the rules of the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), to qualify, as a Kolpak signing a player must not have played international cricket or first-class cricket in another country -- except as an overseas player -- within the 12 months prior to the start of the season.

However, Yorkshire chief executive Stewart Regan said: "The ECB

have confirmed they are not able to enforce that, so as long as he has signed the declaration (not to play for South Africa) he is perfectly fine. He has given us an undertaking that he will not seek to play for South Africa while he is under contract with Yorkshire."

Rudolph's signing comes after some difficult moments in the off-



JACQUES RUDOLPH

season at Headingley.

Yorkshire suffered the embarrassment of seeing Chris Adams accept and then reject an offer to become their skipper and cricket chief, the former England batsman eventually opting to stay with county champions Sussex.

And homegrown ex-England batsman Anthony McGrath recently walked out of Headingley

even though he had three years left on his contract and had been offered the county's captaincy after Adams's U-turn.

The European Court of Justice handed down the Kolpak ruling in 2004. In cricketering terms it means a player who is a national of a country which has an association agreement with the European Union, such as South Africa, and is in possession of a valid UK work permit, is treated as if he were a British or other European citizen and can therefore qualify as a domestic player for county cricket.

Yorkshire were the last English county to insist on selecting players born solely within their own boundaries, a policy that was only formally abandoned in 1992 when India's Sachin Tendulkar arrived at Headingley.

Rudolph's decision to put the county ahead of international commitments is not unprecedented.

During the mid-1970s legendary Yorkshire opening batsman Geoff Boycott opted out of England duty for three years after being overlooked for the captaincy of his county.

Yorkshire finished sixth out of nine teams in the first division of the County Championship last season, narrowly avoiding relegation.

## DeMerit seals

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and they went ahead when Smith's cross looped to the far post and Emerton, trying to head clear, could only nod the ball past United States international goalkeeper Brad Friedel.

Rovers were restricted early on to a McCarthy off-target shot and a 30-yard effort from David Bentley which went narrowly wide.

But Bentley produced a fine moment of individual skill to fashion Rovers's leveller as the interval approached, beating two men on the right wing before crossing for McCarthy to head in off the under-side of the bar.

However, Watford's confidence remained intact and it was the Hornets who looked most likely to score in the second-half.

The goal they had been threatening eventually came when after a spell of 'pinball' in the Blackburn box ended with DeMerit stooping to head home.

## Gonzalez stamps

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world number two, looked to be heading out when Davydenko broke him early in the deciding set but the German took a leaf out of Clijsters's book, saving a match point at 4-5 and breaking back twice to stun the 25-year-old Russian.

"I knew it was going to be a tough match going in," the 28-year-old said. "I wanted revenge for the U.S. Open quarter-final when he beat me. That hurt me a lot. I don't know how I did it, I'm so happy."

World number one Roger Federer meets sixth seed Andy Roddick in the other men's semifinal on Thursday.

## Henin no more Hardenne

AFP, Melbourne

Justine Henin-Hardenne, the world number one before being overhauled by Maria Sharapova this week, announced Wednesday she has split with her husband after four years.

The Belgian, who pulled out of the Sydney International and Australian Open citing personal reasons, said it had been a tough few weeks.

"The last few weeks were difficult for me and my team. First I must announce to you that Pierre-Yves and I have decided to separate. The reasons are personal. I request of you to respect my privacy," she said on her website.

The 24-year-old, who has won five Grand Slams, married Pierre-Yves Hardenne in November 2002.

She said she would return to action in the Open Gaz De France in Paris early next month.

"On the tennis side of things, I have begun training again. I also have slightly altered my schedule. I will play at the Open Gaz De France in early February," she said.

"It's not far from my home, and it's always pleasant for me to be in Paris."

"This will be my first tournament for the season. I hope to find my form, and as usual will give all of myself. I'm looking forward to once again giving you exciting emotions."

Henin-Hardenne controversially retired injured midway through the final here last year, handing the title to the Frenchwoman Amelie Mauresmo.

She reached all four Grand Slam finals last year, but only won the French Open.

Cricket

AFP, Perth

England's disastrous loss to New Zealand in Tuesday's one-day match in Adelaide has left them in a real bind in the triangular series, the team's stand-in skipper Andrew Flintoff has said.

The 90-run defeat, which saw England struggle to just 120 in chasing 211 to win, was England's 23rd in their last 31 one-day internationals as they continue to struggle with the game they invented.

A win over the Black Caps would have all but guaranteed England a berth in the tri-series finals next month.

Instead, New Zealand leapfrogged England in the table by collecting a bonus point as Flintoff's nightmare antipodean captaincy continues.

Both sides have four matches left, two against each other and

two against the unbeaten Australians.

But Flintoff conceded Tuesday's defeat was extremely damaging to England's hopes of making the finals.

"We have a big game on Friday against Australia," Flintoff said on Tuesday in Adelaide. "Every game we play now is a big one in the context of the competition."

Flintoff, who is yet to win a match as captain on a tour that is almost three months old, was adamant his side was far better than its form suggested.

He said the bowlers were doing their job, but that the batting was a major concern, with only Ed Joyce defying the Black Caps on Tuesday.

Flintoff said the English simply needed to "execute the batting better".

"We have to start performing with both bat and ball," he said.

"I thought we bowled well (against New Zealand), but we need to start scoring runs. We are

better players than what we showed today (Tuesday).

"It has been a tough trip for some, no getting away from it, but we have to remain confident, we have to go out there believing we are good players and we can score runs."

Flintoff said it was hard to find a reason for England's continued poor batting form.

"It is not through a lack of trying," he said.

"The lads in the net are working at the game and trying to improve, we are practising well. We have to keep backing our ability and ourselves and have no fear about expressing ourselves in the middle."

"We are good players and we have scored runs and we will score runs again, hopefully on Friday," he added.

As if the English weren't under enough pressure, New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming questioned their state of mind after Tuesday's match.

"(Defeat) is not going to help, when you've been through a tough Test summer as England have," Fleming said.

"Any momentum you can grab, those close games you can get across the line, and just scrap and scrape some results together, is going to help to build that momentum you need, just to keep your tour alive."

"Being away for so long it's going to have some effects -- if you're playing good cricket it's going to make it a lot easier."

## Imran behind

**FROM PAGE 17**

"He (Akhtar) would have been angry on not being selected in the first place, so he would have lost his temper."

Pakistan Cricket Board announced Akhtar and another paceman Umar Gul, who on Wednesday returned home from South Africa after injuring his ankle, would start rehabilitation before the World Cup in the West Indies starting from March 13.



PHOTO: AFP

File photo shows recent world number one Belgian star Justine Henin-Hardenne (R) with husband Pierre-Yves in Zaventem on August 9, 2004. Henin announced yesterday that she had split from her husband for four years.