

## Norman heading to India

PTI, Dubai

Greg Norman, one of the most charismatic players to have walked the golfing greens, said India was a land of opportunities and he was interested to take up golf course designing projects in the subcontinent.

The 52-year-old Australian golfer, described as 'Great White Shark', was the World Number 1 for 331 weeks, a record that Tiger Woods broke. He won 86 titles worldwide including two British Open and finished in top-10 of the Majors as many as 29 times.

Norman, now considered a legend in golf course designing, said he was negotiating to take up a few projects in India.

"We have been approached for numerous projects (and asked) if we're interested in going to India, and the answer is yes. We have looked at them, and we are in the negotiation stage right now," said Norman, who is playing at the Desert Classic.

Norman, who was one of the first designers to come to India and lend his name to a course -- now called Jaypee Greens near Delhi, is one of the sharpest business minds in sport.

"Like any designer you want to be at the tip of the sphere and the growth of the game of golf is at its peak at present," he said.

"Normally, golf course design is a very good barometer to what's happening to the economy no matter what continent you're on, because when people go and build a golf course, they are either doing a residential golf course community or a resort development," he added.

PTI

## Trez in Domenech

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That is unlikely to discourage Domenech, though, as the French coach has made a reputation for toughness and forcing players to join up with the squad, even in the case of prior retirement.

His biggest selection poser will be who to start in the centre of defence with Roma's Philippe Mexes, Lyon's Sebastien Squilacci and Monaco's Gael Givet pressing for the two starting berths.

### SQUAD

**Goalkeepers:** Gregory Coupet (Lyon), Mickael Landreau (PSG)  
**Defenders:** Eric Abidal (Lyon), Francois Clerc (Lyon), Julien Escudé (Sevilla/ESP), Patrice Evra (Manchester United/ENG), Gael Givet (Monaco), Philippe Mexes (Roma/ITA), Willy Sagnol (Bayern Munich/GER), Sebastien Squilacci (Monaco), Lilian Thuram (Barcelona/ESP)  
**Midfielders:** Claude Makelele (Chelsea/ENG), Rio Mavuba (Bordeaux), Jeremy Toulalan (Lyon), Patrick Vieira (Inter Milan/ITA), Sidney Govou (Lyon), Florent Malouda (Lyon), Franck Ribery (Marseille)  
**Forwards:** Nicolas Anelka (Bolton/ENG), Djibril Cisse (Marseille), Thierry Henry (Arsenal/ENG), David Trezeguet (Juventus/ITA)

## Akram warns

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taken over 400 wickets in both versions of the game, advised Pakistan to focus on improving its fielding for the March-April mega event.

"Fielding will be a key factor and it can be improved if we work very hard in this department," he said.

Akram said he favoured a foreign coach for the team because it reduced the chances of bias but "in my opinion, Bob Woolmer is not behaving impartially which is an area of concern at the moment." He also said fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar's fitness would be crucial for Pakistan's chances in the mega event.

"The fitness of Shoaib, skipper Inzamamul Haq and players like Kamran Akmal would be very important. Inzamam is a strong captain and he also has a big say in selection of the team. Hopefully, the best eleven would be picked for every game in the West Indies."

## Flintoff relieved

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the foundation for the team's 292-7.

The 28-year-old said: "It's unbelievable to score a hundred against Australia in Sydney. Obviously I had a bit of luck along the way but we all need that."

Stand-in Australia skipper Adam Gilchrist said: "We were out there to play and we were up for it but we just couldn't execute the way we wanted to and sustain any real pressure with the ball.

"Good overs were followed by expensive overs and with the bat we just didn't get the partnerships going."

Australia were bowled out for 200 with Gilchrist being bowled on the first ball of the innings by Liam Plunkett.

"That first ball pretty much set the tone for the whole innings," Gilchrist said.

"But it's not all doom and gloom for us.... this just highlights that we've still got a lot to work on and improve."



PHOTO: AFP

Top-seeded Russian tennis player Maria Sharapova returns the ball during her quarterfinal match against Ai Sugiyama of Japan in the Pan Pacific Open Tennis Tournament in Tokyo yesterday.

## PAN PACIFIC OPEN

# Sharapova, Hingis into semis



AFP, Tokyo

World number one Maria Sharapova struggled with her serve again before beating Japan's Ai Sugiyama in three sets to reach the Pan Pacific Open semifinals on Friday.

The Russian top seed, who hit 17 double faults in three sets Thursday, committed another 14 double faults before finally seeing off Sugiyama 4-6, 6-0, 6-1.

In the semifinals Saturday, Sharapova will take on fifth seed Ana Ivanovic of Serbia, who eliminated her compatriot and fourth seed Jelena Jankovic 3-6, 6-4, 6-2.

The other semi will be a rematch of last year's final between Swiss former world number one Martina Hingis and defending champion Elena Dementieva of Russia.

"I felt worried about my serve too much in the first set. That was the reason for me not being aggressive enough. Obviously some part of my game was off and in this tournament it's my serve," said Sharapova.

"But I thought I did a good job just focusing on what I have to do, even if I gave her many free points off my serve."

"I played enough matches in the last couple of weeks. Getting into a Grand Slam final (at the Australian Open) definitely gave me some confidence," added the US Open champion.

The 19-year-old Russian, the winner here in 2005, failed to keep a service break up in the beginning as she hit her third double fault on a break point to be pegged back at 3-3.

She hit another double fault to go to deuce in the 10th game, allowing Sugiyama eventually to take the set with an excellent backhand down the line.

But that turned out to be Sugiyama's best moment as Sharapova dominated the rest of the 87-minute match.

Meanwhile second-seeded Hingis, seeking a record fifth title here, needed only 42 minutes to beat Samantha Stosur of Australia 6-0, 6-1, while third seed Dementieva whipped Italy's Roberta Vinci 6-1, 6-2.

"I just love the whole idea of being here in Japan and Tokyo and being relaxed. Today it just seems that everything was on my way. I was able to focus, except the three double faults," Hingis said.

"If I play the way I played today, I don't have to really be afraid of anybody who is on the other side," she added.

"Last year in the final she (Dementieva) played just too good. I'll be definitely looking forward to play her again. We'll see what will happen this year."

## Another Gough comeback?

CRICINFO, undated

A report in Friday's London Daily Mail claims that England have asked the ICC for special dispensation to select their final 15-man World Cup squad from outside the provisional 30-man party named last month.

The news underlines the desperation among the selectors following a dismal one-day series in Australia and, according to the article, opens the door again for Darren Gough to make a dramatic return. Sources inside the England camp quickly moved to suggest that there were options other than Gough available to them. James Kirtley and Ryan Sidebottom of Nottinghamshire were two other names mentioned.

It seems that the abysmal bowling performances have led to the move, with Liam Plunkett, Chris Tremlett and Sajid Mahmood all failing to offer any sign of form. The Daily Mail added that things are so bad that the future of Kevin Shine, the bowling coach only appointed last May, is likely to be reviewed when the team returns home.

The inclusion of extra players would be possible as the 30-man squad had to be named mainly for logistical reasons to help with the preparation of pre-tournament publicity.

"I think it's absolutely ridiculous that the selectors can't get the squad right and it's a reflection of how badly they have played in Australia," said Michael Atherton. "A few months ago Duncan Fletcher said he knew 10 or the 11 for England's World Cup side ... now they can't even agree on who the best 30 are."

## Sapient crush UNO

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Sapient Sporting Club crushed UNO by 111 runs in the second division cricket league at Gaibandha Stadium yesterday.

Opting to bat first, Sapient piled 192 for eight in their stipulated 30 overs. In reply, UNO were bowled out for a meagre 81 runs in 18 overs.

Adhunik Sporting Club take on DCP in today's match.

## Watson boosts WC options

CRICINFO, undated

Shane Watson's successful return from a hamstring injury this week has Ricky Ponting excited about Australia's options for the World Cup. Watson, who made 46 not out and took 3 for 60 in Queensland's latest Pura Cup loss, would be in the selectors' minds for the three-match Chappell-Hadlee Trophy series starting in New Zealand in a fortnight, Ponting said.

"We haven't really sat down and spoken a lot about the complete make-up of the squad for the World Cup," Ponting told AAP.

"We've been waiting on a few guys as well, waiting to see how Watson comes up and those sorts of things. If he does make it into the squad, he basically plays as another fast bowler anyway. It would probably be five fast bowlers plus him."

"We've all seen in the last week that he got through the game in Brisbane pretty well, made runs and did the amount of bowling he was supposed to do. He's got a little bit of cricket under his belt but whether or not he takes part in the remainder of this series, I don't really know. I just hope that he can recover as quickly as possible and start putting some good performances on the board before the World Cup comes around."

Ponting said Watson, who was promoted to open with Adam Gilchrist throughout the Champions Trophy, would be a strong chance to play at the top of the order should he prove his fitness for the World Cup.

"I wouldn't imagine he would be in the middle order anywhere," Ponting said. "I think the middle order is pretty settled at the moment with Michael Clarke at four, Andrew Symonds, Mike Hussey and those guys."

## Chelsea deny

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But a statement issued by the London club on Thursday stressed Mourinho would see out his Stamford Bridge contract.

"Following further media speculation regarding the position of Chelsea Football Club manager and comments allegedly attributed to Marcello Lippi, the club would like to make clear that no list of candidates has been drawn up to replace Jose Mourinho," the statement said.

It added: "Nobody from Chelsea FC has spoken to Mr Lippi or his representatives or indeed anyone regarding the manager's job."

"As previously stated, Jose Mourinho has a contract until 2010, he has the support of everybody at Chelsea and he has said he wants to stay for the time of his contract."

Chelsea are currently second in the table, six points behind leaders Manchester United, ahead of Saturday's match away to London rivals Charlton.

# Sachin hits 105



CRICINFO, undated

Even as late as last year, the Ranji setup was so unprofessional India players would come to play for state sides wearing their India shirts.

So it wasn't quite out of place for a journalist at the Wankhede Stadium to be surprised at seeing Sachin Tendulkar wearing the Mumbai shirt.

The cynic would argue that most state teams have sponsors who ensure every player wears the official apparel but it's a fact, as pointed out in the press box, that Sachin turns out even for club matches wearing the club shirt.

This goes a bit beyond the merely symbolic as it reveals two things about Tendulkar: he wants to be one with the team he is playing for and he feels strongly for Mumbai cricket.

The irony is that he hasn't played as much as he would possibly like -- only seven Ranji matches in the past 10 years, his last back in 2000 -- yet in those seven matches, he has five centuries and a 95. He would have played in Mumbai's last league match but for a hamstring injury but that offered a more fitting stage for his return to the side.

When Tendulkar walked out on

Friday, the scoreline read 14 for 2 and Mumbai desperately needed him to take charge.

And take charge he did, though after initial problems. He left the first ball from Bose alone, only for it to come in from wide outside the off stump to hit his elbow. Two overs later, he shouldered arms again and was hit on his thigh. In the same over he edged one through the gully region for four. And that was that. Bengal would have to wait another 43 overs, 100 more Tendulkar runs, and 18 more boundaries for the next mistake by Tendulkar.

By then, he'd delighted the motley crowd with an innings almost ridiculous in its effortless as he notched up his 18th Ranji century in only his 32nd match. It started with two straight drives down the wicket -- one just right of mid-off and one just left of the bowler -- in one over from Ashok Dinda.

The contest that was building up between Bose and Tendulkar ended soon enough as Bose began to tire and Tendulkar took full advantage every time he bowled wide or too straight. There was, suddenly, no margin for error.

In the 25th over Tendulkar played the shot people say they'd swear they can travel the world to see. Dinda bowled short, but on the

stumps; Tendulkar, for lack of room, just punched it down the ground with absolutely no follow-through of the bat and the ball sped to the long-on fence.

The bowlers, on their part, just fed Tendulkar, barely causing him to manufacture even a single stroke. His fifty came off his 78th delivery, which was pulled disdainfully for his 10th boundary.

Dinda and Sourav Sarkar, the inexperienced pacemen, got special treatment as Tendulkar scored 52 of his 105 runs off their 43 deliveries. By the time Saurashish Lahiri, the only spinner, came on to bowl, he had settled down well enough and was just having fun. He drove him against the turn, swept him in front of square, and probably got too confident as he swept him straight to short mid-wicket.

With Tendulkar at the other end, Wasim Jaffer had the pressure taken off him and went to his century almost unnoticed. Jaffer later said that, Tendulkar excepted, scoring runs was difficult on the wicket. The rest of the team scored 176 runs in 61.3 overs. Two late strikes mean Bengal have not yet been batted out but Tendulkar's remorse at missing out so much domestic cricket will have grown one century less.

# Final prep for sides



AFP, Johannesburg

South Africa and Pakistan switch from Test to one-day cricket in a five-match one-day international series starting at Centurion Sunday, the last chance for both teams to tune up ahead of next month's Cricket World Cup in the West Indies.

South Africa's 15-man squad for the series is their probable World Cup party, while Pakistan have named a 17-man squad for the series, indicating they need to do some fine tuning ahead of the tournament in the Caribbean.

Opening batsman Imran Nazir is another who gets a chance to revive his international career. "It's taken us two years to build our one-day team," said South African captain Graeme Smith. "We've been pretty consistent in one-day cricket over the last few years and we would like to carry that on going forward to the World Cup. We're a powerful one-day team and we're confident."

Smith said Pakistan would provide strong opposition in a battle between the second and third teams on the International Cricket Council rankings.

"It should be a fantastic series. They've got some world-class players and a good all-round team of one-day players. In South Africa we've had the better of them but we've got to show them a lot of respect."

Pakistan, who pushed South Africa hard before losing a three-

and Shaun Pollock.

South Africa named only one specialist spin bowler, Robin Peterson, in their squad and are expected to stick to their traditional strength in seam bowling backed by athletic fielding, with former one-day star Jonty Rhodes having had an impact since he became the team's fielding coach last year.

### TEAMS

**South Africa:** Graeme Smith (captain), Jacques Kallis (vice-captain), Loots Bosman, Mark Boucher, AB de Villiers, Herschelle Gibbs, Andrew Hall, Justin Kemp, Charl Langeveldt, André Nel, Makhaya Ntini, Robin Peterson, Shaun Pollock, Ashwell Prince, Roger Telemachus.

**Pakistan:** Inzamamul Haq (captain), Younis Khan (vice-captain), Mohammad Hafeez, Yasir Hameed, Imran Nazir, Shoaib Malik, Mohammad Yousuf, Shahid Afridi, Kamran Akmal, Abdul Razzaq, Zulqarnain Haider, Rana Naved-ul-Hasan, Mohammad Asif, Abdul Rehman, Shabbir Ahmed, Imran Farhat, Mohammad Sami.

## Ulsan edge

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including the goalkeeper, replacing Tariq with Himel who was beaten twice ten minutes from time. But Aurup made a goalline save on Jung Min-mu's close-range tap before Lee Dong-keun rattled the crossbar from 25 yards.