

Pak players warned

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan have warned players to behave or face stiff penalties after an incident involving vice-captain Mohammad Asif in their one-day series against Sri Lanka in Abu Dhabi.

Asif was reprimanded by match referee Javagal Srinath for taunting Sri Lankan Mahela Jayawardene after dismissing him in the third and final match of the series on Tuesday. Pakistan won the series 2-1.

Asif, who went down the pitch and glared at Jayawardene, was fined 50 percent of his match fee. Srinath said the penalty was lenient because it was a first offence but that Asif's attitude would remain under observation.

"Asif unnecessarily crossed the line. Since the International Cricket Council (ICC) code of conduct is tough, players have been told to maintain discipline," team manager Talat Ali said.

"Players who do not will also face penalties from the Pakistan Cricket Board as it has decided to deal with disciplinary matters on its own," added Ali, who is also interim coach after the death of Bob Woolmer at the World Cup in Jamaica.

"We have suffered great losses through bans on the players in the recent past so players need to control themselves on and off the field."

The most recent example was Pakistan's inability to play all-rounder Shahid Afridi for the first two matches of the World Cup after he was slapped with a four-match ban during Pakistan's tour of South Africa in February.

Afridi threatened to hit an abusive spectator with his bat while walking back to the pavilion.

Former captain Inzamam-ul-Haq was banned for four matches after he refused to take the field in protest at ball-tampering allegations during the Oval Test against England in August last year.

The ban forced Inzamam to miss the Champions Trophy held in India in October. Without Inzamam, Pakistan won only one of their three matches.

Sidebottom ends six-year hiatus

AFP, Leeds

Ryan Sidebottom was included by England in their starting side for the second Test against West Indies here at Headingley on Friday, six years after making his one and only previous appearance at this level.

Nottinghamshire left-arm seamer Sidebottom, 29, made his Test debut against Pakistan at Lord's in 2001.

He replaced Matthew Hoggard after the Yorkshire swing bowler was ruled out of this match with a thigh injury sustained in the drawn opener of a four-Test series at Lord's concluded Monday.

Sidebottom, who began his first-class career at Headingley with Yorkshire before moving to Nottinghamshire in 2004, has since taken 221 first-class victims at 25 apiece since that solitary Test six years ago.

His inclusion for this match saw him edge out James Anderson for the third seamer spot in a four-man attack and gave England some variety in what would otherwise have been an all right-arm pace lineup.

Sidebottom is the son of former Yorkshire seamer Arnie, who played one Test for England during the 1985 Ashes.

England also recalled captain Michael Vaughan, after 18 months out of Test cricket with a variety of injuries, in place of fellow batsman Owais Shah, twice dismissed for single figure scores in the first Test.

Vaughan

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Fall of wickets: 1-38, 2-91.

To bat: Collingwood, Bell, Prior, Plunkett, Harmison, Sidebottom, Panesar

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Powell	14	3	59	1
Collymore	13	1	44	0
Taylor	10	3	50	0
Bravo	11	1	29	0
Gayle	6	0	26	1

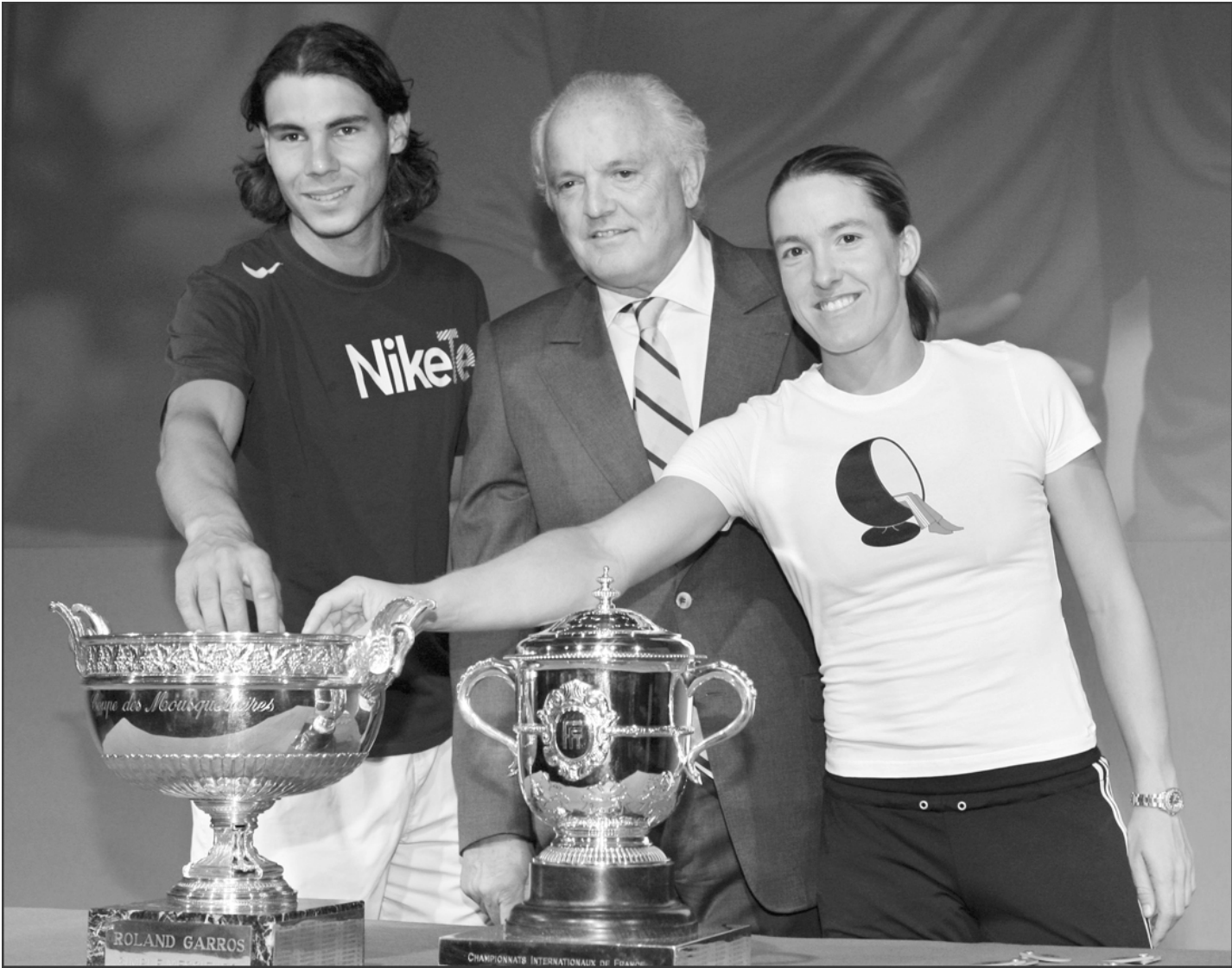
WEST INDIES: Chris Gayle, Daren Ganga, Devon Smith, Ramnaresh Sarwan, Sylvester Joseph, Runako Morton, Dwayne Bravo, Denesh Ramdin (wk), Daren Powell, Jerome Taylor, Corey Collimore

Toss: England
Umpires: Rudi Koertzen (RSA) and Asad Rauf (PAK)
Match referee: Alan Hurst (AUS)



Did U Know?

Joe Darling of Australia was the first left-handed batsman to make a century in Test in 1897/98, thus ending a sequence of 43 tons by right-handers.



(L-R) Spaniard Rafael Nadal, president of the French Tennis Federation Christian Bimes and Belgian Justine Henin taking part in the French Open draw at Roland Garros in Paris yesterday.

Williams, Henin on crash course



AFP, Paris

Their semifinal showdown here four years ago was one of the finest games in recent memory and fate has once more thrown together Justine Henin and Serena Williams at the French Open.

Friday's draw saw the Belgian title-holder and No.1 seed land in the same quarter of the draw as former world No.1 Williams meaning that they are on a collision course to meet in the quarter-finals. In 2003, Williams was at the peak of her powers having won the four previous Grand Slam titles and reigning supreme as world No. 1.

She blasted home heroine Amelie Mauresmo off the court in the quarterfinals with a daunting display of naked aggression and was hot favourite to despatch the slightly-built Henin in the semis.

But with the Parisian crowd getting firmly behind the underdog, Williams bit the dust 6-2, 4-6, 7-5 and the American juggernaut left the court in tears to hostile jeers.

Both have had their ups and downs since then, but with Henin now atop the world rankings and a resurgent Serena winning the Australian Open and back in the top

10 for the first time since late 2005, their progress will be closely monitored.

Henin, who turns 25 next week, admits that in terms of physique she is no match for Williams who is only nine months older but considerably bulkier. But she insists that she has other advantages.

"I have this image of being a girl not as tall as the others, not as strong as the others," she said.

"But I have a great sensibility, which makes me perhaps a bit more fragile, but also much stronger than others on some occasions."

Henin says that she is finally over the emotional strain that accompanied the break up of her marriage earlier this year, a drama that caused her to miss the Australian Open.

And she says that she has found a new inner contentment that she hopes will take her to more Grand Slam success over the next few years.

"I'm a very happy person, I'm lucky, I'm in good health and that's important for me and I have a wonderful team around me," she said.

"My life has been a fight many times, but I have no bad feelings about it. I want to share with other people and I don't consider any-

thing as a revenge against life."

Williams insists she has no bad memories from the bitter 2003 defeat to Henin and after a 2006 ruined by injuries and lack of commitment, she appears to be back to her bruising best and determined to win the French Open for the second time.

"I definitely feel that I've had a rebound," she said of her season so far.

"Winning a tournament boosts your confidence, let alone a grand slam. It makes you feel really good."

"Right now I think the French Open is my No.1 priority, simply because I only have one trophy and she's really lonely, so she really wants a friend."

"And the other ones (US, Australian, Wimbledon) have friends, so this is the only one that I have that doesn't have a friend."

There's a long way to go though before she will even contemplate pondering her chances of becoming the first woman since Steffi Graf in 1988 to achieve a calendar year Grand Slam.

"What's on my mind is just winning seven matches at Roland Garros which would be completely awesome. That's my main focus."

Sharapova in last four

AFP, Istanbul

Russian top seed Maria Sharapova reached the semifinals of the 200,000-dollar WTA Istanbul tournament with a hard-won victory over Poland's Agnieszka Radwanska Thursday.

The world number two beat the seventh-seeded Pole 6-2, 3-6, 6-0, but a shoulder injury that had kept her away from the courts since March appeared to still strain her performance, just days before the French Open.

"My shoulder is still aching a little bit. Let's see how I will do tomorrow," she said of Friday's semifinal against France's Aravane Rezaï, whom she described as "a young player who has nothing to lose against me."

The die-hard Radwanska, 18, mounted a spirited challenge against Sharapova in the second set, breaking her three times and eventually winning 6-3.

Sharapova came back in the third set but she had to fight hard for each point as Radwanska never let up the pressure.

"My opponent was really very tough," Sharapova said. "There were lots of ups and downs in the game."

Rezaï, who ousted fourth-seeded Venus Williams, continued her winning series Thursday, defeating another American player, Meghann Shaughnessy, 1-6, 6-1, 6-4.

In the other semifinal Friday, second-seeded Elena Dementieva of Russia will face the number five, Ukrainian Alona Bondarenko.

Dementieva struggled in her quarterfinal match against Catalina Castano of Colombia, but eventually prevailed 1-6, 6-4, 6-4.

Bondarenko reached the semis without putting up a fight as her rival, third-seed Patty Schnyder of Switzerland pulled out of the tournament because of a right thigh injury ahead of the match.

"I decided to withdraw from the tournament after the pain in my right thigh muscle increased during the night and continued this morning," Schnyder said.

Juninho extends Lyon contract

AFP, Lyon

Brazilian playmaker Juninho has signed a two-year extension to his contract at Lyon keeping him at the six time French champions until 2010.

The 32-year-old Lyon captain joined the club in 2001 from Vasco de Gama on an initial five-year deal.

The deadball specialist has played a part in all Lyon's six titles under managers Jacques Santini, Paul Le Guen and existing boss Gerard Houllier and was named the French league's best player in 2005-2006.

Capped 39 times for his country Juninho has turned out 259 times for Lyon, scoring 77 goals, 32 from free-kicks.

Sonn remains

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decade. All our thoughts are with his family and wife Sandra at this difficult time."

Sonn's career in cricket administration has been as controversial as it has been long. In January 2002, as president of the UCB, he caused a public rumpus by overruling the selection of Jacques Rudolph for the New Year Test against Australia, opting instead for Rudolph's black room-mate, Justin Ontong.

FRENCH OPEN DRAW

Federer ensured easy passage



AFP, Paris

Roger Federer won the opening skirmishes of his French Open battle with double defending champion Rafael Nadal on Friday when the world number one was handed the easier of early round draws. Federer, bidding to win a first ever Roland Garros title and hoping to become only the third man in history to hold all four Grand Slams, will face his first serious test here in the fourth round where former 2003 champion Juan Carlos Ferrero may wait.

He will open his campaign against America's Michael Russell, the world number 71, before facing either a qualifier or Frenchman Thierry Ascione in the second round.

Another qualifier or Potito Starace of Italy will be a third round opponent.

By contrast, Nadal, hoping to follow in the footsteps of Bjorn Borg by winning three French Opens in a row, faces highly-rated Argentinian teenager Juan Martin del Potro in his opener before a second round clash with either a qualifier or Russia's Teimuraz Gabashvili.

Britain's surprise 2004 semi-finalist Tim Henman could be a third round opponent, with 2004 champion Gaston Gaudio or former world number one Lleyton Hewitt, who took a set off the Spaniard in the Hamburg semi-finals last week, possibly waiting to pounce in the fourth round.

Federer comes into the French Open having beaten Nadal for the first time on clay in the Hamburg Masters final last weekend where he recovered from a first set loss to win in three.

The victory also snapped Nadal's record 81-match winning streak on clay and was sweet revenge for the straight sets mauling the Swiss suffered at the hands of his nemesis in the Monte Carlo Masters final in April.

"In Monaco, I had a bad approach," Federer told the French media on Friday.

"I went into the final saying to myself: 'I'm going to see what happens'. In Hamburg, that wasn't the case. I was certain I was going to beat him and I was sure of the way I was going to play him. It was very important for me mentally."

"I am happy with my clay season. I have played enough matches and I am ready physically and mentally."

Amongst Federer's possible quarterfinal opponents are Spain's Tommy Robredo, twice a last eight player here, former world number one Marat Safin of Russia and Italy's Filippo Volandri who knocked the world number one out of the Rome Masters in the second round.

That defeat prompted Federer to split with coach Tony Roche.

American third seed Andy Roddick, who has never survived beyond the third round, opens against Russia's Igor Andreev, the last man to beat Nadal before the Spaniard went off on his record-breaking epic. Meanwhile, women's top seed

and defending champion Justine Henin, who is seeking her third consecutive title and fourth in the last five years, opens her campaign against Russian world number 67 Elena Vesnina.

The Belgian world number one is seeded to meet 2002 champion Serena Williams in the quarterfinals.

Second seeded Russian Maria Sharapova, who has never got beyond the quarter-finals in Paris, faces experienced Frenchwoman Emilie Loit in the first round with the best home hope Amelie Mauresmo, a potential last eight opponent, taking on Laura Granville of the United States.

Third seed Svetlana Kuznetsova faces Russian compatriot Ekaterina Bychkova in the first round with fellow Russian, and 2004 winner, Anastasia Myskina a possible second round opponent.

Wimbledon champion Mauresmo, who has consistently failed on home clay, never getting beyond the quarterfinals in 12 attempts, is a potential last eight opponent for Sharapova.

Serena Williams, playing here for the first time in three years, is seeded eight and will meet Tsvetana Pironkova of Bulgaria.

Fourth seeded Serb Jelena Jankovic, widely tipped as potential champion after winning in Rome last week, faces French wildcard Stephanie Foretz in her opening match.

The French Open gets underway on Sunday.

'Invincible' Bill Johnston passes away



AFP, Sydney

Bill Johnston, a member of Don Bradman's 1948 'Invincibles' cricket team, has died at the age of 85, Cricket Australia said Friday.

Johnston, a left-arm medium-pace bowler from Victoria, played 40 Tests for Australia between 1947 and 1955, taking 160 wickets at 23.91.

Cricket Australia said he died in a Sydney nursing home late Thursday.

His death leaves five surviving members of the 1948 squad that toured England unbeaten -- Arthur Morris, Neil Harvey, Sam Loxton, Bill Brown and Ron Hamence.

Brown, who turns 95 in July and is Australia's oldest Test cricketer, said he was extremely sad to learn that his good mate had died.

"Bill was really one of the most likeable blokes in cricket, a lovely fellow with a great sense of humour," Brown said Friday.

Although his contemporaries rated him as an outstanding bowler, he was forced for much of his career to remain in the shadow of Australia's brilliant new-ball pair,

Ray Lindwall and Keith Miller.

"He probably didn't see as much of the new ball as he may have liked," Brown recalled.

"He had the ability to handle it, there's no question about that, but Lindwall and Miller were our No.1 and No.2 shock bowlers, and poor old Bill used to get what was left over."

"But Bill was a great team man. You might say he did all the hard



BILL JOHNSTON

work.

"He had this lovely, fluid, left-arm bowling action and he could move the ball away off the wicket."

New Ashes schedule proposed



AFP, Leeds

Ashes Test series in Australia are set to be rescheduled so they don't take place just before the World Cup, the chief executive of the England and Wales Cricket Board announced here Thursday.

David Collier told a news conference at Headingley he was in discussion with his Cricket Australia counterpart, James Sutherland, and they would soon be putting forward proposals to their respective boards.

Collier was speaking at the launch of the Schofield report into the future of English cricket.

Chaired by former European golf tour boss Ken Schofield, it also featured six ex-England cricketers, including former captain Nasser Hussain.

The committee, which came into being following England's 5-0 Ashes thrashing in Australia, made 19 recommendations in all including the creation of a new full-time national selector, who would travel with the team on tour where currently the captain and coach pick the team.

Schofield's team also echoed calls from players for a reduction in the amount of international cricket but didn't say how this would be achieved.

Collier insisted England were "locked in" to their current programme until 2011 because of agreements already in place with other boards.

England are due to host an Ashes series in 2013. Breaking the cycle so the next Ashes in Australia didn't lead up to the 2015 World Cup in Australia

Cricket Australia chairman Creagh O'Connor said Johnston was an "invincible on the field during his distinguished 40-Test career, and a gentleman off the field."

"Those of us fortunate enough to have known Bill will remember him as a good companion, well-humoured, passionate about cricket and always willing to share his knowledge," O'Connor said in a statement.

"However, to cricket fans he will always be remembered, rightly, as a member of Sir Donald Bradman's legendary Invincibles, and as a left-arm who took a lot of wickets quickly and economically when bowling in the company of fellow greats such as Lindwall and Miller."

"His cheery tail-end batting also had its moments, including a quirky statistic that gave him a batting average of 102 during a tour of England in 1953."

Johnston captured 554 first-class wickets at 23.35, and was a Wisden Cricketer of the Year in 1949.

Johnston is survived by his sons -- David, the chief executive of the Tasmanian Cricket Association, and Peter. His wife Judy died in 2004.

Donald given

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Cooley, who now holds a similar position with Australia, was replaced by Shine, whose role has been called into question amidst suggestions he will soon be concentrating solely on developing up and coming England bowlers.

Donald, who knows English cricket well from his time as an overseas player with Warwickshire, has made no secret of his desire to work with England's quicks, having previously acted as a mentor to Matthew Hoggard when the two were in the same Orange Free State side in South Africa.

Captain

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captain if he doesn't have his own say?

No doubt there is the need for a captain in the team who can lead the side from the front and definitely set an example as a leader but unfortunately it has not been the case for Bashir in the recent past.

There is no need to go too far back because he had let the side down by his poor and defensive captaincy in the first one-day international at the same venue and many believe that it could have been a different story in the series if he had shown some courage in that game.

Undoubtedly the 34-year-old has served the team to his fullest in shaping their future in recent times.

But there is no scope to be stagnant on past successes anymore.

So, the obvious question is that whether the cricket authority in the country goes ahead with a new vigour or shoulders the responsibility on someone who himself looks tired and out of shape to deliver anything for the side.