

Akhtar fit

FROM PAGE 17
the appointment of opener Salman Butt as vice captain.

"There has been a lot of talk about differences in the team but there is no credibility to it. I have the full backing of the seniors and there are no problems," said Malik.

Malik led Pakistan to a 2-1 win over Sri Lanka in a one-day series in Abu Dhabi in May, which he said put the team back on track after the World Cup and the death of coach Bob Woolmer in Jamaica in March.

"We did well to beat Sri Lanka as they were the losing finalists in the World Cup. The match against India will be a another big test for us," said Malik.

"I hope we enter the ground with an aim to win because after this tour we must prepare for the Twenty20 World Cup and then we a hectic season awaits us," he added.

Pakistan host South Africa in September-October and tour India in November-December before hosting world champions Australia early next year.

India still

FROM PAGE 17
scheduled to join the Test party later on the tour, were due to arrive in Belfast on Wednesday with a view to being available for selection for Friday's match.

Uncapped 28-year-old Baroda pace bowler Rakesh Patel, who has been playing club cricket in Liverpool, north-west England, was called up to India's one-day squad on Monday.

"The two quicks are quite bad, both Sreesanth and Agarkar. Dhoni should be okay for the next game but with the 'flu you never know," said Dravid.

"With Ishant Sharma and Ranadeb Bose landing on Wednesday, we'll hopefully have some cover in the fast bowling department but, then again, they would be off a flight straight away and into a game.

"It's going to be a tricky one for us."

India's one-day series with South Africa concludes at Stormont on Sunday. They then play Pakistan in a one-day international in Glasgow on July 3.

But the bulk of India's United Kingdom tour sees them facing England in three Tests and seven one-day internationals from July 19-September 8.

Henman stars

FROM PAGE 20
Childs 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (8/6), to earn himself a crack at former world number one Marat Safin.

There was also a stirring display from veteran Australian Wayne Arthurs. The oldest man in the men's singles at 36, Arthurs fought back from two sets down to eliminate an opponent half his age, last year's Wimbledon juniors champion, Thiemo De Bakker.

And in the women's singles, Indian star Sania Mirza made light of a very late start by racing to a 6-0, 6-3 win over Russian Yaroslava Shvedova in just 55 minutes. Mirza now faces 11th seed Nadia Petrova for a place in the last 32.

Nakamura

FROM PAGE 20
Massoni does not represent Nakamura, who joined the Scottish champions from Reggina two years ago and completed a clean sweep of Scotland's player of the year awards last season.

Takuda confirmed: "I would like to stress that these reports about Naka are complete nonsense.

"Naka is currently preparing for the Asian Cup but straight after this, is very much looking forward to returning to Celtic.

"He and his family are very happy at Celtic and very happy in Glasgow. He has no reason to go anywhere else."

I'm still

FROM PAGE 20
loyalties and fashion sense than she does her game. Tuesday was no exception.

The topic of the day was not her serve or forehand, but her choice of dress, all white, as All England Club tradition demands, and based on a swan.

"I wanted it to have more pleats in the back and the end result made it look like a swan," explained Sharapova to her mostly-male audience.

"On a hanger, it doesn't look as swan-ish as it does on me. I just put a reference to it because a swan is usually white, right, unless it's weird."

Another blow

FROM PAGE 17
in the rest of the stoppage time raised hopes of full three points for Muktiyodha but Kanchan nodded the ball over in what was the last real chance of the game.

TEAMS

MUKTIYODHA: Titumir, Hassan Ali Mamun, Rajani, Ghansah, Titu, Brahim (Saiful), Arman Aziz, Biddyt, Munna (Parvez), Moni (Enamul) and Kanchan.
FARASHGANJ: Mamun Khan, Khaled, Faisal, Mamun Mia, Liton, Arup, Amirul (Ali), Kutub, Rony, Robin and Puma.
Referee: Abdul Hannan.



PHOTO: AFP

Bangladesh batsman Rajin Saleh about to play a drive as Sri Lanka wicketkeeper Prasanna Jayawardene looks on during the third day of the first Test match at the Sinhalese Sports Club in Colombo on Wednesday.

Gayle issue dragged



AFP, London

Players' chief Dinanath Ramnarine has questioned the decision of the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) to reprimand Chris Gayle for a diary published on the CricInfo website, saying the opening batsman had received clearance for the June 21 article from team manager Michael Findlay.

The WICB said Tuesday it was censuring Gayle for his "totally unacceptable" conduct in criticising the handling of his selection as one-day international captain and the late arrival of players for warm-up games ahead of the upcoming series with England.

Although he remains captain, a WICB statement warned they would "pursue this matter at the end of the tour" and would take "drastic and immediate" action if Gayle, who met with board president Kenneth Gordon in London on Monday, stepped out of line again during the England tour.

However, Ramnarine, chief executive of the West Indies Players' Association (WIPA), said Gayle had, as required, submitted his article to Findlay, who edited and approved it.

"It seems difficult to understand why Gordon and Findlay would ... demand an apology for comments

approved by Findlay," Ramnarine was quoted as saying by CricInfo.

Gayle, 27, angered officials by writing: "First and foremost I am very disappointed with the West Indies Cricket Board for not having the guys here in England already and ready to play.

"As the captain I have to say this is disappointing and it is not at all a good start.

"I also have to mention that I was hurt and disappointed that after I was nominated as captain by the selectors, I did not initially get the support of the board," added Gayle who took over the captaincy from stand-in Test skipper Daren Ganga, appointed after Ramnaresh Sarwan's tour-ending shoulder injury.

The board responded by saying: "Mr Gayle was requested to issue a public apology to the WICB for his unfortunate and ill-advised statement.

"He subsequently advised the president and team manager that he was not prepared to apologise.

"In the circumstances, the WICB has issued a very strongly-worded letter of reprimand to Mr Gayle advising him that his conduct is totally unacceptable and that the WICB will pursue this matter at the end of the tour."

Gayle, amidst the controversy, scored 73 in West Indies' 56-run Twenty20 win against the Professional Cricketers' Association Masters at Arundel on Tuesday.

West Indies, who recently lost their four-match Test series against England 3-0, play back-to-back Twenty20 matches at The Oval starting on Thursday before taking on their hosts in three one-day internationals.

Arguably even more embarrassing than the Test series reverse was Sunday's 51-run Twenty20 defeat against struggling county Derbyshire.

It was a far cry from the 1980s when West Indies were the dominant force in world cricket.

The state of disarray within the Caribbean game had previously been exposed when West Indies had to call-up five players from English league clubs and universities to make up the numbers against England A at Worcester after three of their 14-man one-day squad arrived too late for the game.

Rows between the board and the WIPA have become commonplace in recent years.

An arbitration panel last week found for the fifth time in as many hearings in favour of the players. They ruled the England tour fell outside the International Cricket Council's Future Tours Programme and therefore the players were entitled to additional payments.

India fined for slow over-rate

PTI, Belfast

Indian cricket team has been fined for its slow over-rate during its nine-wicket victory against Ireland in its one-day international match on June 23 here.

Match Referee Alan Hurst of the Emirates Elite Panel imposed the fines after Rahul Dravid's side was ruled to be one over short of its target at the scheduled finish of the Ireland innings, an International Cricket Council press release said on Wednesday.

"In accordance with the ICC Code of Conduct regulations governing over-rate penalties, players are fined five per cent of their match fees for every over their side fails to bowl in the allotted time, with the captain fined double that amount.

As such, Dravid was been fined 10 per cent of his match fee while each of his players received five per cent fines.

For such offences, the decision of the ICC match referee is final and binding.

Ashraful

FROM PAGE 17
considering their first innings performance. I must say it would have been a different story had Bangladesh finished the day with the loss of three wickets," said Penney, who played most of his cricket at Warwickshire in the English county circuit.

Bangladesh selector Akram Khan was in a riddle after contrasting performance by his team in the match.

"They showed that they have the ability. So it is unacceptable when they were dismissed for only 89 runs (in the first innings). I think responsible batting is needed," said the former Bangladesh skipper, who could smile only yesterday after two gloomy days.

New Road ground flooded

CRICINFO, undated

Worcestershire's Twenty20 Cup fixture against Warwickshire at New Road has had to be cancelled after unseasonal rains caused the Severn and Teme rivers to break their banks and flood the county ground at New Road.

"Around half of the ground is flooded at a depth of at least a couple of feet," explained David Leatherdale, the commercial manager. "It is up to the engines of cars parked on the ground." Games against Northamptonshire on Friday and Gloucestershire on Sunday are also in doubt.

Although county officials immediately sought an alternative venue to stage the game, the Twenty20 regulations as they stand require all matches to be played within the county boundaries. Worcestershire had hoped to play at Kidderminster, Ombersley or Barnt Green, but were forced to admit defeat.

"Regrettably no other venue within the county with the facilities to stage the Twenty20 match could be identified in spite of the very best efforts of the home club," said an ECB statement. "ECB has indicated that it wishes to consider changes to regulations which could provide increased options for the 2008 season but recognises that the weather conditions experienced in June have been exceptional.

While the ground, which is on a flood plain, is often submerged in the winter, it is rare that it suffers during the season. In June 1931 Worcestershire had to move their match against Kent to Stourbridge because New Road was underwater. On that occasion the local fire brigade were called in to help mop up. In August of the same year heavy rain meant that a small lake formed in front of the ladies stand and the boundary had to be brought in by 25 yards midway a game against Warwickshire. It also flooded in August 1957.

Tharanga not

FROM PAGE 17
he was hit by a yorker from fast bowler Lasith Malinga.

"We won't rule out his availability for the second Test," said Tommy Simsek, the Sri Lankan team physio. "There is no point in rushing him. He may be available but if he rests the second Test as well he will be that much better off.

"Tharanga's improving very quickly. He's got no pain in his foot. We will continue to rest him precautionary wise because the bone will get stronger with each day. We are letting nature take its course. We're doing some very low dose ultrasound which helps to stimulate bone healing and applying some cream which helps remove bruising as well."

Tharanga was replaced in the squad for the first Test by another left-hander, Michael Vandort, who went on to score a century.

Sachin pleases Rahul



AFP, Belfast

India captain Rahul Dravid is confident Sachin Tendulkar has some great days ahead of him on the United Kingdom tour after seeing the 'Little Master' make 99 against South Africa at Stormont.

Tendulkar's innings -- his first 99 in a one-day international career spanning 386 matches and featuring 41 hundreds -- couldn't prevent a four-wicket defeat in the opening fixture of a three-game series against the Proteas, all taking place at the Belfast venue.

But Dravid, who helped Tendulkar add 158 for the third wicket while making 74 himself, was buoyed by his teammate's form.

"He's very keen to have a good tour of England," Dravid said of his fellow 34-year-old.

"He does realise, along with a lot of us, that this probably will be the last time he will be touring in the UK."

Tendulkar's innings left him 50 short of becoming the first batsman in history to score 15,000 one-day international runs -- a landmark he could reach during the remaining games of this series.

And if he doesn't rewrite the record books in Belfast, there is every chance he'll do it in the seven one-day interna-

tionals against England in August and September that follow a three-Test series due to start at Lord's on July 19.

This latest innings was not exactly vintage Tendulkar. For a start, it lasted 143 balls -- only four times in his limited overs international career has he batted for longer.

And on each of those occasions Tendulkar went onto a large century (the lowest was 141 not out against West Indies in Kuala Lumpur in September 2006).

But there were signs with some of his 12 fours on Tuesday that Tendulkar, who as a 19-year-old scored his first Test hundred, against England, in 1990 at Old Trafford, had retained his touch despite the passing of the years.

He struck Charl Langeveldt square through the offside off the backfoot and then drove the medium-pacer straight down the ground with the minimum amount of visible effort.

However, age appeared to be catching up with Tendulkar when, going for a risky second that would have given him his hundred, he was run out by a throw from Morne van Wyk to wicketkeeper Mark Boucher.

Nevertheless, an upbeat Dravid said: "It's a good start. It's the early part of the tour. We are coming from 45 degrees (heat) and totally different wickets and I thought for the batsmen to hit some early form is a good sign."

At the other end of the age spec-

trum to Dravid and Tendulkar is 18-year-old leg-spinner Piyush Chawla who, in only his third one-day international, took an impressive three for 47 in 10 overs in conditions stacked against slow bowlers.

His wickets included that of van Wyk, who made 44 before lobbing a catch to cover after getting a leading edge to a genuine leg-break while playing across the line, and star batsman Herschelle Gibbs, out for five when bowled by a ball of full length.

Afterwards Dravid praised Chawla, the successor to Anil Kumble following the leg-spinner's one-day international retirement after the World Cup.

"I think he acquitted himself very well, considering the conditions. It's not a track that really helps the spinners too much, it was really cold and for a leg-spinner it wasn't easy to grip the ball."

"But the more he can bowl in these conditions the more he is going to learn and it's going to be good for his growth and development as a cricketer."

That India took Tuesday's match into the last over said much for their resilience after more than half their 14-man squad were struck down with flu.

Seniors unhappy with Salman



CRICINFO, undated

Pakistan manager Talat Ali has dampened down rumours of disgruntlement within the side over the appointment of Salman Butt as vice-captain, saying there is "complete harmony" among players.

Local reports over the last few days have said that senior members of the team are unhappy with the promotion of Butt to Shoaib Malik's deputy. The move surprised many when it was announced, given that Butt had only just returned to the side after a spell on the sidelines and also his general inexperience: he has only played 14 Tests and 26 ODIs since his debut in 2003. He replaced Mohammad Asif, who was vice-captain for one series against Sri Lanka in Abu Dhabi.

"There is complete harmony in my team and if some people are saying otherwise then they have malicious

intentions," Ali told The News. "These are false reports. There have been no revolts and there will be no revolts. Our team is slowly turning into a well-oiled unit and we are looking forward our future assignments," he added.

His comments came a day after it was alleged that the manager had a showdown with Shahid Afridi during the team's recently concluded training camp in Abbottabad. The incident is said to have occurred on the team bus after training. Butt entered the bus only to find the best seats already taken up.

Ali apparently asked Afridi, one of the most experienced members of the side, to offer his seat to the "new vice-captain", which led to harsh words being exchanged. Ali said the incident had been blown out of proportion and was "no big deal."

"I just said (to some of the junior players) that one of you should offer his seat to Salman, he is your vice-captain. It was Afridi who said that he can take my seat, after all he is the vice-captain". I told him (Afridi) to stay where he is and that some junior boy



PHOTO: INTERNET

A partial view of Worcestershire's county ground in New Road that went under knee-deep water after unseasonal rains caused two nearby rivers -- Severn and Teme -- to break bank on Tuesday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS										DOWN																																																															
1	One of the Three Bears	5	Humor	8	Ardor	12	Oscar-night clasher	13	Expert	14	"That hurts!"	15	Great elation	17	Soft cheese	18	Usher elsewhere	19	Solost's elegy	21	To the degree	22	Trade	23	Rushmore face	26	Scale member	28	Feudal figure	31	Praise to the heavens	33	"Golly!"	35	Ms. Turner	36	Turner																																				
38	Mischievous tyke	40	Enthusiast	41	News-paper page	43	"Wham!"	45	"Scall!"	47	Canine coating	51	Cow-headed goddess	52	Mrs. Orpheus	54	"The Producers"	55	In favor of	56	Messes	57	Air from a pair	58	Round Table address	59	— ex machina	60	Low-ph	61	Yon folks	62	Feedbag fill	63	He gives a hoot	64	Jungfrau, for one	65	Sheepish remark	66	Extol	67	Main-lander's memento	68	Wild-beast	69	Cause corrosion	70	Passbook plus	71	Napoleon or Nero	72	Lair	73	Small horse	74	Ocean nadirs	75	Tested the waters	76	Tie	77	Jacob's twin	78	Muck	79	Beiga	80	Not so much	81	Spoon-spooner	82	Geller
Solution time: 21 mins.										HEED CHL SLIP OLGA HAL TODD PLAY BALL ROLL SADA BARE MIELO JAPAN UNDERGIR OPAL GMT THRO BELLYUP SWOOP TIE BOO FIGH FOUR SEET OGOR YOUR ELET ROBE EART TORE ELSE ALT ATOM										CRYPTOQUIP										BEWN PXRO FUOEN PXFLCXYT PURO BEUQL JLFXXKLQURO W V V J N F L R N B W Q Q P ?											" O X X K C T L , X Q K V W U R N . " Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN TWO BIG BOVINES PUT ON GLOVES AND START SPARRING, WOULD PEOPLE SAY THEY'RE BOXIN' OXEN? Today's Cryptoquip Clue: B equals W																																

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12					13		14			
15				16			17			
18						19	20			
21						22				
23	24	25		26		27	28		29	30
31		32		33		34		35		
36			37		38		39		40	
41				42		43		44		
45	46					47		48	49	50
51						52	53			
54						55			56	
57						58			59	

CRYPTOQUIP

BEWN PXRO FUOEN PXFLCXYT
PURO BEUQL JLFXXKLQURO
W V V J N F L R N B W Q Q P ?

" O X X K C T L , X Q K V W U R N . " Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN TWO BIG BOVINES PUT ON GLOVES AND START SPARRING, WOULD PEOPLE SAY THEY'RE BOXIN' OXEN? Today's Cryptoquip Clue: B equals W