

Alonso grab pole position

AFP, Budapest

Fernando Alonso's charge for a third consecutive world title picked up pace here on Saturday when he grabbed pole position for the Hungarian Grand Prix.

Alonso's McLaren teammate Lewis Hamilton had looked set to claim pole but a hold up in the McLaren garage prevented him from recording a final flying lap.

Alonso, still only 26, possesses class and experience in bucket-loads and he used all his ability to take full advantage of Hamilton's misfortune and seal his place at the front of the grid.

It was the seventeenth pole position of his career yet surprisingly only his second this season after Monaco back in May.

Behind Alonso and Hamilton will be BMW Sauber's German Nick Heidfeld who was third in front of Finland's Kimi Raikkonen who qualified fourth for Ferrari.

German Nico Rosberg was fifth in the other BMW Sauber and will share the grid's third row with Ralf Schumacher.

BMW's Pole Robert Kubica will start from seventh ahead of Italian Giancarlo Fisichella in a Renault. Jarno Trulli of Toyota and Red Bull's Australian Mark Webber complete the top ten.

Madrid bounce

FROM PAGE 20 Moments later, and with injury time looming, the visitors netted a fifth when Saviola exchanged passes and after the keeper had saved at the feet of the Argentinian, Blaboa raced in to score from the rebound.

The day's other match had to be decided on penalties, with PSV just edging their more famous opponents thanks to missed penalties from Yoann Gourcuff and Clarence Seedorf.

Unchanged

FROM PAGE 17 The Oval tends to favour tall pacemen who can generate sharp bounce and swing bowler Anderson, one of several players on both sides who let themselves down with verbal abuse during an ill-tempered match at Trent Bridge, is vulnerable after a return of one for 157 in 42 overs in helpful conditions. Broad's inclusion would also strengthen England's lower order batting. At Trent Bridge, England's last five wickets fell for 51 and 68 in the first and second innings respectively.

"Some people have missed out but I think everyone is playing pretty good cricket but we need to think about things and make a decision," said England coach Peter Moores.

England have been unbeaten in 11 home series, comprising 41 Tests, since losing the 2001 Ashes.

India are now eyeing their first series success in England since 1986 and only third overall.

Up until three years ago India had won only one series out of 19 against major Test opposition on foreign soil since their last triumph in England.

But victory in Pakistan was followed up last year by a 1-0 win in a four-match series in the West Indies and beating England, ranked the world's second-best Test side behind Australia, on their own turf would be a notable achievement for India.

Lampard injury

FROM PAGE 20 play.

Chelsea's statement said: "Contrary to speculation, Frank Lampard has only suffered a minor injury, sustained over three weeks ago whilst training in Los Angeles.

"The injury has not required any painkilling injections nor affected Frank's ability to play or to take part in any one of Chelsea's training sessions."

Bojinov joins

FROM PAGE 20 Shinawatra has bankrolled Eriksson's amazing spurge, the former Thai prime minister is realistic about the improvement he can expect over the next 12 months.

"This season, I feel we should be able to finish in the top 10," he told the Manchester Evening News.

"The second season we should be aiming for the top six and qualifying for Europe. I accept the first year is a learning curve but we should start to be successful by the third. That is what I would expect.

"I am pleased with what Sven has done. He has set about reshaping the side and has handled both the existing players and the new ones very well. He has given everyone their chance.

"Sven has proved to be quite a draw when it comes to signing players. His name and reputation have proved to be valuable.

"There is more money to spend if he feels he needs it but we will not be held to ransom by other clubs."



PHOTO: AFP

Russian starlet Anna Chakvetadze makes a double-handed backhand return against American Venus Williams during their quarterfinal clash of the Acura Classic at the La Costa Resort and Spa in California on Saturday.

Chakvetadze downs Williams



AFP, Carlsbad

Anna Chakvetadze saddled Venus Williams with her first loss San Diego Classic defeat since 1999 on Friday to set up an all-Russian semifinal with Maria Sharapova.

Chakvetadze, the third seed who arrived here seeking her third title in as many weeks, defeated Wimbledon champion Williams 6-7, 7-6, 6-2.

Chakvetadze struggled through a collapse in the first set, throwing away a 5-2 lead, missing on two set points and finally losing a tiebreaker.

But the 20-year-old hung tough, taking the second set in a decider as Williams stuffed an easy volley into the net after two hours on court.

The third set turned into a runaway for the Russian, who has now won a dozen straight matches. Williams was stunned after striking 79 unforced errors and missing on a match point.

"She saved her best for San Diego," Williams said. "I was not at my best level. I'm really tired and it showed. Lots of things went wrong in my game tonight."

Chakvetadze said that the crowd of 5,500 helped pull her through the

marathon that lasted two and a half hours.

"I'll have to try and do my best tomorrow, but I don't know what my strategy against Maria will be. I'm tired now and will have to see how I feel on the day.

"I'll try to move her around and hope for the best," said the winner of July events in Cincinnati and Stanford.

By contrast, top seed Sharapova earned an efficient 6-2, 6-1 win over India's Sania Mirza to book her place in the final four of the 1.3 million-event.

Sharapova has won her last two events against Chakvetadze, both played this season, leading the series 4-1.

Swiss 11th seed Patty Schnyder continued her roll, upsetting Russian fourth seed Nadia Petrova 6-4, 6-4 to reach only her second semi-final of the season. She had stalled seven times at the quarterfinal stage this year.

She will play ninth seed Elena Dementieva, who moved into her second semi of the season with a 6-2, 6-4 victory over fellow Russian Maria Kirilenko.

Schnyder followed up her three-set win over compatriot Martina Hingis in Thursday's third round with a com-

prehensive victory against Petrova.

"I made her run a lot and really got my game going well," said Schnyder, who played a third straight quarterfinal after Cincinnati and Stanford.

"I'm feeling great on the court, especially these past three days. Everything seems to fit well in my game. I just want to keep this up for the weekend."

Sharapova, playing through a lingering shoulder problem, was pleased with her performance.

"I had a good start and was able to play my game," said the world number two, one of five Russian to reach the quarterfinals during the final edition of this tournament.

"Sania is a solid player, so it's good to get some matches like I've won this week behind my back."

Sharapova lost serve only once, in the second set, but got it straight back on the way to victory in just 61 minutes.

"I've had three good matches, I much prefer it this way than running around for a long time in the hot sun to win," added Sharapova, who is nursing a sore shoulder. "I've got confidence, and I'm ready to step it up in my next match."

Glos stun

FROM PAGE 17 shortly before that when a mis-timed drive was spilled by Alex Gidman above his head at mid-off, but he did not last much longer and did not wait for the third umpire after he was sent back by Hodge.

The Australian looked set for a major innings but fizzed a drive straight to extra-cover, when a yard either side would have given him his seventh boundary.

Gloucestershire's purposeful out-cricked proved successful again, Ben Edmondson running out Steven Cross with a direct hit from fine-leg as the batsmen sought a second and Hamish Marshall pouching a Chilton top-edge.

New Zealanders Hamish Marshall and Craig Spearman gave the Glos reply some early impetus and 23 came from the third over, Spearman lofting James Anderson nonchalantly over long-off for six.

Chilton then decided to bring on Flintoff, who was on the mark straight away and made the breakthrough in his first over.

After a strong appeal for lbw was rejected, Flintoff had Marshall sharply taken at backward point by Hodge.

Then it was the turn of star spinner Muttiah Muralitharan, but two boundaries came off his opening two deliveries.

The unflappable Spearman continued to keep Glos ahead of the rate, often employing a deft reverse sweep, and reached fifty from 35 balls with a towering straight six off left-arm spinner Gary Keedy.

No foreigners

FROM PAGE 17 participate in the competition.

The BFF also has short-listed five booters for the best player of the inaugural B. League award and the final name will be announced tonight at a prize distribution ceremony at the NSC Tower Auditorium.

The players are Wali Faisal, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Zahid Hossain Ezzini (Dhaka Abahani), Zahid Hasan (Dhaka Mohammedan) and Mohammad Robin (Farashganj). The best player will receive Tk 25,000 while Brothers Nigerian recruit Junior will also get the same money as the highest scorer in the league with 16 goals to his credit.

National Sports Council (NSC) chairman and Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed will be the chief guest at the function and will distribute the prizes and trophies.

Abahani became champions while their old foes Mohammedan finished runners-up in the professional league.

Meanwhile, Helal also informed that they already donated the saved amount of Tk 5 lakhs from the prize distribution ceremony to the Chef Adviser's relief fund.

Not fun time

FROM PAGE 17 to survive in the highest level of the game.

The new committee under the leadership of Chief of General Staff Maj Gen Sina Ibn Jamali has to give a clear message to the players about their duty because it is worrying for everybody when a team even found positives from their worst possible performance.

Otherwise, the New Zealand trip in December could be a complete Black-wash.

Real after Rafael

FROM PAGE 20 Real would likely sign Chelsea winger Arjen Robben despite the high cost involved and that AC Milan playmaker Kaka could join the team if he demanded to leave AC Milan.

Chelsea are reportedly asking for 35 million euros for Robben while AC Milan have refused to consider letting Kaka go despite Real reportedly being willing to pay 90 million euros for the Brazilian who is under contract with the Italian side until June 2011.

Akhtar snubs ICL offer



AFP, Karachi

Pakistani paceman Shoaib Akhtar said Saturday he had turned down an offer from a multi-million-dollar breakaway Indian league because representing his country was more important than money.

The 32-year-old bowler was among seven current Pakistan players offered lucrative deals to play in the Indian Cricket League (ICL).

The league is bankrolled by India's Essel Group, which controls India's biggest listed media firm, Zee Telefilms.

"I was offered a decent amount from the Indian league officials. I have decided that my country is far more important for me and I am important for my team so I have decided not to take the offer," Akhtar told AFP.

Others who reportedly received offers include current captain Shoaib Malik, all-rounder Shahid Afridi, Abdul Razzaq, paceman Mohammad Asif and batsmen Mohammad Yousuf and Younis Khan.

Akhtar was joined by new-ball partner Asif and all-rounder Afridi in turning down the rebel offer.

"Pakistan has given me name, fame

and money so I think I should stick to playing for the country," Afridi told AFP.

Asif shared those sentiments, saying he did not hesitate to turn down the offer.

"I was first offered a hefty sum to play for the league but when I did not reply they increased the offer, but I am not ready to play and I have told them now," said Asif.

There were reports that the seven players may not sign the central contracts with the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) which prohibit players from playing in any private league but Akhtar said he had signed the contract.

"I have also signed the central contract which proves that I am only willing to play for my country and for my people," said Akhtar.

The PCB Friday said eight out of 15 players had signed the central contracts while seven had asked for more time to go through the details. The PCB last month offered central contracts to 20 players.

Five players did not attend Friday's meeting but will sign the contracts in the next couple of weeks, the PCB said.

ZEE launched the Twenty20 league in May, an annual tournament featuring foreign players and some current Indian players. The league resembles

World Series Cricket, which was launched by Australian media mogul Kerry Packer in the 1970s and changed the face of the modern game.

Recently retired West Indian batting legend Brian Lara was the first player to sign for the league, which carries prize money of one million US dollars.

Pakistan's Inzamam-ul-Haq and New Zealand's Stephen Fleming -- both of whom retired from one-day cricket after the World Cup -- were also linked to the league.

PCB chairman Nasim Ashraf last week said any player featuring in the rebel league will not be considered for future selection in the national team, a warning that played a major role in players' decisions.

Akhtar, who missed the World Cup in the Caribbean earlier this year due to injury, is attending a training camp here to tune up for next month's Twenty20 World Cup in South Africa.

Akhtar, who has not played for Pakistan since February, said he was focusing on his comeback.

"Pakistan have to play in the Twenty20, then against South Africa, then against India and Australia, so I am more focused for the Pakistan assignments than playing any series which is not for my country," he said.

Five-star Bose set the tone



AGENCIES, undated

Two contrasting innings from Wasim Jaffer and Gautam Gambhir, one cultured the other iffy, pushed the Indians to 127 for 2 at lunch on the second day at Grace Road.

Jaffer's soft dismissal, twenty minutes before lunch, was the only blot in a session where the Indians took control after five-star Ranadeb Bose shot the second string Lankan side to 266 on Friday.

Jaffer set the tone, reeling sweetly-timed drives off the faster bowlers. His cover-drive off Akalanka Ganegama's first over, the second of the day, was the shot of the morning and he was soon in cruise mode, glancing and driving with minimum fuss. Two runs short of his half-century he advanced down the track to left-arm spinner Rangana Herath and spooned a simple catch to mid-on. Just like in the first innings at Trent Bridge, he gave it away when well set.

Gambhir was at the opposite end of the comfort spectrum. He was dropped in the first over of the day, flashing outside off to Dammika Prasad and watching Herath let off a diving chance at third slip. Several

other edges fell short of the slip fielders and two confident appeals for lbw, against Prasad and Chanaka Walagedara, were turned down. It was a charmed existence for most part and it was only before lunch that he appeared to be hitting his stride.

Rahul Dravid, who would want to use this game to regain some form before the third Test at The Oval, began positively in his short stint before the lunch break.

Earlier, Ranadeb Bose pushed his claims for a Test recall by taking five wickets on the first day of India's three-day match against Sri Lanka A at Grace Road here Friday.

Pace bowler Bose, yet to feature in the ongoing Test series against England which sees India 1-0 up following a seven-wicket win at Trent Bridge ahead of the third and final match at The Oval starting on Thursday, took five for 51 as Sri Lanka A were bowled out for 266.

He was well-supported by off-spinner Ramesh Powar, who took four for 85. Powar, also yet to play in the Test series with India opting for experienced leg-spinner Anil Kumble as their specialist slow bowler, enjoyed a purple patch of three wickets in four balls.

At stumps, India were 25 for one.

Iraqis fine gesture

FROM PAGE 20

"We come to Baghdad with great joy. It was a huge victory. We would like to present this cup as a gift to the Iraqi people and to the woman who lost her son in the terrorist attack," said substitute Ali Abbas, bursting into tears.

Led by a grinning goalkeeper Noor Sabri carrying the silver cup, the team lined up in their matching team track-suits to be kissed by Maliki, who placed limp garlands of white carnations around their necks.

Maliki later hosted a reception at his office in Baghdad's fortified Green Zone, the often-shelled city district housing the government and US embassy, attended by cabinet ministers and President Talabani.

Najeh Hamud, the deputy chairman of Iraq's Football Federation, told AFP while still in Amman that seven members of the team would skip the homecoming.

The captain, Mahmoud, was going to Damascus to see his family, among

the four million Iraqis to have fled the violence since the 2003 US-led invasion, Hamud said. The other six players had commitments with foreign clubs.

An Iraqi ministry spokesman flatly denied that their non-appearance had anything to do with the dire levels of violence plaguing the capital.

"Security has nothing to do with not arriving with the team, it's purely administrative reasons related to drawing up contracts," said Hassan Qassim, a spokesman for the ministry of youth and sports.

Mahmoud has already said that he feared death if he joined a victory parade through Baghdad. The national squad trains in Jordan because of the danger in Iraq and many of the team members play their club football abroad.

The squad's Brazilian coach Jorvan Viera also avoided Baghdad, instead opting for a holiday in Morocco now that his stint with the Iraq squad is over.

Viera is also mulling a deluge of tempting job offers after overseeing the

surprise victory.

"I need to rest and that might take three months before I decide my future, given all the offers I have received from China, Australia, Korea, Turkey, Tunisia and Qatar," he told AFP in the Jordanian capital Amman.

The team's victory has been celebrated as a rare moment of national solidarity by most of Iraq's war-weary population.

But some extremists did not share the joy in the performance of the team -- which counts players from all of Iraq's bitterly divided communities.

Neither has the football team's example of national unity been matched by Iraq's divided political leaders.

On Wednesday six cabinet ministers from the largest Sunni bloc resigned, effectively ending the Shiite-dominated government's claim to be one of national unity and damaging Iraq's faltering programme of reconciliation.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Woman, slangily
4 Information
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12 Diva's problem
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18 Hoodlum
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32 In the cards
34 Pesky flier
35 Crystal gazer

DOWN
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4 "Impossible!"
5 Joie de vivre
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8 Malden
9 Erstwhile ova
10 Relaxing exercise
11 Convince
16 OK
19 Grand story
20 Shot a hole-in-one
21 Theater box
22 Photocopier need
23 Desertlike
25 Vanished
26 Lover of classical music
27 Scrambled wd.
28 Collections
30 Haberdashery rackful
33 Sleeping sickness
34 Slip-up
36 Sire
37 Prompted
38 Knowing about
39 Lab container
40 "Bus Stop" writer
42 Beirut's land (Abbr.)
43 Praise/lul piece
44 Turn on the water-works
45 Supplement, with "out"

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Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF YOU'RE MUCH MORE SPEEDY THAN ALL OTHER COMPETITORS, ONE COULD SAY YOU'RE FASTLY SUPERIOR.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: F equals M