



Sania Mirza of India plays a forehand return to Spaniard Anabel Medina Garrigues at the Pilot Pen tournament in New Haven, Connecticut on Tuesday.

Bangladesh's

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two teams will be pitted against each other with both their previous games ending in identical 1-1 draws. It was the Merdeka Cup in 1973 when Bangladesh drew with Singapore while their second meeting resulted in the same in Kathmandu in 1986 during an international tournament also involving Denmark and hosts Nepal.

Zimbabwe face Indonesia in the day's other match with the Africans also in a must-win situation against the last year's runners-up in a bid to stay up for a berth in the last four.

Agencies add: "Being a newcomer to the Merdeka Cup will not stop us from gunning for wins over Indonesia and Bangladesh," Zimbabwean head coach Sunday Chidzambwa told yesterday.

He said they had learned the ASEAN footballing style in the match against Singapore and would make some adjustments in their encounter against Indonesia.

Meanwhile, Indonesian coach Ivan Kolev said it was a new team and the tournament gave his players the chance to gain some international experience.

"Some of them are debutants in representing Indonesia, like Muhammad Nasuha, Siswanto and Cornelius Map," he said.

Kolev added against Zimbabwe, certain aspects of the teams have to be improved particularly in ball control because the Indonesians lost the ball too easily against Bangladeshis.

Indonesia are represented mostly by the U-23 players who are inexperienced except for mid-fielder Atep, who played for the republic in last month's Asian Cup.

BCCI's Plan B

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president of the International Cricket Council in July 2008, and will then have to relinquish office at his home board. An interim president will hold office for the three-month period from July till September 2008, when the elections are set to take place.

Once the ICC announced that David Morgan of the ECB, and Pawar from the BCCI, would take up office as ICC president in 2008 and 2010 respectively, the BCCI decided to do something similar at home, wherein the president elect will be chosen a year in advance. This suggestion came from Inderjit Singh Bindra, former president of the BCCI and current president of the Punjab Cricket Association. It was suggested that such a practice would ensure that the president elect had a good working knowledge of the board, and that elections would proceed in a smooth manner.

According to the procedural changes being suggested, the interim president for that period will be someone from the same zone as the existing president -- West Zone -- which in this case is Amin. By rotation the next turn, which will be for a full three years, from September 2008 till 2011, goes to Central Zone. The front-runner here is Shashank Manohar, who is the president of the Vidarbha Cricket Association and vice-president of the BCCI, apart from being a close aide of Pawar. What this will mean, in effect, is that there will be no elections for the post of president in 2008 and the current regime will continue, unchallenged, till 2011.

It is understood that Lalit Modi, the man behind many of the financial and business aspects of the board, suggested that a similar procedure be adopted for other office bearers of the board, apart from the president, in order to ensure some sort of continuity. However, this did not come up for discussion in the course of the two special general meetings held in Mumbai on Tuesday.

Blake eases past Clement

Tennis

AFP, New Haven

Third-seeded American James Blake eased into the third round here on Tuesday as rain continued to disrupt the 675,000-dollar Pilot Pen Open tune-up event.

On a chilly evening, the 25-year-old American overwhelmed unseeded Frenchman Arnaud Clement 6-4, 6-2 in a match featuring nine service breaks and multiple unforced errors.

Blake, who reached the finals in Cincinnati last Sunday, was far from his fluent best. Despite not firing on all cylinders, he proved too strong for Clement who just couldn't get his counter-punching game going.

"It was a little tough," Blake said. "You just have to accept that you're not going to hit the 125 or 130 serve. I took advantage of his second serves.

The sixth-ranked American has now extended his winning streak to 7-0 against the Frenchman.

"It's not as if it's indicative of his play. He really is one of the best players out there. I know with his

ability he can get me on any given day," said Blake who now awaits the winner of the match between Robby Ginepri and Agustin Calleri.

Heavy rain poured down all day at the Connecticut Tennis Center, forcing officials to cancel the day session and push all but four matches to Wednesday.

"During a rain delay, you don't want my job," tournament director Ann Worcester said. I can't remember canceling out a session for the 10 years I've been doing this."

In the only other men's match, American giant-killer John Isner continued his dazzling summer run with a straight set dismantling of Germany's Benjamin Becker 6-3, 6-4.

The 22-year-old American, who smashed a stunning 144 aces on his way to the final in Washington a few weeks ago, entirely dominated the contest, breaking his opponent once in each set to seal the deal in 58 minutes.

"My return is my favourite shot," said the 28th-ranked Indian. She's not one of the biggest servers. So you want to put pressure right away."

Isner had a hectic schedule since Wimbledon, but finally took some time off ahead of the US Open, the last Grand Slam of the year which starts next Monday in Flushing Meadows.

"I took a week off last week. I felt I needed it. I feel fresh again and ready for the US Open."

Isner came into the post match news press conference sporting a 'J-block' shirt, in reference to James Blake's rooting section of the same

name.

"I lost a little bet with James, so I have to wear this at every press conference I do," Isner said. "When I warm up, I have to wear this other shirt which he autographed. It's worse. It has his face in the back of it."

In women's action, Poland's Agnieszka Radwanska outlasted Ai Sugiyama of Japan 7-6, 3-6, 6-4, while Indian Sania Mirza downed Anabel Medina Garrigues 6-3, 6-3.

Mirza and Medina Garrigues started their match Monday evening with the Spaniard leading 1-0 and 30-30 before rain intervened. When play resumed late Tuesday, the Indian star played with authority, unleashing a barrage of winners and ravaging returns.

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ICC distances from ICL

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"But I'm not shattered or surprised. It's not as if lightning has struck me," he said. "This was surely not a bolt from the blue, for such a possibility was doing the rounds for quite sometime."

"It feels bad that though I wanted to teach them (his former wards at the NCA) a few things, I can't do that any more. They have to learn things themselves. I did not get the opportunity to help them learn."

The BCCI sacked Kapil -- who is chairman of the ICL's executive board -- a day after the league announced a host of new recruits..

The domestic cricketers who have signed up for the ICL have been barred from playing in tournaments affiliated to the BCCI and they will not be able to derive any benefits from the board.

HARRIS CLOSE TO ICL

Chris Harris could be the latest former international to join the Indian Cricket League, with reports from New Zealand that the allrounder has already reached an agreement with the group. A New Zealand television station reported that Harris would be joined by Chris Cairns and Nathan Astle, with a fourth unnamed player also set to follow their lead.

TNVP said Harris had rejected a new deal with his domestic side Canterbury to become the ICL's first signing from New Zealand. If the move is confirmed, he will further boost the league's list of international players that includes Brian Lara, Lance Klusener, Inzamamul Haq and Mohammad Yousuf.

Harris, 37, has not played for New Zealand since 2004-05 but has remained a first-rate contributor in domestic fixtures. Last season he was Canterbury's top one-day run-scorer with 362 at 60.33 and chipped in with nine wickets, while also averaging 42.80 in a solid first-class campaign.

Cairns and Astle, both of whom have retired from first-class cricket, have been mentioned for some time as potential ICL recruits but they have not confirmed the rumours. Stephen Fleming has also declined to publicly comment on the speculation that he would join the group.

VENGSSARKAR DISMISSES FEAR

Dilip Vengsarkar, India's chief selector, identified lucrative financial

rewards as the driving factor behind players joining the ICL, but was confident that big-name players would not be tempted because they are "already getting plenty" playing for India.

"Money, it appears, has been the main attraction," Vengsarkar told the Kolkata-based Telegraph. "They've made a choice... I don't think the biggest names will be tempted simply because they're already getting plenty. I doubt if they (those who have joined ICL) discussed things with either family or friends, though."

Vengsarkar said, however, that the current situation was very different from the time he and five other Indian players (Bishen Singh Bedi, Sunil Gavaskar, Gundappa Viswanath, Farhad Chandrasekhar and Syed Kirmani) were approached by Kerry Packer's recruiters in 1978-79. "Then, we hardly got anything. There was just no money in international cricket."

However, Vengsarkar admitted he was not sure when the decision he would have taken then. The offer came late and Packer had reconciled with the establishment before Vengsarkar could decide. "Frankly, I don't know what decision I would've taken... I was, at that point, very young."

Meanwhile, Rohan Gavaskar has also confirmed an approach from the ICL, though he is yet to take a decision. "I've got an offer, yes, but haven't made up my mind," Gavaskar said.

FARHAT BLAMES BIAS

Imran Farhat launched another stinging attack against Pakistan's selectors, claiming that their bias towards him compelled him to opt out of a central contract and join the ICL instead.

Farhat last represented Pakistan during the Test series in South Africa; he has since been overlooked not only for the subsequent ODI series, but also the World Cup and the tours to Abu Dhabi and Scotland. He was also recently omitted from the squad for the Twenty20 World Championship after being handed a central contract.

"Instead of being appreciated, I was put in the list of Future Players Programme that caused me great mental torture. And as if this wasn't humiliating enough, the selectors called me for the Twenty20 camp in Karachi, only to drop me to give another shock," Farhat told Dawn.

Hamburg, who are second in the table to Bayern Munich after winning both of their opening games, are away to VfL Bochum on Friday.

"Despite being the top scorer at the Patron's Trophy one-day cup and

in the Pentangular Cup, the selectors have been considering me as a Test player. They don't know I am also a record-holder of the national Twenty20 championship, having scored 115 in an innings of the second edition of the event in Karachi."

Farhat scored over 500 runs in last year's Pentangular Cup, four-day matches played on a league basis, with a top-score of 184 and 242 runs at a strike-rate of over 100 in the five Patron's Cup matches he took part in.

Farhat's ODI record, however, has never been convincing, with only six half-centuries and a solitary century to show from 33 matches. In his last 15 ODIs, he has scored 337 runs at an average of 24.07, with only two half-centuries.

Heinze

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"I am not anti-United but I only wanted to defend my right to search for another club without restriction," he added.

Heinze said he has never spoken to clubs in Spain, France or Italy and was still hoping to join Liverpool.

"I have never spoken with clubs in these countries because in my head the only option is Liverpool. My hope was to negotiate a transfer to Liverpool but, unfortunately, the Premier League decided in favour of United," he said.

The decision is a painful one but my lawyers are still searching for a solution, one that is favourable to all parties," he added.

Hamburg win

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"I don't see it that way," added Beiersdorfer.

The Dutchman scored the winning penalty in Hamburg's 1-0 win over Bayer Leverkusen on Sunday which put his side second in the table, but he was the victim of boos and jeers from his own supporters.

"Of course, the move to Valencia would have been a dream move for Rafael, but I am sure the disappointment will gradually disappear," added Beiersdorfer.

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Flintoff delights Cook, Bell

BBC ONLINE, undated

Alastair Cook and Ian Bell believe Andrew Flintoff can inspire England to a one-day series win over India.

Flintoff took 1-12 in seven overs in his first game for England since ankle surgery after the World Cup as they went 1-0 up in the seven-match series.

"An England side with him in it is a much better side," said Bell.

Cook said: "There are not many people in the world who can bat like he does and bowl as quickly as he does. He gives great balance to our side."

Cook and Bell hit their maiden one-day international centuries to help England amass 288-2, before the tourists were bowled out for 184.

Flintoff, who is confident he can play a full part with bat and ball despite undergoing his third ankle operation in June, bowled with pace and accuracy.

"To see the big man back and firing on all cylinders, bowl seven overs and hit 90mph and above, is a great sign for all England supporters and the team," Bell said.

"It's great to have him back, as a presence out there as much as anything. He's earned the right to have that presence."

Cook added: "Any side would love to have him. It's good he's back and hopefully he can stay fit."

The Lancashire star also impressed India skipper Rahul Dravid, whose team won the Test series 1-0 in Flintoff's absence.

"He bowled really well, he's obviously an important player for them with the bat and ball, and we'll have to think about how to counteract him for the rest of the series," he said.

Cambodia defy

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have played three games, and Cambodia are bottom of the table with one point each.

The top two teams will meet in the August 29 final.

BANGLADESH TEAM

Biplab, Ariful, Rajani, Nazrul, Waly, Zahid, Arman Aziz, Abul, Titu, Emily, Alfaz (Robin, 56 and Ujjal, 82).

SYRIA-KYRGYZSTAN

AFP adds: Favourites Syria brushed aside Kyrgyzstan 4-1 on Tuesday to record their second successive win in the five-nation meet.

Maher El Sayed put Syria ahead in the seventh minute, but Kyrgyzstan were lucky to draw level six minutes later when Syrian defender Ali Dyeb lobbed the ball into his own goal while trying to clear.

Zyad Chaabo shot Syria ahead again a minute before halftime and the emphatic victory was sealed by two second-half goals from Mohammed Alzeno in the 70th minute and Abraheim Al-Hasan in the 82nd.

Exhibition

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Meanwhile, the first women's football match between visiting Orissa and the Bangladesh team yesterday at the Ansar Academy was postponed as the two teams could not make the trip to Shafipur.

The second match today at Narshingdi is also doubtful. The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has yet to decide about the fate of the match.

Diouf steals

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able to field a strong side including Chelsea midfielder Michael Essien and Portsmouth's Sulley Muntari.

It was Muntari who provided the decisive pass as Ghana took the lead on the stroke of half-time. His perfectly-weighted ball sent Asamoah clear and the Udinese forward planted a low shot past Sylva at his near post.

Ghana gave a debut to Andre Ayew, son of Black Stars legend Abedi "Pele" Ayew, in the closing stages.

But the last word went to Diouf. Babacar Gueye's 74th minute strike cannoned into Diouf and he managed to control before calmly slotting home.

Samba in Down

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defender Tony Popovic, who played for Australia in the last World Cup, is with Sydney FC.

Defender Hayden Fox has