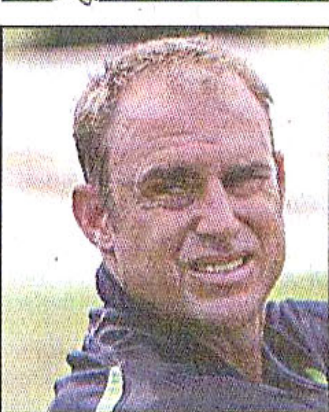
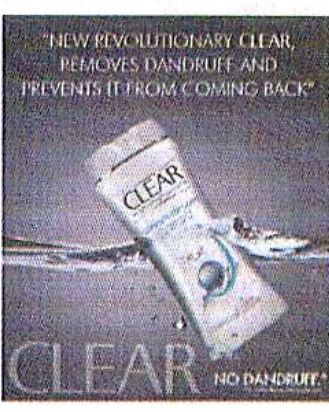




Did U Know?

The equestrian sport first appeared at the ancient Olympic Games in 648 BC, in the form of chariot races.



Matthew Hayden
(Australia's star opening batsman)
"I pray every day. I make a cross on the crease when I take guard and say whatever I do here -- win or loss -- it is all for You."
Talking about his faith.

What to WATCH

TEN Sports
Pakistan v South Africa
Second Test, Day Two
Live from 10:45am
ESPN
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

SAFF football deferred

SPORTS REPORTER

India had their way as the SAFF Football Championship has been deferred for the sake of the Indian domestic calendar.

A meeting of the South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) executive committee in Colombo yesterday decided to hold the eight-team event of the south Asian nations in the last week of May next year instead of December this year.

Sri Lanka and Maldives will jointly host the biennial football competition.

Bangladesh Football Federation's acting general secretary Manzoor Hossain Malu, who attended the meeting, informed from Colombo that it has been put back due to clash with 2010 World Cup qualifiers and also the professional and national football league in India.

It was expected that India would put pressure on the SAFF to reschedule the meet in the meeting. The draw will be held in Maldives on February 26.

Badrinath in for Gambhir

PTI, Chandigarh

Opener Gautam Gambhir, injured during the practice session on the eve of the fourth one-dayer against Australia, will be out of action for two weeks and has been replaced by Tamil Nadu batsman Subramaniam Badrinath.

Gambhir on Sunday slipped while batting in the nets and sustained a right adductor (groin) muscle strain.

"An MRI scan has not revealed a significant injury to the region, but from initial findings and clinical presentation it appears that he will

Hosts hold Tajikistan

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Be it football or a game of cricket, Bangladesh tend to do the unexpected when there is no burden of expectations.

Having trained against all odds, the national football team once again proved the critics wrong when they held Tajikistan to a 1-1 draw in the 2010 World Cup pre-qualifier yesterday.

However, Syed Nayeemuddin's experimental and young side were so impressive that they could have won the match against a side that had handed Bangladesh their biggest ever home defeat at the same old Bangabandhu National Stadium last year.

Incessant rain and an almost waterlogged pitch might have helped Bangladesh's purposes but it alone cannot take away the credit as the booters played throughout the 90 minutes at the same pace without tiring at all.

Jumratul Islam Mithu scored on his full international debut after a barren first half but an hour's hard

work was spoiled when Zahid Hossain's clumsy challenge inside the box gifted a penalty to the visitors, who equalised through Numondzhon Hakimov.

The Tajiks, favourites in the pre-qualifiers, came to the game with a hundred percent record against Bangladesh after winning both their 2006 World Cup pre-qualifiers by identical margins of 2-0 and last year's AFC Challenge Cup match 6-1.

However, the inaugural Challenge Cup winners looked a shadow of the last year's team and struggled in unfamiliar conditions.

It were the home side, who had hardly a few hundred fans watching the game, rushed first blood when Mithu's teasing cross was held by rival goalkeeper Mukanin in his second attempt under pressure from Emily.

The Bangladesh backline stood firm against a few corners and Farkhod Vasiev's blistering freekick that whistled past Biplab's post before the touring defence was tested by Zahid.

The young winger raced down the right to cut back a low cross but Moni mishit the chance at the near

post.

Mithu provided another fine centre from the left but Zahid's header from ten yards was too weak to trouble Mukanin just seconds before the short whistle.

Mukanin made a fine save when his reflex denied a superb header by Arman Aziz two minutes after the restart. Bangladesh maintained the pressure but Abul's effort inside from the area was deflected by a rival defender.

The resulting corner in the 50th minute saw Nayeemuddin's boys go ahead but not before a comedy of errors. Abul and Emily both shot the ball twice in a long melee only to be denied by the defensive wall but Emily's diagonal pass finally found Mithu who back-flicked home from close.

The lead was short lived as Zahid unnecessarily pushed substitute Dilshod Vasiev, who never looked threatening enough at the far corner of the penalty box.

Hakimov, who had scored one goal against Bangladesh during their visit in 2006, kept his cool and drilled a low drive into the back of the net from the spot for a valuable

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Bangladesh's goal scorer Mithu (2nd from L) waits for fellow striker Emily (No. 10) to send the decisive pass from a goalmouth scramble during their World Cup pre-qualifier against Tajikistan at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

India clinch a thriller

Cricket

AFP, Chandigarh

A Mahendra Singh Dhoni-inspired India stunned Australia with a thrilling eight-run win in the fourth one-dayer here on Monday, throwing the series wide open.

Chasing India's challenging 291-4, Australia made 283-7 to allow India to pull one back in the seven-match series and reduce the margin to 2-1. The first game was abandoned due to rain.

Australia appeared to be cruising towards a win after Matthew Hayden top-scored with 92 and Andrew Symonds hit 75 but the game turned on its head through some spirited bowling by the Indians at the death.

It was India's first win over Australia in 11 matches, the last coming in Brisbane in January 2004.

Left-arm seamer Rudra Pratap Singh (2-66) changed the complexion of the match in the 47th over when he clean-bowled Symonds and then ran out Brad Hogg on the next ball.

Needing 16 off Zaheer Khan's last over, James Hopes (23 not out) hit a four off the first ball but could manage only three more runs off it in the company of Brett Lee.

Man-of-the-match Dhoni made two brilliant stumpings after making a 35-ball 50 which helped India finish strongly despite a sedate start.

"We were not able to chase earlier on in the series so we decided to bat first. Credit should go to Tendulkar and Ganguly for giving us a good start. Our bowlers also bowled very well in the middle overs," Dhoni said.

"We needed to be aggressive otherwise we could not have come back in the series like this."

Sachin Tendulkar anchored the innings with 79 off 119 balls while

adding crucial 91 runs with Sourav Ganguly (41) and 83 with Yuvraj Singh (39).

"The Indians played very well, they kept wickets in hand and opened up only at the end," Australian skipper Ricky Ponting said.

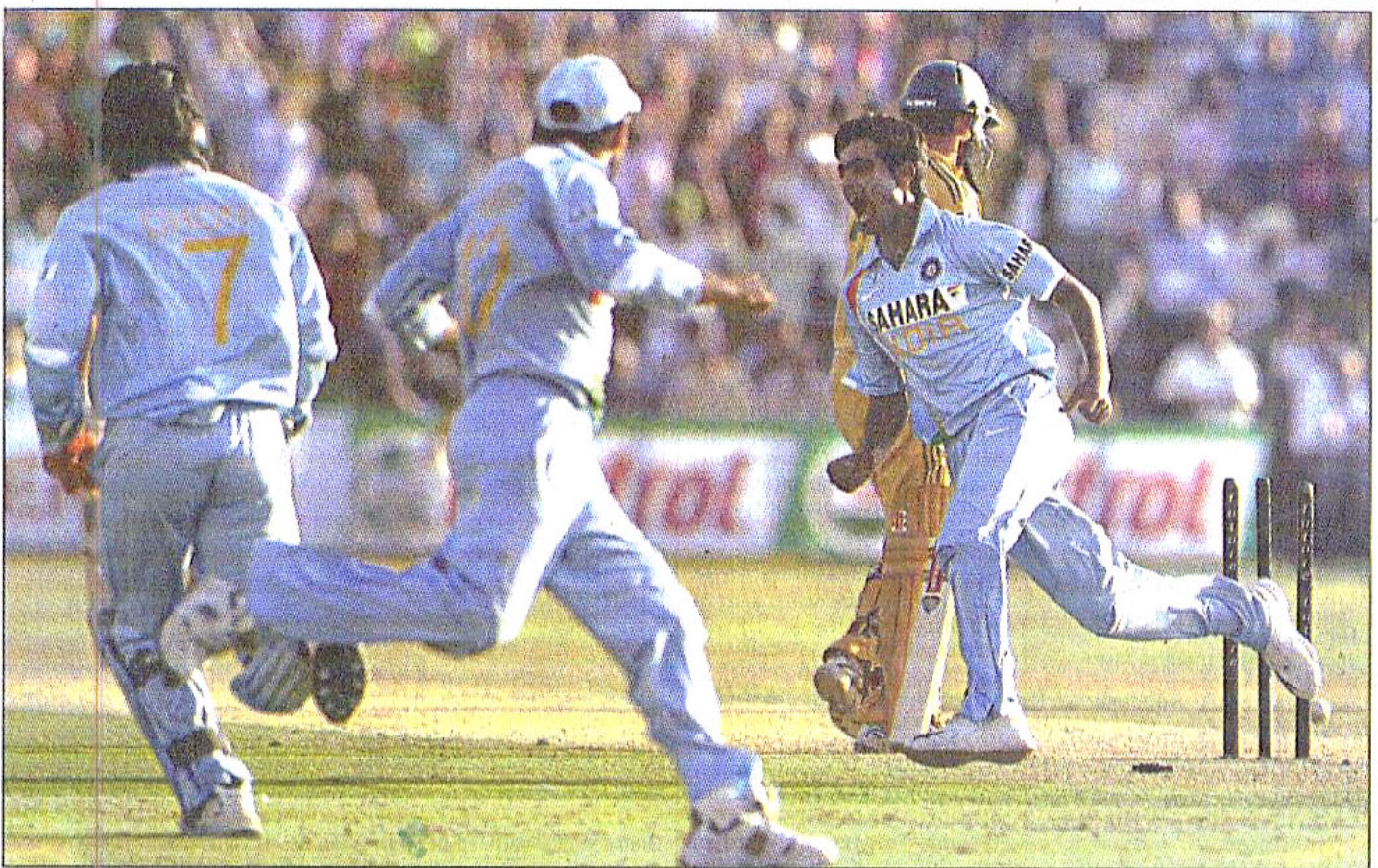
"We were in a comfortable position while chasing but then lost crucial wickets."

Australia started their innings in a blazing fashion, despite losing Adam Gilchrist (18) early once again, thanks to some lusty hittings by Hayden.

Hayden, who slammed 11 fours and two sixes in his run-a-ball knock, holed out to Zaheer off left-arm spinner Murali Kartik (1-48) after he had hit the same bowler for a four a ball earlier.

Symonds took Australia close to the target with his 84-ball 75 before being clean-bowled by a searing Rudra Pratap delivery.

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India fast bowler Rudra Pratap Singh (R) is ecstatic after running out Australia's Brad Hogg during the fourth one-day international in Chandigarh yesterday. Singh also had clean bowled dangerous Andrew Symonds to turn the match on its head.

More feathers in Sachin's crown

AFP, Chandigarh

Prolific Indian batsman Sachin Tendulkar established a slew of records en route to his 79 in the fourth one-day international against Australia here Monday.

Tendulkar, who reached his 84th fifty with a double off Andrew Symonds, became the most prolific half-century in one-day international cricket, surpassing Inzamam-ul-Haq's 83.

He also became the player with the highest run tally against Australia in one-dayers, surpassing Desmond Haynes of West Indies. From 51 matches against the Aussies, Tendulkar has 2,321 runs while Haynes scored 2,262 in 64 games.

The Mumbai "master blaster"

SEE PAGE 18 COL 3

Spinning with a smile

Cricket

CRICINFO, Lahore

A chat with Danish Kaneria is one of life's little pleasures. Permanent mischief resides in those eyes and if you don't see it, his toothy smile will make sure you do. He talks straight, a Karachi trait, much of it unprintable, but generally spot on.

The day before this Test he wasn't happy. Catches had been dropped -- they have been for some time -- and he had been without spark on his home ground, against opponents he fancies. In truth, he was also a touch overshadowed by the newbie Abdul Rehman, reduced on day four of a turner to the secondary spinner: "It was slow turn year (mate)." There was even idle talk of Kaneria being dropped for Lahore.

Had it happened, it might even

have overshadowed the man to whom this Test is dedicated. Near enough four years ago against the same opponents, Pakistan held, in effect, a spin-out to decide which leg-spinner to bank on. Kaneria and Mushtaq Ahmed played the two-Test series: the former won. Test in Lahore, the latter did little, and Pakistan had a new leggie.

Since then Pakistan have played 34 Tests and Kaneria has missed only one. He's taken 141 wickets in that time, some of them expensive (35.46) and not all of them quickly (70.2 balls per wicket). But lead man he has been and if ever proof was needed as to why, then today was it.

When no one is sure really what the pitch will do (bounce, turn, a little seam too); when the attack not only looks light, but unbalanced; when some bowlers, like Umar Gul, are having an off-day; when fate conspires against others,

like Mohammad Asif, when batsmen get municipal permission and build houses at the crease; for such days is Kaneria.

He doesn't always make fools of men as Shane Warne or Abdul Qadir did and neither does he carry the precise threat of Anil Kumble. He bowls good balls more often than wicket-taking ones, occasionally he loses some fizz and South Africans at least are reading his googly better. Sometimes you can even lose interest in a Kaneria spell, until suddenly he takes a wicket and for about half an hour thereafter, you shouldn't move.

But he is Pakistan's get-out clause. When pace failed to take more than one in the morning, and the pitch lost some spice after about 20 minutes, Kaneria came on, the day only 12 overs old. The brief was wide-ranging and flexible: strike, but if not, then at least

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NATIONAL CRICKET LEAGUE 2007-08

Ashraful in bullish mood

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka captain Mohammad Ashraful said that he has a headache everyone would love to have when his side starts their campaign in a bid to retain the National Cricket League title.

"I don't know whether there is any weak point in my team and I think the main problem will be to choose the playing eleven. You know Dhaka is always crowded with star players," said the national captain.

"We were even unable to accommodate players like Mehrez Hossain (Opie) and Rasheedul Haque in the 20-member list," he added.

To the Bangladesh skipper, last year tournament was a memorable one although he played only three games before being recalled to the national side on the back of a magnificent 263 runs, his maiden first-class double hundred.

"I think it's an event where one player can improve his batting or bowling by a significant margin. Every player has to set a target," he observed.

The 24-year old right-hander

was supremely confident that they would be able to maintain their supremacy in both versions of the games in the first-class competition, despite the fact that this year all the teams will benefit from the service of the national team players.

"If we can play to our potential then it will not be a big task for my team to retain both titles," said a confident Ashraful.

While the main talking point has been this year's hefty financial package, the ace batsman believes that it is not all about the money -- instead stating that the participation of national players will make the tournament more competitive than in the last few years.

"I don't try to underestimate the financial boost for the players because money always plays a big role to bring seriousness among the players. But I can tell from my playing experience that the presence of national players will matter more for the tournament," he explained.

"It's really exciting that we will be able to play at least six rounds before the New Zealand trip. I think

it will be a real test for the national players before the tour," he added. Ashraful however believes that everything will be in vain if the organisers fail to produce requisite standard pitches for the competition.

"Many people are saying that it would be wise to prepare a pitch akin to the surfaces in New Zealand. But is that practically possible? I think no."

What would be wise is for us to ensure wickets which produce even bounce. And I suggest batting wickets for the one-day competition because if we can make a habit of posting 250 plus runs then it will ultimately bring some positives," he observed.

Ashraful however said that the tournament will be helpful for the national players to show something in the tough tour of New Zealand.

"You know there is nothing better than to have competitive match practice before any series."

We had some success in the last World Cup in West Indies because we went there after playing the Premier Division Cricket league," he said.

Pakistan keep SA in check

Cricket

AFP, Lahore

Ashwell Prince and Jacques Kallis hit half-centuries but Pakistan struck back with some disciplined bowling to restrict South Africa on day one of the second and final Test here Monday.

South Africa had posted 259-6 with Prince (63) and Kallis (59) leading the charge at the Gaddafi Stadium when bad light stopped play seven overs ahead of schedule.

Mark Boucher was unbeaten on nine and Andre Nel was yet to score.

It seemed AB de Villiers (45) would ratchet up the South African total but he fell to an unfortunate run-out, giving Pakistan some advantage as they seek to level the series.

South Africa won the first Test in Karachi by 160 runs.

Captain Graeme Smith plundered 46 runs but none of his teammates followed suit against the spin and pace attack of Pakistan.

Prince conceded that Pakistan have the edge after the first day.

"AB's dismissal tilted the match slightly in Pakistan's favour," Prince said. De Villiers was caught out of his crease as a drive by Boucher was deflected by bowler Mohammad Asif on to the stumps.

"The pitch also surprised us with the turn and it's good that we do not have to bat last," Prince added.

Key batsman Kallis, who scored a masterly 155 and an unbeaten 100 in the first Test, was not in the best form as he nearly played on Danish Kaneria twice. He regained composure though and hit pace-man Umar Gul for two consecutive boundaries to reach his 45th half-century.

Kallis added an invaluable 83 runs for the fifth wicket with Prince, who also defied the bowling with some resolute stroke play.

Pakistan captain Shoaib Malik, who once again went into the Test with just two seamers and two

frontline spinners, did not introduce left-arm spinner Abdul Rehman until the 51st over.

Rehman, who took eight wickets in Karachi, was hit for a six by Kallis before Kaneria struck back, trapping the South African with a disarming googly.

Kaneria, who bowled a long spell of 27 overs on either side of lunch, was the best of the home bowlers with 2-73.

Earlier, Kallis added 53 runs for the third wicket with Smith after the tourists lost Herschelle Gibbs (13) and Hashim Amla (10).

Pakistan's pace duo of Gul and Mohammad Asif provided the early

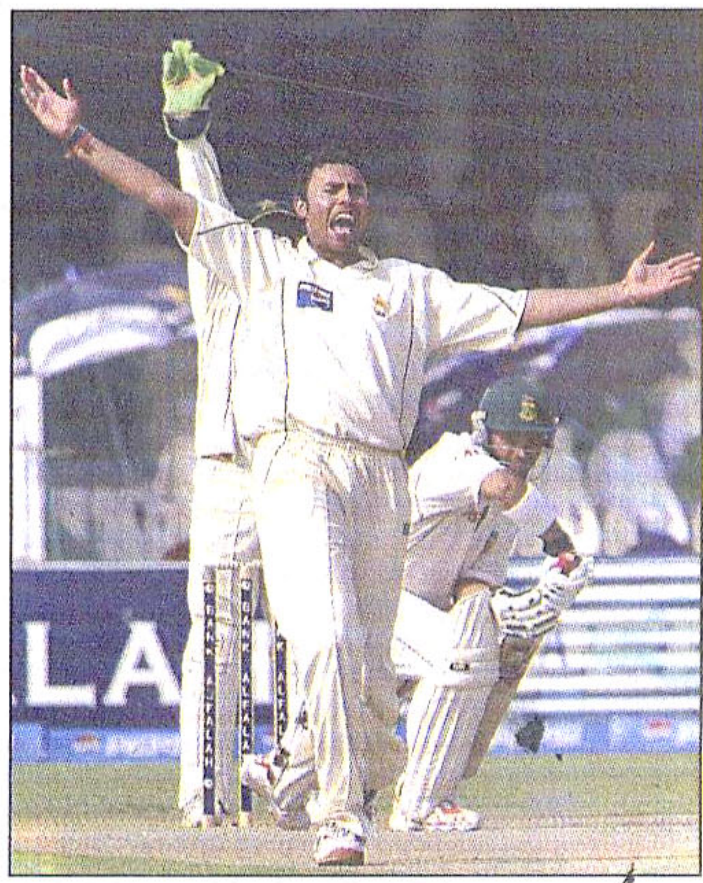
breakthroughs. Gul had Gibbs caught in the gully while Asif bowled Amla with an inswinger.

Smith, batting with confidence on 31 with South Africa 70-2 at lunch, drove Kaneria for a boundary before the leg-spinner had the last laugh with a sharp turner, which went through bat and pad to hit the off-stump.

Prince and Kallis took the score to 160 before Kaneria claimed the prized scalp of Kallis to raise hopes of dismissing the tourists for a modest total.

Prince, however, kept one end intact and consolidated the South

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4



Pakistan leg-spinner Danish Kaneria (C) unsuccessfully appeals for an lbw decision against South Africa batsman Ashwell Prince during the first day of the second Test at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore yesterday.