

V-DAY HOCKEY Sonali Bank meet Army in final

SPORTS REPORTER

Sonali Bank won their fifth match in a row to set a final clash against Bangladesh Army in the Dhaka Bank Victory Day hockey tournament.

In yesterday's last league match at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium, the bankers edged contenders BKSP 3-2 to maintain their great run in the competition.

Bank ended the fray on 15 points while BKSP's last hopes were dashed as they stuck to nine points, three adrift of Army, who lost 3-0 to Sonali Bank in their earlier meeting.

The final between the top two teams will be held at the same venue on Saturday.

The star-studded bankers established their domination early and took a 2-0 first-half lead through goals by Mia brothers Musa and Issa who scored in the six and 13 minutes respectively.

Mamunur Rahman Chayan sealed the victory from a 40th minute penalty corner before BKSP retaliated.

Abdus Sajjad converted a penalty corner in the 43rd minute while Al Masum added the second for the Savar sport institute in the 58th minute.

Under-16 chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Nineteen players share the lead in the 28th National Sub-Junior (under-16 boys' and girls' chess championship securing two points each after the second round matches at the Chess Federation hall-room yesterday.

The two-point holders are Abdullah Al Saif, Ekramul Haque, Arifa Khatun, Mohammad Fahim, Mosabbir Khan, Ashrafuzzaman, Nazmus Sakib, Abir, Saad Junaid, Rakib Hasan, Masudur Rahman, Mainuddin Asif, Masum Miah, Saadi, Tanzania Akhter Tani, Fardeen Islam Pranto, Amirul Islam, Russell and Sakina.

The third round matches will be held on Friday from 3pm at the same venue.

Gus plays

FROM PAGE 24 Russia in group four of World Cup qualifying.

"There are always a lot of rumours, and Bayern are a big club in Europe. To hear my name linked to them is nice, but there's no substance in these rumours."

Hiddink, 60, recently succeeded in qualifying Russia for the Euro 2008.

He has also coached the Netherlands, South Korea and Australia.

A test of spirit

FROM PAGE 21 been laid against the Indian spinner Harbhajan Singh.

It was sensationalism at its worst, trivialising an issue that sport has long struggled to come to terms with, and detracted from the debate about the players.

The announcement that the Indian board were threatening to cancel the tour unless Harbhajan was cleared was also reflected in the polls. Officials were now the media's target.

Still, the general consensus remains that Ricky Ponting's side are a great team but lack grace.

History may judge them harshly, remembering their behaviour rather than their achievements, but cricket history is littered with scandals far more serious than the over-zealous appealing of Ponting's men.

The gentlemen's game has been filled with cases of match-fixing, racism, drug use, ball-tampering even physical confrontation, virtually since the first Test was played in 1877.

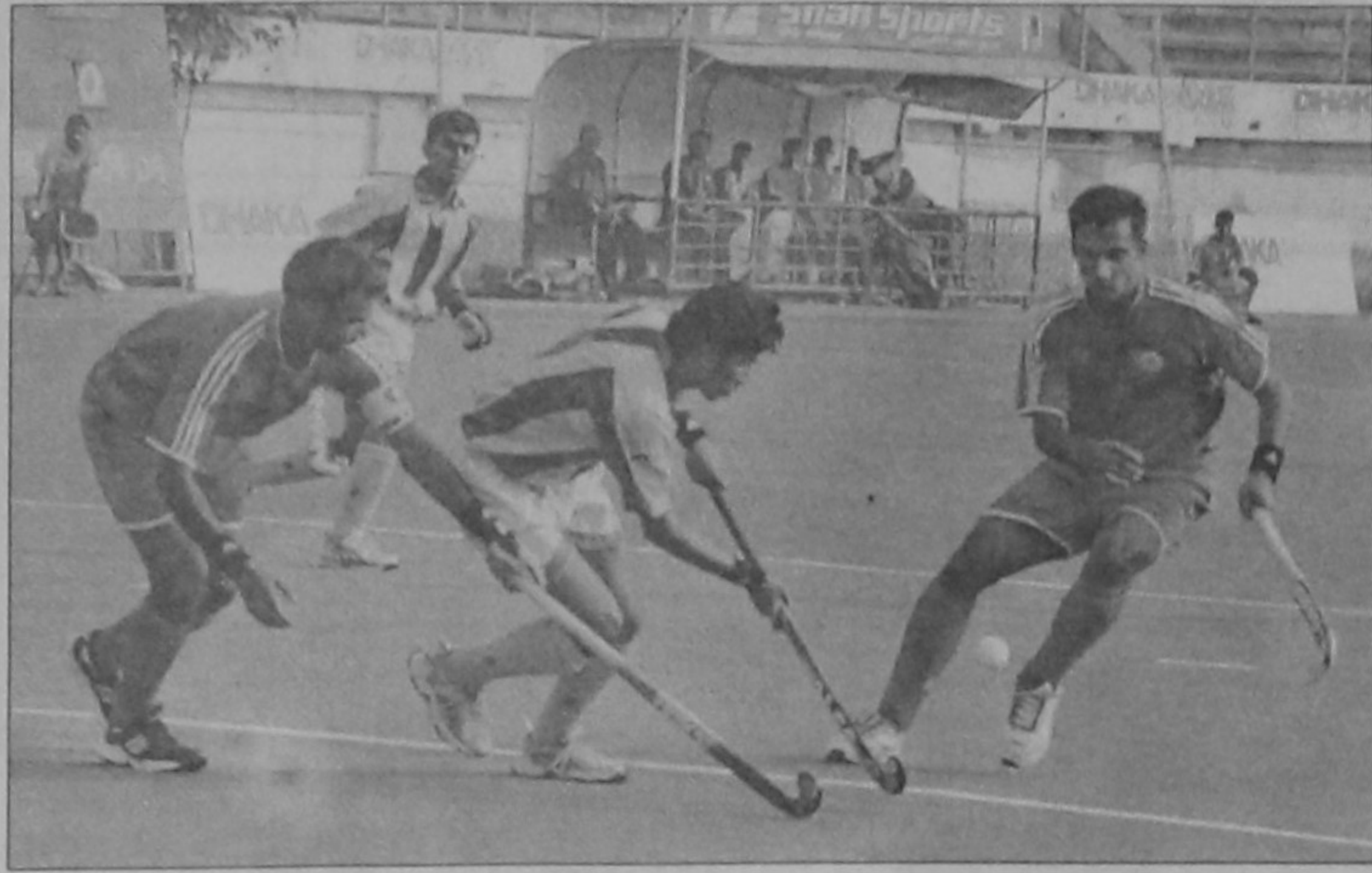
Indeed, English newspapers were eulogising about the spirit of cricket as long ago as the 1880s. Betting on matches was rife at the time and the sport's most revered figure, WG Grace, was a compulsive sledger who broke all sorts of rules.

There were fears the game would be ruined forever when the English skipper Douglas Jardine instructed his bowlers to aim at the Australian batsmen's heads during the Bodyline series but interest in the sport only increased.

There is a lesson in history too for Ponting's men, whose defence of their antics hangs on their argument that they perform within the rules.

That was the same argument Greg Chappell used when he ordered his brother Trevor to bowl the infamous underarm delivery in a one-day international against New Zealand in Melbourne in 1981.

It was an act that met with worldwide derision and almost triggered another diplomatic incident.



A Sonali Bank player tries to take the ball past two BKSP defenders during their crucial last league match of the Dhaka Bank Victory Day hockey tournament at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Ponting wants 'love'

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Ricky Ponting still believes his team does not need to alter its behaviour, but has admitted he would do some things "a little differently" if he could return to the Test in Sydney. Ponting's parents received abusive phone calls in the fallout from the match and his wife Rhianna was concerned about her husband's job after a newspaper column demanded his sacking.

Australia will analyse footage of the Test, in which they equalled the world record of 16 consecutive wins, to see which areas can be improved. "It's perception and the way people see things when they're off the field," Ponting said in the Daily Telegraph. "I might be talking to opposition players on the field but it might be construed by people watching on television that you're in a slanging or sledging match when that's not the case."

Ponting has been backed by Cricket Australia and his teammates, but there has been severe criticism from former cricketers and sporting greats about the team's attitude.

In Sydney there were issues over race, umpiring, sportsmanship, catching, walking and the celebrations when the match was sealed with Michael Clarke's three wickets in an over.

Malcolm Speed, the ICC chief executive, has concerns over the players' behaviour despite them being in "a great cricket team". "I would hate to see them remembered for any reason other than that," he said in the Age. "The team is being criticised, members of the team are being criticised, and they need to be aware of that -- they need to respond to that."

Ponting does not believe the team is arrogant. "I don't think anyone wants the way Australia plays cricket to change," he said. "Everyone likes to see a tough, uncompromising brand of cricket... If we were big-headed and arrogant we wouldn't have been celebrating like that. Big headedness doesn't go hand in hand with the sort of euphoria we showed at the end of the game."

Ponting, who was lbw after hitting the ball in the first innings, told the paper there were things "that in hindsight you might do a little differently". "There's no doubt I stood there for a second or two too long and I shouldn't have done that," he said. "It probably didn't help that I was shown throwing my bat when I got back to the rooms."

"Some of the guys mightn't have shaken Anil Kumble's hand after the game but we were so wrapped up with the end of the game that they were already off the field. We all walked along when it was over and shook their hands."

He has also set himself a big task to get inside the hearts of all Australians. "What I want is for the Australian cricket team to be the most loved and the most respected sporting side in this country," he said. "That's always been one of my aims and it will continue to be."

Stuart Clark, who believes the arrogance claims come from media sensationalism, said a lot of the reaction had been "over the top". "It seems like it is getting to the point where games will be played in silence," he said in the Sydney Morning Herald. "Most of the talk in the Sydney Test was all pretty light-hearted, anyway, and that has been one of the reasons we have all been taken by a bit of surprise with what's gone on after."

Chris Rogers was playing for ACT XI and the Western Australia opener could be called up to replace Hayden should he be ruled out, although New South Wales' Simon Katich is another option.

Hogg, who has been charged with making an offensive remark to India's Aril Kumble and Mahendra Dhoni, will have his hearing two days before the Perth Test and, if found guilty, could be banned for between two and four Tests.

But he is likely to be replaced for this Test anyway as the WACA ground is expected to be a traditionally fast and bouncy wicket and fast bowler Shaun Tait is expected to be named in the starting XI.

"Pace and bounce, that's our overriding characteristic that we look for in a wicket at the WACA, so it will be no different this Test," said Cricket Australia chief executive James Sutherland.

"I think it would be good to see four quicks... especially with an exciting guy like Tait waiting in the wings. I like a lot of people are looking forward to that."

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MAGPIES part FROM PAGE 24 was the 1955 FA Cup when they haven't been champions of England since 1927.

In their quest for success Newcastle have now got through six managers since Kevin Keegan, who twice guided them to runners-up spot in the Premier League, left St James' Park in 1997.

By contrast Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson has been in charge at Old Trafford since 1986.

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In case the league does not see light this year, a broader corporate league could mark the beginning of the metropolis cricket scene.

MSC receive FROM PAGE 21 to be the co-sponsors for the tournament," he added.

Mostaq informed that only one match would be held on the first day of the tournament (Jan 26) while two matches are likely on other days - at 3pm and 5pm.

Proposed rates of ticket for the Club Cup Football tournament is Tk20 for east gallery, Tk 30 for west gallery and Tk 100 for VIP enclosure.

Metro chess from Jan 19

UNB, Dhaka

Metropolis selection chess tournament will begin at the Chess Federation hall-room on January 19.

The event, organised by Bangladesh Chess Federation will be held in 9-round Swiss-League system with the top 16 players qualifying for the Preliminary Phase of the 34th National Chess Championship.

This is an open event for unranked players and those below 2100 rating.

Interested players have been asked to enroll their names by January 17 at the Chess Federation office.

Hayden named despite injury

BBC ONLINE, undated

Australia have named an unchanged squad for the third Test against India despite doubts over Matthew Hayden because of a hamstring injury.

His fitness will be monitored before the Test begins in Perth on 16 January.

Brad Hogg was also named despite facing a ban for an alleged offensive remark, but he could miss out on the final XI if Australia go with four quicks.

Australia lead the series 2-0 but the second Test was marred with a charge of racism and India threatening to quit.

India spinner Harbhajan Singh was banned for three Tests by match referee Mike Procter for allegedly calling Australia's Andrew Symonds a monkey.

He is appealing against the ban and India have said they could suspend the tour if the appeal is not upheld.

They were also unhappy at some of the umpiring decisions made by West Indies' Steve Bucknor and the International Cricket Council agreed to replace him with Billy Bowden for the Perth Test to avoid a "possible diplomatic incident".

Meanwhile, India started a three-day tour match against an Australian Capital Territory XI in Canberra on Thursday.

The tourists declared on 325-9, with opener Wasim Jaffer hitting 92, before ACT XI reached 10-0 in reply at the close. Harbhajan was also playing but was out for a duck.

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India take to the field

Cricket

AFF, Canberra

Opener Virender Sehwag and the struggling Yuvraj Singh both fell cheaply on Thursday as India returned to action after fears they would quit their crisis-hit tour of Australia.

Sehwag fluffed his chance to make a powerful case for Test selection, making just 24 after India won the toss and elected to bat against the Australian Capital Territory XI.

Singh's horror tour continued when he made just two as the tourists paid the price for poor shot selection against a modest attack with the first-class experience.

The Indians declared at 325-9 after throwing a number of wickets away with loose shots, and the ACT were 10 without loss at stumps on the first day.

The match follows three days of frenzied fallout from the controversial second Test in Sydney, which ended in charges of racism, bad sportsmanship and poor umpiring.

Senior batsman and former Indian skipper Rahul Dravid, who benefited from dropping down to number four, making 62 from 91 balls with nine fours, said it was

disappointing that several batsmen again failed to deliver.

"It is about making people sit up and notice them," he said. "Hopefully they can reinforce that in the second innings. When people get their opportunities they have to put their hands up. That's what these games are about."

"I'm sure that Yuvraj and the guys would have liked to get some more runs, get some confidence and get some time in the middle" Dravid added.

Sehwag, considered close to selection for Sydney, where Australia won in dramatic fashion, began his innings cautiously but played a couple of trademark aggressive shots before falling to seamer Luke Swards, 25, who is yet to play first-class cricket.

Sehwag, who survived a run-out scare on seven, was caught at second slip, where ACT captain Mark Higgs held a difficult catch.

The highly rated Singh's batting woes continued when he was caught in the gully from a poor shot. He has made just 17 runs in the first two Tests at 4.25.

In better news for the tourists, embattled opener Wasim Jaffer finally found some form with a stylish 92.

Jaffer, with just 22 runs in four Test innings on this tour, was in

much better touch against the ACT bowlers, hitting eight fours and two sixes during his 191-ball knock.

Wicketkeeper Mahendra Singh Dhoni, captaining the tourists, ran into some overdue form with a quickfire 38 runs from 37 balls, including six boundaries.

Spinner Harbhajan Singh, handed a three-Test ban for alleged racism in the second Test, received a mixed reception when he strode out to bat and survived a confident LBW appeal first ball, but was caught behind two balls later without scoring.

India rested captain Anil Kumble, star batsman Sachin Tendulkar and VVS Laxman and former skipper Sourav Ganguly for the match.

The Indian and Australian captains have both tried to calm the situation in the wake of the Sydney Test. Kumble has called for talks with his opposite number Ricky Ponting, and the Australian skipper promised to examine his team's behaviour.

India arrived in Canberra a day late in protest at Harbhajan's ban, which they are appealing. They decided to resume the tour after umpire Steve Bucknor was axed from the Test series.

Australia lead 2-0 in the series with two matches to play.

Yuvraj lacks fight

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Most of India's cricketers took just a few days to get over their jet lag. Not Yuvraj Singh who, by the looks of it, has sleepwalked through the first half of the Test series. India began the tour trying to accommodate Yuvraj in the middle order. Five innings on and they've seen the move blow up in their faces.

Yuvraj has nothing in the two Tests to suggest he deserves a spot. More importantly, he seems in a daze. So far it's been his technique that's been in doubt, now it's his stomach for a fight. Other batsmen have struggled for runs, too, but they've shown the desire to grind it out. Yuvraj just seems in the wrong place at the wrong time. It's disappointing, simply because of the destructive form he's been in of late.

A whole batting line-up was switched around to accommodate him, the best No. 3 was asked to open. Yuvraj, who had played 20 Tests in his seven-year international career, has waited for this chance all along. He has spoken about the frustrations of sitting on the sidelines and made no bones about Test cricket being his priority. He couldn't have hoped for a better chance, against the best side in their backyard. Now, sadly, he's botched it.

Yuvraj's mental state can be gauged from his fielding. He is supposed to be the team's best fielder but, going by his body language in Melbourne and Sydney, has often been an embarrassment. Normally he's a livewire at point -- sliding and stopping the singles -- but he's looked disconnected so far. There's also the small matter of an ever-enlarging paunch. To say he is lost would be an understatement.

Rahul Dravid hasn't been in the greatest of form, nor has Wasim Jaffer or Mahendra Singh Dhoni. But each has done his bit to provide some confidence. Dravid gusted it out in an agonising knock in the first innings in Sydney before finding some rhythm in the second dig. Dhoni fought hard when India were trying to save the match on the final afternoon and Jaffer made the most of a weak bowling attack on the first day in Canberra.

Yuvraj has been too casual, whether it's waiving outside off stump to the metronomic Stuart

Clark, or playing back to a flipper from Brad Hogg, or even flashing at a slightly wide one from Andrew Symonds when India were battling for a draw. Barring Brett Lee's full, swinging delivery in Sydney, he hasn't got out to a great ball. Even that was a classic set up: short, short and full. He has paid for meeting the ball on the move, unlike in Bangalore, where he was assured with his footwork. Some experts have suggested his head isn't still, others have spotted him not taking his initial movement forward, probably fearing the short ball on Australian pitches. All things considered, he's a far better batsman than his scores (0.5, 12.0) suggest.

On Thursday, against the ACT Invitational XI bowlers -- who might struggle to make a top Ranji Trophy side -- he threw it away again. Here was a chance to finally find some form, to bang around and spend some time in the middle. He couldn't have asked for a better time to walk in: India were well set at 210 for 3. He began by cautiously playing out three balls from left-arm spinner Mark Higgs before hanging on for two more balls before tea. After the break he handled a full over from medium-pace Richard Sherlock before facing up to the left-arm seamer Ash Perera. Faced with one that was slightly short of length, he responded with a tame waf to gully, slicing the ball without control.

The impression he's made on this trip brings back memories of the tour to West Indies in 2006. He was in the side for the injured Sachin Tendulkar and hardly made an impact in the four Tests. Barring the final Test in Jamaica, the Tests were played on good batting tracks against a largely toothless attack. In a series where five Indian batsmen made hundreds he managed 23, 39, 2, 0, 8 not out, 19, and 13. It's no secret that the team management weren't happy with him at the end of the series. Lack of runs, it must be stressed, wasn't the only issue.

What now for Yuvraj? The team no doubt will be wary of including him again, especially given the bouncy reputation of the WACA in Perth. But Yuvraj can first begin by showing the desire. He still has another chance in this game but he can start by bringing his tigerish self on to the field on Friday. He has often galvanised the one-day side with his electric exploits and a more eager approach would only provide

the team some confidence.

He might do well, too, to heed Rahul Dravid's advice. "I don't think it should play on my mind," Dravid said when asked if Yuvraj would be under pressure knowing that the rest have done their bit to accommodate him in the side. "Two Test matches back he got a brilliant hundred. He's got to look at that, the successes he's had in one-day cricket over the last 6-8 months and see them as positives. He should not just look at the poor scores on this tour. You've got to be positive and trust yourself. He's got another hit in this game and it could be the one that helps him turn the corner."

He was seen having a long chat with Sachin Tendulkar in the pre-match nets Wednesday. It appeared as if they were discussing Yuvraj's head position, with Tendulkar asking him to keep it still. A talk with Sourav Ganguly, the captain who brought the best out of him, would help too. One innings could well turn the corner. That may bring him runs but, more importantly, he needs to find the biggest requisite for cutting it at the Test level: desire.

Walcott saves

FROM PAGE 24

For once, Wenger's boys looked their age. Spurs were counter-attacking with menace and they got the goal their play deserved in the 37th minute.

Keane beat the offside trap to meet Berbatov's pass. He slid a square pass to Jenas and the flag stayed down as the England international slotted a low shot past Fabianski.

Facing only a second defeat at the Emirates, Wenger sent on Eduardo and Bacary Sagna at the break to try to revitalise the hosts.

Usually so fluent on the ball, Arsenal were guilty of squandering possession with alarming regularity, but Tottenham couldn't deliver the killer blow and they were punished in the 79th minute.

Eduardo's through ball sent Walcott clear. As he was taking aim, Lee Young-Pyo tried to block but he only succeeded in diverting the ball onto Walcott's chest and past Cerny.

There was still time for one last twist as Jermain Defoe wasted a glorious chance to win it when he shot over from close range.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Clues include: 1 Across: 13 tubs; 5 Across: Kennel cry; 8 Across: Channel neighbor; 12 Across: Sher-man's analogy of war; 13 Across: Didn't pay yet; 14 Across: Turn the wheel hard; 15 Across: They're nothing new; 17 Across: Messes up; 18 Across: Travel-ocly mascot; 19 Across: Frugality; 21 Across: Icelandid tale; 24 Across: Ally's lillo; 25 Across: Rudi-ments; 28 Across: Jessica; 30 Across: Einstein's birthplace; 33 Across: Savings-plan acronym; 34 Across: Playful water critter; 35 Across: 'Ch bin-Berliner'; 36 Down: Elmer; 37 Down: Bugs; 38 Down: quantity neighbor; 39 Down: Bar; 41 Down: Grate; 43 Down: Bar; 46 Down: They often break; 47 Down: Wile E.'s falls; 50 Down: Responsi-bility; 51 Down: Abdomi-nally; 54 Down: Pace; 55 Down: Young fellow; 56 Down: Caspian feeder; 57 Down: Throw; 58 Down: Ram's mate; 59 Down: Otherwise; 60 Down: Go out with; 61 Down: Carpet style; 62 Down: Teller's partner; 63 Down: Sax range; 64 Down: Gooney; 65 Down: Thee; 66 Down: Shock and -; 67 Down: 7 Mutes; 68 Down: States with; 69 Down: Louisiana tobaccos; 70 Down: Helot; 71 Down: Formerly, once; 72 Down: Proof ending (Abbr.); 73 Down: Solution time: 21 mins.; 74 Down: Pajama cover-up; 75 Down: Ringlet; 76 Down: Oolong et al.; 77 Down: Gilligan's home; 78 Down: Acknowl-edge applause; 79 Down: Caustic solution.

Cryptogram puzzle grid with letters and numbers. The text to be deciphered is: RL QFC WQNRW SRCMURCO BLQCO KOBLOCMRK, H SORCM LSRL LUQ UQCZOCB UOCO NRFLAS UCOTNS-ZHBBHTA. Yesterday's Cryptogram: IF A MAGNIFICENT CHURCH STEEPLE REALLY UPLIFTED SOMEONE, YOU MIGHT SAY HE'S SPIRE-INSPIRED. Today's Cryptogram Clue: L equals T