

BCB not to renew Shaun's contract

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has decided not to extend the contract of Shaun Williams.

The Australian joined the board as a national game development manager but later acted as interim coach of the national team following the departure of Dave Whatmore.

Under his guidance Bangladesh toured Sri Lanka and then took part in the first-ever Twenty20 World Championship of Cricket in South Africa.

However, Williams will continue to perform his responsibilities under the existing contract till June this year.

The board acknowledged Williams' immense contribution to the development of Bangladesh cricket as the BCB's national game development manager and as coach and assistant coach of the national team.

India warned over WC

AFP, Lausanne

India are in serious danger of losing the right to host field hockey's men's World Cup in 2010, the world governing body warned on Monday.

The International Hockey Federation (FIH), worried at India's falling standards, devised a "Promoting Indian Hockey" project last year to raise standards in the country's national sport.

FIH president Els van Breda Vriesman warned Indian officials they could miss hosting the 2010 World Cup in New Delhi if the project was not implemented immediately.

And the issue and the organisation of the World Cup were again addressed during a three-day meeting of the FIH Executive Board ending on Saturday.

"After having carefully studied the progress made with the project 'Promoting Indian Hockey' as well as the actions taken in the preparation of the World Cup 2010, the Executive Board noted that satisfactory progress had not been made in either area," the FIH said in a statement.

"However, the Executive Board decided to give Indian Hockey some additional time...to urgently address those issues before taking a final decision.

"In the meantime, FIH is looking for alternative host countries in case the FIH would be forced to take the decision not to host the World Cup in India," the statement added.

Eight-time gold medallists India have failed to qualify for the Olympics for the first time.

Since winning the last of their eight Olympic medals at the western-boycotted Moscow Games in 1980, India claimed just one major title when Dhanraj Pillay's men took the Asian Games gold in Bangkok in 1998.

India finished seventh in the last two Olympics and were forced to qualify for Beijing after failing to win an Asian Games medal in Doha.

Olympics torch re-lit in Beijing

PTI, Beijing

Chinese President Hu Jintao yesterday officially declared open the start of a grand Olympic torch relay by re-lighting the flame in the host city Beijing, amidst tight security after pro-independence Tibetan protestors marred a similar ceremony in Greece.

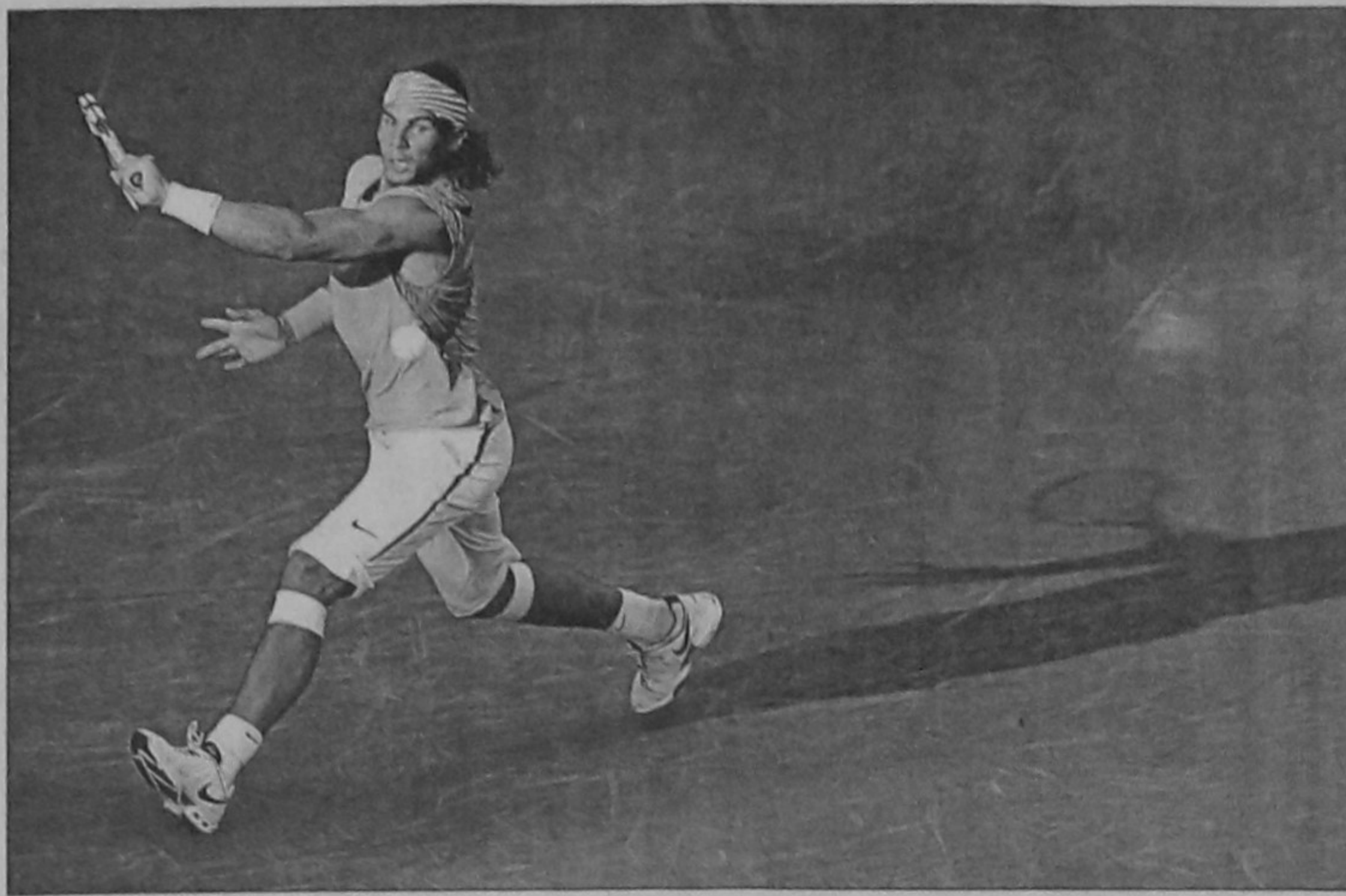
The ceremony kicked off at the Tiananmen Square, the world's largest, two hours after a specially chartered Air China plane carrying the flame from Greece touched down at about 9 am local time.

At the ceremony held in front of the Great Hall of the People with the Forbidden Palace forming the backdrop to the rostrum, Hu kindled the cauldron and handed over the torch to Olympic champion hurdler Liu Xiang, kickstarting the longest-ever Olympic torch relay.

"I declare the torch relay of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games begun," Hu announced amidst a joyous atmosphere with thousands of doves and colourful balloons released into the sky.

The flame is scheduled to depart from Beijing tomorrow for the Kazakh city of Almaty, the first stop in its global tour of 135 cities, including New Delhi, India, where it will reach on April 17.

The relay, with highest number of torchbearers in its history, will cover 137,000 kilometers in 130 days before the flame finally arrives at the National Stadium in Beijing on August 8, 2008 for the opening ceremony.



Spaniard Rafael Nadal stretches to return a shot against Germany's Nicolas Kiefer during the third round of the Sony Ericsson Open at the Crandon Park Tennis Center in Key Biscayne on Sunday.

Davenport stuns Ivanovic

Tennis

AFP, Miami

Former world number one Lindsay Davenport defeated Serbian second seed Ana Ivanovic 6-4, 6-2 to reach the fourth round of the WTA and ATP Masters Series hardcourt tournament here Sunday.

World number one Justine Henin of Belgium, third seed Svetlana Kuznetsova and defending champion Serena Williams also advanced to the round of 16 at the 7.54 million-dollar event with straight-set triumphs.

On the men's side, world number two Rafael Nadal moved a step closer to his first title of the season, defeating Germany's Nicolas Kiefer 6-2, 6-4 to reach the fourth round.

While not as efficient as his second-round victory over German qualifier Benjamin Becker, in which he committed just four unforced errors, Nadal shrugged off a rain delay to complete his second straight match without facing a break point.

"Well, it was not the best day because I was playing unbelievable in the beginning, playing very well, hitting very well the ball, and playing almost perfect match," he said.

"When I come back to the court

the ball was a little bigger and slower, and it was a little bit more difficult for me," he said.

Next up for Nadal is France's Paul-Henri Mathieu, who ousted Carlos Moya of Spain 7-6 (7/1), 7-5.

Nadal is playing in his 12th tournament since his last title at Stuttgart in July.

Ninth-seeded American James Blake stayed on course for a possible quarter-final clash with Nadal with a 6-3, 6-7 (4/7), 6-4 victory over Frenchman Fabrice Santoro.

Davenport, 31, denied Ivanovic, 20, a chance at back-to-back triumphs after her victory a week ago in the Indian Wells final.

Instead Ivanovic followed Indian Wells men's finalists Novak Djokovic and Mardy Fish out of the tournament.

"I was playing really well. I felt really confident out there," Davenport said. "Obviously she's had a great year so far. But it's very tough to play Indian Wells and Miami back to back, doing well in Indian Wells," Davenport added.

"You can see on the men's side with Fish and Djokovic. I was trying to take advantage of that."

"You never know what your opponent will bring, but I could tell she was maybe a little fatigued, and I tried to take advantage of that."

Henin advanced to the fourth round with a 6-2, 6-1 victory over

Italy's Sara Errani.

Henin, who has won two titles in four tournaments this year, will next face Russian Elena Vesnina, who ousted American Ashley Harkleroad 6-4, 5-7, 6-4 after three hours and seven minutes.

This is Henin's return after nearly one month off since losing a Dubai quarter-final to Italy's Francesca Schiavone. Henin has already taken titles this year in Sydney and Belgium and is 14-2 on the season.

Also advancing to the round of 16 was Kuznetsova, who rallied to defeat Victoria Azarenka of Belarus 1-6, 7-5, 6-0. Kuznetsova, the 2006 winner here and runner-up at Indian Wells, saved a match point down 5-3 in the second set.

Defending champion Serena Williams, the eighth seed, shrugged off a slow start to defeat Italian Flavia Pennetta 6-7 (6/8), 6-3, 6-2 in a rain-disrupted match.

Williams disrupted 2 hours, 12 minutes to polish off Pennetta, largely because of a stream of unforced errors.

"I just think I had a bad day today," she said. "Every time I went to connect it was like I didn't have my contact point."

Serena's elder sister Venus, the sixth seed, also reached the fourth round, beating New Zealand's Marina Erakovic 6-2, 6-1.

Selectors angry with Malik

PTI, Karachi

Pakistan's national selectors are unhappy with captain Shoaib Malik for his absence during the selection of the squad for the Bangladesh series.

The selectors were surprised when they were told to communicate with Malik, who was not available for the last 10 days citing his mother's poor health, on telephone in Mumbai to finalise the squad for the first two one-day games against Bangladesh.

"It came as a surprise to us to know that Malik was in Mumbai. We were told he was not playing in domestic matches because of the illness of his mother," a selector said.

Sources said Malik had been to Mumbai for some official ceremony of the Indian Premier League and in connection with the legal case he was pursuing against the Siddiqui family in Hyderabad.

Slow South Africa fined

REUTERS, Mumbai

South Africa were fined on Monday for maintaining a slow over-rate in the drawn first Test against India.

Captain Graeme Smith was ordered to forfeit 20 per cent of his match fee and each of his players received 10 per cent fines, the International Cricket Council said in a statement.

Match referee Roshan Mahanama imposed the fine after Smith's side were ruled to be two overs short of their time allotted bowling target in the Test which concluded in Chennai on Sunday.

The second match of the three-Test series begins in Ahmedabad on Thursday.

Experience

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always demands the best, which has been ignored once again.

This has been tried before, as the local football think-tank sent under-23 teams to Asian tournament last year but many of those faces have been already lost in the mist.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

BKSP defeated Bangladesh Air Force 61-41 in the opening match of the Independence Day basketball tournament at the Dhanmendi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday.

The winners led the first half 29-23. Setu and Mithun dominated the scoring for BKSP with 16 and 14 points respectively while Air Force cager Siraj made 16.

Earlier, federation president Kazi M Aminul Islam declared the meet open.

DIVICRICKET

Badda Ekota and Agrani Bank won their respective matches in the First Division cricket relegation league. Agrani (200-5) defeated Dhaka Mariners (197-9) by five wickets at the Jagannath Hall ground while Badda (189) beat Kathal Bagan (133) by 56 runs at the Dhaka University ground.

BOOST CUP

Explosive knocks by Adnan (70) and Rabbi (71) helped Kalabagan CA (221-5) record a massive 110-run victory over Indira Road CA (111) in the Boost Power Cup Twenty20 cricket tournament at the Kalabagan club ground.

In another match, Dhaka CA (144-9) edged CCSA (131) by 13 runs.

NEWCOMMITTEE

Lalmatia Club announced its new executive committee with Maj Gen (ret'd) Muhammad Abdul Matin as president. Asghar Rashid was named general secretary.

BEACH KABADDI

Bangladesh Rifles and Bangladesh Ansar clinched the men's and women's titles of the first-ever Beach Kabaddi tournament held at Laboni Point of Cox's Bazar sea beach.

Bangladesh Rifles emerged unbeaten champions in the men's group with eight points beating Bangladesh Police 39-26 in the last league match. Police finished runners-up with six points.

Ansars won the women's crown outplaying Jatrabari KC 48-24 in the final.

GYMNASTICS

BKSP clinched the top slot in the daylong Independence Day Gymnastics Competition at the National Sports Council (NSC) Gymnasium.

BKSP established absolute supremacy in the meet winning eight out of 11 events.

Chittagong University, Dinajpur and Ka, Kha, Ga Shishu Shikhalaya won the remaining three events. A total of 57 competitors from 12 teams took part in the meet.

Veeru overtakes Rahul, Sachin

PTI, Dubai

Virender Sehwag's career best 319 against South Africa catapulted him to the 12th spot in the ICC Test Rankings, making him the highest ranked Indian in the batting chart.

Sehwag, whose triple ton was the fastest in Test history, jumped 13 places to 12th spot after a massive 17 per cent rise in his rating that saw him leapfrogging compatriots Rahul Dravid (13th), Sachin Tendulkar (15th) and VVS Laxman (18th).

On current form, Sehwag has a realistic chance of returning to the top 10. He is within touching distance of 10th place Kevin Pietersen of England who is just behind ninth-placed Shivnarine Chanderpaul of the West Indies.

Dravid himself rose two places to 13th following his 25th Test century, while Tendulkar dropped three places to 15th position after a fifth-ball duck in the Chennai Test against South Africa.

Besides Sehwag, South African batting duo of Hashim Amla and Neil McKenzie have also made significant upward movement.

Amla, who made scores of 159 and 81, rocketed up 10 places to a career-best 24th spot while McKenzie, who contributed 94 and 155 not out, jumped 26 places to 36th position.

Jacques Kallis, however, continued his slide in the rankings as he slipped another place to drop to fourth behind Australia's Ricky Ponting, while captain Graeme Smith fell two places to 16th position.

Kaif

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and those who stood by me in my bad period. I hope that the bad phase has ended and this selection will bring more good news for me in the future."

Though excited about being included in the squad, Kaif said India would not doubt miss Tendulkar. "Captain Anil Kumble will never have wanted him [Tendulkar] to be out of the side," Kaif said. But now I have got a chance and if I play, I will try and make the best out of it."

Canary Wharf

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Patel's no to ICC

Cricket

AGENCIES, undated

The International Cricket Council's (ICC) search for a new chief executive officer has been dealt an embarrassing blow with the news that Imtiaz Patel, who was offered the job two weeks ago, has "withdrawn his interest" in the position.

The decision was conveyed by Patel, currently CEO of the South African media organisation SuperSport, to the ICC's president-elect David Morgan on Sunday and announced on Monday.

The development means the ICC will have to once again cast its net to find a successor to Malcolm Speed, the incumbent since 2001 who steps down from the role after this year's ICC Annual Conference, which will take place between June 29 and July 4. Speed took over from the ICC's first chief, David Richards.

An ICC statement said the committee charged with identifying a successor -- comprising Morgan, ICC president Ray Mali, vice-president Sharad Pawar and the chairman of Cricket Australia, Creagh O'Connor -- will now reconvene.

The Recruitment Committee will now reconvene, identify a preferred candidate, and make a recommendation to the ICC Board "with a view to confirming the appointment at the earliest opportunity."

"My family and I have reflected deeply on the wonderful opportunity which the ICC presented to me to fulfil such an important role in a sport which is in my blood," Patel said. "After considering my position carefully, I have, however, resolved to remain in my beloved country, South Africa, and continue in my challenging and fulfilling role as chief executive officer of



IMTIAZ PATEL

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SuperSport International."

Patel was announced Speed's successor on March 17, though the ICC failed to seek Patel's consent for the post. The next day, Patel said he would be "considering my position very carefully during the coming weeks" and a spokesman for SuperSport told Cricinfo he had been offered the job but was weighing his options.

"We are obviously disappointed that Imtiaz has chosen to withdraw his interest, having regarded him highly," Morgan said. "However, the fact that Imtiaz has withdrawn does not mean that, by default, we will be left with a candidate who is, in any way, inferior to him."

"In fact, we have been fortunate to have several high calibre candidates on the shortlist, all of whom bring something slightly different to the table," Morgan said. "The role of ICC CEO, while challenging, represents a huge opportunity for the successful candidate. It is an opportunity for that person to help forge the future of our great game at a time of huge innovation and excitement."

"We remain committed to securing the services of the right candidate and we anticipate being able to complete that task in the very near future."

Mahela behind new boys

Cricket

AFP, Port of Spain

Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene has assured Malinda Warnapura and Thilan Thushara that they can expect an extended run in the national team.

Warnapura starred with scores of 120 and 62 in Sri Lanka's opening Test win by 121 runs against West Indies last week at Providence, and Thushara offered steady support to the elite bowling duo of Chaminda Vaas and Muttiah Muralidaran with match figures of five wickets for 129 runs from 37.5 overs.

"These two guys have played good first-class cricket back home and play a little bit of league cricket in England so know their way around the park," Jayawardene said.

"We can always call them up and say this is your opportunity."

"They have waited a long time for this opportunity, and now they will get an extended run -- whether they make runs or not, or whether

they take wickets or not.

"So we have not put them under any pressure on this tour, and told them that if they fail that they will lose their place. They will get an extended run, and this is probably why they have responded to the challenge in this way."

The retirements of former captains Sanath Jayasuriya and Marvan Atapattu have left vacancies at the top of the Sri Lanka batting line-up that have yet to be convincingly filled.

As a result, the selectors promoted the 28-year-old Warnapura from the middle-order to an opening slot on the basis of his consistency at domestic level.

He has been a regular member of the Sri Lanka A team, and visited the Caribbean two years ago, when illness restricted him to three innings of two, eight and 11.

But almost a decade after making his first-class debut, he had to wait to make his Test debut against Bangladesh at home last June.

His entry into Test cricket was hardly auspicious, as he was dis-

missed off his first ball, and scored 82 in the second Test.

With seamer Vaas admitting he is nearing the end of his career, the national selectors have eyed Thushara as a possible left-arm replacement.

He made his Test debut on Sri Lanka's previous trip to the Caribbean five years ago, but he subsequently faded, and others have overtaken him in the pecking order.

This trip provides him with a second crack at international cricket, following strong performances in domestic competitions.

Sri Lanka, eyeing a Test series victory for the first time in the Caribbean, lead the two-Test series 1-0, after the victory handed them their first Test win on Caribbean soil in five matches.

The second Test from April 3 at Queen's Park Oval here will be followed by a three-match ODI series with two matches also at the Oval, and a day/night affair on April 15 at St. Lucia's Beausejour Stadium.

Milan hit panic button

AFP, Rome



With just seven matches left in the Serie A season, AC Milan are starting to panic.

They sit sixth in the table, have lost their last two home matches and trail Fiorentina in the crucial race for fourth place by four points.

The only saving grace for Milan is that Fiorentina's current form is no better, having lost their last two away matches.

Last season Milan claimed the Champions League title and in December they added the Club World Cup to their honours list.

Back then they had already given up hope of winning the title having got off to a dreadful start in Serie A, failing to win in their first seven home matches while city rivals Inter were storming away.

They reassessed their goals, set their sights on fourth place, and a ticket to the Champions League, and by the end of February, following six wins in seven matches, they looked all set to achieve that aim.

But it has all gone wrong since then.

Arsenal won 2-0 at the San Siro to knock them out of the Champions League in the second round and they have won only two of their last seven league encounters, losing three times.

Coach Carlo Ancelotti spent more than an hour in the dressing room following the 2-1 defeat to Atalanta on Sunday before coming out to face the press.

"We're being incapacitated by the number of mistakes we're making at home," he said. "We're starting slowly and in the end we're paying for it."

"We're not concentrating in several situations like against Sampdoria (their previous home defeat). Matches become very difficult when you do this."

Ancelotti joined his team's vice-president Adriano Galliani in criticising the referee, who disallowed two goals.

The first by Clarence Seedorf was offside but the second from Massimo Ambrosini was chalked off for a foul on the goalkeeper, which looked a harsh decision.

"The referee played like us. He had a bad first half and a bad second half," added Ancelotti. "Ambrosini's goal should have

stood. Having said that it's not his fault we lost."

Milan have not been helped by injuries among their forwards.

Ronaldo is out for the season, Filippo Inzaghi is out injured and World Player of the year Kaka is also on the sidelines.

Alberto Gilardino is desperately short of form, meaning Milan are often relying on two 18-year-olds, Brazilian Patto and Alberto Paloschi, to fire them to victory.

"It's not been working well. Now we need to change something," admitted Ancelotti. "We can't continue like this. We hope to have Kaka back for the next match."

"Right now we're not defending well and we're not attacking well. We need to defend better and attack better."

"Changing something does not mean I'm talking about players, I'm talking about attitude."

The problem is Milan have to turn things around quickly or they will miss out on the Champions League next season. They could even miss out on Europe altogether.

Fiorentina are fourth, four points ahead; Udinese are fifth, one point ahead, and Sampdoria are seventh, behind only on goal difference.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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Today's Cryptoquip Clue: U equals Q