

Proteas plot Sehwa's downfall

AFP, Ahmedabad

South Africa will target swash-buckling Indian batsman Virender Sehwag with short-pitched bowling in the rest of the series, coach Mickey Arthur said on Tuesday.

Sehwag tore apart the tourists' bowling in the drawn first Test at Chennai with a scintillating 319 off 304 balls, the fastest triple century in history and the second of his career.

Arthur, preparing for the second Test starting here on Thursday, said the South Africans had analysed Sehwag's innings in detail to spot potential loopholes in the opener's play.

"We had a look at Sehwag's fantastic innings. He cuts the ball very well but we saw he played his first pull shot only after scoring 312," the coach said.

"So we are planning to target him with short balls on his body, cramp him for space and see how he takes it."

Arthur, however, insisted his squad was not under pressure and had batsmen and bowlers who were capable of churning out match-winning performances.

"We have probably taken more positives from the first Test," he said. "The top order has performed and we have bowlers who can take 20 wickets."

"We have played a lot in the sub-continent, we have kept the same top six in the batting order and we are comfortable playing spin bowling."

Arthur hoped the wicket will offer more assistance to his fast bowlers, unlike the unresponsive track at Chennai which saw a whopping 1498 runs being scored at the cost of 25 wickets.

"We will have to wait and watch for the first ball to be bowled on how the wicket is," he said. "At the moment it looks good with some grass on it. Hopefully the pitch will help the seamers."

"It will be interesting to see how the ball behaves on the lush green outfield or whether it helps reverse swing."

11 nat'l hockey

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recruit any of these players by Thursday.

The BHF also increased the total quota of local player registration for a team to 24 players from 20.

The federation, however, will sit soon to take a decision on relegation after its earlier declaration of not relegating any team this season was heavily criticised by all quarters.

Shoaib banned

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Instead, Akhtar was offered a special retainer deal, which he refused to sign.

The mercurial fast bowler last played for Pakistan in the third and final Test against India at Bangalore in December last year. He broke down with back trouble and was blamed for Pakistan's 1-0 defeat in the series.

He was not selected for Pakistan's five-match series against Zimbabwe in February and was omitted from next month's first two limited overs international against Bangladesh.

Akhtar took 178 wickets in 46 Tests, while his tally in 138 one-day matches stands at 219.

Biman look

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Iftekhar 24, Sabir 12, Habibur 51*, Jubair 33*, Farhad 15, Rajin 12, Sanchay 27, Monir 11, extras 8, Kibria 21, Latif 2-25, Nasir 2-6.

BKSP: 128-2 in 23.2 overs (Mithun 21, Aziz 66*, Rahim 36*, extra 1, Rasheed 1-15).

Result: BKSP win by eight wickets.

PARTEX: 256-8 in 50 overs (Rafique 105, Tariq 13, Shaheen 15, Hanif 63, Arif 17, Raisul 10, Mushfiqur 13, extras 11, Rasel 2-41, Sadat 2-19).

KALABAGAN [revised target: 188 in 30 overs]: 189-9 in 29.3 overs (Sadat 46, Butt 69, Nahidul 32, Hannan 14, Farid 10, Akhtar 4, Tariq 4-34, Hanif 2-43).

Result: Kalabagan win by one wicket.

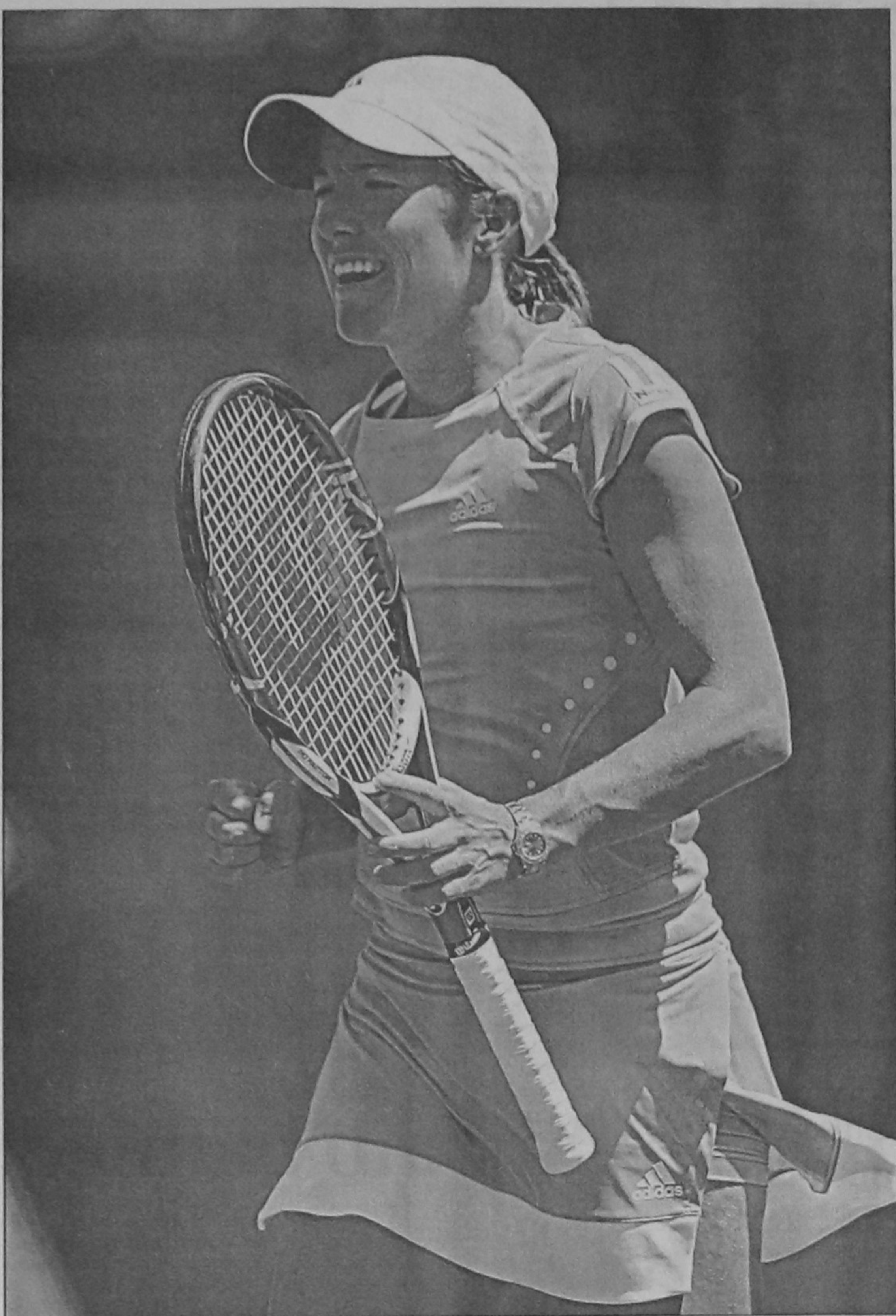


PHOTO: AFP

World number one Justine Henin of Belgium celebrates winning a point against Elena Vesnina of Russia during the Sony Ericsson Open in Florida on Monday.

Federer, Henin advance

Tennis

AFP, Miami

World number ones Roger Federer and Justine Henin advanced with ease here Monday at a 7.54 million-dollar ATP and WTA hardcourt event, Henin in straight sets and Federer on an injury retirement.

Swiss superstar Federer was leading Robin Soderling 6-4, 3-0 when the ill Swedish player retired, advancing the world number one into the round of 16.

"There is a big difference between not playing at all and playing a set and a half. I prefer today," Federer said. "I get the feel of the tournament playing a match and I'm able to handle the conditions."

Federer, upset by American Mardy Fish at the Indian Wells semifinals in his most recent prior event, will next face Argentina's Jose Acasuso, who eliminated Israel's Dudi Sela 6-4, 6-4.

Belgium's Henin beat Russia's

Elena Vesnina 6-2, 6-2 in a fourth-round match to book a quarterfinal date with defending champion Serena Williams of the United States in a rematch of last year's final.

Williams, the eighth seed, beat Estonia's Kaia Kanepi 6-3, 6-3 to give herself another date against Henin. Williams rallied to defeat Henin 0-6, 7-5, 6-3 for her 28th career win.

Henin, who won titles at Sydney and Beijing in four starts this year, fired eight aces to overcome six double faults in her victory. She is in her first event since a Dubai quarterfinal loss.

Possibly awaiting the Williams-Henin winner in the semifinals would be Venus Williams or Russian third seed Svetlana Kuznetsova, the runner-up at Indian Wells.

Kuznetsova, the 2006 winner here, defeated Israeli 16th seed Shahar Peer 7-6 (7/4), 6-3, while the elder Williams sister, seeded sixth, beat Denmark's Caroline Wozniacki 6-3, 6-3.

Serbian fourth seed Jelena Jankovic eliminated China's Zheng Jie 6-4, 7-5 to advance into a quarterfinals date with Russian 10th seed Elena Dementieva, who ousted Germany's Sabine Lisicki 6-3, 6-2.

Also reaching the final eight was Russian Dinara Safina, who ended the run of US tennis mum Lindsay Davenport 6-3, 6-4. She will next face Russian Vera Zvonareva, who beat Japan's Ai Sugiyama, 6-2, 6-7 (5/7), 6-0.

In other matches on the men's side, Russian fourth seed Nikolay Davydenko reached the round of 16 by defeating Italy's Simone Bolelli 6-7 (5/7), 7-5, 6-1 and will next face Croatian wild card Mario Ancic or Argentina's Juan Monaco.

Australian Open runner-up Jo-Wilfried Tsonga was eliminated by fellow Frenchman Julien Benneteau 6-3, 6-3 in another third-round match.

Benneteau, ranked 72nd, will next face US sixth seed Andy Roddick, who beat Czech qualifier Ivo Minar 7-6 (7/4), 6-4.

Spin the answer?

Cricket

AFP, Port of Spain

Stories of the ill-treatment of spin bowlers at the hands of the West Indies selectors over the years are notorious.

Since Lance Gibbs ended his distinguished career on February 5, 1976, West Indies cricket history is littered with several bowlers plying the slow stuff that have been tossed aside in preference for bowlers living in the "fastlane".

Truth be told, though, West Indies — who face Sri Lanka here in the second Test on Thursday — have only produced three World-class spin bowlers in the eight decades since their entry into Test cricket — and this number may be stretched to four when Garfield Sobers is included on the list.

Gibbs has been the most successful with a former world record 309 wickets at 29.09 apiece in 79 Tests, fellow off-spinner Sonny Ramadhin snared 158 at an average of 28.98 in 43 Tests, and left-arm spinner Alf Valentine snared 139 at 30.32 each in 36 Tests.

Sobers took 235 wickets at an average of 34.03 in 93 Tests — bowling principally either left-arm orthodox or chinaman — but some of his scalps were taken when he transformed himself into a left-arm fast-medium bowler.

But West Indies have languished behind the other Test-playing nations of the world in the deployment of spin bowlers in their attack, even after the rules of the

game were changed to render their feared battery of fast bowlers toothless in the 1990s.

The crescendo of noise for spin bowlers to gain recognition at the highest level of the game has escalated, particularly in the face of the friendly fire produced by the modern-day armoury of West Indies fast bowlers, and the continued success of the slower bowlers in domestic competitions at all levels.

The selection of the beaniepot left-arm spin bowler Sulieman Benn for the opening Test of two against Sri Lanka last week at the Guyana National Stadium has given hope that the selectors may finally be getting the message.

Benn conceded 120 runs from 40 overs in the first innings without success, and he collected three scalps in the second innings when the Sri Lankans were chasing quick runs, but leaked almost five runs-an-over — hardly evidence that suggests greatness.

But West Indies coach John Dyson believes it was satisfactory, and seems prepared to give him a chance in the second Test.

"In assessing his performance, you have got to say that the pitch was a batsman's paradise," Dyson said.

"It didn't help the fast bowlers, and it didn't help the spinners, and I thought he bowled very, very well for his first Test match. He came in, maintained a good line, a good length."

"I felt sorry for him that he didn't take a wicket (in the first innings) albeit there was one opportunity missed from his bowl-

ing, and I was pleased that he came out there again and bowled pretty well (in the second innings)."

Batting legend Gordon Greenidge heads the West Indies selection panel which also comprises former off-spin bowler Clyde Butts and fast bowling legend Andy Roberts took the unprecedented step of including the uncapped pair of Benn and off-spin bowler Amit Jaggernauth in the 15-member squad for the Guyana Test.

It's hard to recall when a West Indies selection panel made such a bold move, and it was a throwback to when a similar combination of spin bowlers Ramadhin and Valentine were given their break on the 1950 tour of England.

"I said before the match that it is good that we have frontline spinners in the squad because it gives us that option that when you get a pitch that might actually be kind to spinners to actually play one," said Dyson.

"We found in South Africa that we didn't have that spin option. We were asking the fast bowlers to do all the 'donkey' work, and all of our fast bowlers are aggressive fast bowlers."

Though fast bowlers have often thrived on the Queen's Park Oval pitch because of its inconsistent bounce, the venue has been the traditional home for spin bowlers in the Caribbean, and there is a delicious prospect in the second Test of watching Sri Lanka's off-spin legend Muttiah Muralitharan working over the West Indies' batsmen.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Four Super League matches of First Division Cricket League will take place on Friday.

Gazi Tank will play Indira Road and Cricket Coaching School (CCS) meet Azad Sporting Club in BKSP. Rupali Bank face Orient Sporting Club at Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium while Brothers Union take on neighbours Bangladesh Boys in Fatullah.

On Sunday, Gazi Tank will meet Azad Sporting at Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, CCS face Bangladesh Boys in BKSP. Brothers Union play Orient at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium while Rupali Bank meet Indira Road in Fatullah.

SCHOOLS CRICKET
BKSP take on Faridpur Zilla School in the final of the Standard Chartered Young Tigers National Schools Cricket tournament at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium today.

The final will be followed by an award distribution ceremony where Vikram Issar, head of consumer banking of Standard Chartered Bank, will be present as chief guest on the occasion.

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL
The 11th inter-district women's volleyball tournament will begin at the Volleyball Stadium on Friday.

Rajbari, Rajshahi, Pabna, Khulna, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Naogaon, Jessore and Bagerhat will be split into three groups in the four-day meet.

The participating teams have been asked to report at the Dhanmondi Women's Sports Complex on Thursday.

AKHTAR TO FIGHT

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probation for hitting a teammate with a bat.

"I was demoted from central contract 'A' category, which was very hurtful and as a reaction I said something. I have apologised to the PCB, before the disciplinary committee and before everyone," Akhtar said.

"So I thought that they would take a lenient action, but this harsh decision has effectively ended my career. I still want to play for my country," he said.

PCB chairman Nasim Ashraf told reporters as he announced the decision that Akhtar was given several chances and since he was on two-years probation, the ban was justified.

Akhtar refused to accept Ashraf's claims that he was a negative influence on the team.

"Ask the captain (Shoaib Malik), ask coach Geoff Lawson and they would vouch for me. I had played with high fever on the India tour (last year), which proved my commitment for the team," Akhtar said.

"I bowl fast so I am prone to injuries, but I have given my heart, soul and body to this team. I know some vested interest did not want me to be the part of the team, but I will be back."

Spin well taken

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With curator Dhiraj Prasanna promising a "sporting" track here, India expect their bowlers to fire in a bid to seize the initiative in the three-Test series. The final match starts in Kanpur on April 11.

The hosts also faced a minor fitness scare after the Chennai Test when Kumble left the field on the final day due to a groin strain, but the skipper said he was confident of playing here.

India are already without batting superstar Sachin Tendulkar, ruled out of the match after aggravating a groin injury in the previous game. He was replaced with Mohammad Kaif, returning to the side after more than a year.

That India's batting flourished without Tendulkar's contribution (0) at Chennai was mainly due to Virender Sehwag, who hit the fastest triple-century in Tests, and Rahul Dravid, who scored a hundred to join the 10,000-run club.

India managed to gain lead after posting 627 following heroics from Sehwag and Dravid, but their remaining batsmen were found wanting against an inspired South African pace attack, led by Makhaya Ntini and Dale Steyn.

A dismal derby

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away their wickets in the last moment," he added.

According to Mahbubul Anam, former cricket board general secretary and an influential Mohammedan official, "lack of knowledge" is the reason behind the gloomy future.

"Whatever it is, commitment or any other thing, all comes from the head," said the bearded organiser after the match.

Ashraf as usually was not ready to accept the blame about lack of commitment. "I think we lacked patience and I am the best example of that," he said in defence of his colleagues.

SCORES IN BRIEF

MOHAMMEDAN: 162 all out in 49.5 overs (Imtiaz 6, Zunaed 5, Anwar 6, Aftab 10, Ashraf 20, Rokibul 14, Aqeel 10, Shuvo 27, Razzak 21, Dollar 25, Tapash 8*, extras 10, Zia 1-29, Talha 1-26, Rafique 1-34, Rezaul 1-22, Sunny 3-29).

Result: Abahani win by two wickets.

Katich handed place Clarke named Aussie vice-captain

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Australia on Tuesday named a revamped Test squad for the upcoming tour of the West Indies, recalling run-maker Simon Katich and including two spin bowlers.

Veteran leg spinner Stuart MacGill and left-arm spinner Beau Casson are among 15 players selected in the squad for the three-Test series, while Michael Clarke was named vice-captain after the retirement of Adam Gilchrist.

Cricket Australia (CA) also named a 14-man squad for the five one-day internationals against the West Indies, which includes batsman Michael Hussey's younger brother David for the first time.

Chair of national selectors Andrew Hilditch said 26-year-old Clarke would be vice-captain to Ricky Ponting for both squads after he demonstrated his leadership credentials during the summer.

Clarke, who recently knocked back the opportunity to play in the lucrative Indian Premier League to spend more time with his ill father, captained the Australian Twenty20 side to victory over India in February.

"With Adam Gilchrist retiring after a stellar Australian career we have identified the need to look towards the future," Hilditch said in a statement.

"While we had some very strong candidates within the current

team, including those of the calibre of Michael Hussey, we had no hesitation in recommending Michael Clarke for the position."

Hilditch said 37-year-old MacGill, who has claimed 203 Test wickets since earning his baggy green in 1998, had used the domestic series to prove he was back to fitness after hand surgery to treat carpal tunnel syndrome.

Casson also won selectors' attention during the summer, with the 25-year-old taking the wicket that won New South Wales the Sheffield Shield competition and finishing the season with 29 wickets at an average of 35.

Katich, who was dropped from the Test team in November 2005 and later lost his Cricket Australia contract, scored a record 1,506 runs in the domestic season at an average of more than 94.

"Since he was omitted from the Australian side there is nothing more we could have asked Simon to do," Hilditch said of the 32-year-old batsman.

Katich said he deserved to be dropped from the team after he averaged 27.55 in the 2005 Ashes series but that he was now a "totally different" player.

"I do know my game a lot better now," he said.

"Having been in and out of the team has taught me a lot of lessons. This time around I probably appreciate it a lot more."

"It's a very proud moment and I feel honoured to be back in there... it's a special moment."

All-rounder Ashley Noffke and fast-to-medium bowler Ben Hilfenhaus, both yet to play at Test level, were also named to the squad.

David Hussey and Cameron White were selected for the one-day squad, alongside 24-year-old batsman Shaun Marsh, son of former Test opener Geoff Marsh.

Hilditch said paceman Nathan Bracken, who is recovering from knee surgery, had been selected for the one-day squad "completely subject to fitness."

Australia begin their tour of the West Indies with the first Test in Jamaica on May 22, moving to Antigua for the second from May 30 and the final Test in Barbados on June 12.

The one-day internationals, which will follow a one-off Twenty20 match on June 20, begin in St Vincent on June 24 and conclude on June 16 in St Kitts.

TEAMS
TEST: Ricky Ponting (captain), Michael Clarke, Beau Casson, Stuart Clark, Brad Haddin, Matthew Hayden, Ben Hilfenhaus, Mitchell Hussey, Phil Jaques, Mitchell Johnson, Simon Katich, Brett Lee, Stuart MacGill, Ashley Noffke, Andrew Symonds.

ONE-DAY: Ricky Ponting (captain), Michael Clarke, Nathan Bracken, Stuart Clark, Brad Haddin, Matthew Hayden, James Hopes, David Hussey, Michael Hussey, Mitchell Johnson, Brett Lee, Shaun Marsh, Andrew Symonds, Cameron White.

CEO hunt on again

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The International Cricket Council (ICC) is looking at a speedy resolution to the search for its next chief executive officer (CEO), with Imtiaz Patel declaring on Sunday that he had withdrawn interest in the position. Its four-man recruitment committee may discuss the issue as early as this week and Cricinfo has learnt that Haroon Lorgat, the former convenor of Cricket South Africa's (CSA) selection committee, has emerged as a strong candidate for the post.

Lorgat has already received a preliminary inquiry for a possible meeting with the ICC this week. "It's very premature to even talk about this subject," Lorgat told Cricinfo. "But obviously if the job is indeed offered to me, I would consider that a great honour."

Incidentally, the other significant candidate in the ICC's shortlist is also a South African — Dave Richardson, the former

wicketkeeper, and currently the ICC's general manager, cricket. "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," the ICC president-elect, David Morgan, said.

Lorgat, 47, headed CSA's selection committee for three years till the 2007 World Cup. A qualified chartered accountant — whose roots, like Patel's, are in India — and formerly a senior partner in Ernst & Young, he is currently on the board of Kapela Investments, a private venture he set up last year with five other associates.

The next CEO will be picked by a recruitment committee that includes Morgan, Ray Mali, the ICC president, Sharad Pawar, the BCCI president and Morgan's chosen successor, and Cragh O'Connor, the chairman of Cricket Australia.

"Once the recruitment committee has identified a preferred candidate, it will make a recommendation to the ICC executive board with a view to confirming the appointment at the earliest opportunity," an ICC spokesman said.

The new CEO will take over from Malcolm Speed, who steps down from the position after this year's ICC Annual Conference, which will take place between June 29 and July 4.

Even as the ICC moves to replace Speed, there is also a deep sense of disappointment at Patel's decision — especially after his participation in the recruitment process, which included a detailed interview. Patel is understood to have reiterated his interest in the job, which is believed to have involved an annual salary package in excess of 500,000 dollars, when Morgan spoke to him just before announcing his name as the "preferred choice" during the board meeting in Dubai last month.

"We need to remember that this is not a minor appointment that is being discussed and it was obvious that a fair amount of groundwork was put in before the preferred choice was announced last month. There is a deep sense of disappointment about how things have turned out after that," said a source.

Bhutia won't carry torch

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spokesman of the Tibetan government-in-exile, said by telephone from Dharamshala town in northern India where his administration is headquartered.

"But we are not making any appeal to the others as it will be a decision they need to make," Samphel told AFP.

"The Dalai Lama supports the right of China to hold the Games, and that's our stand, too," he said.

The Olympic torch is due to arrive in India on April 17 and Indian security sources told AFP that the route had been altered as a precaution against possible disruption by Tibetan exiles.

"Originally it was set to start in (the western Indian city of) Mumbai, but now the relay will be a limited event and held in the Indian capital," a top home ministry official said, asking not to be named.

Other Tibetan groups urged relay runners to follow Bhutia's example.

"Hope it encourages others like Usha and (actor) Aamir Khan," said Tibetan Youth Congress president Tsewang Rigzin.

Bhutia, who was conferred India's third highest civilian honour for promoting football in a country where cricket is the ruling passion, has scored more

than 35 goals at the international level.

India, home to more than 100,000 Tibetan refugees, has witnessed a string of demonstrations since protests first broke out over the border in Lhasa on March 10, the 49th anniversary of a failed uprising against Chinese rule.

The Olympic torch relay, which was launched by Chinese President Hu Jintao in Beijing on Monday, is the longest ever, lasting 130 days and covering 137,000 kilometres (85,000 miles).

It will pass through 19 countries during April before returning to China on May 4.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	DOWN
1 Pocket-watch chain	1 Have a hunch
4 Straight flush, e.g.	2 Gumbo ingredient
8 Err	3 Sweetheart
12 — out a living	4 "Quiet!"
13 Addict	5 Moving home?
14 Emanation	6 Night light
15 Geological period	7 Friday telecast?
16 Old porcel	8 Attendant of Bacchus
17 Ski lift transport	9 Friction reducer
18 Zoo	10 Dr. Seuss' "If — the Zoo"
21 — Miss Brooks	11 South American rubber
22 — a tender be	19 Acceptable
23 Urban sale site	20 Spicy opener
26 Lustrous black	23 Crally
27 Carle	
30 Plumbum	
31 Same old, same old	
32 Ends in failure	
33 Still	
34 Launch locale	
35 Dutch export	

27 Carle-	APT REF JABBA	coin
lead-in	LOU EUE ALUOD	40 Ms.
30 Plumbum	ILL TEDDYBOYS	Brocko-
31 Same old,	BAS HOURS	vich
same old	TRAO UPF WORDS	41 Relied
32 Ends in	PHOTO PLANET	for one
failure	EMBAUN EAT	expert
33 Still	NOIR NGN ZARF	42 Jeans-
34 Launch	TEDDYBEAR ATE	maker
locale	SWEAT AGE THE	Strauss
35 Dutch	PENNE LES NOT	43 Leave
		44 Week-