



A Team Cute striker (R) goes on the offensive against Bangladesh Jail Directorate during the Office Handball League match at the handball stadium yesterday.

Gayle likely to quit captaincy

CRICINFO, undated

Chris Gayle is likely to step down as the West Indies captain, the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) has reportedly indicated. The board however said it is yet to receive official word from him.

"I am aware he is considering not making himself available for the captaincy," Dr Donald Peters, the WICB chief executive officer, told Trinidad and Tobago Express on Saturday. West Indies' next assignment is the Champions Trophy in September.

West Indies were recently drubbed 5-0 in the one-day series against Australia at home, after losing the three-Test series 2-0. Gayle was apparently unhappy with the selection policy for the last two ODIs and also questioned the policy of experimenting with several youngsters against the Australians.

Gayle has had mixed results as captain, winning two Tests out of five and seven ODIs out of 17. He led West Indies to two series wins in one-dayers, including an away victory against England last year, and against the touring Sri Lankans recently. He presided over a surprise win in the first Test against South Africa in Johannesburg but his side went on to lose the next two games and the series. His other Test win came against Sri Lanka in Port-of-Spain to level the two match series.

Hold on to your

FROM PAGE 17
and Beas River areas of the territory, said staff was being offered an alteration service.

"We apologize for this kind of hassle, but I think the volunteers understand that we are trying our best," said Horace Yuen, the company's corporate administration director.

Yuen estimated that 40 to 50 workers brought in their trousseaus to be downsized.

Seventeen to fly

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The second batch with six sportsmen -- two athletes, two swimmers and two shooters, two team manager-cum-coaches, one general team manager and two participants of youth camp, will leave for Beijing on August 6.

The third batch with Sports Adviser Mahbub Jamil and the BOA chief General Moeen U Ahmed will fly on August 7, a day before the mega sports festival begins.

Abu Hena M Kawser and Sharlin Manjor will take part in the Youth Camp.

Athletics coach Nazrul Islam Rumi will be the last to join the team on August 12.

Some 10,500 athletics from all over the world are expected to compete in the 17-day sports carnival for the 302 gold at stake. A record 20,000 accredited journalists are expected to cover the great show on earth.

THE CONTINGENT
Mohammad Abu Abdullah, Nazmul Nahar Beauty, Nazmul Islam Rumi, Rubel Rana, Dolly Akhter, SM Israfil, Imam Hossain, Sharmin Akhter, Shoyeb Uzzaman. Officials: Mahbub Jamil (Sports Advisor), General Moeen U Ahmed (BOA president), Kutubuddin Ahmed (BOA Secretary General), Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed (Chief-De-Mission), Col (ret) M Wali Ullah (Administrative Officer), Sadrudin Ahmed (General Team Manager).

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Ansar started their Spectra Group National Women's Kabaddi campaign in great style by outclassing Jhenidah 47-3 in the opening match at the Kabaddi Stadium yesterday.

They also crushed Narail 63-13 later in the day.

In another match, Narail earned an exciting 30-28 victory over Gaibandha while Rajshahi notched an easy 37-17 win over Faridpur.

Earlier, Secretary general of Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) Kutubuddin Ahmed inaugurated the four-day final round in the afternoon although the competition started in the morning.

BOA CEO Col (ret) M Wali Ullah, Kabaddi Federation General Secretary M Nazrul Islam and tournament committee chairman Rowshan Ara Chhabhi were present on the occasion.

PIONEER FOOTBALL

Masud Rana slammed a hat-trick to help BKSP Thrash Tejgaon Nabataranga Shantha 6-0 in the Dhaka City Corporation Pioneer

Football League at the Kamalapur Stadium.

His hat-trick came when he scored in the eleventh, 22nd and 59th minutes of the match. Apart from Masud, Saif, Arif and Saddam scored once each as BKSP eased to another victory.

The day's other match failed to take off after Mohammadpur Jubo Samaj Kalyan Sangha failed to turn up for their match against Nababpur Kirira Chakra at the same venue.

Nababpur were declared winners of the match.

JU FOOTBALL

Our Correspondent adds: History beat Botany in the opening match of the Jahangirnagar University inter-batch football competition at the campus ground.

Vice-chancellor of the university M Moniruzzaman was present as chief guest during the tournament's inauguration.

LONG-DISTANCE SWIMMING

Qualifications for this year's long-distance swimming competition

will be held at the National Swimming Complex in Mirpur from August 8.

Upto four swimmers (men and women) can take part from each association. Interested competitors have been asked to register at the complex ahead of the qualifiers, which are for the main competition of August 24, to be held in Murshidabad, India.

OFFICE HANDBALL

Cute beat Prisons Directorate 49-11 in the day's lone match of the Design Zone 2nd Office Handball League at the Outer Stadium Handball ground yesterday.

Faruk scored 10 goals and Saidur scored nine goals for the winners, while Apu scored seven goals for Prisons.

Earlier, before the match, a one-minute silence was observed in memory of former Handball Federation president Lt Col (ret) MA Hamid who died on Saturday.

In today's matches, BDR take on Prisons while Police face Cute.

Middlesex clinch T20

Cricket

AFP, Southampton

South Africa's Tyson Henderson held his nerve as Middlesex beat Kent by three runs in the final of English county cricket's Twenty20 Cup at the Rose Bowl here Saturday to set themselves up for a cash bonanza.

Kent needed just four runs off the last two balls with the big-hitting Justin Kemp, previously dropped by Middlesex stand-in captain Ed Joyce, facing.

But seamer Henderson sent down two dot balls to his fellow South African and ran his compatriot out off the last to seal a thrilling victory under the floodlights as Middlesex won their first major trophy for 15 years.

England batsman Owais Shah top-scored with 75 in Middlesex's total of 187 for six from their 20 overs before defending champions

Kent, despite 49 from Kemp and 52 from captain Robert Key, the former England international, finished on 184 for five.

By reaching the final, Middlesex and Kent qualified for the Champions League due to be held in India later this year, where the winners will take home 2.5 million pounds (five million dollars) although that event is threatened by a dispute over the involvement of players from the rebel Indian Cricket League.

But winning the showpiece match gained Middlesex the lucrative additional prize of a place in the Super Series -- the latest creation of American billionaire Allen Stanford -- where they will be up against the England national side, a Caribbean All-Stars team and Trinidad and Tobago.

Kent started the last over needing 16 for victory.

Middlesex looked to have thrown away their chances of

victory when an all-run four created by overthrows from David Malan left Kent needing six off three balls. But Henderson kept his cool when all round him were losing their.

"It's been a very interesting day to say the least," said the 33-year-old Henderson, who earlier in the day started with the bat by making a rapid 59 in Middlesex's eight-wicket semifinal win over Durham.

Middlesex off-spinner Shaun Udall, back on his old home ground, added: "I'd have preferred it not to have gone to the last ball. We were second favourites with a couple of balls to go.

"We're absolutely elated," the former England off-spinner, who took an impressive one for 21 in his maximum four overs in the final, added. "I thought these days were gone but they're back and I'm really pleased."

Kent had beaten Essex by 14 runs in the semifinals.

India exposed

FROM PAGE 17
scored a crucial hundred against Sri Lanka in 2005, batting at No. 3 on a turner in Ahmedabad.

Kumble denied charges that the batting could have failed because of technical reasons. "We have people who have played Test cricket for more than 15 or 20 years," he said. "You can't find a more experienced batting line-up."

This may be true, but adjustments need to be made ahead of the Galle Test. The last match in which Laxman batted at No. 3, he scored a sublime century against Australia in Sydney. It may not be a bad idea to have him swap places with Dravid. Those who suggest that Dravid batting lower down the order would throw his balance out of whack are underestimating a batsman with 10,000 Test runs, and one who has arguably looked the most settled in Test cricket among his teammates. India need to focus on at least drawing this series, and if promoting Laxman is crucial, that's the way they need to go.

The second issue is India's bowling. When Australia toured Sri Lanka in 2004, Shane Warne picked up 27 wickets on his return from a drugs

ban. The pressure from the other end, where Jason Gillespie and Michael Kasprovic gave little away, was instrumental in Australia's series win. Neither pace bowler picked up too many wickets, but their accuracy strangled Sri Lanka and Warne reaped the benefits. Murali took 26 in the three Tests but the lack of back up told as Darren Lehman and Damien Martyn took full toll of the other bowlers. Now with Mendis at one end, Murali is more potent than ever.

"Everyone talks about the need to be positive against spinners but that's easier said than done when picking them in real time," an Indian batsman told Cricinfo. "Only then can you think about being positive. It's a fact that India just don't play enough quality spin bowling. People talk about Monty (Panesar) and (Daniel) Vettori -- and they are fine spinners -- but at the end of the day they are orthodox bowlers."

"Mendis and Murali are unorthodox, and bowling in tandem they exert immense pressure from both ends. Previously, in Sri Lanka, you could try and score runs at the

other end but now we have to adapt a new strategy because they have the other guy asking just as many questions."

India don't have such options. Kumble has indeed been unimpressive in his past two series. His 20 wickets in Australia clearly made him weary, but look at the support he had. Harbhajan Singh took eight wickets at 61.25 -- and struck once every 18 overs; hardly the stuff that's going to help you take 20 wickets in a Test. Harbhajan has been around for exactly ten years now, and such is his predicament. Who is going to take wickets for India?

India used to thrive on producing quality spin bowlers, but the paucity of resources is worrying. Piyush Chawla and Pragyan Ojha don't look ready for Test cricket and the only other name that comes to mind is Amit Mishra.

In the long run there are plenty of issues for India, but first they have to pick themselves up for Galle. It is just one loss and they have the batting power to come back, as tough as conditions there may be. How they cope there may prove decisive going forward.

Iraq's last ditch effort

AP, Baghdad

An Iraqi delegation headed to Switzerland on Saturday for talks with the International Olympic Committee over a ban on Iraq competing in the Beijing Games, government officials said.

The Iraqis will meet with IOC representatives early next week at the committee's headquarters in Lausanne, said IOC spokeswoman Giselle Davies.

She said the Iraqis have offered the IOC "productive signals" that could allow two athletes from the original seven-member Iraqi team to compete in Beijing. She did not elaborate.

The Iraqi envoys include the government's main spokesman and other senior sports representatives, two sports officials said on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly on the issue.

Earlier this week, the IOC upheld its ban on Iraq for what it calls political inference in Olympic affairs.

In May, Iraq's government replaced the national Olympic Committee with members not recognized by the IOC. Iraqi officials have said they will not reverse the decision and claim the disbanded committee was rife with corruption and other abuses.

The IOC, meanwhile, has insisted the old committee be reinstated even though four members remain missing, including the committee's chief. They were kidnapped two years ago and their fates remain unknown.

Ahmed Radhi, a member of the sports committee in Iraq's parliament, was quoted by the sports newspaper Azzaman as saying he still holds out hope for a compromise before the Aug. 8 opening ceremony in Beijing.

On Friday, IOC spokeswoman Emmanuelle Moreau said the deadline to finalize athletics competitors is this coming Wednesday, and that Iraq can field a partial team if the government reverses its decision.

That means two members of Iraq's Olympic team discuss thrower and a sprinter could still make it into the Olympics. But the deadline has already expired for the other members of Iraq's Olympic team.

Iraq had also hoped to compete in weightlifting, judo, archery and rowing.

Match trudging

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catch at New Road on the second day of this three-day game. He left the field for an X-ray at a nearby hospital but then layed any fears regarding his fitness by finishing on 55.

The second string Bangladesh side, playing their last three-day, also took it easy as they employed as many as nine bowlers during the second innings.

Gala opening

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the largest of the games, slightly bigger than the 600-member U.S. team.

The 163-acre venue is a complex of high-rise apartments that contains a restaurant that can feed up to 6,000, a library, a clinic, swimming pools, tennis courts, basketball courts, jogging tracks, shopping areas and coffee shops. The village will also have its own fire station.

The apartments themselves are modestly decorated in marble and wood with balconies overlooking walkways and courtyards.

After the Olympics and Paralympics, the apartments will be refitted for sale. It's been widely reported the units have already sold out at prices quoted between 20,000-30,000 yuan (\$2,800-4,200) per square yard. In round numbers, that means apartments will cost in the area of \$500,000-\$1 million considered high-end in Beijing's soaring property market.

The converted buildings are supposed to be ready late in 2009.

PCB not

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Lorgat said the game's world governing body was powerless to force players to compete in the event.

"ICC cannot force players to attend. All we can do is to make them confident about measures taken in this regard to safety and security, and on that basis hope they participate," Lorgat said.

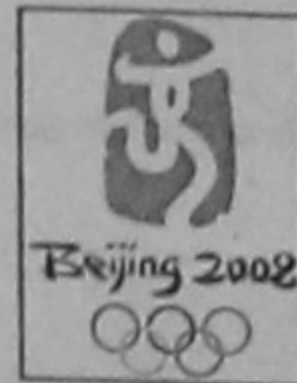
Ashraf hoped the taskforce appointed by the ICC will remove players' doubts and invited their representatives to Pakistan to see for themselves.

"Invite players' representatives of all the countries to come and see the ground realities. There are several Australian companies with their citizens working in Pakistan, which prove the fears are unfounded."

Australia are due to defend the title they won in 2006. Hosts Pakistan, South Africa, the West Indies, England, India, Sri Lanka and New Zealand are the other teams scheduled to take part.

Bolt unsure about double

AP, London



Usain Bolt's coach is worried that going for the sprint double at the Beijing Olympics could hurt the 100-meter world

record holder's chances of winning gold in his stronger race, the 200.

The Jamaican has said he wants to run in both, but is leaving the decision to coach Glen Mills.

"You have to ensure that you are not going into it just because there is a chance of glory, you have to go there knowing that your chance is solid," Mills said after Bolt's 200 victory in 19.76 seconds Saturday at the London Grand Prix. "I think he will get a medal in both, it's a question of winning."

Bolt's 200 was the fastest ever run in Britain, and he beat Wallace Spearmon of the United States by more than half a second.

"I definitely want the double in Beijing, but my coach makes all my decisions for me," Bolt said. "I'm

just waiting on him to decide. I'm definitely ready I've been ready for two months now."

"People may try to pressure me, but I don't pressure myself because I look to do my best all the time."

Mills winning gold in the 200 will be easier for Bolt, as Asafa Powell and Tyson Gay have more experience in the 100 at big events.

"The 200 is the easier race based on his performances so far it's not as competitive as the 100," Mills said. "There's always the temptation to take what you are sure of. If you run the 100 you have to be consistent with your technique."

The 21-year-old Bolt showed some of his inconsistency Tuesday, when his weak start at the DN Galan in Stockholm saw him lose to Powell by one-hundredth of a second.

"In the 100 meters you need to be an experienced person at this level," Mills said. "Things that happen to you like at Stockholm getting left at the start and he just ... abandoned all strategy that is the response of an inexperienced runner."

"The 100 we need to work out and master and we have 15 days to declare to the (Jamaican) association."

Bolt embarked on the 100 to improve his speed in 200, but it "took off like a roller coaster" after he set the world record of 9.72 on May 31, breaking Powell's mark of 9.74.

Bolt, who skipped Friday's 100 at Crystal Palace, said his confidence wasn't jolted by Tuesday's defeat and is ready to take on Powell and Gay.

"It's worth more to beat the best to become the best," he said.

Mills, who once coached doping-tainted British sprinter Dwain Chambers, said he thinks Bolt will never be tempted to enhance his performances with illegal substances.

"We can't shield him, he has to shield himself and we try to educate him on proper values," he said. "Most of the athletes who have got into trouble have gone abroad to train or go to school. ... We believe our athletes don't need it, we are talented enough."

Nadal to face Kiefer in final

Tennis

AFP, Toronto

Wimbledon champion Rafael Nadal will face Nicolas Kiefer for the third time in four months in the Toronto Masters final on Sunday as the unstoppable Spaniard aims for a third Masters title of 2008.

Second seed Nadal, playing his first event since beating Roger Federer for the title at the All England club, moved to his ninth final of the season with a 7-6, 6-3 semifinal win over eighth-seeded Andy Murray of Scotland.

Unseeded Kiefer, 31, rolled back three years of injury and poor form, ending the nine-match win streak of Frenchman Gilles Simon 6-7, 6-3, 7-6 in their three-hour semifinal struggle.

Nadal has moved even closer to Federer in the rankings race after the Swiss world No.1 crashed out this week in the second round to Simon.

Kiefer will be playing in his first

final in three years and hoping to lift his first trophy since Hong Kong, 2000.

"I'm very happy with the way I was winning today," said Kiefer, who missed a year with two wrist surgeries from mid-2006. "I didn't play my best tennis."

"But in the important moments I could pick up my game, and I was playing pretty good. It wasn't easy after a few tough matches here, but right now I'm in another nice final."

"It's my first one in a Masters Series and I'm looking forward to tomorrow."

Nadal is on fire this season. He has polished his record to 60-7, capturing six titles from eight finals, including two Grand Slams and two Masters Series.

He landed in his fifth straight final after Murray saved two match points but then plowed a forehand into the net on another.

"I played a very good match, and Murray played one of his best matches against me," said Nadal, who won this title in 2005 when the tournament was in Montreal. "But

I've reached the final again."

"The second set was very tough. I was a break up, but he played well. He had a lot of good points."

"I'm very happy to be in this final. To win a second time would be unbelievable."

Nadal profited after a close-run first set when Murray came down hard on his right knee in the 11th game and level first set against the eighth seed after the Scot came down hard on his right knee in the 11th game.

While he played on in a set that produced not a sniff of a break point, Murray needed taping after dropping the tiebreaker.

Nadal went up a break early in the second set but gave it back with a double-fault in the fifth game. He went up again with a break in the eighth for a commanding 5-3 lead.

Kiefer has not claimed a set off of Nadal out of eight they have played this year. The Spaniard beat him at Miami, in Davis Cup last month in the third round at Wimbledon.

"Of course, I have to pick up one more level," said the German, who owns six career titles.

Simon won his fourth career title at Indianapolis last weekend and carried on with a stunning second-round upset of Federer here.

Reviews fix

FROM PAGE 17
but I think it is something that we will have to take forward. It is a bit too early to comment," he said.

A top International Cricket Council (ICC) official recently said here he did not believe the rule would undermine the on-field umpires' authority as their word was still "final".

"It is an extension of the appeal. It doesn't undermine their roles. Their skill as umpires is still paramount. They have to make the decision (after consulting the TV umpire)," said ICC general manager Dave Richardson.

"I am confident it will work quite well. We must not forget what the real objective of this process is -- and that is to avoid obvious and clear mistakes."

Each team is allowed three unsuccessful review requests per innings but if one is successful they will get an additional appeal.

The rule applies for all dismissals except "timed out" when an incoming batsman is out if he takes too long to arrive at the crease after the fall of the previous wicket.

The second Test starts in Galle on Thursday.

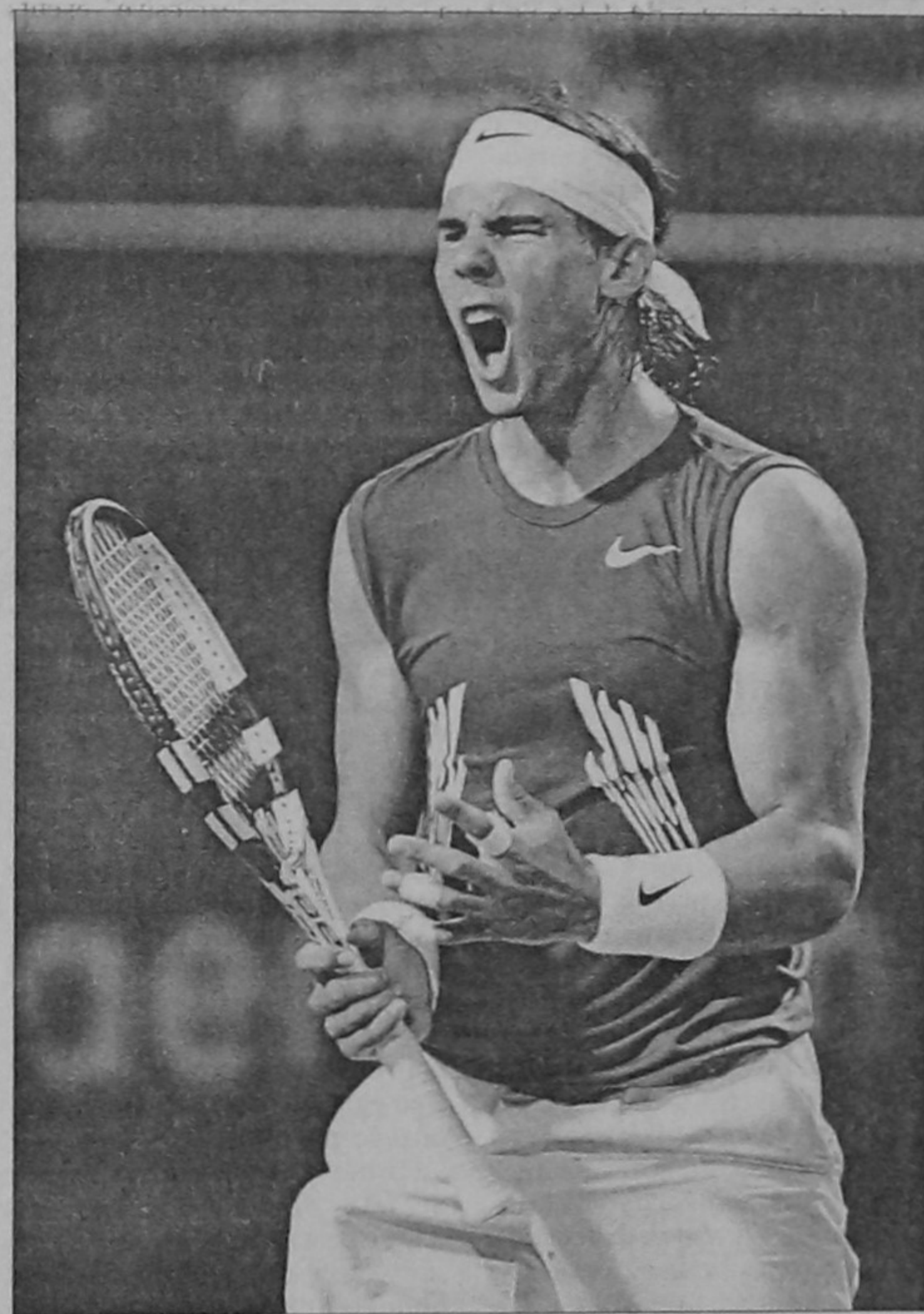


PHOTO: AFP

Spaniard Rafael Nadal celebrates after winning a point against Richard Gasquet of France during the Rogers Cup semifinal clash in Toronto on Saturday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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