

Tri-series in the air still

CRICINFO, undated

Negotiations are still underway for a tri-series tournament in South Africa, involving Pakistan and potentially Sri Lanka, as Pakistan continues to find ways to fill a depleted international calendar. Though talk of the series has been rife since the Champions Trophy — originally scheduled to be held in Pakistan from September 12 — was finally postponed at the end of last month, progress in bringing it about has been slow.

The PCB's international cricket committee met yesterday to review the situation arising from the postponement and discussed several options for Pakistan. Time, though, is against Pakistan as realistically, most teams have international commitments from October 1 and any commitment has to be arranged before then. The committee discussed the South Africa tri-series proposal as well as alternatives within and outside Pakistan.

"They [Cricket South Africa] are still looking at various commercial options and opportunities for the series," Shafiqat Naghmi, chief

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IT HAS HAPPENED AGAIN: Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal makes an early exit after edging the first ball of the innings to second slip David Hussey off left-arm Nathan Bracken in the second one-dayer against Australia at the TIO Stadium in Darwin yesterday.

Siddons says sorry

Cricket

TIGERCRIKET.COM, Darwin

A day that had started on the wrong foot for the Tigers with the first ball dismissal of Tamim Iqbal never got better and Australia's eight-wicket win at the TIO Stadium yesterday only confirmed how effortless securing the Commonwealth Bank series has been for the world champions.

Coach Jamie Siddons said he was sorry for the Bangladesh supporters after another poor show as his side showed hardly any improvement from the first one-dayer in which they lost by 180 runs after hitting their lowest ever ODI total, 74, at the same venue.

"On behalf of the team I want to apologise to our fans around the world and all those who are supporting us back home. I can assure you that we are a much more capable side and we will do a lot better against New Zealand at home and maybe even in the last ODI here," said Siddons.

Mohammad Ashraful had won the toss yet again but this time

gambled on batting on a pitch that apparently looked 'better' than the one used for the first ODI when the Tigers had fielded first.

But Tamim was squared up by the first delivery of the game bowled by Nathan Bracken and edged to second slip David Hussey while fellow opener Mehrab Hossain (1) chased another Bracken delivery and gave catching practice to Mike Hussey.

Then it was Ashraful's (3) turn to bring the slips into play again. The skipper went hard at a Stuart Clark away-swing and offered a simple catch to Cameron White to leave Bangladesh at 15 for three in the sixth over and the match was as good as over for the tourists.

"It was a half volley and a four ball; just swung too much. The ball was swinging a lot early on and that is only natural. It would swing in the first 6-7 overs whether you bowl first or second and it is our responsibility as batsmen to see off that period. We again failed to do that," said Ashraful.

"It is very disappointing. We are unable to implement what we are practicing and planning. Everyone knows and we know that we are a

much better team than this and we can play much better cricket. It's just not happening for us at the moment," he added.

Bangladesh captain also refused to see the team making 117 as an improvement from the first ODI where they were bundled out for 74.

"The disappointment is the same. Improvement would have been scoring over 200 and pushing Australia. I thought we had confidence in the batting department after the practice matches where we twice made 300-plus scores and crossed 270 twice. But after the first match the confidence has suffered a bit," said Ashraful.

The captain said the only comforting feature was the bowling of Ashraf Bin Mortaza and Shakib Al Hasan. Shakib, in his 50th ODI, bamboozled Australian opener Shane Watson and also saw the back of captain Michael Clarke for the second game running. Clarke's one was his 50th wicket in ODIs.

Mortaza went for only 30 off his nine overs and had man-of-the-match Shaun Marsh dropped by Alok Kapali at slip.

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Marsh carves a niche

Cricket

CRICINFO, Darwin

Shaun Marsh's first two one-day internationals at home could hardly have gone any better. Having made a success of his debut ODI series in the West Indies this year, Marsh has continued his excellent form with a pair of half-centuries in Darwin but he knows he is no certainty to retain his place when Matthew Hayden returns from injury.

Marsh's 76 in the opening game was followed by a confident unbeaten 69 that earned him the man-of-the-match award in the second contest as Australia cruised past Bangladesh's 117 with 27 overs to spare. First in the Caribbean and now in Australia he has forged a promising opening partnership with Shane Watson.

It is a combination that could be the future for Australia's one-day team. In the short-term, the return of Hayden from a persistent heel injury, probably for the series in

India, will force the selectors to choose between Marsh and Watson for the second opening slot.

"Hopefully I can get a few one-dayers when the season starts in Australia when we play South Africa and New Zealand," Marsh said. "I've just got to keep working hard and keep playing well for Western Australia. The season starts there soon so I've just got to keep working hard on that."

Marsh has averaged 50.50 from his first seven one-day internationals and against Bangladesh he has found gaps and regularly scored boundaries while taking few risks. It is a skill that is in high demand among opening batsmen and he is a more attacking type than his father Geoff, the former Australian player.

"I take after my mum a bit, she was always left-handed at whatever she did," Marsh said. "I've probably got a few more shots than the old man."

Marsh has noticed a major improvement in his own batting in the past year, a period during which he averaged more than 60 in

the Pura Cup and took the Indian Premier League by storm by topping its run tally. He is one of several men who have impressed the stand-in captain Michael Clarke during the Darwin series.

"There's been some great individual performances," Clarke said. "Shaun Marsh has been on fire. He batted really well in the first game and backed it up today. Guys have an opportunity to either cement their spot in the team or push for selection when guys come back from injury and I think a few of our guys are certainly doing that."

Bangladesh could have had Marsh run out on 5 when he drove to mid off, set off for a single and collided mid-pitch with the bowler Shahadat Hossain. Both men ended up in a messy tangle on the turf and the fielder Nazmul Hossain decided against throwing at the stumps, where Marsh would have been well short.

There were echoes of the Ryan Sidebottom-Grant Elliott crash at The Oval this year, when England ran Elliott out and their captain

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CITYCELL FUTSAL FROM TODAY

First futsal title MSC veterans'

SPORTS REPORTER

After their successors bagged the season's first major tournament -- the Federation Cup -- on Monday, Mohammedan veterans won the title of the Abdur Rahim-Gafoor Baloch Memorial Futsal competition which marked the launching of football's indoor version in the country yesterday.

And expectedly, Mohammedan's opposition in the final of the daylong tournament were none other than their perennial foes Abahani, who gave up a lead to lose 3-1 to the likes of Kaiser Hamid, Sabir, Johnny, Kanan, Nurul Haque Manik, Nakib and others.

In the final at the Woodenfloor Gymnasium, Zakir put Abahani ahead but Bakhtiar levelled the score before halftime while a second-half brace by Sabir sealed the trophy for the black and whites.

Current Abahani coach Amal Sen, Aslam, Rupu, Zakir, Iqbal, Ghaus and their former colleagues featured in the sky-blues strip.

Abahani defeated Arambagh 4-1 in the opening match before brushing aside Rahmatganj 8-1 in the semifinals.

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U-18 football trial begins

SPORTS REPORTER

The final trial of the under-18 footballers began at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

A total of 150 selected players are taking part in the three-day programme.

BFF president Kazi Salahuddin was present as chief guest.

Initially, BFF conducted the age-group training from July 1 to August 31 with 900 footballers from 35 districts with the cooperation of the District Football Associations to groom talented booters and aimed at reducing the crisis of players in the future leagues and tournaments.

Out of the trainees, BFF picked up the 150 to give them intensive training.

Federer wins a thriller

AP, New York



Poor Roger Federer. All these years of dominating the tennis world, and he was missing out on the fun of riveting five-set matches.

Federer wasn't actually complaining about the dearth of drama, but he insisted he found joy in the match. Pushed to the limit by 23rd-seeded Igor Andreev on Tuesday in the fourth round of the U.S. Open.

The four-time defending champ won 6-7 (5), 7-6 (5), 6-3, 3-6, 6-3.

"They're fun when you play them," Federer said of going the distance. "Sometimes, of course, they're hard physically and mentally, and the pressure is huge on me, because Igor doesn't have a whole lot to lose. For me it's way

worse, so I'm very happy with the way we competed tonight."

He noted it was the first time he played a five-setter straight through at Arthur Ashe Stadium, with its boisterous crowd. In 2004, he knocked off Andre Agassi in the quarterfinals in a match split over two days because of rain. Federer went on to win his first Open title.

"I mean, it's why you practice hard, that you play good when it's crunch time," he said. "I'm happy with the way I played today when the pressure was the highest, and the crowd gives you that feeling of going crazy a little bit."

His yelling, fist-pumping and grinning after clinching the final point comprised the kind of celebration usually reserved for Grand Slam titles. He's got 12 of those, two shy of Pete Sampras' career mark. And Federer has now won 31 consecutive matches at the U.S. Open.

Not feeling quite so energized after his five-set match was No. 3 Novak Djokovic. He survived No. 15 Tommy Robredo of Spain by a score of 4-6, 6-2, 6-3, 5-7, 6-3. Djokovic was bothered at various points by his stomach, his hip, his right ankle and breathing problems.

"If we start talking about things that are bothering me, as I said on the court, we'll chat for a long time," he said. "It's better I skip all these things and leave it behind."

Djokovic figured his quarterfinal opponent would be less fatigued, and that certainly should be true after Andy Roddick needed just 87 minutes to beat No. 11 Fernando Gonzalez of Chile.

Roddick, the No. 8 seed, lost only nine points on his serve. He wasn't buying the argument that he'd have an advantage over Djokovic.

"He's also had a much better

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Swiss star Roger Federer makes a forehand return against Russia's Igor Andreev during their US Open fourth round match at Flushing Meadows on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Kirsten backs Dhoni

Cricket

AGENCIES, undated

Gary Kirsten, the India coach, has said that Mahendra Singh Dhoni is "ready" to captain India in all forms of the game but added that there was no immediate need for change because Anil Kumble was doing "an exceptional job" leading the Test side.

"He [Dhoni] is ready for it [Test captaincy] but there is no need to rush as of now," Kirsten told NDTV. "Anil has done an exceptional job, he is a great leader. He is prepared to do 30 overs in a day but he is on the other side of the physical side of the game."

"MSD is a great thinker. He has got fantastic skills in terms of understanding the situation. He is the best ODI batsman in the world. I think he has worked his heart out,

how to win games batting in the middle period. He plays every situation really well and is a very good keeper as well."

Kumble has led the Test team since Rahul Dravid resigned after India's tour of England in 2007 while Dhoni has been in charge of the ODI and Twenty20 sides.

India have just returned from a tour of Sri Lanka where they were beaten 1-2 in the Tests but bounced back to take the ODI series 3-2. Dhoni had opted out of the Test series in order to rest but returned for the one-dayers.

"Their characters [Dhoni's and Kumble's], their strategies are different," Kirsten said. "Their thinking is different but they both are exceptional cricketers and they have proved their worth in different formats of the game. It's always good to have captains that are performing well. It makes a big difference to the morale of the

team, to the energy and intensity of the game."

One of the disappointments for India during the ODIs in Sri Lanka was Yuvraj Singh's form. He scored 72 runs in five innings and was tormented by Ajantha Mendis, who has dismissed him four times in six matches. Kirsten hoped that the break from international cricket would help Yuvraj.

"We all want to see Yuvraj hitting the ball hard," Kirsten said. "He is as good as anyone. Sometimes the break does a world of good. I am hoping that this break does him a lot of good and that he can comeback really motivated and determined."

After India coach Gary Kirsten said that Dhoni is ready for Test captaincy, former Pakistan skipper Wasim Akram echoed the view and said Kumble should quit at the top of his form, passing over the Test captaincy to Dhoni.

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Did U Know?

The fastest serve by a woman is by Brenda Schultz-McCarthy of the Netherlands when she hit a serve at 130 mph during a qualifier for the Cincinnati tournament on May 30, 2007. It is considered to be the fastest serve in women's tennis history.



Talk Turkey



Shoaib Akhtar

(Pakistan fast bowler) "I am honoured to play for a county like Surrey. I will do my best to win all three matches for the county and I am fit and raring to go." While expressing his desire to make an international comeback after signing for the county.



What to Watch

ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

TEN Sports
US Open Tennis
Day Eleven
Live from 9:00pm

Identical wins for Police, Dhanmondi

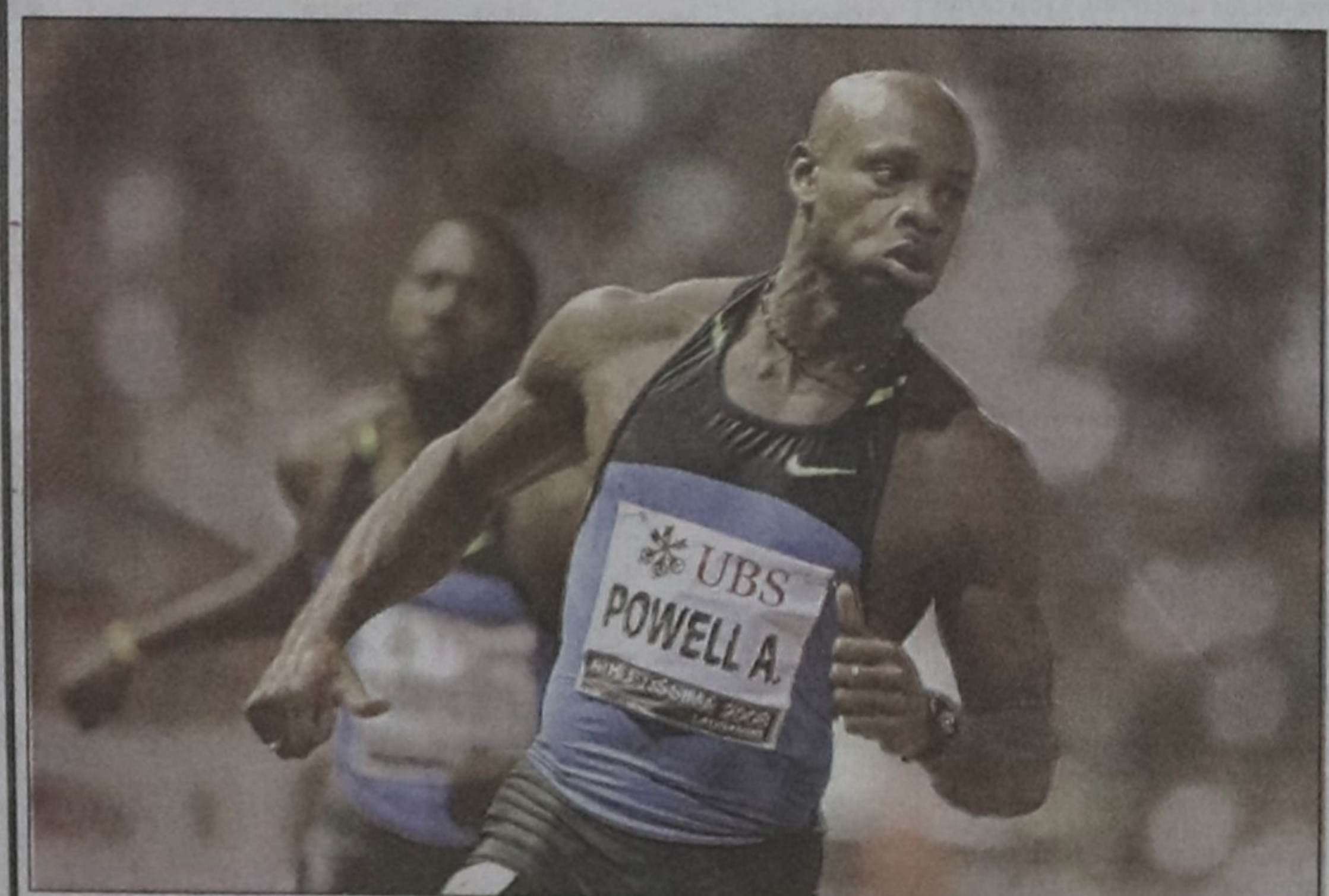
SPORTS REPORTER

Police blanked Little Friends 2-0 in the Second Division Football League at the Bir Shreshtha Shaheed Sepoy Mohammad Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Montirul Hasan and Al-Amin scored in the 50th and 62nd minutes respectively for the winners. The day's other match between East End Club and Euro Famous Club ended in a goalless draw at the same venue.

At the Army Stadium, Dhanmondi Club also secured a 2-0 victory over Gazirchot.

Shipon and Ripon netted one goal each in the 35th and 49th minutes respectively.



Jamaican Asafa Powell looks on after winning the men's 100m race clocking the world's second best time of 9.72s during the IAAF Super Grand Prix in Lausanne on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Powell turns up heat

Runs second fastest 100m of all time

Athletics

AFP, Lausanne

Jamaica's Asafa Powell on Tuesday ran the second fastest ever time in the 100m at a meeting in Lausanne where Olympic hurdles champion Dayron Robles failed to win.

And three-time Olympic champion Usain Bolt clocked 19.63sec in his favourite event, the 200m, for the fourth-fastest ever time.

Powell's time of 9.72sec at this IAAF Super Grand Prix event was 0.03sec outside the 9.69 world mark which compatriot Bolt set at the Beijing Games on August 16.

On that occasion, Bolt had shaved down his original mark of 9.72sec on May 31 in New York.

Powell shot out of the blocks and quickly sped ahead of Walter Dix, the Olympic bronze medallist

who timed 9.92sec.

Powell, who could only manage fifth in Beijing, said on arrival in Lausanne on Monday that he was on form and hoped to beat his personal mark of 9.74sec, set on September 7 last year at Rieti in Italy and which at the time was a world record.

"I came here full of confidence," he said moments after his win. "The track is fabulous and the fans just great."

Last Sunday Powell had timed 9.87sec in rainy conditions at Gateshead in northern England while on Friday at the IAAF Zurich Golden League meeting in Zurich Bolt won in 9.83.

Powell added: "After all the problems I have had this year I am really overwhelmed by this performance. To get a personal best is great."

The 25-year-old has had physical problems and, to cap the lot, the

entrance on to the scene of Bolt in the 100m event made things tougher.

American David Oliver clocked 13.02sec in the 110m hurdles to beat Cuba's Beijing champion Robles, who managed 13.17.

Oliver, the bronze medallist from China, also beat Robles on June 1 in the first leg of the IAAF Golden League in Berlin.

Robles, who had been hoping to improve on his 12.87sec world record, was on target to set a new mark at the race's midpoint but, as Oliver fought back, he lost his composure and even hit the 10th and final hurdle.

"I had come to run fast," said the Cuban afterwards. "But sometimes these things happen."

Bolt, the 100m, 200m and 4x100m relay winner in Beijing, is still in scintillating form. Though

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Nadal awarded Spanish Nobel

AFP, Madrid

Spain's men's tennis world number one Rafael Nadal was awarded the Prince of Asturias prize for sport, the jury announced on Wednesday.

In a statement, the jury praised the 22-year-old for his "commitment to the most noble sports values both in and outside of the court" and his development and charity work in favour of the underprivileged.

Nadal took the crown ahead of fellow Olympic champions Russian pole vaulter Yelena Isinbayeva and Jamaica's 100m and 200m world record holder Usain Bolt and the Spanish national football team which won the Euro 2008 tournament.

Nadal officially became the new world number one last month, ending Swiss superstar Roger Federer's run of 237 weeks atop the ATP rankings.

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