



Serb tennis star Novak Djokovic (L) meets (from L-R) Red Bull's German driver Sebastian Vettel, Ferrari's Brazilian driver Felipe Massa and Toro Rosso's French driver Sébastien Bourdais in the paddock of the Monaco racetrack in Monte Carlo on Wednesday. The Monaco Grand Prix is on May 24. Djokovic is also in France to play in the French Open that begins on May 24.

Footballer Hafiz passes away

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur



Former Bangladeshi age-group footballer Hafiz Rashid Hafiz passed away yesterday at Padma General Hospital in the capital. He was 33.

He left behind his wife and a host of relatives to mourn his death. He has been suffering from blood cancer for the last four months.

Hafiz was a player of Bangladesh Under-16 football team and later played for Agrani Bank, Bangladesh Police, Dhaka Wanderers and Badda Jagaran.

After his Namaz-e-janaza at Faridpur Stadium, he was laid to rest at the Alipur graveyard in the town.

Confusion over Afro-Asia Cup

CRICINFO, undated

Confusion continues over the next staging of the Afro-Asia Cup after it emerged that it was being touted it would be held in Nairobi between July 19 and 25.

Little had been heard about the far-from-popular tournament after discussions earlier this year failed to resolve its future. The increasingly packed international schedule, allied to the IPL, meant that no suitable date could be found in the calendar.

But Nimbus, who have the rights to broadcast the event, have indicated to potential partners that it will take place in Kenya in July. However, at that time Bangladesh are finishing their series in the Caribbean, while Pakistan are meant to be touring Sri Lanka. That would leave India to make up almost all the side, possibly supplemented by a few players from the leading Asian Associates.

Furthermore, hosts Kenya have not officially been notified that the competition will happen. While all the games could take place at Nairobi Gymkhana, Cricket Kenya officials said that while they had been provisionally given notice July was an option, no formal approach had been made.

The proposed format has switched from three ODIs to five Twenty20 internationals.

Warne eyes spin job

CRICINFO, undated

Shane Warne has expressed his interest in coaching Indian spinners if the BCCI offered him the job.

"If there is any offer or something like that I will seriously consider," Warne told Indian news channel CNN-IBN. "I love Indian culture. It took a long time to embrace the culture and get to appreciate India and probably took me a couple of tours to understand."

Warne wasn't at his best in India during his Test career, averaging 47.17 in 14 Tests compared to his career figures of 25.41 in 145 matches, but was in great form in last year's IPL leading the unfancied Rajasthan Royals to victory. Wednesday's defeat to Kolkata Knight Riders ended Rajasthan's hopes of making the semifinals this season.

Shah hurt by snub

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Owais Shah still doesn't believe he has had a fair chance to prove himself at Test level after losing his place following the tour of West Indies. With the success of Ravi Bopara at No.3 the chances of a recall look extremely slim, but Shah is determined to use the upcoming one-day cricket to make a statement to the selectors.

He was finally given his long-awaited chance of a spell in the Test team after Ian Bell was dropped following the defeat at Sabina Park in February. He hit a half century on his recall in Antigua, but failed to make the most of his opportunity in the rest of the series as he twice ran himself out in ideal batting conditions.

"I still believe I haven't had a proper shot at Test cricket," he said ahead of the first ODI against West Indies. "I've had one Test match, a year out, another Test match, a year out and then I've had three in a row. I'd like to have a proper run but again I've got to earn that run, which I will."

"Perhaps I didn't quite set the world on fire," he added about the West Indies tour. "A lot was expected, especially batting at No. 3, the media loves talking about that position, perhaps because we've had a lot of problems in that position over the years. I was kind of hoping I would get at least five or six Test matches in a row to say 'here's your chance, let's see what you can do'."

"Unfortunately, it didn't quite work out but I am as determined as ever and I think I will force my way back into that team."

However, he has all but given up on a place in the Ashes side, well aware that England aren't going to be making changes to the batting line-up for the

first Test in Cardiff. "What I've got to do is perform against West Indies in this one-day series, the Twenty20 World Cup and then I go back to county cricket to try to churn out the runs," he said. "I have done it for years and I will carry on doing it because I am still good enough to play Test cricket and I'd like to get a proper shot at it."

Shah found out about his Test omission while he was with the Delhi Daredevils at the IPL. He didn't manage to get a game during his four-week stint but has no regrets about the decision to join, despite it meaning that he couldn't play any early-season county cricket. He doesn't feel that turning out for Middlesex in April would have made any difference to the selectors' decision.

"I don't think me coming back and scoring a load of runs would have got me the nod ahead of Ravi. The England selectors, they know what I can do, I've been doing it for years. I don't think getting runs in a four-day game would have made a massive difference."

"They made a decision to go with Ravi, he played very, very well and was the man-of-the-series. He deserved all the recognition he's getting. All I want to do is now concentrate on getting back into the Test scene by scoring loads of runs this year."

And he still believes he learnt valuable lessons from his time in South Africa which he will be able to take with him into next month's ICC World Twenty20. "It wasn't actually that frustrating because I got an opportunity to watch and learn," he said. "I really did learn a fair bit regarding Twenty20 cricket, how teams approach it and what sort of tactics are used."

"Also watching some of the best batsmen in the world, [Virender] Sehwag, [Gautam] Gambhir, [AB] de Villiers and [Tillekeratne] Dilshan and just hanging around with the likes of Glenn McGrath and stuff. You grow up watching those guys, so it wasn't such a bad experience."

Mind games
FROM PAGE 17

Graham Onions and Stuart Broad and James Anderson are doing a great job. I think from what we saw out here a couple of years ago they've probably improved and are at a higher level than what they were.

"They've played some good cricket. I'm not sure they're playing against the greatest competition in the world. They've still gone out and done a job. They beat the West Indies in three days, which is not an easy thing to do, even if the opposition isn't great."

The Australians, on the other hand, are coming off a 2-1 victory in South Africa against the No. 2 side in the world. It all adds up to a group confident of overcoming anything England can throw at them.

But they will be back on court in front of 15,000 fans at the Venetian Macau Showdown on October 25 for an exhibition.

"I really enjoy playing, keeping sharp and staying in shape. It's great to see Andre playing again as well, after the problems with his back," said Sampras.

"My motivation to play Andre in Macau will be playing my rival and the great energy that Macau has, so I am very excited to play him in October," said Agassi.

Andre-Pete tie after so long

Tennis

AFP, Macau

Tennis legends Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi will renew their epic rivalry later this year for the first time since the US Open final in 2002.

The two Americans, who played each other 34 times, have not faced off since Sampras won that classic match and then retired.

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Maria's return cut short

Tennis

AFP, Warsaw

Maria Sharapova's comeback from injury came to an abrupt halt when she was beaten 6-2, 6-2 by Ukraine's Alona Bondarenko in the quarterfinals of the claycourt Warsaw Open here on Thursday.

The 22-year-old Russian is back in action after nine and a half months out with a shoulder problem, but having advanced through the first two rounds she found no answer to eighth seed Bondarenko's speed and surefire power.

Sharapova, a three-time Grand Slam winner, was broken

early in the first set and struggled to impose herself with both her serve and her return, while Bondarenko looked sharper and was far quicker around the court.

The Ukrainian broke again to love in the seventh game before serving out to take the set in 35 minutes.

Sharapova broke back and briefly rallied but never looked likely to orchestrate a turnaround, with Bondarenko reeling off some sumptuous winners en route to a surprisingly comfortable victory.

Bondarenko, 24, will face Britain's Anne Keothavong in the semifinals, after she breezed past Ioana Raluca Olaru of Romania in straight sets, 6-0, 6-1.

Eng-WI ODI

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another look an hour later, boos rang out around the ground from frustrated spectators.

And when Australian umpire Steve Davis and his English colleague Nigel Llong decided there was no prospect of play and called the game off shortly after 3pm (1400GMT), their decision was greeted with more cat-calls from the crowd.

The second match of this three-game series takes place at Bristol on Sunday before concluding on Tuesday at Birmingham's Edgbaston ground.

Delhi cruise

FROM PAGE 17

Delhi got off to a flying start, putting 60 runs on the board within six overs, and the loss of opener David Warner for only 15 had little impact as Gautam Gambhir (47), Tim Dilshan (24) and Sehwag (50) did the damage.

SCORES IN BRIEF

MUMBAI: 165 for 8 in 20 overs (Rahane 56, Tendulkar 46, Shah 12, Harbhajan 12 not out, Ashraf 2; Nannes 3-27, Sangwan 2-28)

DELHI: 166 for 6 in 17.3 overs (Sehwag 50, Gambhir 47, Dilshan 24, Warner 15, Mishra 13; Harbhajan 4-17)

Result: Delhi Daredevils won by four wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Virender Sehwag.

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