

Imran liking T20 support

PTI, Karachi

Former Pakistan captain Imran Khan said T20 cricket being in its infancy it is hard to predict who will win the ICC World Twenty20 in England as no team appears to have a clear planning or strategy on how to approach this format of the game.

"At present the way I see it all the teams are just going with the flow and Twenty20 cricket is only about luck and taking chances. There is no science or planning in how the teams play this format of the game," Imran told reporters during a visit to Karachi.

"One can't make predictions in the present state of things because any team can win on its day. Everyone is just taking chances and if it pays off it looks good." He said when one-day cricket started in the early 70s it took time for the teams to understand the game and plan strategies.

"Just like that, Twenty20 cricket would also evolve with time and teams will start understanding the format better and play it accordingly," Imran said.

"I am sure this will happen with Twenty20 cricket as well but right now it is just 'Tullebaazi' [chance cricket]," Imran said.

Imran was happy that Twenty20 cricket has been a big hit with the public.

"It is good for the sport that so many people are now coming in to watch these matches."

England

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quick like his boyhood hero Wasim Akram, marked his international debut by removing Ravi Bopara but it needed a superb catch at backward point by Shoaib Malik to leave England nine for one.

Opener Luke Wright, who struck England's first six of the tournament, a pull off the 17-year-old Aamir, kept the run-rate high in the overcast conditions by striking five fours in as many balls faced.

But a stand of 53 was ended when Umar Gul yorked Wright for 34.

Colly salutes

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"If we didn't win we were out and that's not nice."

"It was a huge evening - I was desperate to play, I've never had an injury that has kept me out which has been hard to deal with."

"Pietersen said he hoped the Dutch defeat would remain an aberration."

"That was a one off - we should never, ever have lost that game. It's not right to lose to the Netherlands."

Australia

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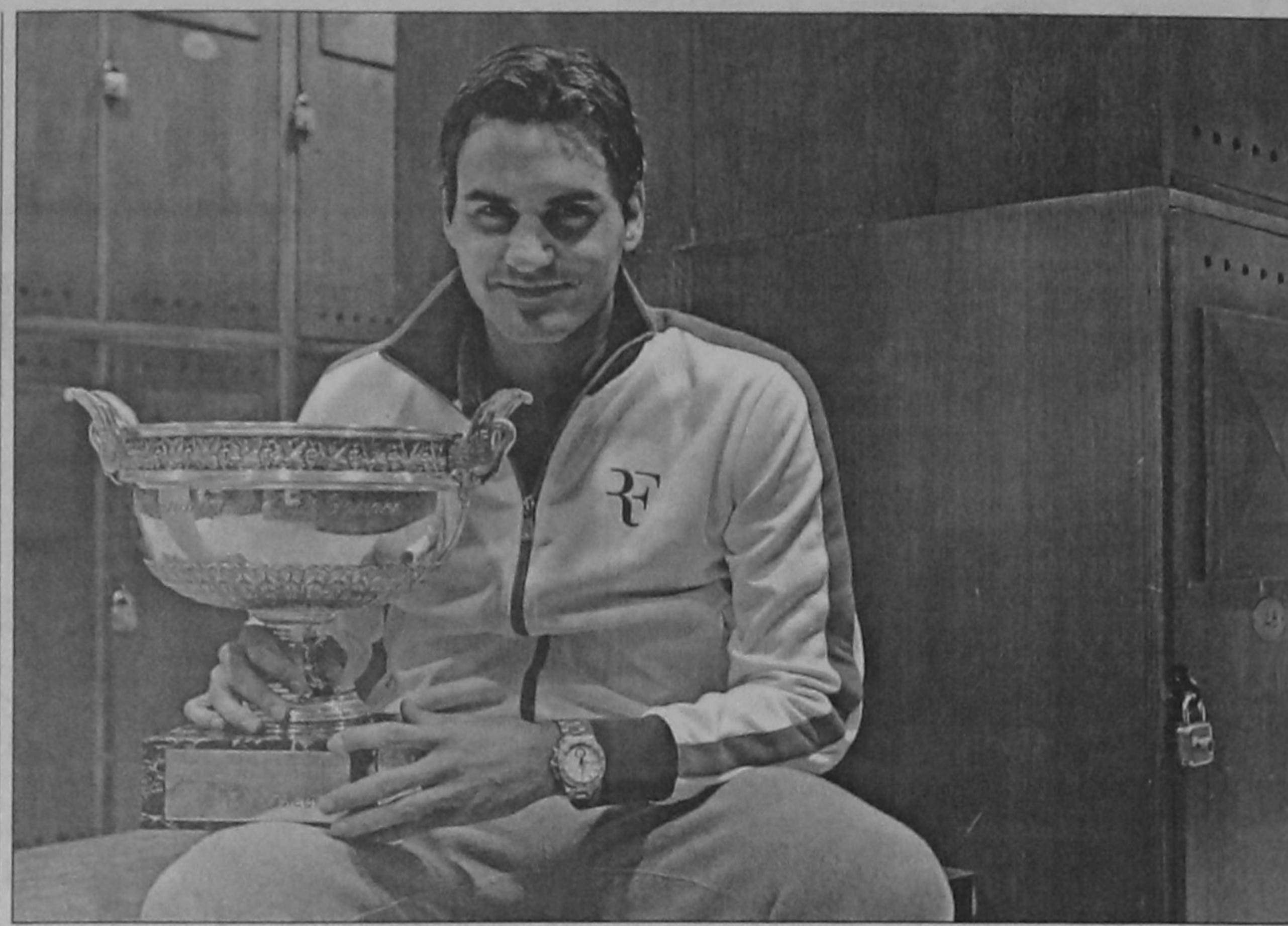
innocent Tamils by the Sri Lankan armed forces in the war against the Tamil Tigers.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: 159 for 9 in 20 overs (D Hussey 28, Johnson 28 not out, Ponting 25, Watson 22, Haddin 16, Lee 15, Clarke 11; Mendis 3-20, Malinga 3-36, Udana 2-47)

SRI LANKA: 160 for 4 in 19 overs (55 not out, Dilshan 53, Mubarak 21, Silva 11; Lee 2-39) Result: Sri Lanka won by 6 wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Kumar Sangakkara.



Swiss superstar Roger Federer poses with the winner's trophy in the change room of Roland Garros after beating Swedish Robin Soderling in the French Open final in Paris on Sunday.

More to come: Federer

AFP, Paris



Roger Federer, with a first French Open and a career Grand Slam carved into his storyboard of achievements, believes he is poised for another record-setting spell, with time stacked in his favour.

The Swiss maestro realised a lifetime dream of finally lifting a Roland Garros title to become only the sixth man in history to win all four majors with his 6-1, 7-6 (7/1), 6-4 victory over Robin Soderling equalising Pete Sampras' record of 14 Grand Slam trophies.

But Federer, who is not 28 until August, vowed there is more to come, with his professional ambition fuelled further by his private life soon to be enriched by wife Mirka bearing their first child.

Federer, acutely aware of the history of the sport, knows that Sampras was four years older, at 31, when he won his last Grand Slam title at the US Open in 2002.

Andre Agassi was already 29 when he won in Paris in 1999 to become the fifth

man to complete the Grand Slam.

The colourful American, who presented the French Open trophy to Federer on Sunday, won the last major of his career, his eighth in total, at the Australian Open in 2003 when he was 33.

Agassi was still reaching Grand Slam finals at 35, when he lost the 2005 US Open final to Federer.

The Swiss also knows that more majors will only serve to finish, once and for all, arguments over who is the greatest player of all time.

"I just tried to have the best possible career I can. I think it should be judged at the very end. How well did I do? Good? Great? Very good? Or medium? It's for other people to decide," said Federer.

"Right now, I'm still playing. I haven't retired, and I think I still have many more tournaments to go and many more Grand Slams."

"I'll give it my best shot to have the best possible career."

"I hope I can maintain the records I have and I hope to break some other ones along the way. I hope to stay healthy. That's most important because motivation and drive is not a problem for me."

Next Grand Slam stop for Federer will be the All England Club from June 22 where he will attempt to win back the Wimbledon title he had held for five years until Rafael Nadal took it back to Spain last year.

Nadal, who had defeated Federer in the last three finals in Paris, had himself been knocked out in the fourth round here by Soderling.

The world number one, so long Federer's nemesis, is now a doubt for Wimbledon because of a knee injury, a factor that only serves to boost the new French Open champion's outlook on life and career.

"If I had to retire tomorrow I would be happy because I feel like I've put everything out there," added Federer.

"I always said it doesn't matter when I retire, I'll be at peace. I can walk away from this game tomorrow, but I don't choose to because I love this game too much."

"Tennis is not forever; I know that. But I'll try to definitely enjoy it as long as I can."

Heskey backs Rooney

Football

AFP, Watford

England forward Emile Heskey believes Wayne Rooney can fire Fabio Capello's team to World Cup glory in South Africa.

For the second time in his England career, Heskey is the foil for one of the world's best strikers and the Aston Villa star is convinced his partnership with Rooney can be even better than the relationship he established with Michael Owen.

It was Heskey's muscular presence that allowed Owen to thrive during Sven Goran Eriksson's reign. After a spell in international exile, Heskey was brought back into the fold by Fabio Capello because the England coach felt his selfless style would give Rooney room to flourish. Capello's decision has already paid dividends.

Rooney's goal in Saturday's 4-0 victory over Kazakhstan was the Manchester United player's eighth in six games for his country, while Heskey netted his second in two matches.

Heskey has never been one to blow his own trumpet but he is willing to express his admiration of Rooney and makes a convincing case for his team-mate to make a major impact in next year's World Cup finals.

"Wayne Rooney is a great player. He has shown it on many occasions for his club and for England as well," Heskey said.

"He is up there with the best in terms of his ability. He can play in different positions and do great jobs. That shows how good he is."

Heskey and Rooney have one final chance to fine-tune their partnership before heading off for

their close-season holidays when England host Andorra on Wednesday.

Group Six leaders England are already within touching distance of the finals and a victory at Wembley would all but cement their place, but Heskey insists there is no chance of complacency creeping into the squad.

"No, we're not thinking about South Africa. The lads are very focused on the games. We want to keep going," Heskey said.

"It's going to be a difficult game after coming back from Kazakhstan on a long flight but we are very focused on getting the right result."

"The lads are really focused on the game. It's the last game (of the season), and it's at home so we are very confident and set on what we have to achieve."

Heskey has extra motivation to help England achieve their goal of qualification after failing to make the squad for the 2006 World Cup.

The former Liverpool targetman's international adventure seemed to be over when he was cast adrift by Eriksson, but he insists he never gave up hope.

"No, never," he said. "You just have to focus on playing well for your club. Once you've done that, you don't know what's going to happen."

"I got a taste of it, and I'm enjoying it now. I want to go to every tournament with England."

While Heskey is enjoying his combination with Rooney, he could get a chance to rekindle his relationship with Owen as well if reports that the Newcastle star is set for a move to Villa prove true.

"It would be nice. Obviously Michael is a great player. He has shown that on many occasions," Heskey said. "He's been knocked and always got back up and performed."

Not be complacent.

"Everyone is training hard and competing to get in the team for Wednesday. Everyone's hungry so I can't see us being complacent."

"If the team approaches it in the right way, which I'm sure we will, there's no reason why we can't get another positive result."

Although Upson is almost certain to lose his place once Rio Ferdinand returns from injury, he is determined to prove his credentials as the best alternative should either of Capello's first-choice centre-backs get injured again.

"It's been the best season of my career to date. I feel I've improved and developed well and I'm very positive about next season," he said.

"I'm really happy with the amount of games I've played (for England). I want to play as many games as I can."

"(Playing in the World Cup) would mean everything. It's something I've dreamt of for a long time and worked hard for over the last four or five years."

"We just have to focus on winning. We need to set out with the right mentality and

Dido picks

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youth perfectly and urged everybody to be patient with the team.

"I also have some experienced players who have proven themselves in the past and I think the right balance between experience and youth is very important for the success of a team. I believe I have that balance in the team. The experienced ones have also shown their worth and positive leadership by helping out the newcomers on and off the field.

"All I hope is that we can work properly and I would ask everyone to be patient about the national team. If anyone works with the right tools, he can develop the team and also get results. There is no alternative for hard work in football," he said.

Dido, who helped Bangladesh qualify for the final round of the AFC Challenge Cup as the best runners-up of four groups, will go into a three-month training programme with the big contingent before the domestic season kicks off.

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Smith sounds caution

AFP, London



South Africa captain Graeme Smith said his side had "sent a message" after their crushing 130-run win over Scotland at the ICC World Twenty20.

Victory in their first match of the tournament saw the Proteas into the second round Super Eights and provided a textbook display of how a Test side ought to deal with one of the minnow nations at this event.

The tournament began in dramatic style on Friday with hosts England losing off the last ball to the Netherlands at Lord's while Saturday saw Scotland give New Zealand a scare in a match reduced by rain to seven overs per side.

But led by AB de Villiers' blistering 79 not out, featuring six sixes, South Africa piled up a huge total of 211 for five here at the Oval.

Fast bowler Dale Steyn then struck early on and when Scotland were bowled out for 81 they'd suffered the second heaviest defeat suffered by any side in a Twenty20 international - Sri Lanka beat Kenya by 172 runs during the inaugural World Twenty20 in Johannesburg two years ago.

"We probably had a few more nerves after watching the first few days of the tournament and seeing a few of the unpredictable results," said Smith, who shared a first-wicket stand of 87 with Jacques Kallis.

"It was important to send a message and we did that."

Scotland captain Gavin Hamilton admitted his largely part-time team had been given some object lessons, especially by the Proteas' batsmen.

Hamilton, who said a national academy ought to be providing younger players for the Scotland side, admitted there was a danger of an unbridgeable gap opening up.

"We've had eight days together and we are playing against the world's best cricket teams but unless we chug along behind them we will get left behind," Hamilton said.

South Africa are likely to face a far sterner test from New Zealand at Lord's on Monday and Smith said: "We've played against New Zealand enough to know they are tough competitors, and on their day they can challenge and beat anybody. We will respect them as we would any opponent."

"The big focus for us is playing to our intensity, and playing our game. If we can do that, we can challenge any team in this tournament."

South Africa's batting, as evidenced by their opening stand and the way 83 runs were scored off the final five overs, has both depth and variety.

"We have got good players in both areas," said Smith. "It is about finding a balance between the touch players and the power players."

Foreign teams seek Roy

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Wayward all-rounder Andrew Symonds has overseas offers to consider as he mulls over whether to continue playing in Australia, his manager said Monday.

The international playing career of Symonds is in doubt after Cricket Australia sent him from the World Twenty20 tournament in England last week after another alcohol-related indiscretion.

His Queensland state wants him to continue playing for them in the domestic competitions, but he has received English and South African offers on top of his lucrative Indian Premier League contract, which has another year to run.

Symonds' manager, Matt

Fearon, confirmed that the unpredictable all-rounder, who turns 34 on Tuesday, was keen to play on despite Cricket