



PHOTO: AFP
Maria Jose Martinez Sanchez of Spain plays forehand to compatriot Carla Suarez Navarro during their Swedish Open quarterfinal in Baastad yesterday. Sanchez won 4-6, 6-3, 6-0.

Phelps tunes up well

Peirsol breaks 100m backstroke WR

Swimming

AFP, Indianapolis

Michael Phelps booked two World Championship berths Wednesday, but his victories in the 200m freestyle and 200m butterfly at the US trials left the Olympic swim star hungry for more.

Phelps, who won both events in world record times as part of his eight-gold haul at the Beijing Games, couldn't help a twinge of disappointment that he couldn't match or improve his best times, even after his lengthy post-Beijing break.

"That was the thing coming in here we wanted - we wanted to make the World Championship team," Phelps said. "I'm happy with where I am all things considered, but I'm really happy with a best time."

"I'm not used to not doing a best time when I shave and taper."

Aaron Peirsol got just what he wanted - a World Championship berth and his world record back in the 100m backstroke with a time of 51.94sec.

Peirsol, winner of Olympic gold in Athens in 2004 and Beijing, had held the record since 2004 before Spain's Aschwin Wildeboer Faber lowered the mark to 52.38 at the Mediterranean Games on July 1.

"That was very good, I'm very happy with that," Peirsol said. "That's the best I've felt probably in a few years."

Olympic silver medalist Matt Grevers, who led Peirsol by a narrow margin at the turn, settled for second in 53.11.

But the spotlight was on Phelps, who still has the 100m fly on Thursday and the 100m freestyle on Friday.

Phelps's time of 1min 52.76sec in the 200m fly was good enough to fend off the tenacious challenge of Tyler Clary, who was second in

1:53.64.

"That was one of the greatest swims I've ever done," Clary said. "It was pretty cool. I could see out of the corner of my eye. I was with him at 150 and just being with him was awesome."

An hour earlier Phelps had set the tone with a victory in the 200m free, winning in 1:44.23.

He led at the final turn, and when David Walters, swimming next to him, pressed early on the final lap Phelps pulled away for the win, leaving Walters second in 1:44.95.

"It's good to have races like that. It's good to have tight races, it makes it more exciting," Phelps said.

Walters booked his first shot at an individual international gold in Rome after appearances in relay preliminaries at Beijing and the 2007 World Championships.

In other races, Dana Vollmer won the women's 200m freestyle in 56.20 ahead of Allison Schmitt (1:57.25), while American record-holder Katie Hoff finished eighth in the event she had reckoned offered her best chance for a trip to Rome.

Hoff, the Olympic silver medalist in the 400m free, had already missed out in that event and has only the 100m free remaining on her schedule here.

Hayley McGregory made up for past disappointments with a victory in the 100m backstroke that sealed her spot on the world team.

McGregory won in 1:00.07, ahead of 15-year-old Elizabeth Pelton.

Pelton clocked 1:00.66 to earn her second runner-up finish of the meet after her second-placed finish in the 200m medley on Tuesday.

McGregory was squeezed out of an Olympic berth last year, despite setting a 100m backstroke world record in the preliminaries of the trials at Omaha. Minutes after she set the record, Natalie Coughlin reclaimed it in the next heat, and McGregory was then shut out of the top two places in the finals.

BOA accepts Moeen's resignation

UNB, Dhaka

A new BOA president will be elected very soon as the resignation of its president and former Army chief General (ret'd) Moeen U Ahmed was accepted at an emergency meeting of Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) on Thursday.

Earlier, on Tuesday, General (ret'd) Moeen submitted his resignation to State Minister for Youth and Sports Mahad Ali Sarkar.

Talking to the reporters after the emergency meeting at the BOA office today, BOA secretary general Kutubuddin Ahmed said they would again call another emergency meeting soon to discuss about the presidential election of BOA.

BOA vice president Maj Gen Mohammad Ashab Uddin presided over the day's meeting. State Minister for Youth and Sports Mahad Ali Sarkar was present at the meeting as patron on special invitation of BOA.

Replying to a question, the BOA secretary general said there is no provision in the BOA constitution for an acting president.

In the absence of a president, the BOA executive committee would now take decisions on any vital issue, he said.

The BOA in its emergency meeting today unanimously accepted the resignation of General (ret'd) Moeen and remembered with gratitude his important contributions as the BOA president for the development of sports in the country.

League Committee to sit Sunday

UNB, Dhaka

The League Committee of Bangladesh Hockey Federation will again sit with the clubs on Sunday to finalise the fixture of Premier League and the dates of inter-club players transfer.

League committee secretary Anvir Adil Khan said they would discuss with the club officials to settle the two issues.

He said they would keep out the 20 national players, now attending a training camp for the upcoming SA Games, from the transfer window this season for the sake of greater national interest.

Adil said the Hockey Federation as well as the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) wanted better result from the national players in the SA Games to be held in Dhaka next January.

He said that in the upcoming meeting, they would also bring amendments to the league bylaws to increase the foreign player's quota ahead of the Premier League.

On July 5, the Hockey League committee in a marathon meeting with the representatives of different clubs failed to finalize the fixture of the premier league and dates of players' transfer as the clubs were reluctant to release their players for national duty prior to the league.

Earlier, the league committee announced the tentative date for the players' transfer on July 8-10.

Ganguly eyes CAB post

CRICINFO, undated

Sourav Ganguly, the former Indian captain, has expressed an ambition to join cricket administration in his home state of West Bengal though he did not specify when he would do so. Ganguly, who turned 37 today, was confident that the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) would appreciate his concern for the state's cricket and the difference he could make.

"At some point, I will find a way to get into the CAB where people have known me since I was a kid," Ganguly told Times of India. "I am convinced that I can play a positive role. Having played the game at the highest level and being part of the system, I know what it takes to make a difference. I intend to take it step by step."

Ganguly retired from international cricket after the home series against Australia in October last year. He played a few domestic matches for Bengal after that, followed by the IPL this year. He also joined the television commentary team for the World Twenty20 in England last month.

WI CONTRACTS ROW Blame game goes on

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The West Indies Players' Association (WIPA) has accused the West Indies board of not responding to its submission of "marked up" retainer contracts last month and then penalising players for not signing the contracts in time. The board vice-president Dave Cameron, on the other hand, said contracts had not been signed because of the WIPA's "unreasonable behaviour".

On Tuesday, the WIPA announced a boycott by the original squad of the first Test against Bangladesh and said the players had played for four successive tournaments without receiving contracts. The players' body has released what it claims to be the facts, based on meetings with the WIBC over the last four months.

On its website, the WIPA says that on March 24 and March 25, the WIBC and WIPA met and made proposals with regard to fees for retainer contracts. The board proposed that the most pressing issue was the contracts and fees of first-class players and suggested that this form the agenda of the next meeting. It stated that in April, the two reached an agreement on retainers and fees and the WIPA received a draft copy of the retainer contract; it was asked by the board "to provide documentation with regards to the players' Intellectual Property Rights and Image Rights which WIPA did".

Later that month the WIPA "submitted

to the WIBC what was agreed by the parties on April 2nd 2009 which included the retainer fees among other things". A week after this, the board responded "confirming agreement including the fees relating to the retainer contracts". In May the board told the WIPA it would be willing to discuss the contracts "after it had received the marked up version from WIPA".

The WIPA claims it submitted a marked-up version of the retainer contract to board official Alanna Medford but received no response for a month. WIPA said it did not get a reply after writing to Medford in June that the players were keen to sign the contracts. On June 17, WIPA said, it received an email, also sent to West Indies captain Chris Gayle, from WIBC chief financial officer Barry Thomas in which he said: "I would like to address the issue of retainers and wish to point out that the time for signing retainers has passed. Our major sponsor has withheld three (3) quarterly sponsorship payments for October 2008, January 2009 and April 2009 respectively totalling USD 3,000,000 as a consequence of the delay in signing retainer contracts. We have been penalized for not delivering central contracts in the required timeframe. These contracts are required to be signed so that they take effect from October 1st of each contract year." The WIPA said it sent a letter to the WIBC president Julian Hunte demanding an explanation for the email but did not receive a reply.

Cameron said each year since the contracts were agreed, WIPA wanted to make changes to the standard agreed

form. "They are not prepared to agree on any contracts unless the changes demanded by them are incorporated," Cameron said. According to him, only 16 contracts were signed which did not include "most of the senior players".

On July 8 WIPA president Dinanath Ramnarine said the decision to pull out of the series came after the latest talks with the WIBC failed to resolve several issues. "They are now being asked to play their fifth consecutive series without a contract, which is highly unacceptable," Ramnarine said. "When a player called me last week and asked what was the position with regards to his injury while playing cricket for the West Indies in the just concluded Twenty20 World Cup, my response was that was there was no written contract in place and therefore any action that would have to be taken would have to be taken in that context. Professional sportsmen should not be allowed to play any sport that has such a high risk without the necessary protection."

Hunte said the Test would go on despite the boycott and a second-string squad, which included nine uncapped players, was announced shortly before the start of the game. Hunte told Reuters there had been "a lot of intimidation of players" but refused to elaborate on who had intimidated which players.

Shortly before leaving, Gayle apologised to fans on his Twitter page. "Heading home, sorry to all the cricket fans - this is the last thing we want to happen to the game. Need respect and stop taking us for granted!!"

Kevin backs Eng to win with spin

Cricket

AFP, Cardiff

Kevin Pietersen was excited by the prospect of England's spinners playing a major role in the first Ashes Test after seeing the Sophia Gardens pitch take turn here on Wednesday's first day of the series.

England at stumps were 336 for seven after a day of fluctuating fortunes.

Pietersen, who top-scored with 69, fell shortly before the close to off-spinner Nathan Hauritz although his dismissal owed more to his mistiming an extravagant sweep shot than cunning deception by the bowler.

But, with England fielding two specialist slow bowlers in Graeme Swann and left-armer Monty Panesar, Pietersen was encouraged by the way Hauritz had turned the ball.

"The promising thing is that Nathan Hauritz is spinning it off straight and on day one and we've got two spinners," Pietersen told reporters.

Australia ended the first day of the previous two Ashes series on top with retired quick Glenn McGrath running through England's top order at Lord's before home batsmen piled on the runs at Brisbane in 2006/07.

But here honours were even after fast bowler Peter Siddle took two late wickets to dismiss all-rounder Andrew Flintoff (37) and wicket-keeper Matt Prior (56) whose stand of 86, which came in just 95 balls, was threatening to take the game away from Australia.

Pietersen, who shared a

fourth-wicket stand of 138 with Paul Collingwood (64) which helped revive England after they were 90 for three, said: "336 for seven, we'll definitely take."

"The previous two Ashes series, Australia dominated day one."

"I could be greedy, the team could be greedy, we'd like to be probably four or five down."

"Maybe Colly and myself could have gone on to get a really big score."

Hauritz, the only specialist spinner in the Australia squad, had taken just two wickets at an expensive 260 runs in the warm-up matches before this Test.

"Although he doesn't have the mystery spin of a Warne, Murali or Mendis, he's a clever bowler, no fool."

As for his dismissal, Pietersen said: "It was unfortunate the ball hit my helmet, otherwise I would have got away."

Australia coach Tim Nielsen said of the shot: "He swept 15 times in the innings before-hand and played them all quite well."

"If a guy nicks a cover drive you don't tell him to stop cover driving, if he misses a sweep shot that's the way it goes sometimes."

Pietersen came into this match under the shadow of an Achilles injury and was limping at times during his innings.

However, the South African-born batsman, who made his England debut during their Ashes triumph four years ago, insisted it was nothing serious.

"Fitness wise I felt good, I was limping a bit because I've only just started my running

programme. It was just a bit of stiffness in the bottom of my legs."

Nielsen was particularly grateful for the late double strike from Siddle, who stuck to his task commendably on a slow pitch as a member of an Australia attack all of whom were making their Ashes debuts.

"If they (Flintoff and Prior) had been not out overnight and still going tomorrow (Thursday) morning with the ball hard and the wicket as good as it's going to be, we were going to be under pressure."

Looking ahead, Pietersen said England would now be aiming for a total of 400 even though that would mean one of their tailenders making a useful score.

Cheeky

FROM PAGE 17
donate 1,000 pounds (1,600 dollars) to charity for every English batsman who scores 50 runs during the five-Test Ashes series throughout July and August.

"I love Australia and I know the Aussies are always up for a spot of light-hearted banter, especially when it comes to the Ashes," Branson said in a statement.

"Every Australian I know wants to stuff us in the upcoming series and I wanted to do my bit to encourage the England team in the hope that they can win the Ashes this time around."

Australia lost the Ashes urn in the 2005 series in England, but regained it 5-0 in the home 2006-07 series.

National chess

SPORTS REPORTER

GM Ziaur Rahman's winning run was snapped by his Biman's teammate GM Reefat Bin Sattar in the tenth round of the Mercantile Bank 35th National Chess Championship at the federation hall-room yesterday.

Zia drew his board with his fellow Grand Master to secure 9.5 points. Zia however maintained his solo lead while Reefat followed him with eight points.

GM Enamul Hossain Rajib maintained third position with seven points.

In this round, Rajib beat Jamal Uddin, Mohammad Ali beat FM Taibur Rahman, Golam Mostafa Bhuiyan beat Aminul Islam and FM Mohammad Javed beat Mohammad Hasan Emam.

U-19s routed

FROM PAGE 17
Mominul Haque scored his second half-century of the match but again missed out on a hundred. He was dismissed for 80 and the rest of the lower-order batsmen did not make large enough contributions to rescue Bangladesh. They managed to avoid an innings defeat but their lead was minuscule. Offspinner Azeem Rafiq was England's best bowler in the second innings, ripping through the Bangladesh middle-order with 6 for 90.

England were left needing only 45 runs which their openers, James Vince and Joshua Cobb, knocked off in only 6.2 overs.

Kluft to miss World C'ships

AFP, Stockholm

Sweden's 2004 Olympic heptathlon champion Carolina Kluft will miss August's World Championships after suffering a serious thigh muscle injury.

The 26-year-old triple heptathlon world champion told Swedish radio she was determined to bounce back from what she described as being the hardest blow of her stellar career.

Mash wanted

FROM PAGE 17

The 19-year-old Hossain is arguably the quickest bowler in Bangladesh and completes a three-pronged pace attack with skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Shahadat Hossain.

The Tigers have stuck with the same combination that featured in the three-day against West Indies A in Barbados last week which means that there is a Test cap for all-rounder Mahmudullah Riyad as well.

Shakib Al Hasan is the main spinner in the side and will get off-spin support from Mahmudullah.

Hossain has played five ODIs for Bangladesh while 23-year old Mahmudullah has appeared in 24 one-dayers.



Did U Know?

Table tennis is the most popular racquet sport in the world and ranked second overall in terms of participation. Over 10 million players compete in sanctioned tournaments each year.

Aussies fight back

FROM PAGE 17

started with the bat, reeled off five consecutive maidens on a pitch taking turn but Australia's second-wicket duo were rarely troubled by him or left-arm spinner Monty Panesar.

Swann, batting at nine, made 47 not out and, together with Anderson (26), had shared in a ninth-wicket stand of 68 in just 53 balls before lunch.

England resumed on 336 for seven, with all of their specialist batsmen out.

Anderson was two not out and Broad four not out. Broad, after playing some stylish shots, fell for 19 when he was bowled round his legs by left-arm quick Mitchell Johnson.

But the runs kept coming. Ponting then brought on Nathan Hauritz in a bid to check England's scoring but the off-spinner's first ball of the day turned sharply and sped past wicket-keeper Brad Haddin for four byes.

Swann then drove Hauritz for three fours in a row, the last a cheeky reverse sweep that took England past 400.

But at the other end Anderson, who batted for over an hour, made a tame exit when he chipped Hauritz to Mike Hussey at mid-on.

Swann was left just short of his second Test fifty when last man Panesar edged Hauritz to Ponting in the slips.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard at tea on the second day of the first Ashes Test between England and Australia at Sophia Gardens in Cardiff on Thursday:

ENGLAND: First innings (overnight 336-7)	
Strauss c Clarke b Johnson	30
Cook c Hussey b Hilfenhaus	10
Bopara c Hughes b Johnson	35
Petersen c Katich b Hauritz	69
Collingwood c Haddin b Hilfenhaus	64
Prior b Siddle	56
Flintoff b Siddle	37
Anderson c Hussey b Hauritz	26

Broad b Johnson 19

Swann not out 47

Panesar c Ponting b Hauritz 4

Extras: (b-13, lb-11, w-2, nb-12) 38

Total: (All out in 106.5 overs) 435

Fall of wickets: 1-21, 2-67, 3-90, 4-228, 5-241, 6-327, 7-329, 8-355, 9-423, 10-435.

Bowler O M R W

Johnson 22 2 87 3

Hilfenhaus 27 5 77 2

Siddle 27 3 121 2

Hauritz 23.5 1 95 3

Clarke 5 0 20 0

Katich 2 0 11 0

AUSTRALIA: First innings

Hughes c Prior b Flintoff 36

Katich not out 53

Ponting not out 44

Extras: (lb-6, w-1, nb-2) 9

Total: (For 1 wkt in 39 overs) 142

To bat: Hussey, Clarke, North, Haddin, Johnson, Hauritz, Hilfenhaus, Siddle.

Fall of wickets: 1-60.

Bowler O M R W

Anderson 8 0 35 0

Broad 10 0 52 0

Swann 10 5 17 0

Flintoff 6 2 15 1

Panesar 5 0 17 0

MU snap up Obertan

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United coach Sir Alex Ferguson has snapped up Bordeaux talent Gabriel Obertan on a four-year contract, the club said Wednesday.

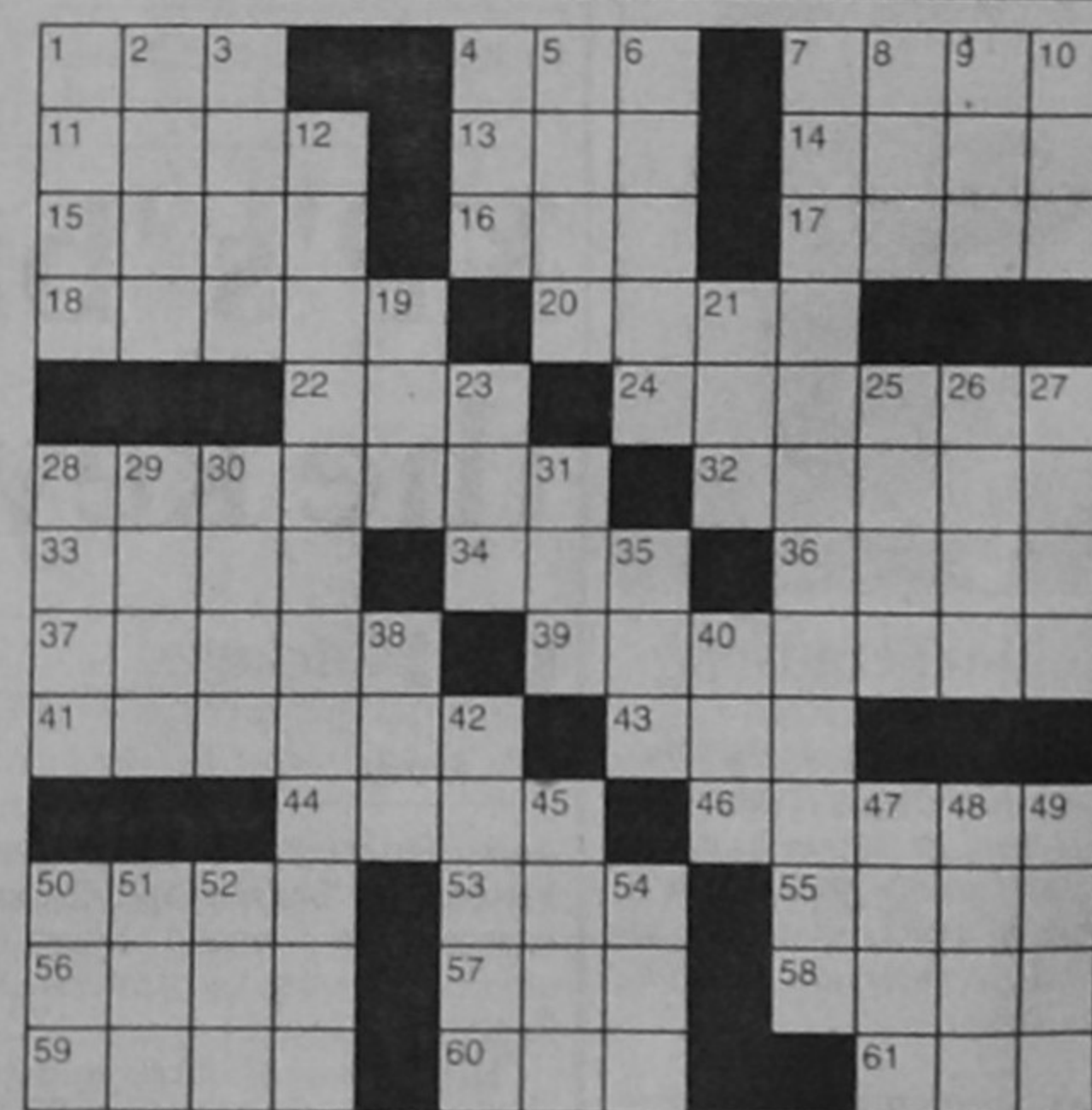
Obertan, 20, who can play in several attacking positions, is United's third signing of the summer and had been tracked by Ferguson for some time.

"Gabriel is a player we have tracked for a few years now, but because of his educational programme our efforts to get him here have always been delayed," Ferguson told the club's website.

"We are delighted to get him now as he is an exciting prospect. We like to get young players and develop them, and we will see that in Gabriel over the next two years."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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