



Marcelo Gomez (R), the first tennis instructor of the newly-crowned US Open champion Juan Martin Del Potro of Argentina, helps a young tennis player with her grip at the Club Independiente Tennis School in Tandil on Wednesday.

Inter hold

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Magrao and Oleg Gusev secured them the three points with a 3-1 victory.

Another debutant Unirea Urziceni - coached by former Chelsea stalwart Dan Petrescu - fared less well as they went behind to Sevilla, Brazilian star Luis Fabiano netting in the first-half against the surprise Romanian champions and another from Renato secured a 2-0 victory.

Lyon gained the upper hand in the first-half of their match with Fiorentina - a side they put out of the competition last season at the same stage - when World Cup winning striker Alberto Gilardino was sent off for elbowing French international Jeremy Toulalan.

And the French side branched that with a goal by Bosnian Miralem Pjanic in the second-half for a 1-0 win.

Greek side Olympiakos' clash with AZ Alkmaar was only really notable for the coaches as the hosts announced during the match that much-travelled Brazilian Zico was their new boss - replacing Timur Ketsbaia sacked on Tuesday - and Ronald Koeman became the first coach to guide five teams in the Champions League.

The hosts ended up 1-0 winners as Vassilis Torosidis scored a 79th minute winner.

Aussies

FROM PAGE 17
in the game, "Ponting said.

"Over the last couple of years I have found it increasingly difficult to play all three forms of the game at the level that I want to play them."

Ponting has become the team elder in a younger group following the retirements of Adam Gilchrist, Matthew Hayden, Shane Warne, Glenn McGrath and Justin Langer.

He now relies on vice-captain Michael Clarke and senior batsman Mike Hussey for the experience that is largely missing from the current set-up.

Australia's Trophy chances also took a blow with the loss of wicketkeeper Brad Haddin following finger surgery.

The big-hitting Haddin broke the ring finger of his left hand prior to the third Edgbaston Ashes Test and has been replaced in the Trophy squad by Tasmanian Tim Paine.

The Australians will be also relying on the batting of emerging star Callum Ferguson and allrounder Shane Watson and the bowling of Ashes troupe, Ben Hilfenhaus, Mitchell Johnson, Peter Siddle and Nathan Hauritz, complemented by senior paceman Brett Lee and Nathan Bracken.

Younis wants

FROM PAGE 17
London to avoid Dubai where he was detained for 19 days on charges of possessing a banned drug before being deported last year.

Asif, whose failed dope test during the inaugural season of the Indian Premier League last year resulted in the ban, will be available for Pakistan's first match against the West Indies.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) confirmed they sought clarification from the Dubai authorities over Asif.

"We are due to play a series in Abu Dhabi and Dubai against New Zealand next month, so we need to know whether he can travel to the United Arab Emirates or not," PCB official Wasim Bari was quoted as saying in local media.

SL look to top order

AFP, New Delhi



Sri Lanka will be looking forward to impressive contributions from top-order batsmen to make a big impact on the Champions Trophy.

Sri Lanka failed to qualify for the semifinals of the tournament's last edition in India in 2006 and look keen to turn around things this time with an improved performance.

Consistency is Sri Lanka's main problem. They were always considered unbeatable at home but have produced a mixed bag of results in recent times, having lost to India twice, beaten Pakistan once before losing to India again in Monday's Tri-nations series in Colombo.

"Over the last year, we have been patchy and inconsistent in one-day internationals," senior batsman Mahela Jayawardene said recently.

"The top order has to get runs. We get to bat the most overs, and it's our responsibility to get the big scores and bat through the innings."

Sri Lanka cannot afford to be inconsistent as they are in a tough Group B with South Africa, England and New Zealand, who are capable of beating the best on their day. The top two sides will advance to the semifinals.

Openers Sanath Jayasuriya and Tillakaratne Dilshan are expected to play big roles as they can dominate any attack with a wide range of attractive strokes.

Jayasuriya may be the oldest batsman at 40, but can overshadow youngsters with his unorthodox stroke-making. He returned to form with a blazing 79-ball 98 in a recent match

against India in Colombo.

Sri Lanka's search for an aggressive pair of openers appeared to have ended with the recent exploits of Dilshan, a middle-order batsman performing the role of an opener remarkably well.

Dilshan has already been nominated for three International Cricket Council awards -- Cricketer of the Year, Test Player of the Year and Twenty20 International Performance of the Year.

Sri Lanka also have solid batsmen in skipper Kumar Sangakkara, Jayawardene and Thilan Samarawera to capitalise on a brisk start, but expect more from others to set or chase a stiff target.

An encouraging piece of news for Sri Lanka is that their pacemen, led by Lasith Malinga, have been backing the spinners in recent matches.

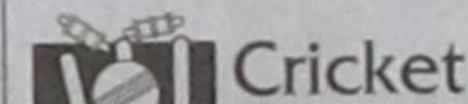
"The positive for us has been our bowling, which has been consistent and has allowed us to use well the variations we have at our disposal," said Jayawardene.

Veteran off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan, the world's leading wicket-taker in Tests and one-dayers, is as shrewd as ever in drying up runs or taking crucial wickets.

Sri Lanka have an unorthodox spinner in Ajantha Mendis, who mesmerised batsman with his subtle variations last year. He has been struggling of late and his side expect him to regain rhythm soon.

They also have an effective pace attack to put the opposition on the back foot, with Malinga, Nuwan Kulasekara and Thilan Thushara all among wickets in recent matches.

'Flintoff no mercenary'



AFP, Nottingham

Andrew Flintoff's decision to reject an England contract was taken partly so he could participate in events such as bungee-jumping, as part of future television work, his agent said.

Andrew "Chubby" Chandler, best known for looking after the interests of top golfers, including Ernie Els and Lee Westwood, insisted that 31-year-old all-rounder Flintoff did not turn down an England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) incremental contract purely for financial reasons.

"I've seen reports he's a mercenary -- he's nothing of the sort," Chandler told BBC Sport of Flintoff, whose career has been blighted by injuries and who is currently recovering from knee surgery.

"There were one or two things in it that made it difficult to sign, like he wouldn't be allowed to participate in dangerous sports -- and he's possibly doing a television series in which he may do bungee-jumping."

Flintoff, who has insisted he remains fully committed to England's one-day cause, retired from Test cricket after the side's Ashes series victory last month because he said his body could no longer cope with the five-day format.

Had Flintoff accepted the ECB offer of an incremental deal, this would still have given England a say over when and where he played

but for a fraction of the money he received from his previous central contract, something only available to Test players.

Chandler added: "I don't know what was in the ECB's mind when they offered him the contract they did, because they probably must have known that the money wouldn't have made a lot of difference compared to the sums of money he was earning as a Test cricketer."

"But he is going to end up with the odd sponsorship deal that would be possibly conflicting with an England sponsorship deal and he just wants to have the freedom of mind that he can do what he wants to, when he wants to."

All-rounder Flintoff, who already has a lucrative Indian Premier League (IPL) tie-up with the Chennai Super Kings, is now available for hire with Australian state sides Queensland and South Australia, as well as the Titans in South Africa, reportedly interested in signing him.

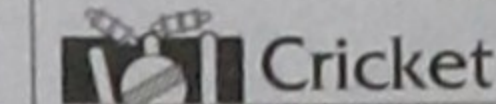
Flintoff hopes to be fit for England's tour of Bangladesh in February.

His plan would then be to play for Chennai in the IPL ahead of another England stint during the World Twenty20 in the Caribbean.

Flintoff's former England captain Michael Vaughan warned his decision to reject the incremental contract could pose difficulties for the team.

"If Fred [Flintoff] starts picking and choosing, that's when it becomes a problem leading into a major event," Vaughan, England's 2005 Ashes-winning skipper, told BBC Radio.

Vaughan's concern



AFP, Nottingham

Andrew Flintoff's former England captain Michael Vaughan warned his decision to reject an England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) contract could have dangerous consequences for the side.

Flintoff, who made an injury-induced retirement from Test cricket after the end of England's Ashes triumph last month, announced on Tuesday he was turning down the offer of an ECB incremental contract.

This would have given England a say over when and where he played but for a fraction of the money Flintoff received from his previous central contract, a deal only available to Test players.

All-rounder Flintoff, who already has a lucrative Indian Premier League (IPL) tie-up with the Chennai Super Kings, is now available for hire with Australian state sides Queensland and South Australia, as well as the Titans in South Africa, reportedly interested in signing

the 31-year-old.

But Flintoff, currently recovering from knee surgery, insists he remains committed to England's one-day cause, which he hopes to bolster by being fit in time for February's tour of Bangladesh.

His plan would then be to play for Chennai in the IPL ahead of another England stint during the World Twenty20 in the Caribbean.

"If Fred [Flintoff] starts picking and choosing, that's when it becomes a problem leading into a major event," Vaughan, England's 2005 Ashes-winning skipper, told BBC Radio.

"If Fred suddenly starts saying 'I won't go to Bangladesh and I won't play in the Pakistan series but I will go to Australia and go to the World Cup' -- that's when it becomes dicey," added the Yorkshire batsman, who this season announced his own knee-injury induced retirement from all senior cricket.

"From next summer, as a coach and a captain, you will want your best players available for the last 15 games leading into a World Cup to get your formation and your strategies all working towards winning it," Vaughan explained.

Gay, Powell set for Shanghai showdown

AFP, Shanghai

Jamaican former world record holder Asafa Powell and American Tyson Gay will face off in the 100 metres at the Shanghai Golden Grand Prix on Sunday.

Organisers had previously said the sprint rivals would not participate in the post-season meet, but announced Thursday they would appear, after triple Olympic and world sprint champion Usain Bolt pulled out, citing fatigue.

"Asafa Powell and his American rival Tyson Gay will compete... The rivalry of the two superstars sets the stage for what is expected to be one of the most heated races at the competition," organisers said in a statement.

The 100m race is now expected to be a highlight of the Shanghai event along with the anticipated comeback of hometown hurdling hero Liu Xiang, whose foot injury forced him to dramatically pull out of the Beijing Olympics.

Russian pole vault queen Yelena Isinbayeva will also compete in Shanghai in a bid for redemption after failing to win a medal at the world championships in Berlin, where she was chasing an unprecedented third consecutive world gold.

Gay won gold in the 100m in the 2007 world championships but finished runner-up in Berlin last month to world record holder Bolt.

Powell held the 100m world record of 9.72 seconds before Bolt set a series of stunning new marks, including his latest of 9.58 seconds.

Gay and Powell are also scheduled to compete at a meet in the southern South Korean city of Daegu on September 25. Bolt has withdrawn from that event as well.

SA's chance

FROM PAGE 17
match Champions Trophy at the Wanderers in Johannesburg and SuperSport Park in Centurion from September 22 as the perfect platform to demonstrate South Africa are true ODI kings.

"It is true we have come short a few times, but there are many players eager to improve. We believe we are the best team in the world and now have the ideal opportunity to prove it."

"Our preparations have been the hardest since I began training with this squad. We run up to four times every day, attend net sessions, sweat in the gym and work on fitness in the pool."

"Although we have not played much cricket recently, training games helped, and I believe we are professional enough to gear ourselves mentally for this tournament," said De Villiers.

Rustiness is a potential problem with South Africa last playing an ODI five months ago while the other seven contenders for a two-million-dollar first prize have been busily at it.

The choice of 32-year-old Ntini, who took just 12 wickets in his last 10 ODI outings at an average of 43.66, ahead of Morne Morkel was the biggest surprise of the 15-man squad.

England outsiders!

AFP, Nottingham



When even the England coach brands the team's one-day cricket as "very ordinary", it's no wonder few give much for their chances in the Champions Trophy.

Andy Flower made that assessment when England were only 3-0 behind in their seven-match one-day series against Champions Trophy holders Australia.

Now his side are an irretrievable 5-0 down against the world champions, ahead of Thursday's sixth match here at Trent Bridge, the former Zimbabwe batsman's words look almost charitable.

Even for a full-strength England team, facing Sri Lanka, their first opponents in the tournament, just three days after arriving in South Africa would be an enormous challenge.

As it is, England -- who have never won a major one-day competition -- will see an inexperienced squad lacking match-winners head into the Champions Trophy without injured stars Andrew Flintoff and Kevin Pietersen.

Andrew Strauss, the England captain, has tried to lead from the front since his one-day recall this year but has lacked the top-order boost once provided by now ex-England opener Marcus Trescothick.

Strauss's Middlesex colleague Eoin Morgan, the former Ireland batsman, and leg-spinner Adil Rashid offer hope of better days ahead while England fans may say their side often saves its best for when they have been most written-off.

However, that tends only to apply to Test

cricket.

Tuesday's fifth one-day international against Australia here at Trent Bridge illustrated some of England's recent problems.

For the first time in the series they did at least manage a respectable total of 299, although no batsman got a century.

But on a good batting pitch a steady seam attack, but one lacking genuine pace or great variety and with the still inconsistent Rashid in support, rarely looked like restricting Australia, who were helped on their way by a succession of sloppy misfields.

And as is the case with struggling sides, England have had little luck when it comes to injuries with all-rounder Luke Wright, now doubtful for the Champions Trophy after being struck on the toe batting against a bowling machine, the latest example.

England have also had to cope with an ambivalent attitude to one-day cricket at home.

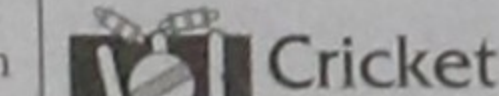
Administrators view it as a financial necessity, fans think of it as "fun" best played before the serious business of Tests, and woe betide the player who says the five-day game is not the pinnacle of his career.

"We haven't had a good one-day side since 1992," Flower said as he recalled the last of England's three losing World Cup final appearances. "So we have got to do something about it and that is part of my job."

He added: "At the moment our one-day cricket is very ordinary. We are investing a lot of time and thought into why one-day cricket in England isn't as good as it should be."

But don't expect a return on that investment in South Africa.

A lesson for Morgan



AFP, Nottingham

Eoin Morgan is determined to derive some benefit from his close-up view of Australia captain Ricky Ponting's match-winning century in the fifth one-day international here at Trent Bridge.

At Tuesday's halfway mark, former Ireland batsman Morgan was earning plaudits for a 58 - his highest score for his adopted country in 56 matches at this level -- that helped England to a decent total of 299.

But that innings was soon put in the shade by Ponting's commanding 126, the all-time batting great's 27th one-day international century, which helped set Australia to a four-wicket win and a 5-0 lead in the seven-match series.

Morgan, speaking ahead of Thursday's second day-night clash at Trent Bridge, said: "It wasn't great from an England point of view, but as a batsman watching him I could really see that determination in him to bat for the majority of the 50 overs and take the innings by the scruff of the neck."

"It was as if he was saying 'I'm going to win this game of cricket for my team' and he went about doing that with a fantastic knock that is the hallmark of a world-class player."

The Middlesex left-hander added: "I've not had the chance to pick his brains yet, but watching him up close can't fail to help any batsman because he has dominated world cricket for such a long time now."

"He is such a great player who sets the benchmark for other batsmen around the world to follow. There is not a great deal that can be done

to stop him at times, but that is our aim."

The frustration for England, whose Ashes triumph is fast receding into the distance with every passing one-day defeat, is that Tuesday's match was the first time this series they had got a good score on the board -- and yet they still lost.

Turning to England's batting, Morgan said the failure of the top order to turn promising innings into three figure scores was a frustration.

"We keep getting starts but fail to kick on which is the most disappointing thing. We know we can score runs at this level, but until you get that big score then you're never comfortable."

"I don't think anyone is comfortable with what they're producing at the moment and there is a real need to go out and grab a hundred and to do it quickly," Morgan explained.

But in the meantime he was happy to have registered his first fifty for England after a hundred and also five fifties in 23 one-day internationals for his native Ireland.

"It felt maybe a small bit different getting this fifty," admitted Morgan, who turned 23 earlier this month.

"It was a very proud moment for me to get my first fifty for England."

"I like to play positive cricket and I felt I was able to play my natural game out there. I could dictate the pace of the game and that is what I try to do when I get in," said Morgan, who reached the landmark in 37 balls with three sixes and three fours.

However, he insisted: "I believe I can go on and contribute a hell of a lot more in this series and getting this first fifty is just a starting point from where I'd like to kick on, and I've got the belief that I can do that."

Fans will drive India Win it for Bob

FROM PAGE 17
confidence in others.

India also have the bowlers to keep pressure on the opposition, with left-arm seamer Ashish Nehra in the middle of an excellent run since returning to international cricket this year.

Nehra, who impressed in the West Indies and Sri Lanka in recent series, and fellow-pacemen Ishant Sharma and Rudra Pratap Singh are all capable of providing early breakthroughs, which are essential to seize the advantage.

India have a specialist spinner in Harbhajan Singh who can keep the batsmen under check with his tidy off-spin. Part-time spinners Yuvraj, Suresh Raina and Yusuf Pathan cannot be ignored as they have been doing a commendable job.

India straightaway step into a high-pressure situation in South Africa when they clash with arch-rivals Pakistan in their opening match, hoping their consistency will see them through.

In Group A, Pakistan meet defending champions Australia, India and the West Indies. South Africa, Sri Lanka, New Zealand and England form Group B.

Pakistan play their first match against the West Indies on September 23 before squaring off against India three days later.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS		37	Big Apple letters	56	Lamb sandwich, often	11	Dressed work	20	Satirist's work
1	Others like it	38	Author Buscaglia	DOWN		22	Eccentric	24	Stickum
5	Impulse	39	Swampy area, for short	1	Hour-glass fill	25	Pi follower	26	Anvil locale
9	Piping material, for short	42	Time of your life?	2	Techie's customer	27	Young lion	29	Wrestling victory
12	Largest of the seven	44	Blood-hound's pride	3	"Arrivederci"	30	— out a living	31	Roulette bet
13	Carrots' mates	48	Spigoted vessel	4	Job for Ahab's crew	35	Libra	36	Like some winter roads
14	Lubricant	49	Risque	5	Maintenance	39	Campus area	40	Pakistan language
15	Approach	50	Mountain goat	6	Oboe insert	41	In due time	43	Get over-emotional
16	Iodine source	51	Hubbub	7	Buckled overshoe	45	Do as you're told	46	Burn some
17	Actress Thompson	52	Whatever remains	8	Kreskin's claim	47	Public show	49	Support system?
18	Let gravity take over	53	Tide type	9	Rod				
19	Tokyo's old name	54	Bradstreet partner	10	Panorama				
20	Lascivious	55	Wan						

Solution time: 27 mins.

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CRYPTOQUIP

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W E E N I V K K ? V W P Z I K H I H H

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHOLESOME SITCOM CONCERNING A SUBURBAN FAMILY BOY WITH GREAT FAITH: "LEAVE IT TO BELIEVER."

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: I equals B