ALL EYES ON HIM: Argentina coach Diego Maradona assures his charges during their World Cup match against Nigeria at Ellis Park in Johannesburg yesterday. Argentina won 1-0 thanks to a brilliant header from Gabriel Heinze.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'SA will get better'

AFP, *Johannesburg*

South Africa's talisman Steven Pienaar believes the host nation will get better and better as the World Cup progresses after the host nation battled to a 1-1 draw with Mexico in the tournament opener.

Everton midfielder Pienaar admitted Bafana Bafana struggled at the start of the match at Johannesburg's Soccer City stadium in front of a crowd of nearly 85,000 raucous fans clad in green and gold.

"It was the first game, the opening game and it's normal that there's a lot of pressure," said Pienaar, who added that South Africa got into their stride midway through the first half when they started playing their own game.

The midfielder said that on the strength of the South Africans' second-half performance "we deserved the victory".

"I'm happy with the way it went. The first 20 minutes we were a a bit nervous. It's normal because if you look at our team it's only Aaron (Mokoena, the captain) who's played in a World Cup," he said.

"For the other 10 players it was our first game in a World Cup but we're quite satisfied with the way it went.

"We just have to go on and we can only get better now. We played against one of the best teams in the world and to walk away with a point, I think we must be proud of ourselves."

South Africa, who sent their supporters wild when they took the lead 10 minutes into the second half through Siphiwe Tshabalala's superb 55th-minute shot, were pegged back by Rafael Marquez's strike in the 79th minute.

The hosts then went agonisingly close to sneaking a win right at the death when striker Katlego Mphela hit the post after outpacing two defenders.

Pienaar welcomed the backing of the crowd, who kept up a deafening wall of noise with vuvuzela horns blaring throughout the match.

"I'm really proud of the fans for their support and I really appreciate it."

Pienaar was substituted towards the end of the match with coach Carlos Alberto Parreira explaining the Everton midfielder had struggled with cramp.

South Africa next face Uruguay in Pretoria on June 16 and then France in Bloemfontein on June 22.

Diego wants flavour of winning

INTERNET

Diego Maradona wants his Argentina side to get 'the flavour of winning' after they opened their World Cup campaign with a 1-0 victory over Nigeria and the coach compared Lionel Messi's love for the ball to a child's love for chocolate.

Argentina created a series of excellent openings in the Group B match but took just one of them, Gabriel Heinze heading home a Juan Sebastian Veron corner after five minutes.

Messi in particular suffered at the overworked hands of Nigeria goalkeeper Vincent Enyeama, who secured the man-of-the-match award with a string of superb saves.

But Maradona felt the result was the most important thing for the opening game and hopes they can now go on a seven-match winning run that takes in the final at Soccer City in Johannesburg on 11 July.

He said: 'I really hope that my men will make the most of the support from Argentina's fans, the people in the stadium, I hope they can make the most of that so they can excel and improve.

'My players will then have the flavour of winning. If our players keep winning the games they are going to feel the need, the hunger to win the game.'

Messi, so often a disappointment for Argentina, looked almost at his Barcelona best for large parts of the game and Maradona says it is easy to get the best out of him - just give him the ball.

'We've talked about this and I want Messi close to the ball,' he said.

'As long as he has fun close to the ball, then we will all be fine. If you take the ball away from him it would be like taking chocolate away from a kid. He produced magic on the field today.'

The 1986 World Cup winner admitted the failure to kill off Nigeria did make him and his team a little nervous.

He added: 'We suffered a little bit by not converting all those chances, we've won the match but when you fail to take those chances you could end up with a draw every minute.'

Heinze emphatically took his chance, diving to head home a corner with Chidi Odiah unable to clear it off the line.

Nigeria coach Lars Lagerback was pleased with his side's overall display but lamented the lack of concentration that allowed Argentina to forge ahead.

'I'm very disappointed by the result but I'm proud of my players and the team performance they put in,' said the Swede.

India romp to 6-wkt win

Cricket

AFP, *Harare*

India needed only 15 overs to inflict a crushing six wicket defeat on Zimbabwe at Queens Sports Club here on Saturday in the first of two Twenty-20 matches over the weekend.

The Indians restricted a defensive minded Zimbabwe to 111-9 in their 20 overs and overtook this poor effort with five overs and much of the afternoon to spare, coasting to 112-4.

Yusuf Pathan top-scored with an aggressive 37 not out, and picked up the man of the match award for his efforts. Virat Kohli, undefeated on 26, and Suresh Raina (28) also shared the spoils.

It was all too easy in the end but India did have their scares. They lost Murali Vijay with only seven runs on the board when he popped up an easy catch to Prosper Utseya. Then the departure of Numan Ojha on 12 had them on the back foot.

Raina eased the crisis before left-arm spinner Ray Price claimed two wickets in his first over, removing both Raina and Rohit Sharma.

It was Price's 34th birthday but it wasn't quite the happy day he would have hoped for - his two wickets cost 24 runs in two overs.

At 48-4, it looked a little rocky for India but Kohli and Pathan saw them home with a flurry of sixes and boundaries as the pressure was released.

It was not so much an Indian success as a Zimbabwe failure of batting tactics. The main culprit was Craig Ervine, who needed 47 balls for his 30 runs.

Chamu Chibhabha made 40 from 30 balls but with the in-form Brendan Taylor going for 15 and fellow opener Hamilton Masakadza making just one, Zimbabwe were always struggling to post an imposing total.

The final match for the Indians on their safari here on Sunday offers a good chance to square their overall account with Zimbabwe and make it 2-2 from four matches.

MSC smash ten past Wari

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club launched their Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League with a 10-0 win over Wari Club at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Mamunur Rahman Chayan and Musa Miah both struck hattricks while Abdus Sajjad, Sabbir Hossain and Zahidul Islam all struck one each in the goal glut.

Wari stood no chance in the highly one-sided game, only mustering four penalty-corners for themselves.

In the other match of the day, Abahani beat Sadharan Bima 3-0 with a goal each from Puskar Khisa, Ajit Kumar Ghosh and Hasan Jubair.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Uttar Baridhara defeated Agrani Bank 3-1 in the Senior Division Football League at the Bir Shreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

Agrani took the lead in the 13th minute through Farhad but Murad equalised for Baridhara fourteen minutes later. It stood 1-1 in the first-half before Dulal made it 2-1 in the 55th minute. Masud provided the finishing touch to the 3-1 score line with his strike seven minutes from time.

In the other match, Wari Club beat Motijheel T&T Club 2-0 with Shahin and Zico scoring the goals for the Old Dhaka outfit.

NATIONAL CHESS

The preliminary phase of the 36th National Chess Championship will start from today at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall-room.

The event will be held in an 11-round Swiss-League system and the top nine players will qualify in the final phase.

Five grandmasters of the country -- GM Ziaur Rahman, GM Reefat Bin Sattar, GM Enamul Hossain, GM Abdullah Al Rakib and GM Niaz Murshed will be invited to participate directly in the final phase.

UNDER-16 TENNIS

BKSP students Hasibul Haq and Ishita Afroze won the boys and girls crowns in the Comilla Club under-16 tennis tournament.

After Ishita beat Sharda Alam 3-6, 6-4, 6-2 in a competitive final, Hasibul defeated National Tennis Complex's Rustam Ali 7-5, 6-2 to make it a cool double for the sports institute.

Proteas rally to 352

Cricket

AFP, *Port-of-spain*

Half-centuries from Mark Boucher, AB de Villiers, and Ashwell Prince trumped a penetrative, marathon spell of spin bowling from Sulieman Benn to put South Africa in a favourable position in the opening Test against West Indies on Friday.

Boucher missed most of the preceding limited-overs matches, but he got his groove back in the top score of 69, de Villiers supported with 68, and Prince made 57, as the South Africans were dismissed for 352 in their first innings about 10 minutes before the scheduled close on the second day at Queen's Park Oval.

"I think we played pretty well," said de Villiers. "We realized after the first day, the pitch was taking a lot of turn, and quite slow, and it was not easy batting in the first session.

"I am really proud of our effort. We strung good partnerships together, and we got the team out of trouble."

He added: "All in all, it was a good day for us. We would have been happy with 300, but we got 352, and so we will need to come on the third day and pick up some early wickets to put West Indies under pressure."

The Proteas' batsmen battled hard to get on top of the West Indies' spin bowlers in particular, but Benn, gaining generous turn and bounce from the pitch, was the pick of the home team's bowlers with five wickets for 120 runs from 47 overs.

Test newcomer Shane Shillingford supported Benn, when he collected three for 96 from 34 overs with his off-spin.

"It is nice to be playing Test cricket again, and this is my first Test at Queen's Park Oval, which has a reputation of being home of spin bowling in the Caribbean," said Benn.

"It is nice to know that I was able to perform here. The pitch started out really ideal for spin bowling, but it flattened out, so you had to put in some extra work. I guess being patient, and bowling good lines and lengths, paid off for me in the end."

Boucher made five fours and one six from 146 balls in his knock to beef-up the visitors' total, after their innings appeared at the cross roads at 238 for seven.

He reached his 50 from 102 balls with a single to point, and added a valuable 86 for the eighth wicket with Dale Steyn either side of tea to tilt the balance back in favour of South Africa.

Steyn was stumped off Benn for 39, and Boucher continued to rally the South Africans with tail-enders Morne Morkel and Lonwabo Tsotsobe before he was last man dismissed, caught at long-off off Dwayne Bravo.

De Villiers and Ashwell Prince had put the South Africans back on track, when they slid to 107 for five inside the first hour of the day.

The pair added 122 for the sixth wicket to revive South Africa before they were dismissed in the space of 25 balls.

Before lunch, de Villiers and Prince had carried the South Africans to 190 for five at the interval. De Villiers and left-hander Prince gave some backbone to the Proteas' innings, after West Indies claimed two early wickets.

De Villiers got off the mark with a lofted four to long-on off Shillingford, and one of Prince's earliest strokes was also a lofted drive to long-on off Benn for his first boundary, and he also carted Shillingford over long-off for a six.

South Africa had continued from their overnight total of 70 for three, and suffered an early blow, when nightwatchman Paul Harris was caught at cover for 10 off Benn in the fifth over of the day.

The South Africa batsmen became bogged down against tight spin bowling from Benn and Shillingford, who trapped Jacques Kallis lbw playing back and across to a well-pitched delivery for 28.

The two sides also play Tests in St. Kitts (June 18-22) and Barbados (June 26-30). South Africa have dominated West Indies in Tests since their re-entry into international cricket following international isolation.

They have won 14, and lost three of the 22 matches between the two sides, and two of the wins came at Port of Spain in 2001 and 2005 in the two Tests the sides have played here.

Afridi wants attention

Cricket

AFP, *Karachi*

Pakistan's cricket squad left for Sri Lanka Saturday to compete in the Asia Cup, optimistic that the event will not be upstaged by the football World Cup now under way in South Africa.

"Football is huge, but I hope after the 90 minutes of excitement (of a World Cup game) fans will give cricket its due attention and follow the Asia Cup," Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi told AFP before his team left for Colombo.

The tenth Asia Cup will be played from June 15-24 in Dambulla, in central Sri Lanka, about 150 kilometres northeast of Colombo, coinciding with the month-long football tournament that opened in South Africa Friday.

Besides Pakistan, the Asia Cup will also include India, Bangladesh and hosts and defending champions Sri Lanka.

Afridi said that his team will follow the football World Cup while in Sri Lanka, but mostly on rest days.

"Like millions of Asians I also follow football and my favorite team is Brazil, so like my teammates I will follow World Cup matches as and when we have time, but the focus remains the Asia Cup," said Afridi.

The 13-man team first flew to Dubai from where they will reach Colombo later Saturday.

Fast bowler Mohammad Asif will fly via Doha, Qatar because of a ban on visiting the United Arab Emirates (UAE) over a drug offence.

Asif was deported from the UAE in June 2008 after a 19-day detention for possession of a banned drug while returning home from league cricket in India.

Pakistan all-rounder Abdul Razzaq will travel to Colombo from England, where he is playing county cricket.

Afridi said he hoped his team will be in form after a turbulent three months for Pakistan cricket which saw senior players banned and fined for disciplinary violations and poor performance.

"What happened in the past is behind us," said Afridi, who was made captain for all three forms of the game last month. "We have a blend of seniors and juniors who all know their duty well."

In March the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) banned and fined seven players, including Afridi, following their December-January tour of Australia. They lost all three Tests, five one-day internationals and the only Twenty20 match of the tour, which was also marred by discipline violations.

However, the board later lifted the bans on former captain Younus Khan and Shoaib Malik and reduced the fines on appeals. Afridi's three-million-rupee (35,000-US-dollar) fine for ball-tampering was revoked.

PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi talks to the media in Karachi airport before boarding the plane bound for Colombo yesterday.

Because of Mandela

FROM PAGE 17

ended with Siphiwe Thsabalala blasting home a beauty from just inside the box. As far as opening goals go, this will take some betterment and 80,000 vuvuzelas trumpeted their approval in the deafening din of the stadium. South Africa have never lost when Tshabalala have scored, and that record remained intact even as Mexico grabbed an equaliser through captain Rafael Marquez. The match the developed into an end-to-end affair devoid of tactical discipline and both sides could have grabbed a winner, although none did. At the end, both sides will rue not getting three points from the game but the hosts will be satisfied to have kept the World Cup tradition of host's not losing openers intact.

In the day's second match, the French also kept up traditions. Les Blues had not won opening games in 2002 and 2006 and they did not this time either.

It was a dull, insipid showing from the French whose tactical make-up left a lot to be desired. Thierry Henry was on the bench along with Florent Malouda but both entered the fray for the relatively anonymous Yoann Gourcuff and Nicolas Anelka. That changed little in the grand scheme of things even as Uruguay's Nicolas Lodeiro managed to be sent off in less than twenty minutes of on-pitch action. The French had missed a glorious chance in the first half after Franck Ribery had shrugged off his marker and put in Sidney Govou, but the Uruguayans could count themselves as unlucky after Diego Forlan hurried his volley wide of the post. It was evens to the end, when Thierry Henry drew a blatant handball inside the box from an Uruguay player.

Believers the world over had a field day, as the referee waved play on. Henry could only smile ruefully.

Iniesta still uncertain

SOCCERNET

Spain's midfield maestro Andres Iniesta is still doubtful for his side's Group H opener with Switzerland after failing to train with the squad on Friday.

Spain were among the final teams to arrive in South Africa when they touched down on Thursday and they underwent Friday night's training session at their Pochefstroomm base without the full involvement of Iniesta, who suffered a thigh injury while starring in the first half of Spain's 6-0 friendly demolition of Poland last week.

Iniesta was substituted before the break in that match, with team officials claiming afterwards it was just a precautionary move. But the problem may be more serious than first thought given Iniesta's limited training session and it's now understood coach Vincente Del Bosque will give the midfielder a late fitness test ahead of the June 16 clash in Durban.

What to WATCH

ESPN & SuperSport3

2010 FIFA World Cup
Algeria v Slovenia
Live from 5:30pm
Serbia v Ghana
Live from 8:00pm
Germany v Australia
Live from 12:30am (Monday)

TEN Sports & SuperSport2

Zimbabwe v India
Second T20 International
Live from 4:45pm
West Indies v South Africa
First Test, Day Four
Live from 8:00pm

STAR Sports & SuperSport1

F1 World Championship
Canadian Grand Prix
Live from 9:15pm

CROSSWORD *By Eugene Sheffer*

ACROSS
1 Have on
5 Taxi
8 Distort
12 "It's a Sin to Tell —"
13 Eggs
14 "Do — others ..."
15 Jeff Probst's show
17 Nevada city
18 Thickness
19 Morning moisture
20 Sandwich necessity
21 Adjective for 22-Down
22 Adversary
23 Debate topic
26 Prime Minister's street
30 Norse thunder god
31 Carton
32 Defeat decisively
33 Greedy
35 Tilts
36 Lingerie item
37 Otologist's subject
38 What Nixon denied being
41 Over-active one?
42 Center
45 Tibetan monk
46 Take unawares
48 Gray hair cause
49 Favorite
50 Looked at
51 Repair
52 Blond shade
53 Root beer brand

DOWN
1 Nasty stinger
2 Hebrew month
3 Ethereal
4 Gun the engine
5 Small flock
6 Acknowledge
7 Tavern
8 Cry uncle
9 Dandling site
10 Sicilian spouter
11 Unfinished furniture?
16 Between assignments
20 Acknowledge applause
21 "Hanging ten" need
22 Hounds' prey, perhaps
23 "Monty Python" opener
24 That girl
25 Scale member
26 Homer's interjection
27 A Gershwin
28 Sister
29 "Pygmalion" playwright's monogram
31 Merit badge org.
34 Annoy
35 Genie's quarters
37 Third rock from the sun
38 Untalkative one
39 Anger
40 Portent
41 Colors
42 Casual greeting
43 Second-hand
44 Foundations
46 Hot tub
47 Roulette bet

Solution time: 21 mins.

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C	O	V	E	R	E	D		B	R	U	N	O
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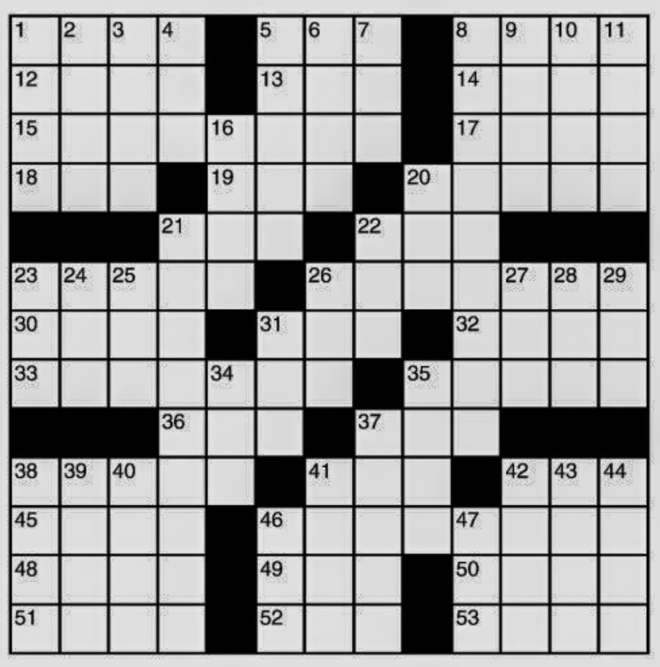
S	L	I	N	G	S		N	I	L			
			A	G	O	G		P	E	A	C	H
C	A	R	T		L	E	A		R	U	L	E
B	L	O	C		V	E	T		O	R	A	L
S	E	T	H		E	K	E			A	D	D



CRYPTOQUIP

CY RCYMD VPG OVCVTYZ RYID RIVTT NVRCDPKPZ KCDIR, CQD VRCFCD OVMEDPCDM EFMOQVRDG V PVKT NKTD.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF A SMALL BEACH VEHICLE LEADS ITS DRIVER TO AN UNHAPPY FATE, YOU MIGHT SAY IT'S A DOOM BUGGY.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals T