



England's Helen Richardson (C) battles for the ball with South Africa's captain Marsha Marescia (L) and Kim Hubach during their World Cup Group B match in Rosario on Saturday. England won 2-1.

England, Argentina reach last four

Hockey

AFP, Rosario

The weather turned from frigid Friday to sunny spring Saturday as England and Argentina secured semifinal berths from Pool B at the women's field hockey World Cup.

England defeated South Africa 2-1, Argentina defeated China 2-0 and Spain knocked South Korea out of semifinal contention with a 2-2 draw.

Helen Richardson's double made England look comfortable after Richardson cracked in a loose ball in the first half and tipped in at the right post Crista Cullen's fifth penalty corner chance in the second half.

That was until Pietie Cortzee brought the crowd to their feet with a sizzling penalty corner flick inside the left post and the large Argentina crowd applauded every move of South Africa in the last 15 minutes.

Cortzee had a last minute penalty corner, but her hit from the right was saved by England goalkeeper Beth Storry.

England coach Danny Kerry was pleased with the quality of England's defence.

"I liked the quality of our play defensively, but we should have scored more goals from our six penalty corners, and we missed two early field goal chances," Kerry said.

South Africa coach Giles Bonnet believes South Africa played below their potential.

"It was a disappointing game for us and I think we played far below our level but in the end I think we fought

well for the equaliser in the last 15 minutes," Bonnet said.

Spain performed at a higher level than their previous three losses to hold South Korea to a 2-2 draw and simultaneous advance England to the semifinals.

Kim Bo Mi drove in Korea's first goal early in the first half and despite superior ball possession, Spain struggled to convert penalty corners until Gloria Comerma converted Spain's third chance late in the first half.

Korea went ahead 2-1, seconds before the break with a penalty corner by Cheon Seul Ki.

Silvia Munoz deflected in Spain's equaliser early in the second half and Spain out-muscled Korea in the numerous physical clashes of the second half to secure Spain's first point of the tournament.

Spain coach Pablo Usoz continued his theme of missed chances to convert penalty corners.

China held Argentina scoreless in the first half despite five penalty corner chances in succession in the middle of the half.

Noel Barrionuevo converted Argentina's seventh penalty corner with a high flick in the second half which found a hole to exit the net and required the umpire to check the video replay to ensure the goal was scored.

Luciana Aymar scored the goal of the tournament so far, an individual run through the left midfield beating four defenders, the goalkeeper and a defender on the line to push in from five metres to the left

of goal and bring the capacity crowd of 10,000 partisan Argentina fans screaming to their feet.

Aymar believes it was her best goal ever.

"It was the nicest goal I have scored in my whole career and I rate it 100 out of 100," she said.

England draw

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end, taking one for 21 with his flat left-armers.

A late burst of 38 runs from 29 balls between Umar Akmal (35 not out) and Afridi (16 not out), who was dropped twice, took Pakistan to 126 for four. It was the first time they had failed to hit a six in a T20 match.

Shoaib Akhtar, 35 last month, recaptured the searing pace of his youth, albeit in the knowledge that he only needed to bowl a total of 24 deliveries with an opening-wicket maiden.

Although England faltered midway, losing four consecutive wickets from the last ball of an over, their target was always too small.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: 126 for 4 in 20 overs (U Akmal 35 not out, Yousuf 26, Shahzaib 21, Fawad 20, Afridi 16 not out; Swann 2-14, Bresnan 1-18, Yardy 1-21)
ENGLAND: 129 for 5 in 17.1 overs (Morgan 38 not out, Yardy 35 not out, Davies 33, Bopara 11; Akhtar 2-23, Afridi 2-27, Gul 1-17)
Result: England won by five wickets.
Man-of-the-match: Michael Yardy.
Toss: England.

Pakistan

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The allegations all relate to the recent fourth and final Test between England and Pakistan at Lord's, which ended with an England victory, in which the News of the World said deliberate no-balls had been bowled.

Aamer, at 18 one of cricket's hottest talents, Asif, 27, and Butt, 25, were questioned by police about the claims on Friday but were released without charge, their lawyer said. They have denied any wrongdoing.

The News of the World on Sunday claimed its allegations had been confirmed by Pakistan batsman Yasir Hameed.

"They were doing it [fixing] in almost every match. God knows what they were up to. Scotland Yard was after them for ages," Hameed reportedly told an undercover reporter in a bar in the central English city of Nottingham.

"It makes me angry because I'm playing my best and they are trying to lose."

Speaking to AFP late Saturday, Hameed denied he had spoken to the paper or bad-mouthed other players.

"I can never think of blaming my teammates in match-fixing," said the batsman, who remains in England after playing in Pakistan's Test series here, despite not being picked for the one-day matches.

"I have just told the team management that the newspaper is claiming I have given them an interview. This is not correct."

He admitted attending a couple of parties in Nottingham but denied talking to any unknown people, saying: "There were no strangers."

Pakistan team manager Yawar Saeed confirmed Hameed's denial but refused to comment further, saying: "Let's wait and see what happens."

The News of the World also published details Sunday of its conversations with Mazhar Majeed, an agent for several Pakistan players who it claims to have paid for advance knowledge of no-balls in the final Test.

It claims it paid him 150,000 pounds (185,000 euros, 230,000 dollars) for the information, which could be bet upon. Majeed, 35, was subsequently arrested and bailed by British police.

Some of this cash was found in Salman Butt's hotel room in London, the newspaper said, although Butt's lawyer rejected any suggestion of wrongdoing, saying it would not be unusual for his agent to give him money.

Earlier, Pakistan one-day captain Shahid Afridi apologised for the scandal, telling reporters: "I think this is very bad news."

"On behalf of these boys -- I know they are not in this series -- I want to say sorry to all cricket lovers and all the cricketing nations."

The ICC action against the three players has infuriated the Pakistani authorities, in particular ambassador to Britain Wajid Shamsul Hasan, who said the ICC had "no business" to suspend the trio and suggested they were set up.

England Twenty20 captain Paul Collingwood said: "I just want this [fixing] eradicated from the game, full stop."

Klose expects

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"We struggled against them before, but the goal is to pocket three more points."

Germany finished third at the World Cup finals and beat Azerbaijan home and away in their qualification group to help earn their place in South Africa.

They won 2-0 in Baku and 4-0 in Hanover in 2009.

Roger, Robin may collide

AFP, New York



Roger Federer and Robin Soderling moved closer to a US Open quarterfinal showdown with straight-set triumphs on a blustery Saturday that also saw Novak Djokovic reach the fourth round.

French Open runner-up Soderling broke 16-time Grand Slam champion Federer's streak of 23 Grand Slam semifinals in a row with a quarterfinal triumph on the Paris red clay over the Swiss superstar who had won their 12 prior matches.

Swedish fifth seed Soderling, who lost the Roland Garros final to top-ranked Rafael Nadal, and world number two Federer each need one more victory to book a rematch on the Flushing Meadows hardcourts after third-round triumphs.

"Everybody has been telling me since the draw came out I'm playing Roger in the quarters. It's still far ahead," Soderling said.

"It's always difficult to play against Roger and I have played him a lot of times. In any tournament they play, Roger and Rafa will be the favourites, but there are a lot of players who can beat them."

Five-time US Open winner Federer hit 13 aces and 31 winners in brisk winds that tested even his formidable skill to down

109th-ranked Frenchman Paul-Henri Mathieu 6-4, 6-3, 6-3, and reach the last 16.

"The wind was very strong. Tough conditions to play in, especially if you're down in the score," Federer said. "You could tell Mathieu was really struggling after being down. His serve, his returns, everything kind of falls into pieces."

"It's really hard to stay positive when you're down and the wind is the way it is. You have to be careful, maybe not aim at the lines as much. After four games or so, I knew what I could do and what I couldn't."

Soderling beat 48th-ranked Dutchman Thiemo de Bakker 6-2, 6-3, 6-3 in gusty conditions that were remnants from Hurricane Earl's nearby brush a day earlier.

"It was very tough. I was fighting the wind the whole time. During these conditions I played a pretty good match," Soderling said. "It's great to make it to the second week at the US Open. It will be very big next week."

Also advancing to the fourth round was Serbian third seed Djokovic, who eliminated US wildcard James Blake 6-1, 7-6, 6-3 to book a date with US 19th seed Mardy Fish.

Federer, trying for his seventh US Open final in a row, next faces Austrian 13th seed Jurgen Melzer, whom Federer ousted in this year's fourth round at

Wimbledon in their only prior meeting.

Soderling will meet Spanish 21st seed Albert Montanes, who led 6-2, 2-1 when 147th-ranked Japanese qualifier Kei Nishikori retired after only 38 minutes with a groin injury.

"He was not well physically so that was lucky for me," Montanes said. "I realised he was very flat. He was not moving. I tried not to think of that but he was moving quite slowly."

Federer, seeking his 64th career title, had won 40 US Open matches in a row before losing last year's final to now-injured Juan Martin Del Potro.

Federer saved a break point on a service winner in the eighth game and broke on an errant Mathieu backhand in the ninth to win the first set and took the second when Mathieu double faulted away breaks in the third and last games.

Montanes claimed his first spot in the fourth round in 36 Grand Slam trips. He was among nine Spaniards in the third round, the most at any Open-era Slam.

French 17th seed Gael Monfils fired 17 aces and 56 winners to beat Serbia's 44th-ranked Janko Tipsarevic 7-6, 6-7, 6-2, 6-4.

Monfils booked a fourth-round match with countryman Richard Gasquet, who ousted South African Kevin Anderson 6-4, 7-6, 7-5. Monfils and Gasquet each matched their best US Open result by reaching the fourth round.

IPL changes format

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

India's cricket chiefs on Sunday announced a new format for the next Indian Premier League (IPL), adding more matches and increasing the cap on team spending to nine million dollars.

The 10 IPL franchises will be divided into two groups of five for the fourth season of the competition in 2011, which will have 74 matches compared to the 60 played this year. The format needed to be changed after the inclusion of two new franchises this year.

Teams are allowed to retain four players in their squads from the last event -- a maximum of three Indians and two foreigners, according to a press release from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

The rest of the players will go into the auction scheduled for the second week of November, the board's secretary N Srinivasan said in the press release.

The cap for each team to spend on the players at the auction was raised to nine million dollars, from the seven million dollars.

In the new format, each team will play the

other four in its group home and away, which means the league stage will consist of 40 matches.

The three top teams from each group will then progress into another round of home and away matches, which will comprise 30 games, followed by semifinals, a third-place playoff and a final.

The tournament is tentatively scheduled to begin five days after the 2011 cricket World Cup final is held in Mumbai on April 2.

The board also said it will manage all player contracts directly.

"All player contracts will now be managed by BCCI and signed by BCCI along with the franchise and the player," it said.

The announcements mark a new chapter for the popular Twenty20 competition in the absence of its suspended chief Lalit Modi.

Modi was suspended as IPL commissioner after the conclusion of the third edition in April following allegations of corruption, tax evasion and money-laundering, which sparked a government probe.

A three-member disciplinary panel of the board is also conducting its own enquiry into the allegations against Modi.

Imran calls for stronger instts

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Former Pakistan cricket captain Imran Khan on Sunday called for stronger national institutions to prevent corruption scandals undermining the country's favourite sport in the future.

"This whole episode of cricket reflects what is happening in the country," Imran told reporters in Pakistan's central city of Multan during a flood relief campaign.

"We are regarded as a corrupt country because our institutions are not strong and the same thing is happening in cricket because of ad-hocism in the game."

Pakistan's spot-fixing crisis deepened on Sunday after an undercover reporter for a British newspaper allegedly caught opening batsman Yasir Hameed claiming some of his teammates had been fixing "almost every cricket match."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	35 Break periods	58 Longings	19 Either—
1 "T," in Morse code	38 Nourish	DOWN	21 Blunder
5 Carte lead-in	39 Dove's call	1 Record	24 Spring mo.
8 Un-altered	40 Hooter	2 —	25 Regret
12 Division word	42 East	3 Dazzle	26 Graph coordinate
13 Cran-berry territory	45 Deli sandwich	4 Rub elbows	28 Larry's pal
14 Ski lift type	49 History	5 Theoretical	29 Soaked up
15 Ignore	50 Recede	6 "Skip to My —"	30 Ball holder
16 Seek damages	52 No. 1 choice.	7 On in years	31 See 7-Down
17 Venomous vipers	53 War initials	8 Sculpture	36 Verse
18 Lacks the skills to	54 Exist	9 Missing person?	37 Charged bit
20 Loathe	55 Took off	10 Navigator's stack	38 Superficial
22 CBS newsmen	56 Fix, in a sense	11 Once, once	41 Lindbergh book
23 Sprint	57 Frenzied		42 Piece of work
24 Bedouin			43 Grate
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32 Tavern			46 Cotton quantity
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CRYPTOQUIP

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Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF A GUY SUPPORTS HIS FAMILY MAINLY BY SELLING MATTRESSES, WOULD YOU SAY HE'S A "BEDWINNER"?
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: V equals T

Sky Blues'

FROM PAGE 17

Robin, goalkeeper Zia, Shohag, Mintu and Biplob but they now want to scrutinise the newcomers like striker Alfaz Ahmed, Mamun Mia, Intiaz Sultan Jitu, Arup Kumar, Choumin Rakhain and Linkin in the tournament.

Asked about two foreign recruits Ghanaian striker Twam and midfielder Yousif Aminu, Sen said, "It seems to me that both foreign players are comparatively better than last season's striker Sherif Din Mohammad but obviously they are not extraordinary."

Meanwhile, Abahani long-serving foreigners Awdhu Ibrahim and Samad Yousuf will also tour Assam.

District leagues

FROM PAGE 17

that they have already completed the Second Division league after getting Tk 50,000 allocation from the BFF.

However, Satkhira DFA has been unique as they resumed the First Division after a break of 15 years and completed without any financial assistance from the BFF and are now targeting to hold Second and Third Division leagues after the Eid break.

"Had we waited for the BFF, we could not have completed it," said general secretary Imadul Haque.

It has been learnt that BFF is going to provide financial assistance to the DFAs after getting assurance from Bashundhara Group, with whom the game's governing body has a three-year deal worth Tk 4.5 crore.

Athers's plea

FROM PAGE 17

Manipulated by the alleged fixer and that he was a "young man in the grip of evil".

But he feared the ICC, accused of weakness over previous 'fixing' scandals would be "unlikely to show any clemency now."

However, while agreeing there could be no way back for Butt or Asif if they were found guilty, Atherton said: "I hope the authorities can find a way to give Aamer a second chance. He is a victim in this episode."

"This is not necessarily arbitrary or unfair, simply a realisation that there are mitigating circumstances for an 18-year old. It would be grossly unfair to ban a kid for life for overstepping the line twice."

Meanwhile Atherton said he agreed with Ronnie Flanagan, the head of the ICC's Anti Corruption and Security Unit (ACSU), who insisted the current allegations were an isolated incident and not the "tip of an iceberg".

And Atherton, who played alongside Pakistan great Wasim Akram for English county Lancashire, urged officials not to throw Pakistan out of world cricket, saying: "Pakistan have produced some of the most exciting, beguiling and brilliant cricketers the world has ever seen."

"It is also a country, swamped by floods, war and terrorism, that is in need of help not punishment."

Maria to meet

FROM PAGE 17

double fault from her opponent pasting pasting Swiss veteran Patty Schnyder 7-6, 3-6, 7-6.

It was a crushing end to the tournament for Jankovic, runner-up here to Serena Williams in 2008 and a former world number one, but who has yet to win a Grand Slam title.

She struggled past her first two rounds and was immediately out of sorts against Kanepi due to the gusting winds that swirled around Flushing Meadows in the wake of Hurricane Earl, which passed by on Friday.

Jankovic said that the conditions had been near intolerable, but Kanepi countered that they had been the same for both players.

"I got a lot of points off Jelena because of the wind and she got a lot off me

because of the wind. It was the same for both of us but it was very difficult to play in and I don't think it made for a nice match."

One player who went through to the last 16 and who was not bothered by the wind was Andrea Petkovic of Germany. Her opponent, China's last hope Peng Shuai, withdrew from the tournament with a right elbow injury.

Petkova will next take on Wimbledon runner-up Vera Zvonareva, who defeated Alexandra Dulgheru of Romania 6-2, 7-6.

Dominika Cibulkova of Slovakia, meanwhile, swept past Lourdes Dominguez Lino of Spain 6-0, 6-1 and will go up against the champion here in 2004, Svetlana Kuznetsova.

The Russian 11th seed saw off compatriot Maria Kirilenko 6-3, 6-4 in the final match of the night session.