



Spain's world No 1 Rafael Nadal returns during his match against Radek Stepanek of Czech Republic in the Aegon Championships at Queen's Tennis Club in London on Thursday. PHOTO: AFP

Nadal in Queen's qtrs

Tennis

AFP, London

Rafael Nadal had to dig deep to reach the quarter-finals at Queen's with a hard-fought 6-3, 5-7, 6-1 win against Czech veteran Radek Stepanek on Thursday. Few players have made the switch from clay to grass courts more effectively than Nadal, but the French Open champion is taking a while to find his feet on the lush lawns of west London as he prepares for the defence of his Wimbledon title. The top seeded Spaniard admits he could do with some time off as he is still drained by his heroics in Paris and the strain showed a little during this inconsistent display. "He made it tough and I'm a bit tired. I had a few mistakes but the crowd are fantastic and it's a pleasure to be here," Nadal said. "I am motivated to keep playing well. Wimbledon is there, but I'm focused on Queen's for now. I will have to play well against (Jo-Wilfried) Tsonga to win." So far Nadal has struggled to recapture the magical shot-making that dazzled Roger Federer in the French Open final. He looked comfortable enough in the first set on Thursday and got the only break in the fifth game as a powerful backhand pass left Stepanek rooted to the spot.

The second set seemed to be following a similar pattern when Nadal broke for a 3-1 lead. This time Stepanek, aided by some sloppy play from Nadal, broke back as the Spaniard served for the match. Encouraged by that escape, Stepanek took advantage of a series of Nadal double faults to break again and then serve out the set. At such pressurised moments Nadal usually finds the winning formula. So it proved in the final set as he finally found some momentum, breaking twice in succession to set up a last eight clash against French fifth seed Jo-Wilfried Tsonga. World number four Andy Murray ignored the pain of his ankle injury to reach the last eight with a 6-4, 7-6 (7/3) win over Serbian 14th seed Janko Tipsarevic. Murray has conceded that the recovery time for the ligament and tendon damage he sustained at the French Open means he should really be resting this week, but a desire to get plenty of time on grass before Wimbledon has forced him to ignore his discomfort. The 24-year-old did a reasonable job of disguising the pain as he secured a last eight match against Croatia's Marin Cilic, who beat Thomaz Bellucci 7-6 (7/3), 0-6, 6-3. "It was a high-quality match. We both played well, especially at the end of the second set. It was a big test," Murray said. "The ankle was the best

it's felt today." Elsewhere in the third round of the Wimbledon warm-up, Andy Roddick remained in the hunt for a record fifth Queen's crown with a 6-4, 6-4 win over South Africa's Kevin Anderson. The American third seed, a three-time Wimbledon finalist, thrives on grass and he did just enough to see off 15th seed Anderson and seal a last eight clash against Fernando Verdasco, who defeated David Nalbandian 7-5, 6-1. "There are a lot of times when he hits his first serve in a good spot and you're rendered a little helpless. Thankfully I was just able to get my teeth into a couple of games and convert the break points," Roddick said. France's Adrian Panarinu enjoyed a remarkable double success as he reached the last eight on his Queen's debut. Mannarino started the day with his second round tie against French sixth seed Gilles Simon delicately poised at one set all overnight. But Simon had to pull out when trailing 3-0 in the final set due to a back injury. And Mannarino, ranked 54th in the world, followed that win with an even better result just hours later as the 22-year-old defeated former US Open champion Juan Martin del Potro 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (9/7). Mannarino will play either defending champion Sam Querrey or British wildcard James Ward after their match was suspended due to bad light at one set all.

Victoria Falls a Test venue

Cricket

AFP, Harare

Construction work will begin at Victoria Falls early next year on what promises to be a spectacular new Zimbabwe Test and ODI cricket ground after the local council granted planning approval. It will be the third Test arena in the country after Harare Sports Club and Queens Sports Club in Bulawayo. These are due to stage matches against Bangladesh in August, including one Test in Harare, following Zimbabwe's return after six years absence to the game at top level. The new ground is designed to attract additional local and international visitors on top of those already drawn to one of Africa's premier tourist destinations. It will also be a second home ground after Queens for the Matabeleland "Tuskers," one of five first class provincial sides recently established into a first class league. The new ground is to be sited close to the Gorges, deep ravines gouged through millions of years, which take massive volumes of water from the 100 metres high Falls down into Lake Kariba, formed in 1958 by a hydro-electric dam across the Zambezi River. These are regarded by many white-water enthusiasts as providing among the best rafting in the world. In addition to staging Tests and ODI's, the expectation is that other cricket teams will be attracted, in particular English representative and county sides, who were occasional tourists in previous years. Before Zimbabwe's demise as a full member of the International Cricket Council (ICC) in 2005, these included MCC, Yorkshire and Northamptonshire. "A" sides from Australia and South Africa are presently in Zimbabwe for a triangular tournament and more than one such match would be staged there from a similar tour three years from now. Zimbabwe Cricket CEO Ozias Bvute and former captain Alistar Campbell confirmed the council approval. Bvute commented: "This is one of the great natural wonders of the world and playing international and first class cricket there will cause a lot of excitement among potentially visiting players and fans. Tourism is on the up in this country and sporting tourism especially so." Campbell said: "We had eight or nine thousand for a recent Twenty-20 tournament in Harare and that has given us additional confidence to go ahead, apart from other factors. People now go to Dubai for cricket. We will soon be an alternative to that. There is a lot of vision here at the moment." Bvute claims there will be facilities for 12,000 spectators while Campbell opts for a lower figure of 4,000. Architects are drawing up plans for a clubhouse, but no cost estimates are so far available. The Victoria Falls are directly opposite the Zambia city of Livingstone, named after the 19th century Scottish explorer and missionary Dr. David Livingstone. And it is only a 90 minutes flight or so from Johannesburg, South Africa. Livingstone and Victoria Falls are connected by a rail and road bridge which once formed part of diamond magnate Cecil John Rhodes's vision of a link all the way from Cape Town to Cairo at opposite ends of the continent.

TESTS THROUGH TIME



The England team of 1876-77.

A starting point

Test cricket has enthralled millions for 134 years and on July 21 this year, the 2000th Test match will be held at its spiritual home Lord's. The Daily Star Sport pays tribute to cricket's ultimate format in this column called "Tests Through Time". Before Alfred Shaw ran up to bowl Test cricket's first ball at Charles Bannerman shortly after one o'clock on a sunny afternoon on March 15, 1877, the game had already metamorphosed from a farmer's hit-into-a-gentleman's game. Purportedly founded somewhere near Paris (!) at the beginning of the 14th century and known back then as creag, it slowly caught the attention through the ages and the English genteel of the time refined it into a sport to be taken quite seriously. By the time the first Test match was played, English teams had toured Australia and New Zealand a few times. The 1876-77 tour was arranged by James Lillywhite Jr., who decided to make his arrangement down under a commercial one. Even Lillywhite didn't decide it to be a "Test" at first, but since two representative teams took part, it was subsequently given the accolade of being cricket's first official Test at the Richmond Police Paddock (Melbourne Cricket Ground). In front of 1,500 people, the first run came off Shaw's second delivery to Bannerman and the first wicket fell in the fourth over, when Allen Hill bowled Nat Thompson. Bannerman was Australia's saviour, the English-born scoring 165 out of Australia's 245 with 126 of them coming on the first day after which the two teams reportedly went to an opera. Shortly after lunch on the second day, the middle finger on his right hand was split by a lob from George Ulyett, forcing him to retire hurt on 165. England, depleted by injury and exhaustion, were bowled out cheaply for 196 but fought back through Shaw's five wickets and had 154 runs to win the second innings. Tom Kendall, another English-born like Bannerman, took seven wickets as his compatriots were bowled out for 108 runs. Kendal was a left-arm medium-pacer who could break the ball either way, according to Wisden. The Australian XI were all presented with a gold watch each by the Victoria Cricket Association - captain Dave Gregory getting a slightly larger one - while a public subscription raised £83 for Bannerman and £23 for Kendall. -- Mohammad Isam.

BCCI blocks UDRS again

CRICINFO

India's forthcoming tour of England will take place without the use of the Umpire's Decision Review System (DRS), after the Board for Control of Cricket in India officially informed the England & Wales Cricket Board that they would be unwilling to embrace the use of technology. The news comes as a blow to England, who - despite some teething problems on their tours of West Indies and South Africa in recent years - have become increasingly astute in their use of the review system. Graeme Swann has been a particular beneficiary of Hawk-Eye replays, with 29.71% of his 138 Test wickets coming via lbw decisions, the highest proportion for an off-spinner in Test history. Dhoni's outspoken opposition to DRS is backed by other senior players within the Indian squad, including Sachin Tendulkar, and as a consequence the BCCI is willing to take a stand on the issue. "Our official position on DRS remains unchanged," an Indian board official told ESPNcricinfo. "To implement UDRS you need the agreement between the two participating nations. Now with the BCCI not supporting DRS, the ECB cannot force it on us." India's stance leaves the future of DRS in doubt, given that the ICC's cricket committee recommended in May that technology ought to be incorporated in all forms of the game. There had been moves to make DRS mandatory at the ICC's annual board meeting in June, but the BCCI's opposition will be hard to overcome.

Andy's plans scuppered

Tennis

AFP, London

Andy Murray admits his plan to stay in shape for Wimbledon by playing regular football matches with his friends has been ruined by the ankle injury which has troubled him since the French Open. World number four Murray is a keen football fan and often uses the sport as a different way to keep fit and break up the boredom of working out in the gym. The Scot, who turned down the chance to train with Scottish club Rangers when he was 15, normally plays five-a-side and 11-a-side matches in the run-up to Grand Slams. Murray, who fancies himself as a striker, teamed up with Novak Djokovic for a Japan earthquake charity match in Miami. But he has had to shelve his football fun ahead of Wimbledon because he is nursing ligament and tendon damage to his right ankle. "I like to play quite a bit of football because it's something different," said Murray after his 6-4 7-6 (7/3) victory over Janko Tipsarevic in the last 16 at Queen's on Thursday. "I played 11-a-side on the Monday before the French Open and I played five-a-side with Djokovic a couple of times before the Australian. "It isn't any more dangerous than playing tennis providing you're playing with people who understand. Slide tackling is a no-no. "We were going to play a game next Monday but I think that's out because of the ankle." Murray had questioned whether he should even be playing at Queen's this week because he was told by doctors that rest would allow the injury to heal much quicker. But the ankle is gradually improving and Murray insisted it held up well during the Tipsarevic match. "I didn't feel it at all, which is good news," Murray said. "I started doing some strengthening exercises last night. "I am going to do them after every match and make sure I do them every day between now and Wimbledon. It will definitely make a difference and make me feel more comfortable on court."

Aamer match official

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that it was a friendly match, being played on a privately owned cricket ground," Aamer told PakPassion.net. "I asked the club representatives if the match fell under the jurisdiction of the ECB and they informed me that the match did not. I spoke to several club representatives about the issue and they all told me that it was a friendly match and therefore would not contravene my ban from the ICC. I was informed that I was fine to play." Aamer also denied that he had signed any registration documents with the club and insisted that he would never have taken the risk of playing had he known it was an official match. "I would not be stupid enough to knowingly play in a match that I knew would contravene my ban. Wherever I am going to play cricket, the world will know about it. I would not be stupid enough to play in a match where I knew that I would be taking a risk". Aamer was central to Addington's 81-run victory in the game, against St Luke's CC. He surprisingly opened the innings and scored 60 before returning figures of 4 for 9 in seven overs. This is not the first time Aamer has appeared in a game which has had to be investigated by cricket authorities. Earlier this year in January, when he was under provisional suspension and still awaiting punishment for the Lord's scandal, he turned out for a Rawalpindi club to play a friendly game. That prompted the ICC and PCB to investigate the nature of the game before the former eventually concluded that it was an unofficial game and the club wasn't registered with the Rawalpindi cricket association; Aamer was thus found to have not broken the ICC's anti-corruption code of conduct.

Zaheer, Sree

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to spend time with his family while the other players are injured. **INDIA'S REVISED TEST SQUAD:** Mahendra Singh Dhoni (capt), Venkatsai Laxman (vice-capt), Murali Vijay, Abhinav Mukund, Rahul Dravid, Virat Kohli, Subramaniam Badrinath, Harbhajan Singh, Ishant Sharma, Abhimanyu Mithun, Amit Mishra, Prayagn Ojha, Praveen Kumar, Munaf Patel, Suresh Raina, Parthiv Patel. **MSC shatter** **FROM PAGE 16** some poor refereeing that were responsible for our previous losses," Manik said. "However, I am satisfied with today's result and hopefully we will play like this and win the remaining two matches."

Gayle still not picked

AFP, St John's

Former captain Chris Gayle was overlooked again by West Indies selectors on Thursday when the squad was announced for Saturday's third one-day international against India. Despite West Indies having lost the first two matches, Gayle was still missing from the 13-man list as his high-profile dispute with officials from the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) goes on. Gayle was dropped for the recent home series against Pakistan, a decision that left him free to play in the entire Indian Premier League with Bangalore. Despite Gayle finishing the tournament as the leading run-getter, the WICB have insisted that the big-hitting batsman will not be recalled until he explains comments he gave in a radio interview in which he lambasted selectors. There are two changes to the squad that was selected for the first two ODIs. Dwayne Bravo's request to be rested has been granted with Jamaica's Danza Hyatt, who played in the only Twenty20 against India, selected in his place. Fast bowler Ravi Rampaul has also been rested for the Antigua leg of the five-match series, which comprises the third and the fourth ODIs. Kemar Roach has returned to the squad to replace Rampaul. **SQUAD** Darren Sammy (captain), Carlton Baugh, Devendra Bishoo, Darren Bravo, Kirk Edwards, Danza Hyatt, Anthony Martin, Kieron Pollard, Kemar Roach, Andre Russell, Marlon Samuels, Ramnareh Sarwan, Lendl Simmons

Pistorius chasing Olympic dream

AFP, New York

South Africa's Oscar Pistorius, the famed "Blade Runner" who dreams of qualifying for next year's London Olympics, brings his quest to Saturday's Diamond League meet at New York. The 24-year-old runner who captured four Paralympic gold medals is set to compete in the 400 meters against a field that includes US star Jeremy Wariner, the 2004 Athens Olympic 400m champion. Pistorius, who had both lower legs amputated when he was 11 months old, ran a personal best of 45.61 seconds last March in the 400 but must run a 45.25 by June 20 to qualify for the World Championships at South Korea in September. "I've had a time now that I started my season off with, which is quite respectable, but it's not as quick as those run (by top entrants) and I've only done it once, so I still have to prove myself," Pistorius said. The prosthetics-power Pistorius sees reaching the worlds as crucial to his quest for London, given the likely similar qualifying standards and similar experiences on offer in both meets. "I think that's pretty important and quite vital," said Pistorius, who was .3 off the 2008 Beijing Olympics qualifying mark. "I missed the Beijing Olympics by a small

margin and I don't want that to happen again." Tyson Gay, who beat Usain Bolt in their only 100m showdown last year, will be favored in the men's 100, with Prefontaine Classic winner Steve Mullings of Jamaica likely the American's toughest rival. "My conditioning was just better than him at that time," Gay said of his victory over Bolt, noting that he still faces a challenge of overtaking the Jamaican world-record holder in the hearts of US athletics fans. "Americans don't always like second best. They like guys like Jesse Owens and Carl Lewis," Gay said. "But if I'm 100 percent and still run second, I accept that." The New York meet also features three-time 200m world champion Allyson Felix, two-time 400m hurdles world champion Kerron Clement and reigning 800m world champion and 2004 Olympic runner-up Mbulaeni Mulaudzi of South Africa. Bershawn Jackson, Javier Culson and South African L.J. van Zyl will test Clement in the hurdles. Reigning world triple jump champion Phillips Idowu of Britain will be tested by reigning world indoor champion Teddy Tamgho of France and Sweden's Christian Olsson. Also entered is french pole vault star Renaud Lavillenie and Croatian high jump star Blanka Vlasic.

Katich fury at axe

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about the decision. It wasn't a personal nature, but it was just made expressing the fact that I didn't agree with it." Cricket Australia chief executive James Sutherland later defended selectors, saying they had to plan for the future. "They need to use their best judgement to pick teams that are not only the best team for Australia for the day, but they also are required under policy to keep an eye to the future," Sutherland told reporters. "I have no doubt that the selectors are doing that, they are following through with that policy." Katich said that Australia's selection policy had destabilised the team during last summer's 3-1 losing home Ashes series