

Rainy finish to 1st Test

AFP, Dunedin

The first Test between New Zealand and South Africa ended in a draw Sunday as steady rain ruled out any chance of play on the final day.

The rain began overnight and the umpires called the game off soon after the scheduled lunch adjournment with no sign of a break in the weather.

The match was evenly poised at the end of the fourth day with New Zealand on 137 for two, requiring a further 264 runs for victory, while South Africa needed to take another eight wickets.

South Africa had dominated play for most of the first four days and when they declared their second innings at 435-5, they set New Zealand a target of 401 to win.

The second Test starts in Hamilton on Thursday.

PCB waits for Bangladesh clearance

REUTERS, Karachi

The Bangladesh government are expected to rule this week whether it is safe for their national cricket team to become the first side to tour Pakistan in three years.

A senior Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) official told Reuters on Sunday they had agreed with their Bangladesh counterparts to play three one-day internationals next month but only if the Bangladesh government approved the tour.

"We are hopeful of getting a response from the Bangladesh cricket board this week for the series," chief operating officer, Subhan Ahmad told Reuters.

"The Bangladesh board has agreed to play three ODIs if they get security clearance from their government. We will hold these matches in Karachi and Lahore," Ahmad said.

Pakistan have not hosted matches since March 2009 when militants attacked the visiting Sri Lanka team in Lahore.

Six Pakistani policemen and a van driver were killed in the deadly attack in which five of the Sri Lankan players were also wounded.

A nine member security delegation from Bangladesh led by their board chairman, AHM Mostafa Kamal, visited Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore earlier this month to inspect the security arrangements and drills for the proposed series.

Ahmad said the delegation had gone home satisfied with the security arrangements but needed final clearance from their government.

"The series if it goes ahead is very important for us because it will at least signal the revival of international cricket in Pakistan where the security situation has improved in the last two years," Ahmad said.

Tamim makes

FROM PAGE 16

Jahurul and Shakib Al Hasan. But whatever the method, it worked for Tamim who pointed either towards the dressing room or above to someone else after reaching the milestone.

The dismissal though will remain as an irritant to the batsman. Trying to dab Hafeez, he got the inside-edge which ricocheted off his boot and on to the stumps. Tamim walked off shocked, but by that time the damage to many of critics, had been done.

How long

FROM PAGE 16

team game, and if the eleven players cannot perform and do the simple things right in crunch situations, it's a team only in name. One would hope that this lesson will be learnt, but that seems to be to be asking too much.



India's batting sensation Virat Kohli carries his batting gear during his side's practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. India will take on Sri Lanka in their first match of the Asia Cup tomorrow. PHOTO: STAR

ICC probing fixing anew

Cricket

AFP, London

The International Cricket Council (ICC) is investigating claims that Indian bookmakers are fixing the results of England county games and international fixtures, Britain's SundayTimes reported.

The newspaper said it had uncovered evidence that tens of thousands of dollars was on offer to players to throw part or all of international matches, including last year's World Cup semifinal between India and Pakistan.

It cited one Delhi bookmaker boasting that English county cricket was also a "good new market", as it involved "low-profile matches and nobody monitors them. That's why good money can be made there without any hassle".

According to the report, batsmen can earn up to 69,000 dollars for slow scoring and bowlers can earn 78,000 dollars for conceding runs in set patterns, with 1.2 million dollars on the table for a player or official who can guarantee the outcome of a match.

The paper's undercover reporters cite fixers as saying they had recruited players from countries including England with the help of a Bollywood actress in a honeytrap.

The allegations come just weeks after

former Essex bowler Mervyn Westfield became the first English cricketer to be jailed for corruption after admitting accepting money to fix a match against Durham in September 2009.

Last year, Pakistan players Salman Butt, Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Aamer were also jailed in Britain for their role in an entirely separate 'spot-fixing' scandal concerning a 2010 Test match against England.

An ICC spokesman said it would investigate the new allegations.

"We are grateful for the information you have provided and will launch an inquiry into these serious allegations," he told The SundayTimes.

"Betting on cricket in the legal and illegal markets continues to grow rapidly and, with many, many millions of dollars being bet on every match, the threat of corrupters seeking to influence the game has not gone away."

In January, after Westfield had pleaded guilty to his corruption charges, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) launched a "reporting window" to encourage players and officials to come forward with information about corruption.

The amnesty allowed them to report past approaches without fear of punishment.

It is usually against ECB regulations not to report any alleged corruption within the sport.

Andy asks charges to shape up for SL tour

Cricket

AFP, London

Andy Flower has challenged his England players to prove they can cope with the demands of playing in the sub-continent during their forthcoming series against Sri Lanka.

England coach Flower wants a much-improved effort in the two-Test series in Sri Lanka after his side were crushed by Pakistan in the United Arab Emirates.

England's inability to handle spin saw them suffer a 3-0 whitewash and gave further ammunition to the critics who claim their current position at the top of the Test rankings will only be truly merited if they enjoy success on the sub-continent.

With a tour to India also looming later this year, Flower knows England have a golden opportunity to silence the critics and he believes his side are capable of doing just that.

"That is a challenge for us and we knew going into this year that we obviously had a lot of sub-continent cricket," he said.

"I would like to see us improve our skills in that part of the world. It would be a really exciting thing for our established cricketers to show that they can still adapt.

"I think that is a crucial part of successful individuals and successful sides that they can adapt and learn.

"After Sri Lanka, at the end of the year we have a very important tour to India and some of the lessons we take from the Pakistan tour and the Sri Lankan tour will be crucial out in India in what will be a very exciting and competitive test series."

While the majority of the England camp were due to arrive in Sri Lanka on Sunday, a number of players have been in the country since March 5 acclimatising with batting coach Graham Gooch.

"They are doing well," Flower said. "I have spoken to Graham Gooch, who is running that little camp out there.

"He and the other guys out there are acclimatising earlier than us and have been doing some good work.

"They have been working very hard, obviously majoring on playing spin but we mustn't forget seamers in Sri Lanka also have success.

"They have been covering all bases and we want to get up to speed as soon as we join them."

Andrew Strauss was amongst the group that headed out early and Flower dismissed talk that the England captain was under added pressure after a poor series against Pakistan.

Lagat defends 3000m title

Athletics

REUTERS, Istanbul

Crafty American Bernard Lagat sprinted home to defend his world indoor 3,000 metres title as British challenger Mo Farah finished out of the medals on Sunday.

Lagat, as he often does in championship events, bided his time until the closing lap, then powered to victory over Kenyans Augustine Choge and Edwin Soi, with Farah finishing fourth.

Lagat clocked seven minutes 41.44 seconds with Choge taking silver in 7:41.77 and Soi one hundredth of a second back.

For a few minutes Farah thought he had taken the bronze when Soi was disqualified for

obstruction only to be reinstated.

"I guess it (the 3,000) suits me because I have the quick burst of speed at the end," Lagat, the five-times world indoors and outdoor champion who lost the world outdoor 5,000 metres title to Farah last year, told reporters.

"I guess that was what helped me tonight. Also staying composed," he said after winning his third indoor title, two for the United States and one for his native Kenya in 2004.

While Choge and Soi did most of the early work, Lagat stayed out of trouble, conserving energy.

"Doing the work, that is the hardest thing in the 3,000 metres," the American said.

While Farah was disappointed with his showing, Lagat said the Briton was still was the one to watch at this year's Olympic 5,000 and 10,000 metres in London.

Aussies land in WI

Watson hopes for a good series

Cricket

AFP, Kingstown

Australia captain Shane Watson says his side will be looking to build on the momentum they gained from success on home soil when they face the West Indies.

The Australian one-day and Twenty20 squads arrived on Saturday ahead of the series, which includes five one-day internationals, two Twenty20 matches, and three Tests.

"Hopefully, we can produce some very good cricket for the fans over here," said Watson.

"We have just come off a very big series in Australia and hopefully we can continue the form that we showed and bring it in the games against West Indies."

The Australians arrived in the Caribbean without regular captain Michael Clarke, who has suffered a hamstring injury and will miss the limited-overs series.

Watson expects his side to overcome the

setback.

"We are always confident," he said. "We know that if we are at the top of our game, we are going to be very hard to beat."

"Right now, the most important thing is to make sure we have recovered from our long flight and make the best of the next couple of days to make sure we are ready to go for the first match."

Watson encouraged local fans to attend the matches and support the faltering West Indies team.

"We have some really talented players and we expect that this series will be a spectacle, so people should come out to see it," he said.

"There is always an amazing following of the game in the West Indies and very passionate crowds always come out to the matches, so hopefully we can help to provide some entertainment that will allow the spectators to enjoy their days at the matches."

The first three one-dayers take place at the Arnos Vale Cricket Ground here from Friday.

ODI SCHEDULE	
Mar 16:	1st ODI St. Vincent
Mar 18:	2nd ODI St. Vincent
Mar 20:	3rd ODI St. Vincent
Mar 23:	4th ODI St. Lucia
Mar 25:	5th ODI St. Lucia

Phelps year's fastest

AFP, Columbus

Michael Phelps delivered a blistering 200m butterfly time of 1:55.32 on Saturday, clocking the fastest time in the world this year to win the event at USA Swimming's Columbus Grand Prix.

Phelps improved on Joseph Roebuck's 1:55.94 set at Britain's Olympic trials at London's Olympic Aquatics Centre on Tuesday.

Phelps sliced more than half a second off that time, gaining a comfortable victory over Tom Kremer (1:58.34) and Dakota Hodgson (1:59.31).

Japan's Kosuke Kitajima won the men's 200m breaststroke in 2:10.35, good enough for fourth on this year's world list.

Masayuki Kishida grabbed another victory for Japan, winning the men's 50m freestyle in 22.62 ahead of South African Graeme Moore (22.75) and Hungary's Krisztian Takacs (22.78).

Hungary's Zsuzsanna Jakabos cruised to victory in the women's 200m fly in a time of 2:08.09, which put her sixth in the world this year.

Natalie Coughlin won the women's 100m backstroke in 1:00.81, with Mexico's Maria Gonzalez Ramirez second in 1:00.96.

David Plummer's winning time of 53.73 in the men's 100m back put him fifth in the world his year. Matt Grevers was second in 53.79 and Brazil's Guilherme Guido third in 56.20.

Phelps, whose 14 Olympic gold medals include an unprecedented eight in one Games at Beijing in 2008, had plenty of energy left over to sign autographs for eager swim fans.

Tennis

AFP, Indian Wells

Defending champions Novak Djokovic and Caroline Wozniacki eased through their openers in the California desert while fourth seed Andy Murray bit the dust for the second straight year.

Djokovic has not made the same perfect start to the season as he did in 2011, but defeated Andrey Golubev in his first match of the ATP/WTN Indian Wells Tournament for the second time

in as many years on Saturday.

He easily beat the Kazakh qualifier 6-3, 6-2 in a 62-minute match -- two minutes longer than he took last year, when he went on to capture his second Indian Wells title.

"It was a good start," the Serb said. "We didn't play a beautiful match. There were a lot of unforced errors but it was the opening match and I am still trying to adjust to this court and get used to the conditions. Hopefully the next match will be better."

Murray failed to advance



PHOTO: REUTERS

Maria Sharapova of Russia celebrates defeating Gisela Dulko of Argentina in their match of the Indian Wells in California on Saturday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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15 Causing unhappiness
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19 Broken-arm aid
21 With "out," depressed
24 Grand tale
25 Historic time
26 Pooch
28 Obliterate
31 Body powder
33 Pinch
35 Sleeping
36 Apportion
38 Beak

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Saturday's Cryptoquip: OUTSTANDING
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INVOLVING SEWN EDGES: DOUG HEMMING.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: N equals T