

Pietersen on hunger-strike!

PTI, undated

For professional sportsmen, failures can be hard to swallow. In Kevin Pietersen's case, it has made him skip his breakfast.

"I did not have my breakfast this morning. It is one of the worst mornings I have had after a match," said Pietersen this morning.

He has come under criticism for his shot selection, a slog sweep that ended up in the fielder's lap in the deep, triggering England's collapse in the first ODI against India at New Delhi on Tuesday.

He had the Indian bowling at his mercy in an intimidating knock of 46 before falling to part-time bowler Yuvraj Singh. England, cruising at 117 for 3, crumbled to 164 all out with almost 12 overs to spare.

"It is not nice to know that I started the collapse, particularly after being caught in deep boundary," Pietersen said. "I was disappointed. I should have been there to finish off the game, probably both of us (him and Andrew Flintoff)."

Pietersen, who plays for Hampshire where Shane Warne was his team-mate in the English County Championship last summer, defended employing the sweep shot against the spinners though.

"It is my favourite shot against the spinners. There is no spinner in the world that I would not like to sweep. It just messes up their line and length. I think it was a really productive shot against Shane Warne. It makes the bowler think differently and creates added pressure on him. And so it gives the batsman a lot more freedom to play his shots."

SA name squad for final Test

AFP, Durban

South Africa added batsman Hashim Amla and fast bowler Dale Steyn to their squad for the third and final Test against Australia, starting in Johannesburg Friday.

The selectors retained the 14 who were picked for the first two Tests, both of which South Africa lost, and will pick from 16 players.

Both Amla and Steyn have played in three Tests. Amla is the leading run-scorer in South Africa's domestic first-class competition, while Steyn is regarded as the fastest bowler in South Africa and has shown good recent form at domestic level.

The selectors also named a Rest of South Africa team to play the touring New Zealand team in Benoni from April 7 to 10. The New Zealanders arrive on April 5 for a three-Test series.

TEAM

(from): Graeme Smith (captain), Hashim Amla, Mark Boucher, Nicky Boje, AB de Villiers, Boeta Dippenaar, Herschelle Gibbs, Andrew Hall, Jacques Kallis, Garnett Kruger, Andre Nel, Makhaya Ntini, Shaun Pollock, Ashley Prince, Jacques Rudolph, Dale Steyn.

Gunners

FROM PAGE 12

forced Philippe Senderos into a hasty clearance straight to Vieira. The former Arsenal skipper's quick pass released Ibrahimovic, but Kolo Toure's pace allowed him to get back and snuff out the danger.

Arsenal's pressure finally paid off five minutes before the interval after a move that started in unlikely circumstances -- Robert Pires winning a 50-50 ball against Vieira in the middle of the pitch.

Pires found Henry who, in turn, fed Fabregas on the edge of the area. This time, the youngster's composure did not desert him as he turned inside Lilian Thuram and placed a low shot inside Buffon's right-hand post.

Arsenal could have snatched a second in the aftermath of the goal, Henry firing wide from an acute angle and then releasing Alexander Hleb, who was unable to hold off a muscular challenge from Gianluca Zambrotta.

Juve had another narrow escape after the restart when Emmanuel Eboue's cross took a deflection off Zambrotta's outstretched boot and looped into the roof of the net with Buffon struggling to cover.

By now, Juventus were clinging on desperately, only the heroics of Buffon, who produced top-quality saves from Henry, Fabregas and, in quick succession, Hleb and Pires, before Arsenal's pressure finally produced a second goal.

Hleb provided the decisive pass, threaded perfectly through the inside right channel for Fabregas, who set himself to shoot before squaring the ball for Henry, who swept the ball into an empty net.

Juve rallied briefly at the end but Fabio Capello's side never looked like securing the away goal that would have transformed the outlook for the second leg.



PHOTO: AFP

Barcelona forward Samuel Eto'o rues another missed chance in their Champions League quarterfinal tie against Benfica in Lisbon on Wednesday.

Barca fire blanks



AFP, Lisbon

Benfica's 0-0 draw against a Ronaldo-inspired Barcelona here at the stadium of Light on Tuesday night has left the Catalonians favourites to move into the Champions League semifinals.

Yet Benfica coach Ronald Koeman could be content with his well-organised defence which did not concede an away goal to keep the Portuguese in with a shout in this last eight fixture.

And Benfica's Brazilian keeper Moretto will be delighted with his clean sheet after half a dozen chances from, among others, Ronaldinho, Swedish striker Larsson and Cameroonian international Samuel Eto'o.

Koeman, a Barcelona hero after scoring an extra-time free-kick against Sampdoria to win the European title for them in 1992, could still complete a giant-killing act against his former club.

Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard said afterwards: "Unfortunately we were not able to score but the result was a good one though nothing has been decided one way or another.

"We created a lot of chances and

with a bit of luck we could have scored but we can't complain about what was essentially a good performance."

Koeman, without leading scorer Nuno Gomes through suspension, brought Brazilian Geovanni into the attack and Ricardo Rocha switched from left back because of a knee injury to usual right back Alcides.

Rijkaard meanwhile had to put together a makeshift defence of Juliano Belletti, Thiago Motta, Oleguer Presas and Giovanni van Bronckhorst because of the absence of suspended captain Carles Puyol, as well as injury victims Edmilson and Rafael Marquez.

A torn thigh muscle to playmaker Lionel Messi also meant Larsson stepped into the breach from the start.

Barcelona had several good chances in the first half with Ronaldinho living up to his reputation with some lively play. The best opportunity came three minutes before the break when Ronaldinho fed Eto'o but his turn and shot from 10 yards was blocked by Moretto.

Then came embarrassment for Moretto when an attempted pass to a defender in the box was intercepted by midfielder Mark van Bommel but his shot across goal from the left went wide of the target.

Barcelona kept up the pressure after the break and hit the woodwork twice within a minute with Larsson shooting on to the right hand post after being fed by Ronaldinho. Then, from a Ronaldinho corner, Motta rose to head on to the left hand post.

On the hour, Ronaldinho was crowded off the ball on the edge of Benfica's box and the home side had their best chance of the match through Geovanni on the counter attack but his shot was blocked away.

And Ronaldinho shot over the bar from a free-kick after Larsson was fouled just outside the area.

Barcelona keeper Victor Valdes also had some work to do, fending off chances from Italian Fabrizio Miccoli on the hour and then Simao with 10 minutes to go but the ball was not destined to find the net in this match.

Rijkaard tried changes with a quarter-hour left, bringing on Frenchman Ludovic Giuly for Larsson and Gabi Garcia on for midfielder Deco but the precious away goal proved elusive.

Crespo admits Italy affection

INTERNET, undated

Chelsea striker Hernan Crespo had admitted he could leave the club because he misses life in Italy. The former Inter Milan striker admits he would like a return to the club after they sold him 3 years ago.

"My heart for the challenge at the San Siro is with Inter," said Crespo when asked about the Milan derby. "I've never forgotten the year with the Nerazzurro.

"And goodness knows I would love to experience that again in the future ..."

Bayern bidding for Argentine prodigy

INTERNET, undated

Bayern Munich chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge has confirmed the club could be ready to bid for 17-year old Argentine teen sensation Sergio Aguero. The midfielder would be a direct replacement for the departing Michael Ballack who is set to move to Chelsea in the summer.

"We must move before the Spanish and Italian clubs join the race, otherwise he will be more expensive," Rummenigge told Bild newspaper.

Bayern could pay up to 15 million euros (18.04 million dollars) for Aguero, who was part of the Argentina squad that won the World Youth Championship last year.

"He certainly won't be a bargain but with a young player of such quality you have to be prepared to take a risk," Rummenigge said.

"Uli (Hoeness) is watching a player of Independiente Buenos Aires who can play in an attacking midfield position or in attack," Rummenigge told German television.

Gaibandha cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Gaibandha Cricket Coaching Centre scored a massive 106-run win against Sapient Cricket Club in the Naheed Cotton First Division Cricket League at the local stadium here yesterday.

Sapient were bowled out for a meagre 62 runs, chasing Gaibandha Cricket Coaching Centre's not-so-impressive 168.

Babu was adjudged man-of-the-match for his allround show.

Cruciani names

FROM PAGE 12

"Topu has also been impressive as a striker and this is the place where we have been struggling most. We need fresh blood upfront."

Siraji will definitely be the first choice rightback in the absence of Hassan walei Wali, who can play at both wings as well as at centre, will be the only backup for Siraji and leftback Parvez Babu.

"After our twin-defeats (in the Asia Cup qualifiers), the footballers are more determined and motivated to change the future. They have worked hard and the boys are ready to produce their best despite the recent damaging comments from the federation president," said manager Syed Hassan Kanan.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Aminul Haque, Biplob Bhattacharjee; Defenders: Ebnul Siraji, Wali Faisal, Rajani Kanta Barman, Mohammed Sujan, Faisal Ahmed, Nazrul Islam, Parvez Babu; Midfielders: Arif Khan Joy (captain), Arman Aziz, Monwar Hossain, Asadur Rahman, Mehdi Hassan Ujjal, Abul Hossain, Zahid Parvez; Forwards: Alfaz Ahmed, Rokonzaman Kanchan, Zahid Hossain Emily, Mehdi Hassan Topu. Officials: Ashrafuddin Ahmed Chunnur (team leader), Sayeed Hassan Kanan (manager), Diego Cruciani (coach), Hasanuzzaman Babloo (assistant coach), Ariel Colman (trainer), Mahfuzullah Chishti (doctor), Hossain Saifuzzaman (physio).

Sangakkara shines

FROM PAGE 12

Fall of wkts: 1-53, 2-127, 3-285, 4-429, 5-438.

Bowler O M R W Asif 23 3 71 2 Gul 20 1 73 0 Kaneria 36 5 138 1 Malik 15 2 48 1 Afridi 21 0 57 1 Razaqat 12 1 43 0 Farhat 1 0 2 0

PAKISTAN: Second innings Malik not out 30 Farhat c Jayawardene b Muralidaran 34 Younis b Muralidaran 8 Iqbal not out 9 Extras: (b-6, w-1, nb-1) 8 Total: (For 2 wkts in 41 overs) 89 Fall of wkts: 1-59, 2-71.

Bowler O M R W Malinga 8 2 31 0 Maharroof 9 4 17 0 Muralidaran 14 6 20 2 Fernando 8 3 14 0 Bandara 1 1 0 0 Jayayuriya 1 0 1 0 Toss: Pakistan Umpires: Steve Davis (AUS) and Rudi Koertzen (RSA)

Becks wants Sven



Football

AFP, London

David Beckham believes England boss Sven-Goran Eriksson is the "obvious choice" to take over at Real Madrid after this summer's World Cup.

The Swede is one of seven potential Real managers named on a shortlist by Bernabeu president Fernando Martin and, according to one leading British bookmaker, is 2/1 favourite to get the job.

If Eriksson wants a character reference to put before the Real board, he needs look no further than Beckham to provide one.

The 30-year-old Madrid midfielder said: "Sven is one of the

best managers around and his name was bound to come into the equation. I think he would work well.

"I don't know who it will be as it's not my decision. Sven is the obvious one because he will be out of a job. He will be free and available so we will see.

"I don't think he would have a problem with any place he went to. I think he is an experienced manager and can handle it.

"He has been the English manager for five years and has handled the pressures there so I'm sure he can handle it wherever he manages.

"One of his biggest qualities is his man-management -- the way he treats the players and what he gets out of the players. He gives the players a lot of respect."

'Real like a circus'



Football

INTERNET, undated

Inter Milan midfielder Luis Figo has described his former club Real Madrid as like a circus, and criticised the way it was run under former president Florentino Perez.

The former world and European footballer of the year moved to Italy last August, six months before Perez resigned with Real heading towards their third consecutive season without a major trophy.

"If the most important thing for your project is to put on a circus, then you have less chance of winning things," Figo said in an interview with sports daily Marca on Wednesday.

Figo joined Real in 2000 in one of the most controversial transfers in Spanish football when newly elected president Perez paid a then world-record 56 million dollars to buy him out of his contract with arch-rivals Barcelona.

"Everything started to go wrong at Real after those first three years when commercial decisions took precedence over sporting ones," Figo said.

"After the third year they signed players for the sake of signing them. They didn't sign them for sporting

reasons, they had other priorities. "When things are like this sooner or later you pay for it."

On top of the new signings the club organised longer and more gruelling world tours to promote the club.

"It is great to go everywhere and be received like kings but this is not reality," Figo added.

"Ask the fans whether they think is more important to see their side winning every Sunday and collecting titles, or to see their side doing tours for 15 or 20 days as if they were the Globetrotters."



LUIS FIGO

Half of them arrive

FROM PAGE 12

Shoro Bishkek FC (formerly SKA Shoro) and one from Abysh-Ata, according to the AFC website.

Podkorytov told prior to their departure from Bishkek that since the tournament did not fall on FIFA match days, clubs in Kazakhstan and Russia were not duty-bound to release the Kyrgyz players.

"Unfortunately, we cannot use all our foreign players including Emil Kenjisarijev and Valery Berezovsky," said Podkorytov.

He has said the team was in the midst of a transition with a new crop of players coming in to replace the old guard. "But we will use the services of our experienced players as well. They are 2005 Player of the Year defender Ruslan Sdykov, midfielder Igor Kudrenko and stopper Vyacheslav Amin."

Podkorytov took over the reins from Nematjan Zakirov last month.

REFEREES PREPARE

The 20 referees including ten assistant referees to officiate AFC Challenge Cup matches were put through a rigorous fitness test under the supervision of AFC director of referees Nazri Abdullah on Wednesday in Dhaka.

The new fitness test, which has been introduced by the AFC, includes a sprint of 40 metres six times and a 10-lap run split into 150

metres stride and 50 metres recovery and referees have to complete this in 6.20 seconds while assistant referees have six seconds to do the same.

"All our referees cleared the test and they are in good physical condition," told Abdullah.

"The test is designed in such a way that the physical fitness and mental toughness of the referees is thoroughly tested."

Workshop on new FIFA laws

BDNEWS, Dhaka

A workshop on FIFA's football new laws for sports journalists, writers and analysts was held at Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) conference room on Tuesday.

Bangladesh Sports Writers Association (BSWA) organised the workshop ahead of the upcoming AFC Challenge Cup in Bangladesh.

AFC director of referees Nazri Abdullah conducted the workshop with Monirul Islam, member secretary of the BFF referees' committee, assisting.

BSWA president Sarwar Hossain, general secretary Aminul Haq Mallik, Referees' Association president Bashir Ahmed and secretary Ibrahim Nesar were present.

Veron backs England

INTERNET, undated

Juan Sebastian Veron has backed England to make a big impression at this summer's World Cup by naming them among his pre-tournament favourites.

The Argentine played in England for several seasons and knows many of the squad well from his time with Manchester United and Chelsea.

In an interview with Colombian newspaper El Espectador, Veron said: "Even though Brazil are the best team, England have players at the top of their level."

"I like England very much because they have Frank Lampard, Wayne Rooney, John Terry and Steven Gerrard."

"And if David Beckham is charged up, I think they are candidates."

Veron is unlikely to feature in Germany for Argentina after being overlooked by coach Jose Pekerman ahead of the competition.

Otieno vows to quit

AFP, Nairobi

Kenyan top-order batting veteran Kennedy Otieno has vowed to quit international cricket after being dropped for the opening match of the ICC Intercontinental Cup here on Wednesday.

Otieno, who also doubled up as a wicketkeeper, was left fuming after being left out for the four-day against Group B opponents Holland following a slump in his form.

The selectors said Otieno and his opening-partnership player David Obuya had failed to deliver during the recent tour of Bangladesh and Zimbabwe.

"I am very disappointed considering what I have done for this country," Otieno told reporters.

"I am crying for justice. I should be treated fairly and judged fairly as the whole top order failed in Bangladesh."

The 34-year-old Otieno is among the pioneer players who featured in Kenya's first World Cup campaign in 1996 in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka where he made a brave 85 against Australia.

Along with current national team skipper Steve Tikolo and the suspended Maurice Odumbe, Otieno is one of only three players to have played in more than 60 of Kenya's 72 One-Day Internationals.

During the tour of Bangladesh Kenya suffered an embarrassing 4-0 humiliation.

Otieno only managed to score six runs in the opening match in Bogra and following a subsequent dry patch of a run each in the second and third one-dayer he was dropped for the fourth and final match in Narayanagarj.

Div II cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Gopibagh Friends Club handed a massive 229-run defeat on Progoti Sheba Sangha, courtesy of a brilliant hundred by Imran. Batting first, Gopibagh amassed 321-4 with Imran notching exactly 100 and then bowled Progoti out for a paltry 92.

In other matches, Chandpur Cricket Academy beat PWD by two wickets in a low-scoring affair at the Jagannath Hall ground and Al-Rashid Cricket Club defeated Green Leaf Cricket Club by 42 runs at the City Club ground.

BCB set

FROM PAGE 12

from the sponsorship deal which would be the biggest amount to date.

World champions Australia will arrive in the capital on April 6 to play their first ever full series in Bangladesh. They will play two Tests and three one-day internationals during their 23-day stay.

Ashes lesson comes in handy



AFP, Durban

Australian captain Ricky Ponting said lessons learned in last year's Ashes defeat in England had contributed to an emphatic series win in South Africa in the side's first overseas tour since then.

Australia overcame stubborn lower order resistance and the threat of a stoppage for bad light when they won the second Test against South Africa by 112 runs at Kingsmead Tuesday.

After winning the first Test in Cape Town, it meant they became the third successive Australian touring team to seal a series win in South Africa with a match still to play.

Ponting, who was not on the field Tuesday because of food poisoning, said: "It was a great result and a lot of hard work. There's lots of emotion in the dressing room, it's a great series win for us."

He said there had been some hard thinking after the Ashes loss.

"We've looked at ourselves and looked at the team. We've identified areas where we can improve. We've got more coaching staff in place and

we feel we're better prepared now for Test matches than we were before.

"More importantly we've got players putting their hands up, which was maybe lacking a bit in the Ashes."

Ponting said the cricket played by Australia in both Tests and one-day games since England had been of "the highest calibre".

South African captain Graeme Smith admitted his team had been outplayed.

"They've been better than us in the Test form of the game in a lot of key departments and key moments. They're the best team in the world and they've proved it to us."

Smith admitted the cumulative effect of playing Australia over an extended period on home-and-away tours had been a factor.

"To play someone for four or five months definitely takes its toll, it's like Groundhog Day sometimes," he said referring to a movie where the main character repeatedly finds himself in the same situation.

Leg-spinner Shane Warne made the crucial breakthroughs, taking the first three and the last two wickets to finish with six for 86.

A 91-run opening stand between AB de Villiers and Smith gave South

Africa hope of saving the match and taking the series to the third and final Test which starts in Johannesburg Friday.

But Warne took three wickets in quick succession and South Africa were four down at lunch.

"He was the difference," said Smith. "He got the key wickets and they wouldn't have got through to the end without a world-class spinner. With the lights on, he was able to make a difference."

Both Smith and Ponting felt that playing Test matches under floodlights was not ideal.

"It is so artificial. There's a different shine coming off the red ball," said Ponting.

Smith refused to comment on whether he thought play should have been called off because of the light.

"What I feel and what I am allowed to say are two different things," he said.

Asked to comment on the general issue of playing under lights he said: "It is tough. You could see the glare on the ball there tonight. At some point they (the umpires) have to judge whether it's a day-night game or a Test match."

Rain ends futile WI tour



AFP, Napier

The third cricket Test between New Zealand and the West Indies fizzled out in the rain here Wednesday, leaving New Zealand convincing 2-0 winners in the three-match series.

The rain washed out the one chance the West Indies had to make amends for a dismal tour, after they were beaten 1-4 in the earlier one-day series.

But although they made their best start of the tour, reaching 256 for four in the rain-disrupted first two days, they could go no further with the remaining three days all washed out.

The abrupt end left a frustrated Runako Morton unbeaten on 70, his second half-century in consecutive Tests, and eyeing consecutive centuries at McLean Park here after his 110 not out in the fourth one-dayer last month.

Morton is in a select group of West

Indies batsmen who can leave New Zealand with their reputation enhanced.

Brian Lara produced a drought breaking 83 here, his first score in double figures from five innings on tour.

The draw snaps an eight-Test losing streak for the West Indies who head home to prepare for a seven-match one-day series against Zimbabwe before hosting India for five one-dayers and four Tests.

New Zealand take heart from a series win, and the second Test victory gave them five wins in succession for the first time in the nation's cricketing history.

An added bonus for New Zealand has been the rain, which has allowed their bowlers to take a breather before embarking on what should be a much tougher Test series in South Africa.

The touring party includes the 13 players in the squad that crushed the West Indies plus the recall of allrounder Jacob Oram and opening batsman Michael Pappas.

New Zealand coach and convener of selectors John Bracewell said he was not too perturbed with their final dress rehearsal for South Africa being washed out.

If anything, the abbreviated match allowed his slightly weary pace attack some valuable recuperation time after bowling the West Indies out four times in the first two Tests.

Bracewell conceded at the squad announcement that some of his bowlers were just "hanging on", but the weather-enforced break had allowed some low batteries to be recharged before their warm-up match against the Rest of South Africa XI starting on April 7.

"It was likely that we probably would not have played Shane Bond, James Franklin and Chris Martin (against the Rest of South Africa) and just warmed them up in