

Ash cracks double ton

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Ashraf got back in the runs with a massive 202 in a second round one-day match of the David Kaufman Memorial Trophy against St. Mary's College Old Boys at their club ground on June 4.

Batting first, Rainhill batted first and amassed 345 runs for three in 45 overs.

Ashraf stroked his way to his highest-ever score and that was more than enough as the Old Boys were bowled out for 134 runs in reply.

Rainhill are currently in second position of the Merseyside-Southport Alliance Division One League with a win against Wavertree Cricket Club.

Quest for Hexa

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The Spanish championship for a second straight season.

The old man of the team, 36-year-old Cafu, has seen it all before and stressed that Brazil were not expecting an easy ride.

"All the teams at this World Cup are going to have problems winning and our first match will be tough."

"Everyone says we will reach the final but we need to take every opponent as they come."

"And we know the whole world will be looking at this match to see what sort of shape we are in."

But Cafu added that "tradition was important" when it came to winning World Cups - and no nation has won the title as many times as Brazil.

Brazil are alone in appearing in every World Cup and after wins in 1958, 1962, 1970, 1994, 2002 and runner-up finishes in 1950 and 1998 their pedigree is unmatched, making them 9/4 favourites.

The Croatians, semi-finalists in France in 1998, will not be there just to make up the numbers.

The Croatians will not arrive as lambs to the slaughter but they have been battling a mysterious virus since arriving in Germany last week.

Doctors could not determine the cause of the infection which had stricken stars including Darijo Simic, Ivica Olic, Bosko Balaban, Dado Prso, Srjejan Tomas, Anthony Seric and Joseph Didulica, although most have recovered and will play.



Did U Know?

After finally agreeing to join the world governing body FIFA in 1948, England made their first appearance in the 1950 World Cup finals in Brazil and were immediately one of the favourites, along with Brazil and Italy.



Talk Turkey

The Bayern Munich star was jeered when replacing Gary Neville in the recent friendly against Hungary and history repeated itself when he stepped on for Joe Cole against the South Americans.

"I was aware of the booing when Owen came on against Paraguay and that was disappointing," said Terry.

"I thought he did well when he came on, particularly in the last couple of minutes when he made some great tackles."

"We're here as a team and I would just ask the England fans to get behind every one of us because their support means so much to us."

"The expectation is there because we have such a great goal. We're here to go all the way."

A story of twins

AP, Germany

When it came to soccer, Philipp Degen was always a few steps ahead of his identical twin David.

But now the 23-year-old brothers are reunited for the World Cup.

They say it's a bonus for the team because they can anticipate each other's moves.

"I know what he wants, he knows what I want, and that's an advantage," said Philipp Degen, a defender.

David, a midfielder, said he never felt jealous of his brother's earlier success.

"I was always happy for him with all my heart, and supported him. Now that we are together at the World Cup, it's a dream come true," he admitted.

Philipp was called to the national squad last year, while his brother was tapped just last

India in driver's seat

Cricket

AFP, Gros Islet

Three hundreds and three early West Indies wickets, including the prized scalp of Brian Lara, placed India in an impregnable position in the second Test on Sunday.

Replying to India's formidable first innings total of 588 for eight declared, West Indies were 65 for two when stumps were drawn on the second day.

Mohammed Kaif hit an undefeated on 148 and Rahul Dravid, the Indian captain, scored 146 to take the number similar to his opposite number when he arrived with West Indies in turmoil on 36 for two.

He hit a rasping extra cover drive off Patel for his only boundary before he was adjudged lbw to Anil Kumble for seven playing down the wrong line.

He was the last of three lbw verdicts India gained that strengthened their hand in the Test.

Munaf Patel struck twice in his fifth over to remove Daren Ganga for 16 and Ramnaresh Sarwan for a first-ball duck off successive balls.

The beanpole Patel, similar in build, height, delivery, and execution to Australia's Glenn McGrath, snared Ganga and Sarwan with well pitched deliveries that moved back from outside the line of the off-stump.

Earlier, Dravid completed his 23rd Test hundred and Kaif hit his maiden Test hundred, after India continued from their bedtime total of 361 for four.

They followed in the footsteps of opener Virender Sehwag, who typically cavalier 180 on the opening day had set the tone for them.

Dravid hit 17 boundaries from 234 balls and added 179 for the fifth wicket with Kaif.

He reached his hundred when he pulled a short delivery from Jerome Taylor through backward square leg for two runs in the fourth over of the morning.

Dravid was the only success West Indies had before lunch when he was caught at square cover off Sarwan, chasing a wide ball and spooning the penultimate ball before the interval to the fielder to leave India 485 for five.

After lunch, Kaif took control of proceedings and steadily progressed to the hundred that had eluded him in 10 previous Tests.

He reached the landmark when he pulled a full toss from Sarwan over mid-wicket for his 10th boundary in the fourth over after the interval.

Either side of his landmark, West Indies made a few more breakthroughs but not until there was a surprising stoppage for about 15 minutes for bad light.

On resumption, Dhoni was dismissed with the first ball, when he sliced a drive to square cover off Ian Bradshaw.

Irfan Pathan came to the wicket



India captain Rahul Dravid salutes the crowd after scoring his 23rd Test century on the second day of the second Test against West Indies at the Beausejour stadium in Gros Islet on Sunday.

and hit a few firm strokes before he was caught at cover off Chris Gayle to leave India on 555 for seven.

Anil Kumble helped Kaif to carry India to 584 for seven at tea before Jerome Taylor bowled him off the inside-edge for 14 to prompt India's declaration.

The four-Test series is level after the first Test at the Antigua Recreation Ground ended in a tense draw.

The series concludes with Tests at Basseterre (June 22-26), and Kingston (June 30-July 4).

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the second day of the second Test between West Indies and India at the Beausejour Cricket Ground on Sunday:

INDIA: First innings (overnight)	361 for 4
Sehwag and b Collins	180
Tafel cirato b Collins	49
Laxman c wkpr Ramdin b Collins	0
Dravid c Lara b Sarwan	146
Yuvraj b Collins	2
Kaif not out	148
Dhoni c Ganga b Bradshaw	9
Pathan c Ganga b Gayle	19
Kumble b Taylor	14
Extras: (b-4, lb-7, w-4, nb-12)	27
Total: (For 8 wks in 148.2 overs dec)	588
Did not bat: Patel, V. Singh.	
Fall of wickets: 1-159, 2-161, 3-300, 4-306, 5-485, 6-517, 7-555.	
Bowler	O M R W
Collins	28 5 116 4
Taylor	24.2 4 88 1
Bravo	10 0 66 0
Collymore	21 1 92 0

Bradshaw	26	6	80	1
Sarwan	18	0	83	1
Gayle	21	6	52	1
WEST INDIES: First innings				
Gayle not out				34
Ganga lbw b Patel				16
Sarwan lbw b Patel				0
Lara lbw b Kumble				7
Chanderpaul not out				5
Extras: (nb-3)				3
Total: (For 3 wks in 25 overs)				65
To bat: D. Bravo, D. Ramdin, I. Bradshaw, P. Collins, J. Taylor, C. Collymore				
Fall of wickets: 1-36, 2-36, 3-55				
Bowler	O M R W			
Pathan	6	0	35	0
Patel	8	3	20	2
Kumble	7	3	10	1
V. Singh	2	2	0	0
Sehwag	2	2	0	0

Roger regrets Slam slip

Tennis

AFP, Paris

World number one Roger Federer admitted Sunday that he let a golden opportunity to complete his Grand Slam collection slip through his fingers.

The 24-year-old Swiss player came close to claiming the only trophy missing from his cabinet.

Competing in his first final on the red clay of Roland Garros in Paris, the seven-time Grand Slam winner would have become just the third man to hold all four majors at the same time.

The Wimbledon, US Open and Australian Open champion would have been the first to do so since Rod Laver in 1969.

But once again clay ace Rafael Nadal was standing in his way.

The world number two has often proved to be a stumbling block for the world's top player over the last year.

And once again he hammered home his dominance on clay with a 1-6, 6-1, 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) victory that extended his winning record on the surface to 60 matches.

Nadal is now 6-1 against Federer -- winning all four of their matches this year, including three times on

clay, and all of those in finals. And Federer concedes he is no closer to mastering the Mallorcan, who also ousted him in the semi-final here last year.

"For me, it's harder to relate to him than maybe (Lleyton) Hewitt. He's a different kind of a player," explained Federer.

"He never really goes out of total extremes, you know, where you have absolutely no chance."

"Where with me and maybe other players like (Marat) Safin, (Andy) Roddick, it's different. We can play a much higher level."

"He's tough to beat, not impossible to beat. That's the difference."

"You've got to be patient and wait for the right moment."

Federer blamed his own inconsistency for failing to build on early nerves from the defending champion.

"I wasn't as consistent today (on Sunday) like I was in Rome and maybe in Monaco," he said.

"It's a pity I didn't play as well as in the last few matches but he makes it tough and he deserves to win."

"Maybe it was the heat. We both tried to cut down on the points in the first two sets so that we never really got a good rhythm going from the baseline."

"I had the feeling he was struggling and it's very difficult to adapt," he said.

"But this year I'm really going to focus on my game."

"It's very difficult because I slide a lot on grass and don't feel confident."

"But I'm going to try and improve in that and play three weeks consecutive on grass this year. Four is difficult, but I am going to try," added Nadal, who heads for Queen's on Monday.

World number two Nadal, who holds 17 ATP titles including five this year, knows that he needs to adapt to other surfaces than clay if he is to challenge Federer for the world number one ranking.

Three-time Wimbledon champion Federer won four of his 37 titles this year.

And Nadal scuppered the 24-year-old Swiss player's bid to become just the third man to hold all four Grand Slams at the same time at Roland Garros on Sunday.

"He's the No. 1 because he plays better in all surfaces. I admire him. He's a very complete player."

"I can't say I am better than him because that's not true."

Comeback Aussie

FROM PAGE 17

Cahill's equalising goal rattled their composure.

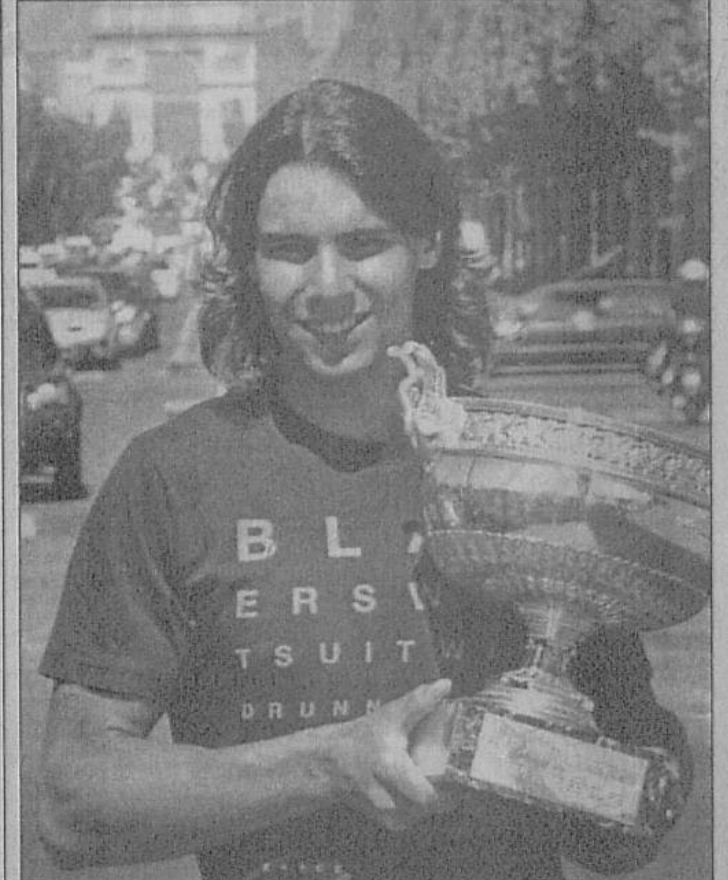
Australia now head to Munich next Sunday for their clash with World Cup holders Brazil, while Japan must regroup against Croatia in Nuremberg on the same day.

Hiddink further enhanced his reputation as one of the great modern-day coaches with the substitutions which altered the course of the match and gave Australia genuine hope of progressing to the last 16.

TEAMS AUSTRALIA: Mark Schwarzer, Brett Emerton, Lucas Neill, Craig Moore (Josh Kennedy 61), Scott Chipperfield, Vince Gelli, Jason Culina, Luke Wilkshire (John Aloisi 75), Harry Kewell, Marco Bresciano (Tim Cahill 53), Mark Viduka.

Yellow card: Grella (34), Moore (57), Cahill (69), Aloisi (77) JAPAN: Yoshikatsu Kawaguchi, Keisuke Tsuboi (Teruyuki Moniwa 56, Masashi Oguro 90+1), Tsuneyasu Miyamoto, Yuji Nakazawa, Yuichi Komano, Hidetoshi Nakata, Takashi Fukunishi, Alessandro Santos, Shunsuke Nakamura, Atsushi Yanagisawa (Shinji Ono 78), Naohiro Takahara.

Yellow card: Miyamoto (31), Takahara (40), Moniwa (68) Attendance: 46,000.



Spanish sensation Rafael Nadal shows off his French Open champion's trophy in Paris on Monday.

Third Eye

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uninventive and Group C certainly looks likely to shape into a very tough group thereby living up to its initial billing as the "Group of Death."

At Nuremberg it was Concacaf against Asia as Mexico squared up against Iran. In a bright first half of play both sides looked sharp. Iran should have grabbed the lead but conceded from a free kick.

However, they hit back after an Ali Karimi corner was not cleared and Golmohammadi slammed it in. However strangely they came out after the break looking to sit on the draw and the result proved fatal, as Mexico deprived even of their stalwart Jared Borgetti; who worryingly limped off with injury; grabbed two more with the Brazilian born Zinha the architect of one and the scorer of the other.

In the last match of the day Portugal faced off against former colony Angola. In the last meeting between the sides the match had to

'Negative' press

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Scolari paid tribute to their rivals at the sell-out 46,000 seater Cologne stadium.

"The game was complicated as we expected. The early goal gave us peace of mind."

"Angola improved and at times in the second half they were better than us, there was a lot of pressure in midfield. But if you study the game all the major chances were on the Portuguese side."

"We had several clear goal scoring opportunities."

He was also forced to explain the reason why Deco hadn't played after initially suggesting the Barcelona Champions League winner had recovered well enough from a training injury to take part.

"If it was our third game against Mexico to decide our qualification then perhaps I might have risked him."

"But it might have worsened his injury and kept him out for a fortnight."

BITS AND BOBS

Terry hits out at booing INTERNET, undated

England defender John Terry has criticised the fans who booed Owen Hargreaves during the 1-0 win over Paraguay on Saturday.

The Bayern Munich star was jeered when replacing Gary Neville in the recent friendly against Hungary and history repeated itself when he stepped on for Joe Cole against the South Americans.

"I was aware of the booing when Owen came on against Paraguay and that was disappointing," said Terry.

"I thought he did well when he came on, particularly in the last couple of minutes when he made some great tackles."

"We're here as a team and I would just ask the England fans to get behind every one of us because their support means so much to us."

"The expectation is there because we have such a great goal. We're here to go all the way."

A vast majority of French fans would be surprised if France were to become world champions for the second time.

A poll conducted by the Ifop institute showed 66 percent of the 1,003 asked believed the 1998 champions would not go all the way in the World Cup finals in Germany.

The poll, to be published by Sunday newspaper Le Journal du Dimanche, showed 69 percent wanted newcomer Franck Ribery to start France's opening match against Switzerland on Tuesday in Stuttgart.

South Korea and Togo are France's other opponents in Group G.

Call for patriotism

REUTERS, Berlin

The German public should join the players in a show of patriotism at their home World Cup, defender

month. In 2005, Philipp moved from FC Basel to Bundesliga club Borussia Dortmund, while David remained with Basel.

David said that in their Basel days, there was an easy flow between them.

"But we could also overdo it in keeping the ball between us, which we don't want to do (here). There are 11 in a team, and we have to play with all 11," he said.

The Degens are the first twins on a national team since Frank and Ronald De Boer started for The Netherlands in the 1990s.

Many players are eager to get started and prove themselves in the French. They meet in a p G match on Tuesday in Stuttgart.

"With every day, we feel more butterflies in the stomach," said David Degen. "The tension is rising."

The issue of public displays of patriotism was highlighted last year when renowned singers at two separate sporting events in Germany managed to get the words of the national anthem wrong.

The anthem used to begin with the line, "Deutschland, Deutschland ueber alles, ueber alles in der Welt" (Germany above everything in the world), words that obviously took on a menacing flavour during the Nazi regime.

The anthem as sung now begins with the third verse, extolling: "Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit" or "Unity, justice and liberty"

Germany play Poland in their next Group A match on June 14 in Dortmund.

Why empty seats?

AFP, Berlin

German organisers admit they are confused as to why there were close to 6,000 empty seats at the Netherlands-Serbia and Montenegro World Cup match in Leipzig on Sunday, as they expected a full house.

A crowd of 37,216 attended the

Group C match - won 1-0 by the Netherlands - short of the 43,000 capacity at Leipzig's World Cup stadium.

"The game was in fact sold out with 43,000 fans. We will look into the mistake," said Gerd Gaus, a spokesman for the organising committee.

"We investigate who the free spaces belonged to. The tickets were not handed back to us, otherwise we would have put them up for public sale."

Before the tournament German organisers said they expected all of the 64 matches at the finals to have capacity crowds.

One way traffic

AFP, Berlin

The well-travelled Dick Advocaat loves one particular aspect of coaching South Korea -- the players do not talk back.

"The South Korean team is very disciplined and in that way it is easier than working with European teams," said the former Holland, Glasgow Rangers and Borussia Monchengladbach coach. "In Europe - Germany, Holland, wherever - the players like to talk to coaches about decisions they make - in Korea they (the players) always follow the leader. I think I am in the right job."

Playing ping pong

AFP, Berlin

France defender William Gallas says he is passing the time on his days off between ping-pong and listening to music on his i-Pod, as well as reading the biography of former NBA star Dennis Rodman.

"I like this character," said the Chelsea defender vis-a-vis Rodman, known for his "bad boy" Hollywood image as well as his haul of NBA titles.