

Twin tons boost SA

AFP, Colombo

South African batsmen Jacques Rudolph and Hashim Amla slammed fine tons to take their team to 351-3 against Sri Lanka A on the first day of a practice match here on Saturday.

Left-handed Rudolph hit 157 off 212 balls with 16 fours and a six.

Rudolph, who was picked in the touring party because of an injury to regular captain Graeme Smith, staked a claim for a place in the final 11 for the first of two Tests to start here on July 27.

Rudolph, 25, who has played 33 Tests since his debut in Bangladesh in 2003, was the only South African to score a hundred on their tour here two years ago.

He added 242 for the third wicket with Amla after South Africa lost Herschelle Gibbs (38) in the morning session. But Sri Lanka's second-string attack failed to take a wicket in the afternoon session.

The partnership was broken when Jehan Mubarak caught Rudolph at short fine leg off leg-spinner Upul Chandana with 40 minutes of the day's play still left.

Amla's hundred was a chanceless one, as he tackled spinners Rangana Herath and Chandana with excellent footwork.

At close, Amla was unbeaten on 128 off 241 balls with 14 fours and a six, while captain Ashwell Prince was on 15.

BRIEF SCORES

SOUTH AFRICA: 351 for 3 (Rudolph 157, Amla 128 not out)

Landis set

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26secs behind Honchar at the second time check at 34km, however the good news was behind him.

Pereiro, who began the time trial with a 30sec lead on Landis and a 12sec lead on fellow Spaniard Sastre, had lost 1:23 on Honchar and nearly a minute to Landis at 34km.

While Landis was tucked in an almost perfect aerodynamic position, the Spaniard was at times seen struggling to keep himself in the saddle.

Sastre meanwhile had virtually fallen out of contention having completed 34km 2:46 behind the Ukrainian.

At the third time check it was Kloden who had moved up to second place, at 47sec behind Honchar.

Landis appeared to be willing, falling to third at 1:08, but with Pereiro at a minute behind the American there was little to worry him.

Laporta

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Laporta's four-year term would therefore have expired on June 30 this year.

"We are in this situation because of a judicial order. We have no option but to resign because the institution comes first," Laporta continued.

"But we will appeal against the decision because we believe the correct course of action is to hold elections in 2007."

A caretaker board will be put in place to manage the electoral process and set the election date, reported to be around 10th September.

Plymouth make

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Plymouth could take their share of credit for that -- and although there were two clear first-half chances which went begging for Javier Portillo, it was not until substitute Lilian Nalis committed a clear handball that Baptista got his chance.

Real took control of midfield in the latter stages, but some determined defending kept the score at 1-0 as substitute Soldado went close several times.

The end

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Manchester United pulled off a better deal by getting Gianluca Zambrotta and Lilian Thuram for 19 million euros than have Real by acquiring Cannavaro and Emerson for 24 million.

The 'madridista' fans have mixed feelings about signing Ruud Van Nistelrooy, just turned 30, from Manchester United.

Most would prefer Calderon to keep his election promises and bring in youngsters like Kaka, Cesc Fabregas and Arjen Robben, though that now seems impossible given the refusal of Milan, Arsenal and Chelsea to negotiate.

The other youngsters the fans would like to see in white are Spain World Cup players Xabi Alonso, Joaquin Sanchez and Jose Antonio Reyes.

Calderon is desperate to move away from the now unpopular 'galactico' model, which has been blamed for Real not winning a thing since 2003. But at the moment he is stuck with the 'geriatricos'.



South Africa batsman Jacques Rudolph (C) works it on the leg side as Sri Lanka A 'keeper Prasanna Jayawardene (L) looks on during the first day of the three-day practice match in Colombo on Saturday.

Kalou eager for Henry face-off

Football

AFP, London

Salomon Kalou cannot wait to come up against football hero Thierry Henry when the new Premiership season gets underway.

Kalou joined English champions Chelsea in May -- one of the London rivals of Henry's Arsenal.

Like the man he admires, Kalou is a striker and it was his goalscoring record at Dutch club Feyenoord which prompted Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho to bring the 20-year-old from the Ivory Coast to Stamford Bridge.

But there was no doubting which aspect of the English game Kalou was looking forward to most.

"Thierry Henry is my idol. He's my brother (Ivory Coast captain) Bonaventure's idol too. I like the style of his play. He can give the ball to others and score himself," he said.

"He has so much skill and is very fast. I met him at Arsenal when the Ivory Coast trained with them for two weeks and told him he was a great player.

"I asked him how he can run so

fast and he said it was something he developed when he was young. If I get the chance to play against him it would be great."

Kalou, who can operate as a striker or on either wing, scored 35 goals in 67 Dutch league games for Feyenoord and also grabbed four in seven UEFA Cup appearances.

Ruud Gullit coached him during the first of his two seasons at Feyenoord and it was the former Chelsea star who urged him to come to west London.

"Before I signed for Chelsea, I spoke to Ruud and he gave me the security to join because he thinks I can get better at Chelsea," Kalou explained.

"It was Ruud who gave me the chance at Feyenoord so when he says nice things about me it gives me confidence."

And he said he was well aware of the standards demanded by Chelsea's Portuguese boss. "Jose is someone who likes perfection. He wants everything to be 100 percent."

"I'm not surprised Chelsea have been winning because of the way Jose is. I was nervous before I met him but when we spoke I was surprised because he was very cool."

Kalou is likely to have to bide his

time before getting into Chelsea's first team with strikers Andriy Shevchenko, Didier Drogba and Hernan Crespo all at Stamford Bridge.

But the forward insisted he was prepared to wait his turn.

"As a player you always want to be in the best competition so for me it was very important to come to England. I want to get better as a player," he said. "I want to get into the first team and take my chance. But it's not easy to get into a big team like Chelsea. I'm here to learn from people like Andriy Shevchenko and Hernan Crespo."

"I have ambition but I must be realistic -- Chelsea is a big club and I'm here to learn."

Kalou had wanted to represent the Netherlands at the World Cup but failed in a bid to gain a Dutch passport.

However, he was adamant international football was the last thing on his mind now. "I'm going to play for Chelsea and that's it," Kalou said.

"I won't think anymore about Dutch nationality. The most important thing is to start well with Chelsea."

Amity cost the Ashes?

AFP, Sydney

National selector Merv Hughes wants Australian cricketers to end their matey relationship with England rivals and return to a ruthless rivalry for this year's home Ashes series.

The former firebrand Test fast bowler believes Australian friendships with English players may have contributed to their shock Ashes defeat in England last year.

Hughes was dismayed to see Hampshire teammates Shane Warne and Kevin Pietersen exchange jokes and share beers after play in the last series while all the Australians enjoyed the company of star all-rounder Andy Flintoff.

Hughes says Australia must again be indoctrinated with the ruthless, hard-nosed attitude towards England that was pioneered by long-serving former skipper Allan Border, also a current national selector.

"It was all too matey for me," Hughes was quoted in Saturday's Daily Telegraph of last year's seismic Ashes loss.

"Imagine if Shane Warne and (England's) Kevin Pietersen didn't have that friendship. Who knows what would have happened?" "We lost the attitude towards the English that we once had, the attitude that was introduced by Allan Border."

Nashiro clinches WBA crown

AFP, Osaka

Japanese challenger Nobuo Nashiro beat Mexico's Martin Castillo by technical knockout to become the new World Boxing Association super flyweight champion on Saturday.

The fight was stopped one minute and two seconds into the 10th round, allowing the 24-year-old Nashiro, ranked top in the WBA, to stretch his unbeaten record to eight wins including five KOs.

Nashiro fought aggressively from the outset and soon opened up a cut above Castillo's left eye which eventually brought the fight to a halt.

But the victory was tinged with sadness for the Japanese whose national title opponent Seiji Tanaka died soon after their bout in April last year.

"I know my punch caused the injury," said Nashiro.

"It was a tough road thinking about my opponent who died soon after the Japanese title match."

Nashiro tied Joichiro Tatsuyoshi for the fastest route to a world title by a Japanese boxer by claiming the belt in eight matches.

Tatsuyoshi sealed the World Boxing Council bantamweight title after eight bouts in September 1991.

"I'm determined to keep fighting. I'm glad that I equalled Tatsuyoshi's record, but rather than the record, I'd like to be a champion who can give an exciting performance," Nashiro said.

Fergie expects

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pound Chelsea have paid for Andriy Shevchenko.

Meanwhile, the United boss has distanced himself from claims he attacked Chelsea's transfer policy during an after-dinner speech in Johannesburg earlier this week. It was alleged Ferguson suggested Chelsea were "hell-bent on ruining football" with their big-spending ways.

However, the Scot has denied making the comments, although he did express some concern at talk the Blues were recruiting large numbers of African youngsters, one of whom, John Obi Mikel, Chelsea bought from United for 12 million pounds earlier this year after a protracted wrangle and without him making a single appearance for the Old Trafford outfit.

"Chelsea have every right to do what is right for their club, just as we have every right to do what is right for us," he said. "I did not say their transfer policy was bad for the game. It is clearly good for Chelsea. But, if it is correct they are going to sign 30 African boys, you have to wonder how they are all going to get a game."

United wrap up their successful three-match South Africa tour in the Vodacom Cup final against Kaizer Chiefs in Pretoria on Sunday. The game is a rematch of the meeting between the sides in Cape Town on Tuesday, which the Red Devils won with a late strike from Dong Fangzhou.

Jose sympathetic to Juve

Football

AFP, London

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho has insisted that he will not be plundering disgraced Italian champions Juventus for players in a bid to strengthen his squad.

The Turin club, relegated to Italy's second division because of their part in the country's match-fixing scandal, have already lost the likes of Emerson, Fabio Cannavaro, Lilian Thuram and Gianluca Zambrotta.

But Mourinho, aiming to guide Chelsea to a third straight English title, said he would not be launching any late bids as the London club had a settled plan for bringing new players to Stamford Bridge.

"We started thinking about transfers for the new season before the last one ended. For example we contacted Bayern Munich about (Michael) Ballack last season," Mourinho said Friday.

"The market was waiting for the problems in Italian football. Chelsea didn't and I'm happy with that because it shows we are working at the right time and also shows respect for difficult times."

"I would be very sad to bring to Chelsea players from a club in difficult circumstances. When I look at a big club like Juventus with players wanting to go, I don't laugh at the situation."

"I'm glad we're out of it. At the moment we're closer to selling than buying, although we'll buy a left-back if we can."

Wayne Bridge has ended his loan spell at Fulham and will be staying at Stamford Bridge but a vacancy will open up when left-back Asier del Horno returns to Spain, with Valencia leading the chase.

Ashley Cole is the hot favourite to be installed as Del Horno's replacement but Mourinho would not comment on mounting speculation the Arsenal defender will join next week.

"It's true that possibly we need a left-back. Del Horno would prefer a move and we are trying to help," he said. "But we must protect Chelsea's position on the business side. If he goes back to Spain we need a good left-back."

"I don't want to say Ashley Cole is the best because in European football there are five or six very good left backs."

"Cole is an Arsenal player and it's

not correct to talk about him. The transfer window is open and for sure we'll have two left-backs. One is Wayne Bridge and maybe Del Horno can be the other one."

Meanwhile Mourinho was clear about his target for the upcoming season. "The objective is to win the Premiership. I don't want to dominate or finish without defeats or with record points."

"The Premiership is so difficult you can only think about winning. Everybody will be better after signing new players. The other teams will improve."

"Big clubs like us, Arsenal or Manchester United don't need to buy 10 players to improve our squads. We buy two or three and it's already better."

"The market was sleeping for a while and now it's in the period of improving. Everybody will be stronger and the quality of the Premiership will be even higher."

Mourinho, who has enough problems giving each member of his star-studded squad enough games each, is resigned to losing Damien Duff with Newcastle and Liverpool reportedly joining Tottenham in the race for the 10 million pounds-rated Republic of Ireland winger.

Buffon staying: Deschamps

INTERNET, undated

Juventus manager Didier Deschamps has claimed World Cup-winning goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon is following Alessandro Del Piero's example by staying at Juventus in Serie B.

Juventus will start next season in Italy's second division with a 30-point deficit after they were found guilty of match fixing.

So far Lilian Thuram, Fabio Cannavaro, Emerson and Gianluca Zambrotta have left, while Patrick Vieira is reportedly on the verge of a move to Inter Milan.

However, Buffon, who had reportedly been a target of Arsenal and AC Milan has indicated he is willing to stay.

"We have managed to keep the goalkeeper. I am 100% certain that Buffon is staying," said Deschamps.

"It is important that we have managed to keep a world-class goalkeeper and a world-class striker, so that we are well covered at both sides of the pitch."

"Currently, four players have left, but I am hopeful some others will decide to stay with us."

One of those is France striker David Trezeguet -- also linked to Arsenal -- and Deschamps believes his relationship with his former France teammate will have in key role in persuading him to stay.

"It is important that we keep (David) Trezeguet because his worth is undeniable. Also I have the added advantage of knowing him very well from when we played together."

"I spoke to him before the sentence, but he is on holiday now and we must wait for him to come back before we know what his decision will be. It's up to him."

Paul confident

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year," admitted Collingwood.

"We have to get back to playing very well to beat the Aussies."

"If they underestimate us fantastic, but we must approach it exactly the same as we did last summer."

"We are going to Australia with a belief we have not gone there with for a very long time. A belief that we can retain the Ashes."

"Not many teams in the past can actually have said that and really believed it 100 percent. But we can, we have had a feeling of what it is like now, they have had a feeling of losing the Ashes."

"The mental side of the game is so important at international level in any sport and if we went over there not thinking we could win we would not get very close."

"The tables have turned now, we know what it is like to win and they know what it is like to lose."

Shoaib aims

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tomorrow and running in hard again. I feel real fit and just want to bowl but, after what happened last time, I know I need to listen to my trainers."

"One thing is for certain and that is when I do play against England I expect to bowl faster and better than when I bowled against them in Pakistan last year."

The 'Rawalpindi Express', who took 17 wickets during Pakistan's 2-0 win in a three-Test home series against England in November and December, missed last week's drawn first Test at Lord's while he continued his recovery from a stress fracture of the left ankle.

The 30-year-old is currently training at Edgbaston -- the home of Warwickshire where Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer made his off-field reputation during the 1990s -- under the supervision of Pakistan's South African fitness guru Murray Stevenson.

Tennis

AFP, Cincinnati

Serena Williams continued to roll at the rainy WTA Tour hardcourt tournament here Friday, booking her semifinal berth with a 6-2, 6-2 victory over fellow American Amy Frazier.

Quarterfinal action at the 175,000-dollar event was disrupted by rain a handful of times.

Williams had to wait out the completion of top seed and defending champion Patty Schnyder's win over ninth-seeded Sania Mirza of India, which was delayed twice, before she got on court in the final match of the evening.

Once she did, however, she made quick work of Frazier.

Williams, a seven-time Grand

Blake the 3rd American

Tennis

AFP, Indianapolis

James Blake squeezed past Nicolas Mahut 7-6, 7-6 Friday to place three Americans in the semifinals of the ATP Indianapolis Open for the first time in 16 years.

The shaven-headed top seed joined compatriots Andy Roddick and Robby Ginepri in the final four, with Florida-based Belgian Xavier Malisse completing the lineup.

The last time three US players got this far here was 1992, when it was Pete Sampras, Jim Courier and Todd Martin.

In Saturday's semifinals, Blake will face Malisse, who upset Chile's third seed Fernando Gonzalez 7-6, 6-4.

Two-time champion Roddick avenged one of the worst defeats of his career as he hammered Luxembourg's Gilles Muller 6-2, 6-3.

Defending champion Ginepri



US tennis star James Blake celebrates his victory over Frenchman Nicolas Mahut in the RCA Championships at Indianapolis on Friday.