

## Proteas hit new low

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Muttiah Muralidaran and Dilhara Fernando combined to bowl out South Africa for 169, their lowest total against Sri Lanka, on the opening day of the first cricket Test here on Thursday.

The pace-spin duo claimed four wickets each as the depleted South Africans were shot out at the stroke of tea on an even-paced wicket at the Sinhalese sports club.

Sri Lanka replied strongly with 128-2 when bad light ended play early, with Kumar Sangakkara unbeaten on 59 and skipper Mahela Jayawardena on 55.

The pair put on 114 for the unbroken third wicket after seamer Dale Steyn had removed openers Sanath Jayasuriya and Upul Tharanga in his first two overs to make Sri Lanka 14-2.

The Proteas, who went to lunch at 78-2, lost their last eight wickets for 91 runs in a dramatic afternoon session to be all out in just 50.2 overs.

Wily off-spinner Muralidaran finished with 4-41 to take his career tally to 639 wickets, second only to Australian record-holder Shane Warne's 685.

Fernando claimed 4-48 and Farveez Maharoo took 2-32 as the South Africans lost the advantage

of winning the toss and batting first on an overcast day.

Visiting coach Mickey Arthur blamed his batsmen for the poor display, adding it was now up to the bowlers to show the way.

"We certainly threw away the advantage we had with a batting display which was very ordinary," Arthur said.

"There were a fair amount of soft dismissals. Guys were feeling nervous and tentative and it came out in our batting.

"It certainly wasn't the way we planned to play. We had one bad day in office but we have got four days to come back."

Sri Lanka coach Tom Moody was delighted the way the bowlers, particularly Fernando, responded to the task.

"Dilhara bowled superbly and has made a vast improvement after working very hard on his game during the past 12 months," he said.

"The decision to leave him out of the England tour was perhaps the wake-up call he needed. His confidence is now high and he is going from strength to strength."

It was South Africa's lowest-ever total against Sri Lanka, falling below the 179 and 189 they managed in two innings of the second Test at the same venue on their previous visit in 2004.

AB de Villiers was the only batsman who took on the Sri Lankan bowlers, smashing 65 off

72 balls with the help of eight boundaries.

De Villiers, who was on 47 when last man Makhaya Ntini walked out to bat, scored the remaining 18 runs for his team before holing out in the deep off Muralidaran.

The tourists missed three top players. Captain Graeme Smith and all-rounder Jacques Kallis stayed home because of injuries, while veteran Shaun Pollock opted out due to the birth of his second child.

Pollock was expected to arrive later on Thursday and will be available for the second Test of the two-match series starting at the Sara stadium here on August 4.

Fernando rattled South Africa at the start by clean bowling openers Herschelle Gibbs and Andrew Hall in a hostile first spell to make it 45-2.

Maharoo struck with the second delivery after lunch when he forced Jacques Rudolph to edge a catch to wicket-keeper Prasanna Jayawardena.

Left-handed Rudolph, a late replacement for Smith, had made a fluent 29 before the break with five boundaries.

Ashwell Prince lasted just 15 deliveries in his first stint at the crease as South African captain, scoring one run when he poked at a Maharoo out-swing and gave the wicket-keeper another easy catch.

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## UEFA postpones Milan decision

AFP, Geneva

UEFA said it would decide by August 2 whether to allow scandal-hit AC Milan to take part in European competitions for the 2005/2006 season.

UEFA's emergency panel "took note" of a report by the governing body's Chief Disciplinary Inspector "on the question whether it would be appropriate, due to the particular circumstances, to admit AC Milan to the 2006/07 UEFA club competitions," UEFA said in a statement.

"Following this report, the Emergency Panel has decided to further examine whether to admit AC Milan to the 2006/2007 UEFA club competitions," it added.

In the meantime, the club's name will be used in the draw for the third round of the Champions League due Friday.

AC Milan was included in the list of clubs taking part in European competitions sent by the Italian federation (FIGC) to UEFA on Wednesday, the deadline day for entries.

The six-time European champions had finished second in Serie A behind Juventus.

But the Italian football federation (FIGC) had excluded both clubs from their Champions League berth under sanctions for their part in a match-fixing scandal.

However, after a successful appeal earlier this week, an Italian sports tribunal allowed AC Milan to take its slot in the third and final qualifying round of the Champions League, provoking an angry reaction from rival Serie A clubs.

## Inter awarded Scudetto

AFP, Rome

Inter Milan have been awarded last season's Serie A title despite finishing third behind Juventus and AC Milan, the Italian football federation (FIGC) announced Wednesday.

The move comes after both Juve and Milan were sanctioned by the federation for their part in a match-fixing scandal.

The FIGC submitted a statement explaining their decision.

"In the case of sanctions that establish a change in the standings, such as penalty points or the retrograding to last place ... there are provisions to automatically attribute the Italian title to the team that becomes top of the standings," said the statement.

Juventus topped the original table ahead of Milan but with Juve relegated, and docked 17 points from the coming season, over their part in the scandal and Milan docked 30 points from last season and eight for the forthcoming campaign, that left Inter top of the tree.

Several people had called for the 2006 title to be unattributed, as is the case with the 2005 title of which Juventus were also stripped.

But Inter owner Massimo Moratti demanded that his side be awarded last season's title, thus ending their long, painful, 17-year wait for the scudetto, claiming they deserved it as they had not cheated.

Inter have thus been awarded their 14th title, although quite what that means to the players who finished 15 points behind their Juve counterparts last season, remains to be seen.

## Sven in Villa link

INTERNET, undated

Six months after Sven-Göran Eriksson told a "Fake Sheikh" undercover reporter he would be interested in coaching Aston Villa, the former England boss could be set for a real-life move to Birmingham.

His agent Athole Still has been revealed as the leader of a consortium vying to take the club over and whose first move would be to install Eriksson as manager.

The Swede caused a furore in January when a News of the World journalist, who was posing as a wealthy Arab interested in buying Villa, coaxed unflattering details about several key players from Eriksson along with an admission that he might walk out on England for Villa if the price was right.

The scandal hastened the announcement that he would relinquish his post after the World Cup, yet the experience does not appear to have deterred the 58-year-old.

American tycoon Randy Lerner was last night rumoured to have pulled out of bidding after a disastrous meeting with club chairman Doug Ellis, who insisted on retaining a hold on power at Villa Park.

The Cleveland Browns owner's cooling interest appeared to leave local businessman Michael Neville who has lodged a £64m (92m euro) bid as favourite to take control before the emergence of Still's consortium.



England's Steven Harmison (2L) celebrates after taking the wicket of Pakistan opener Imran Farhat during the opening day of the second Test at Old Trafford in Manchester on Thursday.

## Steve too pacy for Pakistan

Cricket

AFP, Manchester

Stephen Harmison's pace proved too much for Pakistan to handle as the tourists collapsed to 119 all out on the first day of the second Test against England at Old Trafford here Thursday.

Harmison took six for 19 in just 13 overs, his analysis also featuring an impressive seven maidens, as he made the most of a hard pitch ideally suited for a bowler of his height and bounce.

And left-arm spinner Monty Panesar (three for 21 in 7.4 overs), made sure there was pressure from both ends after Pakistan captain Inzamam-ul-Haq won the toss and elected to bat.

At tea, England were 49 for one, a deficit of 70, after Marcus Trescothick (five) had been caught behind limply hanging his bat out against Mohammad Sami.

England captain Andrew Strauss was 29 not out and fellow left-hander Alastair Cook unbeaten on five.

Earlier Pakistan, who had been 90 for two, lost their last eight wickets for 29 runs in 85 balls as England took charge of the second

match of this four-Test series.

Harmison's figures were his best in Test cricket since his seven for 12 against West Indies in Jamaica two years ago, the Durham fast bowler giving England's attack the lead it required – and was often missing in the drawn first Test at Lord's – in the absence of injured paceman Andrew Flintoff.

But he was helped by a series of loose shots from the Pakistan batsmen.

Pakistan, 93 for four at lunch, lost their fifth wicket five balls after the resumption.

Faisal Iqbal fell for three when, trying to force Panesar through the offside, he was caught behind by wicketkeeper Geraint Jones.

England then captured the prize wicket of Inzamam, who had made nine successive Test fifties against them, for nought, when he could only steer a rising Harmison delivery to Kevin Pietersen in the gully.

Shahid Afridi briefly threatened, lofting Panesar for six. But two balls later, trying to repeat the shot, he wastefully skied a simple catch to Pietersen in the covers.

Harmison then had Sami caught by Strauss in the slips before clean bowling Abdul Razaq middle-and-leg stump.

Pakistan's demise was com-

pleted with the run-out by Pietersen of Danish Kaneria for the third wicket of the innings.

The tourists had been dismissed in under 39 overs, with Harmison's figures surpassing Alec Bedser's six for 45 in 1954 as the best by an England bowler against Pakistan at Old Trafford.

He received good support from Panesar, who bowled with control and accuracy after Pakistan had threatened a revival.

Harmison had earlier taken two wickets for no runs in eight balls as Pakistan, with wicket-keeper Kamran Akmal promoted to open in place of the dropped Salman Butt, again failed to fire at the top of their order and collapsed to nine for two.

Only Mohammad Yousuf (38), who made a double century at Lord's, and vice-captain Younis Khan (44), fit again after a knee injury, checked England's progress with a third-wicket stand of 81 after the hosts' back-up seamers were unable to build on the start provided by Harmison and Matthew Hoggard.

But shortly before lunch Yousuf was caught behind off Panesar's fourth ball and three deliveries later Younis was taken in the gully

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## Maradona in and out of hospital

AFP, Buenos Aires

Argentina legend Diego Maradona was admitted to a private hospital for several hours on Wednesday for a "complete examination", his personal doctor has said.

"Maradona was hospitalised during the night to avoid a media circus," said Alfredo Cahe.

It is not the first time the infamous owner of the "hand of God" has had a health scare. In April, the 1986 World Cup winning captain underwent a medical exam for gastric pains.

He also flirted with death in 2004 after a cardiovascular crisis and in March 2005 he went under the knife to reduce his ballooning stomach, an operation that saw him lose 50 kilos.

## Twist in RvN saga

AFP, Paris

Ruud van Nistelrooy's expected transfer from Manchester United has taken a new twist with reports about how the negotiations are going contradicting each other.

According to AS newspaper in Spain, Real are about to seal the transfer of the Dutch striker for 15 million euros, whereas Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson told MUTV that they would not budge from the 15 million-pound (21.9m-euro) asking price.

AS newspaper wrote: "Real Madrid have sealed the purchase of Ruud van Nistelrooy. The club will pay 15 million euros for the player who will be presented today (Friday) at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium."

Real Madrid made an improved offer of 10.3m pounds on Wednesday and Bayern Munich are also in the running.

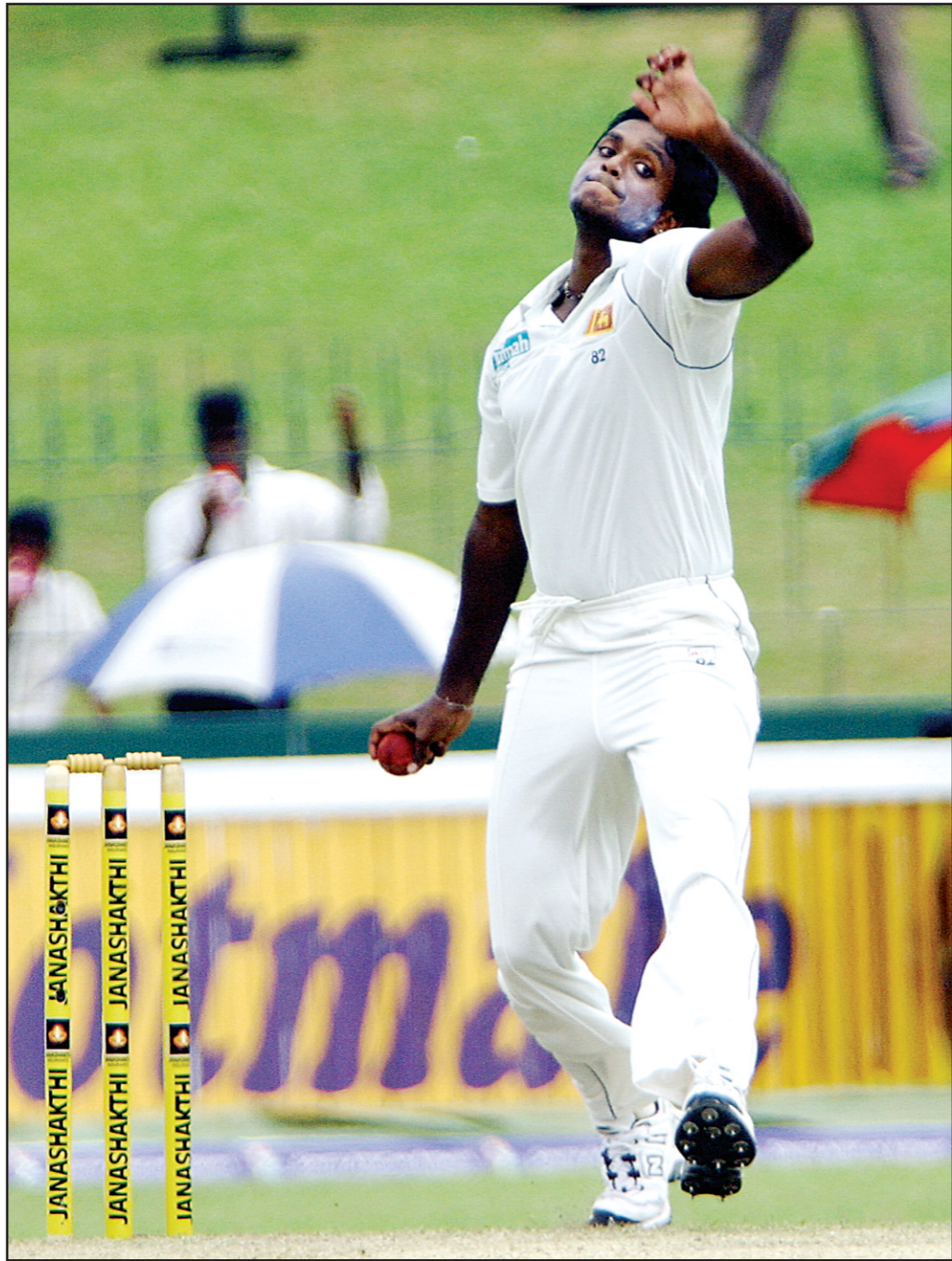
However Ferguson told MUTV: "We know our value. If we are going to sell Ruud we should get the proper value. He is one of the best strikers in the country, one of the best strikers in Europe, so when you think about Andriy Shevchenko going for 35 million -- he is a similar age group.

"We know the value of the player so at the moment he is a Manchester United player."

Real's new offer is believed to be a straight cash deal and Ferguson added: "I read it on teletext and I spoke to chief executive David Gill and nothing has really materially changed.

"They have slightly increased it but it is nothing really. An increase of about two bob or something. We know the value of the player so at the moment he is a Manchester United player."

Meanwhile England's Sun newspaper claimed Tottenham manager Martin Jol wants to do a swap deal with Van Nistelrooy coming to White Hart Lane and Michael Carrick going to United.



Sri Lanka quick Dilhara Fernando is pictured in his delivery stride during the opening day of the first Test against South Africa at the Sinhalese Sports Club (SSC) ground in Colombo on Thursday.

## Zagallo leaves Brazil post

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Former World Cup winner Mario Zagallo has left his role as Brazil's technical director as part of a restructuring of the national set-up.

Zagallo, 74, had been part of Brazil manager Carlos Alberto Parreira's coaching staff at this summer's World Cup.

Parreira quit last week in the aftermath of Brazil's disappointing quarterfinal defeat against France and has since been replaced by former Brazil captain Dunga, who will name his coaching staff next Tuesday.

Zagallo has won four World Cups: as a player in 1958 and 1962, as manager in 1970 and assistant manager to Parreira in 1994.

Brazilian football federation president Ricardo Teixeira revealed there could be another role for Zagallo in the future if Brazil wins the right to host the 2014 World Cup.

He paid tribute to Zagallo and said: "It is impossible to think of the Brazilian team without thinking of Zagallo."

## Deschamps ends summer sales

Football

REUTERS, Rome

Juventus coach Didier Deschamps has said that no more of his players will be leaving the club despite Tuesday's confirmation that they will be playing in Serie B next season.

"No one is going anywhere. The club's directors have decided that those under contract will stay at Juve, even in Serie B," Deschamps was quoted as saying in La Gazzetta dello Sport on Thursday.

"In a year's time we will be back and competing for a major title. It's better to hold on to our players now rather than trying to buy them back a year from now."

Juventus will start next season in Serie B on minus 17 points after Tuesday's ruling by the appeals court upholding the decision of a sports tribunal earlier this month that the club was guilty of conspiring with referees and linesmen to

rig games during the 2004/05 season.

Deschamps's view, however, was not shared by Juventus's chairman Giovanni Cobolli Gigli, who seemed prepared to let players go -- provided the price was right.

"If there are some departures there will also be some arrivals and whoever leaves will certainly not be sold cheaply," he said.

The 27-times Italian champions have already lost several of their best players in the fallout from Italy's worst footballing scandal for more than 20 years.

The departures to Spain of Italy's World Cup captain Fabio Cannavaro, Brazilian midfielder Emerson, and defenders Gianluca Zambrotta and Lilian Thuram have weakened the side and raised fears that it could struggle to win immediate promotion back into Serie A.

Of the club's remaining players, Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon is the object of the greatest speculation.

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Formula 1 driver Michael Schumacher skips past a challenge during a football match entitled "Spiel der Herzen" (Match for the Hearts) in Mannheim on Wednesday. Benefits from the match was donated to UNESCO.