

Ganguly likely for Challenger Trophy squad

PTI, Mumbai

Sourav Ganguly and Test specialists Anil Kumble and Venkatasai Laxman are expected to be named in one of the three squads to be selected here on Tuesday for the Challenger Trophy limited-overs tournament.

The trio was among the 30-strong probable's list announced for the Champions Trophy on August 9 but failed to make the final 14-member list.

All the thirty probable's named for the Champions Trophy, to be held in India from October 7-November 5, are expected to be included in one of the squads -- India seniors, India A and B -- for the high-profile domestic event to be held under lights in Chennai from October 1-4.

The probable's list contains all the 15 members of the national squad led by Rahul Dravid which failed to reach the final of the DLF Cup in Malaysia plus Zaheer Khan, Venugopal Rao, Robin Uthappa, Rohit Sharma, Dinesh Kartik and Piyush Chawla.

Players out of action for long due to injury -- Ashish Nehra, Laxmipathy Balaji and Murali Kartik -- should also make it to the list of 36 players (each team comprising 12 each), along with three others, as per indications.

It will be the outgoing national selection committee's last job before it's reconstituted in the BCCI AGM, scheduled here on September 27 and 28.

Selection panel chief Kiran More and co-selector VB Chandrasekhar are expected to give way to Dilip Vengsarkar and Venkatapathy Raju in the next panel.

Indian cricket going global

REUTERS, Mumbai

Indian domestic cricket will be broadcast around the world for the first time from next weekend, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said on Monday.

Lalit Modi, head of the board's marketing committee, told reporters that 70 days of live cricket would be televised in Britain, Australia, Africa and Malaysia, as well as on the internet, beginning with a one-day tournament from next Sunday.

"In the past we had failed to market domestic cricket the way England and Australia have done," marketing committee member Inderjit Bindra said.

"We want to give prominence to domestic cricket, make stars out of them."

Despite the fervour for international cricket in India, the domestic competition draws few spectators and little sponsorship as top players such as Sachin Tendulkar and India captain Rahul Dravid rarely participate due to their busy international schedule.

Best yet

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of us are yet at the level required to play our best cricket," he said.

"But we knew that and we have given ourselves a bit of time to get used to the tempo and to have some time in the middle."

"We've got a pretty good structure in place and if each guy looks after themselves and keeps trying to make themselves better day in and day out, then we will go a long way in the Champions Trophy."

Seedorf plays

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"Anything can happen on the pitch, but that doesn't compromise the relationship we have with him," stated the Azzurri midfielder.

"Ancelotti is not that older than us, we feel he is more a player than our Coach and we have a very frank relationship with him."

"If there is something wrong we can talk about it, but everything also depends on the intelligence and respect of the players."

Portuguese

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warned not to expect an easy match.

"I don't think there's a weakest team in the group. We have one real good team in Manchester United and another three who are all aiming for the second qualifying place."

"Copenhagen have drawn against Benfica in the group and defeated Ajax earlier in the season so that's a good record."

"They've got some experienced players so it's going to be a real test of our abilities."

Group H's matches see AC Milan travel to Lille and AEK Athens host Belgian club Anderlecht.

The Italian giants will be without veteran captain Paolo Maldini due to a thigh strain.

AC Milan opened their European campaign with a 3-0 home win over Greek side AEK Athens while Lille drew 1-1 away to Belgian outfit Anderlecht.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Russian Dmitry Tursunov celebrates after beating American Andy Roddick in the Davis Cup semifinal in Moscow on Sunday.

Russian-Argentine Davis Cup finale

Tennis

AFP, Paris

Russia will face Argentina in the 2006 Davis Cup final after Dmitry Tursunov overcame Andy Roddick in a marathon fourth rubber as the hosts won 3-2 against the United States in Moscow Sunday.

The Russians next host Argentina from December 1-3 after the South Americans reached their first Davis Cup final in 25 years with a 5-0 whitewash of Australia in Buenos Aires.

Tursunov had squandered a two-set lead but hung on to win 6-3, 6-4, 5-7, 3-6, 17-15 in nearly five hours, taking the rubber and his country's first victory against the United States on his fourth match point, after Roddick had served for the match at 6-5.

It equaled the longest final set in a World Group singles rubber, and secured a 3-1 winning lead for the Russians.

James Blake got a point back for the Americans when he later beat Marat Safin 7-5, 7-6 in the final dead rubber.

US doubles specialists Mike and Bob Bryan beat Tursunov and Mikhail Youzhny in straight sets Saturday to keep alive their team's hopes of reaching the final.

Argentina, meanwhile, sealed

their spot on Saturday when doubles duo David Nalbandian and Agustín Calleri beat Wayne Arthurs and Paul Hanley to give the hosts an unbeatable 3-0 win in their semifinal tie.

They extended their lead to 4-0 on Sunday after Agustín Calleri's 6-0, 6-3 romp over Paul Hanley in the first dead rubber and completed the whitewash by walkover when Arthurs did not play Juan Ignacio Chela.

Argentine captain Alberto Mancini said: "We've waited for this for a long time. It's unbelievable to be here with the chance of winning."

"To beat Australia here at home in the semifinals is something. We are very emotional people as you can see and that's why I am overwhelmed."

It will be Argentina's second appearance in the Davis Cup final after 1981, when the South Americans lost 3-1 to the United States.

Russia are still looking for their first Davis Cup final victory at home, having lost there to Sweden in 1994 and USA in 1995.

Russia won their only Davis Cup title in Paris in 2002, defeating France 3-2.

Meanwhile Spain, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Romania, the Czech Republic and Belgium secured their places in the World Group next year.

World number one Roger

Federer secured Switzerland's place among the elite by beat beating Serbia's Novak Djokovic 6-3, 6-2, 6-3 at the Geneva Palexpo.

Marco Chiudinelli then beat Janko Tipsarevic 6-4, 6-1 in the dead singles rubber to make the final score 4-1 in Switzerland's favour.

Rafael Nadal defeated Filippo Volandri of Italy 3-6, 7-5, 6-3, 6-3 to give Spain an unassailable 3-1 lead in their World Group Play-off tie in Santander.

In the final rubber, David Ferrer made the final score 4-1 for Spain after he completed a routine 6-2, 6-2 win over Andreas Seppi.

In Dusseldorf, Germany secured their place in the World Cup with a 4-1-victory over Thailand.

Alexander Waske gave his team the decisive point by beating Thai number one Paradorn Srichaphan 6-4, 7-5, 7-6 with Florian Mayer later defeating Sanchai Ratiwatana in the dead rubber 6-1, 6-3.

Andrei Pavel beat Hyung-Taik Lee 4-6, 6-4, 6-3, 6-2 to give Romania an unbeatable 3-1 lead over South Korea in Bucharest.

Elsewhere Belgium overcame the Slovak Republic 3-2 in Bratislava and Austria completed a 5-0 whitewash over Mexico at Porthschach and the Czech Republic beat the Netherlands 4-1 at Leiden.

WORLD BADMINTON CHAMPIONSHIPS

Sino couple does it again

AFP, Madrid

Lin Dan and Xie Xingfang made sure that there can be another romantic celebration by winning the World Badminton Championships singles titles within a couple of hours of each other at the Palacio de deportes here Sunday.

After Lin and his girlfriend Xie both won singles titles at the All-England Open championships in January they celebrated with a ride together on the fair-ground big wheel in Birmingham.

Now there will be reason for a special evening again after each beat fellow teammates, Xie making a successful defence of the women's singles title and Lin winning the men's singles for the first time.

He did that with a 18-21, 21-17, 21-10 victory over the seventh-seeded Bao Chunlai, while she beat top-seeded Zhang Ning 21-18, 21-14.

"It's really good that Lin Dan won as well as me," said Xie.

"It's better for me that we win together. But actually it was more exciting to win for the first time."

But prising out of her where they might celebrate this time was harder.

"It's difficult because we don't know where to go here," she claimed, and then added: "It will depend on whether the coaches have decided anything for us."

The only surprise was that Lin, who has been the world's best player for much of the past three years had never won the world title before.

But he seems to reserve his almost unbeatable brilliance for certain occasions and, in this match against Bao, for special phases of the contest.

There were times, as for instance in the final few points of the first game, when he seemed to be taking it all too casually.

And there were others, such as

the phase from 17-17 in the second and throughout much of the third, when he played at a higher speed and burst out from periods of defence with bursts of thrilling attack.

Bao once again showed the steady temperament, good defence and ability to counter-attack which brought him surprise wins earlier in the week against Lee Chong Wei, the number one seed from Malaysia, and Lee Hyun-Il, the number five seed from Korea.

But in the final stages he was outplayed by Lin, who revealed the full extent of the dominance he could impose on the point at 19-10, flick-serving the shuttle over his opponent's head, moving forward, and nearly burying Bao's return of serve through the floor.

Through these contrasts it had not always been easy to gauge Lin's frame of mind, but that became clear with his spectacular celebration.

He held his head as if amazed, fell slowly over as if unconscious, rolled over with his shirt over his head, and raised his legs repeatedly on the air. When he got up he embraced Bao like a bear.

"I'm not sad at being second, because I did my best and I believe I will do better in future," said the 23-year-old loser.

"I was very excited," said Lin, which sounded like an understatement.

"After losing to Taufik (Hidayat of Indonesia) in the final last year I decided to work extra hard."

"I've kept up a high level all this year with the training I have done. But I'm not unhappy that I didn't meet Taufik face to face this time (he was beaten by Chen Hong) -- I am just happy with the result."

Xie's victory, though in theory a seeding upset, had a feeling of inevitability.

It repeated the results of last year's final in Anaheim, California, and the rallies often had the feeling of a training exercise.

China duly won four of the five titles when the top-seeded Cai Yun and Fu Haifeng outplayed England's Anthony Clark and Robert Blair 21-9, 21-13 in the men's doubles final.

They provided both finalists in three of the events as well, and nearly had all four of the men's singles semi-finalists. It was another reminder that the Beijing Olympics are not far away.

However Clark was the only player in the tournament to win two medals, finishing runner-up in the mixed doubles as well, with Donna Kellogg.

They lost 21-15, 21-12 to their English compatriots, Nathan Robertson and Gail Emms, who thus added the world gold to the Commonwealth gold they won in Melbourne in March and the Olympic silver in Athens two years ago.

They will retire at the Beijing Olympics -- as will Zhang Ning.

China Open goes to Kuznetsova

AFP, Beijing

Svetlana Kuznetsova won the concluding eight games after a rain interruption to lift her fourth career title in Asia on Sunday at the China Open.

Russia's 2004 US Open winner defeated an off-the-boil world No. 1 Amelie Mauresmo 6-4, 6-0, sweeping to the victory in a rapid final half hour.

The contest was forced off court at the Beijing tennis centre at 4-4 in the first set due to spitting rain, which delayed proceedings for two hours.

When the players returned, second seed Kuznetsova charged to her second title in two weeks and her third victory over Mauresmo this season.

Rahul needs to call the shots, says Ravi

CRICINFO, undated

Ravi Shastri, the former Indian all-rounder-turned-commentator, has stated that Rahul Dravid needed to assert himself more as captain of the team.

Shastri came down heavily on India's team management in the wake of their disappointing showing in the recently concluded DLF Cup in Kuala Lumpur.

"It's time Dravid exerted himself and told Chappell that in future he will call the shots," Shastri told Gulf News after India failed to qualify for the final of the tri-series.

"A coach must only help the captain but the final decision must rest with Dravid. He should decide who should bat at No. 3 and not the coach. Dravid should stand up and say that he is the boss and that he controls matters once he crosses the boundary line. He should get an eleven of his choice."

India experimented with Dravid and Sachin Tendulkar opening the batting and Virender Sehwag at No. 4 in all the matches except the last against Australia when Sehwag opened with Tendulkar. Shastri felt that the constant shuffling of the batting order cost India their chance at winning the tournament.

"It's time Chappell stopped his experiments with the team. I cannot understand how he could send Sehwag at No. 4. I will always prefer Sehwag as an opener. If he gets going even three out of ten times, it would bring victory to the team," he said.

"To ask Dravid, known as the world's finest middle-order batsman, to open the innings, is a big blunder. One must have a solid batsman like Dravid coming in at No. 4."

Dravid had a poor tournament with only 39 runs in four innings while Sehwag managed only 28.

India, Pakistan champions to clash

REUTERS, Karachi

The national champions of Pakistan will play a four-day challenge match against their Indian counterparts from September 27 to 30, a Pakistan Cricket Board official said on Monday.

The Pakistan and Indian cricket boards hope the match will encourage more bilateral exchanges. An Indian under-19 team returns home on Monday after completing a tour in Pakistan.

The first-class game between India's Uttar Pradesh and Pakistan's Sialkot had been postponed from September 12 due to time constraints.

"The match is final and the Sialkot team has left today for Dharamasala where the match is being held," PCB official Subhan Ahmed told Reuters.

Sialkot, which includes Test players Shaohab Malik, Mohammad Asif and Imran Nazir, are the reigning Quaid-e-Azam Trophy champions while Uttar Pradesh are the Ranji Trophy winners.

"We wanted this match to be held on time so that we can work on other bilateral proposals," he added.

Pakistan and India resumed bilateral cricket ties in 2004 after a four-year suspension following the Kargil war.

England must

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bowler who will get good batsmen out like Ricky Ponting and Matthew Hayden," Chappell added.

"Reid is clearly the best wicketkeeper in England and he should play."

Chappell also believes the form of fast bowler Steve Harmison will be vital for England.

"Harmison is the type of bowler who can cause real problems on the hard wickets in Australia with his height and pace," he said.

"But England need the Steve Harmison who played against Pakistan at Old Trafford, not the one who played the rest of the summer there."

Chappell also hopes Australia captain Ponting leads his team more decisively than he did in England last year when Vaughan clearly held the upper hand.

"When you looked at the two on the field Vaughan was always the one who appeared to be in control of his emotions and his team," Chappell said. "His body language was very good."

"Ricky would often find himself engaged in discussions with other senior players like (Adam) Gilchrist or (Shane) Warne and it wasn't always easy to tell who was in charge."

"It will be interesting to see if that changes in this series because then we will know that Ponting has identified it as a weakness in his game." Chappell fully expects Warne's leg spin bowling to have a huge impact on the series, just as it did in England when he took 40 wickets in a losing cause.

The first of five Ashes Tests starts in Brisbane on November 23.

Let bygones be bygones



CRICINFO, undated

He wasn't seething with rage, but the customs officer at Grantley Adams International Airport in Barbados felt it was necessary to highlight the common train of thought running through the Caribbean cricketing fraternity in the aftermath of yet another contentious Brian Lara dismissal on Sunday.

It may be stretching it to suggest that Lara was definitely on course to keep West Indies in the hunt for a target of 241 against Australia in the DLF Cup final in Kuala Lumpur, especially as things were already looking pretty grim when he came in at 20 for three in the 10th over. Australia were back to full strength and were fully charged up to show they were still very much numero uno after failing to defend a total of 272 six days earlier.

But then again, who knows? The West Indies captain had belted 87 off them in that victory last Monday, and his unbeaten 40 coming in at number nine against India two days later was a cameo that touched the levels of the sublime in the way he made such a mockery of all that had preceded him. Ramnaresh Sarwan was obviously in the mood to hang around, and, as we've seen many times before, Lara's mastery at one end tends to inspire the lesser mortals rampaging him from 22 yards away.

All of that is, of course, speculation. But one thing is an indisputable fact. It takes a tremendous level of self-control to avoid making a very obvious display of disgust at yet another umpiring decision against the one man who has so often made the difference between victory and defeat for a West Indies side struggling desperately for over a decade.

There is always a danger of mak-

ing too much of one incident, for nothing is ever certain in the unpredictable world of sport. Who would have ever thought that Ian Bradshaw, a self-confessed part-time cricketer, would be ranked at number five in the latest list of the world's best bowlers in the one-day international rankings? However it is surely not being too parochial to attempt to analyse just why Lara seems to be victim of so many dubious or flagrantly poor decisions. Are the umpires out to get him? No, never mind what anyone says.

Are the opponents out to get him? Absolutely, and the more high profile the opposition, the more celebrated the bowler, the greater the pressure on the official to raise that index finger. And being human, umpires, despite the very best training and the toughest character, are more likely to waver under a constant bombardment from teams accustomed to dominating the competition.

So it is, so it has been and so it always will be until every controversial decision is verified or reversed by technology. Even then, there will be a suspicion of conspiracy by the aggrieved party, however unjustified, especially as the manipulation and interpretation of the technology remains a human task.

Check it out yourself. The pages of sporting history are replete with instances where critical decisions went in favour of the team or the individual with the more impressive pedigree. It doesn't make it right, but it might make it a little more bearable to appreciate that Lara is not alone in paying the price for being the superstar in a struggling side.

Nor should his unfortunate demise yesterday divert attention from other issues surrounding a 127-run cut-throat. Like why Wavell Hinds, in such woeful form throughout the tournament, was

Nantes stop Marseille

REUTERS, Paris



despite playing the last 25 minutes with 10 men.

Nantes, who recorded their first victory of the season and inflicted Marseille's first defeat, were 2-0 up when Argentine defender Mauro Cetto was sent off for insulting Marseille goalkeeper Cedric Carrasco in the 65th minute.

Westeners Nantes, playing their

first match under new coach Georges Eo, who was appointed after Serge Le Dizet was sacked on Wednesday, move up to 15th in the 20-strong league.

Marseille stay second but are three points behind leaders Olympique Lyon, who top the standings with 19 points from seven games after a spectacular 4-1 win over Lille on Saturday.

Forward Dimitri Payet put Nantes ahead from inside the box after 38 minutes and defender Guillaume Norbert doubled the advantage in the 48th.

Marseille kept racing forward but only managed to reduce the arrears, courtesy of a superb 25-metre shot by striker Mamadou Niang after 78 minutes.

Racing Lens moved up to third

persisted with for every match? It defied all logic. Now everyone has seen just why there is still a debate over Runako Morton's role in the team, even if he has fought hard to make the most of almost every opportunity that has come his way in the past 15 months.

While we sympathise with the national hero for being given out caught behind to a delivery he never touched, he should still be asked to explain why he persists with Dwayne Bravo as the "death" bowler, especially when it was killing the team's chances of keeping totals down to manageable proportions. Add to that the all-rounder's impetuosity at the crease (Sunday's demise was just the latest example of poor shot selection) and it should be clear that West Indies have more to look at in the aftermath of a heavy defeat than constant replays of an erroneous decision.

Even if it all fell apart in the final, this is just the first leg of an Asian campaign that has another 13 weeks to run. By the time the last of five one-dayers against Pakistan is played in Karachi on December 16, the heavy loss at the Kinrara Cricket Academy Oval will seem a distant memory. Not that the lessons of each segment of the tour should be forgotten by the time the players settle into their business class seats for the next leg of the journey. But it serves no useful purpose to hanker over the captain's latest contentious dismissal.

In fact, if all goes according to form, there will be more dubious decisions against him before the squad returns home, giving the customs officer more ammunition to launch at the ICC. Amid the agonising of others, Lara will, quite sensibly, just shrug his shoulders and get on with the game.

with a 1-0 home win over Monaco earlier on Sunday that pushed the principality club into the relegation zone.

The northerners, who took the points thanks to an early penalty from Brazilian forward Jussie, climbed four places, moving on to 13 points.

Monaco are second from bottom with four points after only one win so far this season.

TOP SIX								
Team	P	W	D	L	Gf	Ga	Pts	
Lyon	7	6	1	0	19	6	19	
Marseille	7	5	1	1	13	4	16	
Lens	7	4	1	2	11	8	13	
Nancy	7	3	3	1	7	4	12	
Toulouse	7	3	3	1	9	7	12	
Le Mans	7	3	3	1	11	10	12	