



Australian cricketers hold the ICC Champions Trophy after beating West Indies in the final at the Brabourne Stadium in Mumbai on Sunday.

Ponting pretty pleased

Lara blames stage fright for final flop



AGENCIES, Mumbai

Ricky Ponting hailed Australia's coolness under pressure after the world champions swept to their maiden Champions Trophy title on Sunday, beating holders West Indies by eight wickets in the final.

"It's a great feeling to win what we had not been able to do till now," said a beaming Ponting told reporters after the rain-hit game.

"This is the one we hadn't won. Full credit to all the guys for the way they played and applied themselves over the last month. When the big games come around, we put our hands up and perform."

"It does not hurt us at all that we continue to do well ahead of the Ashes but before that we will like to celebrate this win tonight. It's quite special."

It was Australia's second consecutive win in a final against the West Indies, having beaten them in the title-clash in the Malaysian tri-series (DLF Cup) in Kuala Lumpur in September.

Australia also avenged the shock defeat by Lara's men in the league stage of the Champions Trophy here last month.

West Indies raced to a solid start before left-armers Nathan Bracken bowled the explosive Chris Gayle to take three quick wickets and help

skittle them for 138 in 30.4 overs. "The bowlers did a terrific job there today. At 1-80 at one stage, we had our backs to the wall," Ponting said.

"I thought Nathan's performance was outstanding. The ball he bowled to Chris put them on the backfoot. That is where the game turned."

Australian opener Shane Watson then hit 57 not out in a 103-run third wicket partnership with Damien Martyn (47 not out) to guide Australia to a revised target of 116 after a lengthy rain interruption.

All-rounder Watson, who also took 2-11, won the player-of-the-final award.

Meanwhile, West Indies skipper Brian Lara said his team were overawed by world champions after the eight-wicket defeat.

"We worked hard to get there, but unfortunately, we were very disappointing in the final," he said at the presentation ceremony.

"The same thing happened in the DLF Cup, we didn't get runs," Lara said. "Maybe it was a little stage fright."

However, he praised his players for performing beyond expectations to boost their confidence ahead of the World Cup in the Caribbean in March and April.

"The fact of the matter is...our getting here, a lot of people did not expect us to. We've to work on crossing the final hurdle," he added.

"I am quite proud to lead this team. It has the potential to go far." Lara also hailed explosive opener

Gayle, who amassed 474 runs from eight innings with three hundreds to be named the player-of-the-tournament. Teammate Jerome Taylor was the leading bowler of the tournament with 13 wickets.

"Most definitely the guys started believing in themselves, in their talent, and began expressing themselves. That is what we need to do from here, straight up to the World Cup," he said.

"Being the host country a lot of people would expect us to do well. It definitely gives us the impetus we need to enter such a major tournament."

CA calls for explanation on Hair cut

AFP, Sydney

Cricket Australia (CA) Monday called for the International Cricket Council to explain its reasons for dropping umpire Darrell Hair off the ICC Elite Panel.

CA said a review of the ICC's management of umpires was needed to ensure transparent, procedural fairness in appointment of umpires.

The ICC's decision, announced in India at the weekend, came after Pakistan lodged a complaint against Hair for his role in the historic forfeited Oval Test against

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Beckham plays the waiting game

REUTERS, Madrid

David Beckham is waiting to see if he can regain his place in the Real Madrid first team before deciding if he will extend his contract with the club, according to the sporting director Predrag Mijatovic.

"We want to renew his contract and we have had several meetings with his people," Mijatovic told Spanish television Sexta on Sunday night.

"On our part there is no problem, but we have to listen to the player too."

"He has been unlucky in that he hasn't won any trophies in the last three years and he is a little sad because he isn't taking part as much as he would like."

A fixture in the Real first team for the past three seasons, the 31-year-old has lost his place since Italian coach Fabio Capello took charge of the team and has started just three of his side's nine league games in the present campaign.

"The situation could change, but we can't guarantee anyone a place in the first team," said Mijatovic. "He wants to continue, but as long as he is playing. He wants to wait a little longer to see if he gets back in the team."

"I believe that he will stay in the end, because the atmosphere in the team is very good and will allow him to experience something good here."

Beckham quit as England captain after the World Cup and has not made the squad since.

Sevilla go on top, Real lose again

AFP, Madrid



Osasuna.

The UEFA Cup holders had been given the spur after Barcelona's 1-1 away draw at Deportivo La Coruna on Saturday, and they did not waste their chance to take the league lead with a one-point advantage over Frank Rijkaard's side.

Malian international Frederic Kanoute stepped up to score a 50th minute penalty, allowing him to co-lead the scoring charts on eight goals alongside Argentinian Diego Milito, who scored in Real Zaragoza's 3-1 win over Getafe.

Sevilla's second goal was scored in the 88th minute by Adriano, with Kanoute the provider.

Their hold on the lead was reinforced by Celta Vigo stunning Real Madrid 2-1 at the Santiago Bernabeu, which left Fabio Capello's side four points behind Sevilla.

Capello was philosophical in defeat, admitting he had been pleased for the first time this season.

"We lost because we gifted them two goals," said the Italian, who helped Real to the league title in 1997 during his first spell in charge of the club.

"We played a good match and I told the team that afterwards. It's the first time my team has really given me something to smile about."

Celta Vigo opened the scoring through the impressive Nene in the 35th minute.

Real equalised through Brazilian Emerson barely eight minutes later, but as both sides chased the winner in a dramatic second half, late substitute Jorge struck to give Celta a memorable away win.

Brazilian striker Ronaldo made his first start of the season and former England captain David Beckham, who has also been used sparingly by Capello of late, came on as a second-half replacement.

To his credit Ronaldo, whom Capello labelled "too fat" only days ago, created a handful of goalscoring chances but ultimately failed to hit the net.

Capello said he still hoped to pair the burly Brazilian with his other striker, Dutchman Ruud van Nistelrooy.

"They played well together up front. I'm sure they can do so again."

Celta keeper Pinto pulled off a superb save in the 19th minute when Ronaldo unleashed a left-foot shot at his near post.

Moments later Ronaldo tested Pinto again after finding space on the edge of the area.

The turning point in the first half came after Real's claims for a penalty were waved away despite wing back Sergio Ramos collapsing to the ground after an apparent shove in the box following a free kick.

Celta came out on the counter-attack, and Canobbia made Real pay by holding the ball up deep on the left before delivering a perfect pass across the area which Nene shinned past Iker Casillas in the Real goal.

Two minutes before half-time Real were back on level terms when Emerson got his head to a precise delivery from a Raul corner on the left.

The Brazilian's effort left Pinto clutching at thin air but Emerson's somewhat aggressive reaction was arguably more remarkable than the goal itself.

Emerson had been under fire from some sections of the Real support of late, and he had perhaps been hoping to unleash a gesture to go with his goal but his progress was slowed by a handful of happy teammates.

In the second half Capello sent on van Nistelrooy in place of Robinho.

But despite coming close twice

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Same old Mourinho

AFP, London

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho's penchant for polemics may have landed him in more trouble with the English Football Association (FA).

His latest outburst was aimed in the direction of referee Graham Poll after he watched his side lose 1-2 at Tottenham on Saturday.

Chelsea went ahead through a Claude Makelele goal after 14 minutes, but it was all downhill after that culminating in the dismissal of captain John Terry for a second bookable offence in the second half.

Mourinho was left upset by the performance of Poll, who ruled out a Didier Drogba goal and -- according to the Chelsea boss -- should have red-carded Hossam Ghaly for elbowing his Ghanaian midfielder Michael Essien.

Ghaly will escape any further punishment thanks to FIFA's stance on retrospective punishment -- but the FA may ask Mourinho to explain his remarks in more detail.

Mourinho said: "I don't understand why John Terry was sent off. I cannot find a reason for that."

"The team gave everything and played high-pressure football. We had chances with one player less. But Mr Poll goes home, and nobody can ask him about the reasons behind his decisions."

"I never ask referees about their decisions, because they always have an excuse. So why should I ask him? He would say something like Didier Drogba was free and had a clean header, but somebody 30 metres away made a foul. They always have an excuse for their decisions."

"Have you ever seen a referee come and say 'It was my mistake, and I influenced the game?'"

"He sends John Terry off, because he is pulling Ledley King, and keeps Ghaly on the pitch when he gives a clear elbow on Michael

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Palermo hush title talk

INTERNET, undated

Palermo are still trying to play down their title hopes despite again winning at the weekend.

The Sicilians beat Sampdoria 2-0 to remain level on points with league leaders Inter Milan, but club president Maurizio Zamparini is refusing to talk about a potential title bid.

"The word scudetto remains a taboo," he said after the Sampdoria game.

"Then, should we go on and beat Inter 3-0 when we play them, we can reconsider the situation," he said.

Confidence is growing amongst Palermo fans that the club can make a title bid, with many people seeing many similarities between the side and the Verona team which surprisingly won the 1985 scudetto title.

However, like Zamparini, the club's general director Rino Foschi is taking things in his stride.

"We shouldn't fear Inter, but we should just be looking to improve on last season's standing first, the aim is still fourth place," he said.



Tottenham Hotspur's Michael Dawson (L) jumps for joy as the others approach him after he scored against Chelsea during their Premiership match at White Hart Lane on Sunday.

Spurs too hot for Chelsea

REUTERS, London



Tottenham Hotspur and England winger Aaron Lennon condemned champions Chelsea to a second league defeat of the season on Sunday when Spurs won their London derby 2-1 at White Hart Lane.

Lennon rifled in on 52 minutes to secure Spurs their first win over Chelsea in 33 league meetings and their first at home over their rivals since 1987.

"It was a great win, we were stronger than them today," Spurs manager Martin Jol told Sky Sports.

"We are now in the top half of the table and nobody can take it away from us that we had a win against the champions of England."

Defeat kept Chelsea in second place on 25 points, three behind leaders Manchester United who thumped Portsmouth 3-0 on Saturday.

Chelsea led through Claude Makelele's thunderbolt from 30 metres on 15 minutes but defender Michael Dawson levelled with a glancing header 10 minutes later.

Chelsea and England captain John Terry was sent off 18 minutes from time after he was shown a second yellow by referee Graham Poll for holding.

Poll's performance left Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho fuming, the Portuguese saying the official, who booked seven other players, had "wanted to be part of the show".

"He disallowed a goal from Didier Drogba which he can only explain," said Mourinho.

"To show a red card to a player for contact in the box when he was the attacking one was also a bit ridiculous... every decision was against us."

Chelsea almost snatched a point four minutes from time but Dutch winger Arjen Robben struck the post with a curling strike.

Earlier, substitute Marlon

Harewood struck two minutes from time to hand West Ham United a 1-0 win over Arsenal as tempers flared at Upton Park while Aston Villa beat Blackburn Rovers 2-0 at home.

Harewood converted Matthew Etherington's cross to secure a second successive league win for West Ham, who moved out of the bottom three and up to 15th.

The goal prompted an unsightly shoving match on the touchline between managers Alan Pardew and Arsene Wenger with the pair needing to be separated after Wenger took exception to Pardew's exuberant celebrations.

"It was a shame, it was a tense game... I was celebrating the goal, basically, that was all and Arsene

had a problem with that, probably

rightly," Pardew said. "It was nothing personal. There was nothing said. He's a top guy, I really respect him... nothing changes my opinion on that. I will apologise to him again if I need to, I was celebrating a goal, I thought I was entitled to do that."

Harewood scored 12 minutes after spurring the best chance of the game, with his shot smothered by Jens Lehmann.

Arsenal, who remain fifth, credited few clear-cut openings but had strong penalty claims turned down when Jonathan Spector appeared to foul Alexander Hleb.

Arsenal's Dutch forward Robin van Persie needed brief attention

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Celta Vigo goalkeeper Pinto (R) and striker Contreras are over the moon after beating Primera Liga powerhouse Real Madrid at the Bernabeu on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP