

Lee fined

AFP, Adelaide

Australian paceman Brett Lee has been fined 25 per cent of his match fee for excessive appealing during the second Ashes Test against England at Adelaide Oval, the ICC said Monday.

International Cricket Council match referee Jeff Crowe dismissed Lee's claim that he thought West Indian umpire Steve Bucknor had given England's Kevin Pietersen out leg before wicket early on the second day of the Test.

"Brett is confused about this verdict, in that he thought he saw the umpire gesture that it was out," Crowe said in fining Lee 3,125 Australian dollars of his match fee.

"The simple fact is that Brett did not stop and wait for the umpire's actual decision, out or not out, before starting his celebrations, something that has been stipulated over the past three years."

Lee's sanction continued a poor disciplinary record for the Australian team over the past 18 months.

Captain Ricky Ponting was fined 75 per cent of his match fee for dissent in reaction to being run out by England substitute fielder Gary Pratt at Trent Bridge in last year's Ashes series.

Batsman Simon Katich was docked half his match fee for showing dissent towards an umpire's decision in the same match.

Lee, Glenn McGrath and Adam Gilchrist were all penalised for incidents last Australian summer.

Werder open

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"If he expresses a wish (to go) we will deal with any enquiries," Allofs said in Monday's edition of Kicker.

"But we'll do everything to convince him to stay. A change would only be possible if the financial details were right and we had a replacement ready."

Werder regained top spot in the Bundesliga on Saturday when Klose struck twice in a 3-1 victory over Hertha Berlin, taking his tally for the season to 10 league goals.

Werder's next game is away to Barcelona on Tuesday, when a point will be enough to send them through to the last 16 of the Champions League while knocking the holders out.

Barcelona face

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group B, need only a draw at home against Spartak Moscow to finish third and join the last 32 of the UEFA Cup. Rijkaard meanwhile will know that if Barcelona fail to make the grade, it will be partly down to Chelsea.

Barcelona dropped two precious points when a late equaliser from Didier Drogba secured a 2-2 draw at the Nou Camp last month.

And Chelsea's capitulation to Werder Bremen last time out did Barcelona no favours at all.

Barcelona could only manage a 1-1 league draw with Levante on Saturday when Rijkaard rested Brazilian midfielder maestro Ronaldinho.

Despite that setback, Barcelona were celebrating mildly on Sunday having stayed top of the league when Sevilla fell to a 2-1 defeat at Barcelona-based Espanyol.

And if any of Werder's notably tall players were watching Barcelona's increasingly shaky defence during the match, it would have given them plenty of hope of securing the draw they need to qualify.

Werder's players, including Brazilian-born playmaker Diego, appear to be up for the challenge - especially after taking the lead of the Bundesliga in timely fashion on Saturday.

"It is a dream for every footballer to play in a game like the one we have with Barcelona," said Diego.

"Two great teams are playing one another at the highest level and neither is the favourite. Barcelona are at home but we only need a point. It will be terrific."

Nafees sets

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stages but it is not the case at all for him. But I must give credit to him because he has capitalised the opportunities which we couldn't do," he explained.

On the other hand, Aftab also echoed the same sentiment but said that he was now more focused to improve his average.

"No doubt Nafees batted brilliantly, especially his last hundred was absolutely brilliant. We heard some sweet sounds from the dressing room during his knock that simply reflects his great form. Honestly speaking I am really concerned about my average which is not good for any international batsman," said Aftab.

"I played with Nafees at age level and I must say he has improved a lot. Actually he is mentally very tough and always tries to cling to the middle which is the key to success."

"I'm very much confident that I can better my average within a short time because now my main objective is to carry the innings as long as possible," he hoped.

Now only time can tell how the two talented guys take inspiration from their junior teammate.



PHOTO: STAR

Former national football captain Badal Roy delivers his speech during a sit-in programme at the BFF Bhaban on Monday in protest of the federation's delaying transfers.

Hockey, kabaddi

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points. Humpy Koneru of India topped the table with eight points.

The men's and women's classical chess competition will start tomorrow.

South Asian Games gold medalist Shahjahan Ali Rony, after failing to impress in the 50m breaststroke, finished 27th among 34 swimmers in the 100m heats yesterday. He clinched fourth place in Heat 2 in 1:10.92s, 9.44s behind the best finisher in the heats. Fellow swimmer Jewel Ahmed was second in Heat 1 in the 50m freestyle in 26.47s but settled for 32nd place among 39 competitors.

In judo men's 66kg category, Mohammed Habibur Rahman was knocked out by Tajikistan's Rustam Bokiev in the first round.

Zim cricket

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with Gameplan Limited, based in India.

"The accused (ZC) then directed Gameplan Limited to pay 75,000 US dollars to 7Cs for breach of contract without the permission of the exchange control authority," the prosecutor told magistrate Sandra Nhau.

The association is also accused of paying 42,930 US dollars in college fees for three cricket players and a manager's daughter who were pursuing studies overseas.

The cricket body's lawyer, Wilson Manase, said it breached the law unknowingly.

Sehwag eyes

Test revival

BBC ONLINE, undated

Acting India skipper Virender Sehwag hoped for an improved showing in the Test series after South Africa completed a 4-0 rout in the one-dayers.

"We are working on the basics and Test cricket is a different game so I hope we will do well," he said of the three Test matches, starting on December 15.

"We need some good batting in the practice matches which I hope we will then take into the Test series."

"We were short of 50 runs (on Sunday) because it was a good track in the afternoon."

Sehwag revealed that he would have batted first, but admitted he was surprised by the early assistance South Africa's seamers found from the Centurion surface.

"Early in the morning there was a little bit of moisture and the ball was moving around," he said. "But we didn't bat very well."

The stand-in skipper added that his bowling attack faced a formidable task with only 200 runs to defend.

"Our bowlers did a great job in the last three games but today we didn't have the runs on the board. They still tried hard and hopefully will do well in the Test series."

The first of the three Tests is in Johannesburg, with matches in Durban and Cape Town to follow.

Totti misses

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for Sunday's match against Lazio.

Totti's absence on Tuesday is likely to mean a start for Vincenzo Montella in attack.

Roma need a point from Tuesday's game against already qualified Valencia to secure their place in the last 16.

Spalletti said there was a doubt over the fitness of midfielder Simone Perrotta who also had an ankle worry.

"We hope he will recover but there is a doubt," he said.

We don't need

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"Shevchenko was sold because it was his decision to leave. And, it's not conceivable that Chelsea, after investing so much (45 million euros), would let him go after just six months," said Galliani.

"It's just not possible, it's unimaginable."

Shevchenko helped AC Milan win the Champions League final in 2003 when he scored the winning spot-kick in an Old Trafford penalty shoot-out against Juventus.

Since his move to England, however, the goalscoring touch of 'Sheva' appears to have dried up.

AC Milan, hit with a points sanction for their role last season in a match-fixing scandal, are in desperate need of a goalscorer but Shevchenko has appeared to commit himself to Chelsea's cause.

Galliani said the only player the club may sign in the January transfer window is a defender.

Nilphamari win

NCC title

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Nilphamari captured the regional title of the National Cricket Championship (NCC) defeating hosts Dinajpur by seven wickets at the Gor-e-Shaheed Baramoydan yesterday.

Winning the toss, Nilphamari put the hosts in and bundled them out for a meagre 89 runs in 38.2 overs.

In their turn, Nilphamari romped home for the loss of only three wickets in 24.5 overs. Mintu of Nilphamari emerged man-of-the-final.

Eight districts participated in the tournament which kicked off on November 10. The tournament was severely disrupted due to the indefinite blockade programme of the Awami League-led 14-party alliance.

Deputy Commissioner of Dinajpur AM Saiful Hasan and Mostafa Kamal handed over the prizes as chief guest and special guest respectively.

Rain feared

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Cup in Jamaica on March 13 and Lara said he hoped the build-up would be good.

"We have played good cricket in a couple of one-day tournaments and we got into finals of two tournaments, so we are going to put the Test series behind us. There is no more Test cricket until May, so our main focus is on World Cup," he said.

The West Indies finished runners-up twice to Australia, first in the tri-series in Malaysia and then in the Champions Trophy in India last month.

The tourists will miss star batsman Ramnarayan Sarwan and all-rounder Dwayne Bravo in the one-day series.

"Unfortunately we won't have a full squad, Sarwan has a hairline fracture in his in-step and he's one of our main players in the one-day game. He will be missed but we definitely have the reserves to do well," said Lara.

Sarwan was hit by Pakistani paceman Umar Gul's yorker in the West Indies' 199-run defeat in the third Test in Karachi last week. Bravo was allowed to return home for personal reasons.

Fast bowler Corey Collymore and opener Daren Ganga, who were earlier due to fly out after the Test series, have stayed back for the one-day matches.

Ian Bradshaw, Marlon Samuels and Dwayne Smith also joined the one-day squad last week.

Pakistan will be without their captain Inzamamul Haq who will complete a four-match ban on Tuesday. Inzamam was banned for bringing the game into disrepute during the forfeited Test between Pakistan and England in August.

Younis Khan will lead Pakistan in Inzamam's absence. Inzamam agreed the West Indies will be a different opposition in one-dayers.

"One-day cricket will be a different ball game because the West Indies have produced better results recently. This series will be a close one," said Inzamam.

TEAMS PAKISTAN (from): Younis Khan (captain), Imran Farhat, Mohammad Hafeez, Yasir Hameed, Shoab Malik, Mohammad Yousuf, Abdul Razzaq, Kamran Akmal, Rao Iftikhar, Navedul Hasan, Mohammad Sami, Danish Kaneria, Umar Gul, Abdul Rehman.

WEST INDIES (from): Brian Lara (captain), Chris Gayle, Lendl Simmons, Daren Ganga, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Runako Morton, Marlon Samuels, Dwayne Smith, Denesh Ramdin, Ian Bradshaw, Corey Collymore, Jerome Taylor, Daren Powell, Dave Mohammed.

Giles dropped the Ashes!



AFP, Adelaide

Ashley Giles may have dropped the Ashes with his costly fumble to give prolific-scoring Australian captain Ricky Ponting an early life in the second Test, media said Monday.

England were in a dominant position, with high hopes of winning the match and levelling the Test series at one-all, when Ponting, on 35, lofted a pull shot off seamer Matthew Hoggard which Giles put down on the backward square leg boundary.

Ponting cashed in on the dropped chance to reach 142 as the Australians moved to within 40 runs of the 352-run follow-on target in reply to England's imposing first innings of 551 for six declared at Sunday's third day stumps.

Ponting became Australia's pinnacle Test centurion with his 33rd hundred and scored his 10th century in his last 13 Tests.

Giles' blunder was given significant space in Australian newspapers Monday.

"For all the debate which surrounded the modest bowling of spinner Ashley Giles heading into the second Test in Adelaide, it was his fielding which did England the greatest disservice yesterday," The Australian newspaper said.

"Indeed, he may very well have dropped the Ashes after putting

down a straightforward catch off Australia captain and century-maker Ricky Ponting.

"The ball tumbled to the ground and with it England's chance of closing its hands around Australia's throat."

The Daily Telegraph said there were warning signs for Australian cricket in the Adelaide Test.

"Australia may yet come out of this slow-moving Adelaide Test with their house in order but must heed the warning signs if they are to avoid further trouble," the newspaper said.

"One of the reasons given for Giles being preferred to fellow left-arm finger spinner Monty Panesar was that Giles is the better fielder of the two," The Australian said.

"Given that Panesar's fielding has sometimes been compared to a Monty Python sketch for its comical clumsiness, there is absolutely no guarantee that Panesar would have done any better were he in the same position."

The Melbourne Age noted that little was said to Giles by his teammates after his missed chance.

"England has been big on team unity in this series, but little was said to Giles now. Steve Waugh in his time might have muttered a taunt to him about dropping the Ashes," the newspaper said.

"A cricket match takes days to win, a series months, a reputation years -- but all of them only a fraction of a second to lose."

"This was one such fixed sliver of time. The erring player will

argue that the proposition that a catch can decide a series is difficult to prove, but remain haunted eternally by the fact that it is impossible to disprove."

The Daily Telegraph said there were warning signs for Australian cricket in the Adelaide Test.

"Australia may yet come out of this slow-moving Adelaide Test with their house in order but must heed the warning signs if they are to avoid further trouble," the newspaper said.

"One of the big pushes of the national selection panel this summer is to thoroughly pick apart each Test performance and doggedly attempt to improve the team -- even if the sides wins."

"The first move should be the reinstatement of all-rounder Shane Watson from injury for the third Perth Test."

"Given the desperately docile state of the Perth pitch Australia need an extra bowling option."

"Australia's attack is getting older and, while still strong, is struggling for penetration on home wickets which have lost their zing."

Beckham

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Both Real and Beckham say they want to extend his contract, although the midfielder is unlikely to commit himself until he is sure he is in coach Fabio Capello's plans.



PHOTO: STAR

Players of Nilphamari are seen with the guests after they won the regional title of the National Cricket Championship in Dinajpur yesterday.

Draw likely at Adelaide

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Gilchrist looked to have a century for the taking after picking up the tempo until he smashed spinner Giles straight to Bell near the boundary rope.

Gilchrist, who had a below-par Ashes series last year with just 181 runs at 22.62 with a highest score of 49, was tested outside his vulnerable off-stump early but was playing his natural attacking game at the time of his dismissal.

Warne fell leg before wicket to Hoggard with one ball left to tea.

Australia lost their last three wickets for 11 runs in 12 overs after tea with Clarke, Stuart Clark (0) and Glenn McGrath (1).

It was big-hearted Hoggard's best bowling performance since his 7-61 among 12 match wickets in England's fourth Test win over South Africa in Johannesburg in January 2005.

John White has England's best bowling performance in an innings

at the Adelaide Oval with 8-126 in 1929.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at close on the fourth day of the second Ashes Test between Australia and England at Adelaide Oval on Monday:

ENGLAND: First innings 551 for 6 decl (Collingwood 206, Pietersen 158, Bell 60; Clark 3-75)

AUSTRALIA: First innings (312 for 5 overnight)

Table with columns: Player, Runs, Wickets. Includes Langer, Hayden, Ponting, Martyn, Hussey, Clarke, Gilchrist, Warne, Lee, Clark, McGrath, Jones, Anderson.

Extras: (b-4, lb-2, w-1, nb-7) 14 Total: (All out in 165.3 overs) 513 Fall of wickets: 1-8, 2-35, 3-65, 4-257, 5-286, 6-384, 7-502, 8-505, 9-

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Includes Hoggard, Flintoff, Harmison, Anderson, Giles, Pietersen.

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Includes Lee, McGrath, Warne, Clark.

Toss: England Umpires: Steve Bucknor (WIS), Rudi Koertzen (RSA) Match referee: Jeff Crowe (NZL)

Russia regain Davis Cup



AFP, Moscow

The 2002 Davis Cup winners Russia won their second trophy here on Sunday after Marat Safin beat Jose Acasuso of Argentina in the deciding rubber of the final.

The former Australian Open and US Open champion won 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 in 2hr 50min for a hard-fought victory, breaking the curse of their home courts, where Russia had lost both of their previous Davis Cup finals -- to Sweden in 1994 and to the United States in 1995.

"I'm happy to win in front of my home fans," Safin said after the match. "It was really hard to win today as I experienced serious problems with the surface as I failed to adjust my playing to the carpet."

"I'm glad I won in four sets. I was sure Nikolay (Davydenko) would win his match but after he lost I was pretty nervous. I also have problems with my heel and knees. I was afraid I could lose the match if I failed to win the tiebreak."

"I'm very happy for all of us and all of our fantastic supporters," he added.

Safin, 26, who won only one of

his previous three meetings with Acasuso, came out firing, breaking his rival's first service game to move ahead 3-0, which proved enough to serve out the first set in 30 minutes.

In the second the 24-year-old Argentine bounced back to break Safin's serve in the sixth game and level at one set all.

Spurred by a capacity 11,000 home crowd Safin's confidence seemed to return in the third set and he broke twice to Acasuso's once to take a 2-1 lead.

The fourth was a tight affair that was finally decided by a tiebreak, with Safin edging it 7-5 after some brilliant back court defence was followed by Acasuso netting a forehand as he moved up the court.

That sent the partisan home fans into rapturous applause. Earlier on Sunday world number eight David Nalbandian of Argentina beat Russia's Nikolay Davydenko 6-2, 6-2, 4-6, 6-4 in two hours 39 minutes to level the scores at 2-2.

With Russia taking a 2-1 lead after Saturday's doubles rubber, the 24-year-old Nalbandian had no choice but to step up to the plate and deliver to keep his country in contention.



PHOTO: AFP

Russian players hold aloft the winners' trophy after beating Argentina in the Davis Cup final in Moscow on Sunday.