

Sreesanth punished

AFP, Dubai
India seam bowler Shanthakumaran Sreesanth has been fined 30 per cent of his match fee after being found guilty of two ICC code of conduct breaches during his side's first Test match against South Africa.

Sreesanth was found guilty of the offences after a hearing conducted by match referee Roshan Mahanama following the completion of India's 123-run win at Johannesburg's Wanderers stadium which finished on Monday.

He was found to have acted contrary to the spirit of the game and also violated the rules on shirt logos.

Sreesanth was ruled to have shown unsporting behaviour when, after dismissing Hashim Amla in South Africa's second innings, he ran towards the batsman.

The charge was brought by on-field umpires Mark Benson and Daryl Harper and third umpire Karl Hurter and Sreesanth pleaded guilty. The other charge was a breach of ICC logo policy.



ROGER FEDERER

The Federer year ends



AFP, Paris

Roger Federer rubber-stamped his status as one of the greatest players the world has seen with a year which was exceptional and record-shattering even by his own mighty standards.

The Swiss ended 2006 with 12 titles from 16 finals and a 92-5 match record.

He started in January with victory in Doha, ended it with a third Masters Cup in four years and, in between, won back his Australian Open title and defended his Wimbledon and US Open crowns.

At the age of 25, his career title count now stands at 45, his year's prize money of almost 8,500,000 dollars took his lifetime total to 28,576,000 and sent his rivals into a trough of despair over how to react.

And Federer's reaction to his shortcomings? He thinks it's funny. "I had to laugh at one stage how well I was playing, I always came up with a great answer," said Federer after he swept aside James Blake in the Masters Cup final in Shanghai.

"To come to this point in my career where I feel so happy with my game, it's come such a long way."

Federer played 17 tournaments in 2006 and reached the final in 16 of them.

Four of his five defeats came at the hands of rival Rafael Nadal, surprisingly on the hard courts of Dubai, but not so surprisingly on the clay of Monte Carlo, Rome and Roland Garros, the only Grand Slam the world number one has yet to

crack. Only once did he fail to reach a final when Britain's Andy Murray beat him in the second round of the Cincinnati Masters just days after a sapping march to another title in Toronto.

His 2006 roll of honour reads: Doha, the Australian Open, Indian Wells Masters, Miami Masters, Halle, Wimbledon, Toronto Masters, U.S. Open, Tokyo, Madrid Masters, Basel and the Masters Cup in Shanghai.

Federer comfortably finished 2006 as world number one for the third year in a row and will now pass Jimmy Connors's 25-year-old record of 160 consecutive weeks at the top on February 26 next year.

"I think that is definitely one of the big records I've broken, maybe the biggest so far in my career," said the Swiss.

Such is his lead in the rankings that he is guaranteed to remain number one, even if he does not play again before March next year.

Even Nadal is showing signs of wilting. The Spaniard still holds a 6-3 winning record over Federer, but the world number one has won the past two meetings - the Masters Cup semifinals and the Wimbledon final.

That would be three-in-a-row if a relaxing exhibition match in Seoul in November is factored into the equation.

Nadal picked up five titles in 2006 but after finishing runner-up to Federer at Wimbledon in July, the Spaniard has looked a spent force failing to reach another final.

His mood at the All England Club wasn't helped when he ordered his lawyers to take legal action after a

French newspaper linked his name to the Operation Puerta investigation probing doping allegations in Spanish cycling.

Nadal retained his French Open title edging Federer in the final but even he suspects the Swiss will be stepping up his pursuit of elusive Paris glory in 2007.

"He's the best," said Nadal. "That's the truth. Now I have to improve my tennis."

While Federer and Nadal were looking to the future, Andre Agassi was heading into retirement. Time finally caught up with the 36-year-old American, one of only five men to have won all four Grand Slam titles.

His last match ended in defeat at the US Open by unheralded German Benjamin Becker.

His career brought 60 titles and delivered colour and controversy into a sport often stripped of personality.

A crowd of 24,000 gave Agassi a four-minute standing ovation at Flushing Meadow and the veteran, never one to call on a bland word when a little bit of metaphysics will do just as well, was at his emotional best.

"The scoreboard said I lost today, but what the scoreboard doesn't say is what it is I've found," Agassi said.

"Over the last 21 years, I've found loyalty. You have pulled for me on the court and also in life. I have found inspiration. You have willed me to succeed sometimes even in my lowest moments."

Also willed to succeed as the year ended was the ever-colourful Marat Safin who supplied the finishing touches to an emotional 3-2 win for Russia over Argentina in the Davis Cup final in Moscow.

100K to turn up for Shane

AFP, Sydney

The Ashes series may already be decided but Australian cricket officials believe record crowds will still attend the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) to see Shane Warne snare his 700th Test wicket.

Warne took his 699th wicket in Perth to end England's Ashes dream and send Australia into the fourth Test opening at the MCG on December 26 with a 3-0 series lead.

The leg-spinner, already the most prolific wicket-taker in Test history, is set to reach the 700 wicket milestone in front of his adoring home town crowd.

Crick Victoria chief executive Ken Jacobs said crowds of up to 95,000 were expected in the first three days of the Test, beating the world record Test attendance of 90,800 set at the same ground in 1961.

Jacobs said the record overall Test attendance of 350,354, also set at the MCG in 1936, could also be under threat.

"If the weather's fine and the match is shaping up as a good match, it would be a possibility," he said.

Dhaka, Rajshahi

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Delwar Hossain and Mohammad Liton grabbed three wickets each conceding 32 and 35 runs respectively.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BARISAL: 99 for all in 41.3 overs (Rabintan Sen 34 not out, Sajib 15, Saiful 9, Alam 9, extras 14; Faisal 3-21, Sharif 2-14, Sunny 2-21).

DHAKA: 102 for 1 in 22.5 overs (Fatyaz 56 not out, Asif 34, Ashiqui 2 not out, extras 10; Monir 1-40). Result: Dhaka won by nine wickets.

RAJSHAH: 208 for all in 44.5 overs (Jonny 74, Lalmon 43, Delwar 21, Santu 20, Jubair 18, extras 21; Ronny 4-54, Al Amin 3-30, Nasiruddin 2-20).

NARAYANGANJ: 168 for all in 43.2 overs (Masum 63, Pappu 29, Ronny 15, extras 24; Delwar 3-32 and Liton 3-35). Result: Rajshahi won by 40 runs.

BFF names 36

FROM PAGE 17
DEFENDERS: Ariful, Rajan, Saikat, Ripon (Youngmen's), Sony (Rahmatganj), Rony (Mohammedan), Kashem (Victoria), Jahirul, Aminul (Sheikh Russell), Waly (Abahani), Imdadul (Bangladesh Boys) and Rajib (Farashganj).

MIDFIELDERS: Rintu (Arambah), Pappu (Muktijoddha), Zahed (Abahani), Sharif, Maruf (Sheikh Russell), Kaisar, Zahid (Mohammedan), Komol, Chanchal (Youngmen's), Nasir (Badda), Rony (Farashganj), Mamun (Brothers).

STRIKERS: Emily (Brothers), Ujjal, Anwar (Abahani), Morshed (Arambah), Robin (Youngmen's), Mithun (Victoria), Humayun (Mohakhali) and Ripon (Farashganj).

Australia go

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The Telegraph said the original Ashes urn, currently in Australia for only the second time since 1883, should be housed down under while Australia hold the title, rather than residing with the Marylebone Cricket Club at Lord's in London.

"The absurdity that denies the Ashes residence in Australia is more infuriating than trying to convince an Englishman to shower daily," it said.

Under the headline "Ricky's Revenge", Melbourne's Age newspaper said the series victory vindicated Ponting, who was heavily criticised after last year's defeat but has performed superbly in the current series.

"He has been the campaign's outstanding figure," it said. "He presided over an incisive performance from a hungry team. He has stood glint-eyed at the crease, alert at slip or silly point, unblinking and composed."

leave. The goalkeeping problem would also be solved in presence of Biplab (Mohammedan) and Tarek (Brothers) -- country's numbers two and three respectively.

The lack of a creative midfielder would be filled with the arrival of Abul (Brothers) while Pranotosh (Brothers) would be a nice backup for skipper Joy as the holding midfielder. Ujjal, Zahid Parvez and Abdullah Parvez will give the coach a welcome headache of selection.

After a long time, they would be able to rely on a local striker to deliver the goods as the promising Emily, already a regular in the national shirt, has switched loyalties to the last year's National League runners-up.

Abahani have yet to sign up Farhad but made sure veteran Tipu stays.

"When Farhad left the camp, he took some time. He will let us know about his decision soon," added the Abahani manager.

The world Cannavaro's oyster

FROM PAGE 17
one," he said of the FIFA annual gala. "As a player yes. But I think there will be something else."

Brazil and Barcelona's 2004 and 2005 winner Ronaldinho failed to win an unprecedented three titles in a row and was third with 380 votes.

Cannavaro, who marshalled Italy's steadfast defence in Germany this summer, was the first defender to carry away the world player of the year award, which has been the preserve of strikers and midfielders since 1990.

"It is more difficult for a defender to come this far, because you have Zidane and Ronaldinho who do all these wonderful things," he told reporters.

Only fellow Real Madrid defender Roberto Carlos (1997) and Italian Paolo Maldini (1995) have come close before as runners-up. Cannavaro kicked off his career

Vaughan to be back?



AFP, Perth

Despite another failure with the bat as he continues his comeback, Michael Vaughan is expected to return to England's one-day squad later this week and may regain the captaincy.

In his fourth match since knee surgery, Vaughan was dismissed for 14 here Tuesday playing for the England Academy, just hours after England coach Duncan Fletcher had given his rehabilitation a glowing endorsement.

Vaughan had made a duck and nine in his two previous appearances for the England Academy here over the last fortnight, and did not bat in the two-day game England played against WA.

There were mitigating circumstances for Tuesday's failure, as the ball was seaming about prodigiously in overcast and muggy conditions ideal for swing bowling.

Vaughan lasted 32 balls and showed signs of his form returning with a couple of elegant boundaries, before again falling to a mistimed pull shot that was skied to mid-on, as he had done in his previous innings.

Despite his indifferent form, the 2005 Ashes skipper is expected to be recalled when England announces its squad for the triangular one-day series, starting in mid-January, later this week.

Fletcher again ruled out Vaughan playing in the last two Ashes Tests and said the selectors were yet to make a final decision on the form and fitness of the former skipper with regards to a one-day recall.

However, the tone of Fletcher's response suggested the 32-year-old

was very much on target to play in the triangular series.

"It is very positive and it is pleasing to see," he said.

"Vaughan has been training with (fitness trainer) Nigel Stockill and he is moving around very freely.

"In fact, he says he hasn't felt so good for some time."

Fletcher confirmed Vaughan was being considered as captain for the one-dayers.

"We'll have to make that decision when we meet with the other selectors," he said.

"The (players) have been happy with (Andrew) Flintoff, we will have to take that into consideration when we pick the one-day side."

Flintoff had said he hoped to remain captain for the one-day series on Monday, just after the third Test loss to Australia.

"If the job is available, of course I will," Flintoff said when asked if he would make himself available to captain in the one-dayers.

Vaughan has not played at the top level for England since the third Test against Pakistan in Lahore 13 months ago.

He has a modest one-day record and his last limited overs appearance for England was against Australia in July last year.

Pace bowler Steve Harmison is likely to return home after the Tests, along with spinner Monty Panesar and wicketkeeper Geraint Jones, while batsman Mike Yardy and pace bowler Stuart Broad will be in the selection mix.

All-rounder Jamie Dalrymple, called into the Test squad following the departure of spinner Ashley Giles and a chance to play in the last two Tests, is likely to be part of the one-day outfit and provide the spin option.

Headbutt leaves wrong

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Zidane's ejection cause France to lose the World Cup?

It would be pure speculation, but France had never lost on penalty kicks in World Cup competition, while Italy had never won in that format. In an added twist of irony, Zidane had given France an early 1-0 lead on a penalty kick due to a foul on - you guessed it - Materazzi.

"It certainly changed the game," DiCicco said. "Not that Italy wouldn't have won, but France was starting to dominate the game."

Regardless, Zidane likely joins a pantheon of athletes who now enjoy instant name recognition and have left enduring moments in history.

Twenty years from now, the casual sports fan may not be able to tell you which nation won the 2006 World Cup. But mention Zidane's name and it will strike a chord. He becomes another Bill Buckner, Chris Webber or Scott Norwood - defined by a mistake.

According to DiCicco, that probably will be the American perspective. "I don't think it will be the defining moment of his career," DiCicco said. "The rest of the world will

remember what he gave to the game, his style, his presence. Americans will probably remember that moment, unfortunately."

What may have prevented serious repercussions in his own country and an angry backlash from French fans is Zidane's body of work over his magnificent career.

Some players have had their reputations tarnished for far lesser errors in international competition. One of the more notable incidents of fan retribution came in the 1994 World Cup.

Colombia's Andres Escobar scored an own goal vs. the United States in an eventual 2-1 loss, which led to his country's elimination from the tournament.

Ten days later, Escobar was eliminated - shot and killed in Colombia, with the motive behind the murder believed to be the own goal.

"The good news was that France forgave (Zidane)," DiCicco said. "There have been other instances where there's not the case. He could have been scarred for life."

Twenty20 rolls

FROM PAGE 17
surface this time offer," he cautioned.

Another former Bangladesh captain Aminul Islam, new coach of Abahani, believe that bowlers are simply helpless in the new version of the game.

"People come to watch the batsmen score runs. The spectators will not be happy if they saw 40 runs on the board and I also think there is any scope for the bowlers in this competition," explained Aminul.

The country's first Test century-maker has some reservation about the game in the country.

"We have to take the competition seriously as ICC already recognised it and asked all the member countries to introduce the competition into their domestic circuit.

"But I am worried as our players have lack of temperament and this kind of cricket may damage it more," explained Aminul.

Opening day's matches: Morning (9 am) - Old DOHS vs Partex (DCS), Victoria vs Kalabagan (BKSP-2) and Biman vs City Club (BKSP-1).

Afternoon (1 pm) - Sonargaon vs Young Pegasus (BKSP-1), Mohammedan vs Indira Road (DCS) and Brothers Union vs Abahani (BKSP-2).

Handball meet starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Design Zone First Office Handball League begins today at the outer stadium handball court.

A press conference was held yesterday in connection with the meet where four teams will take part on league basis.

Design Zone provided Tk 25,000 out of total budget of Tk 75,000.

Gulshan Youth tennis kicks-off

SPORTS REPORTER

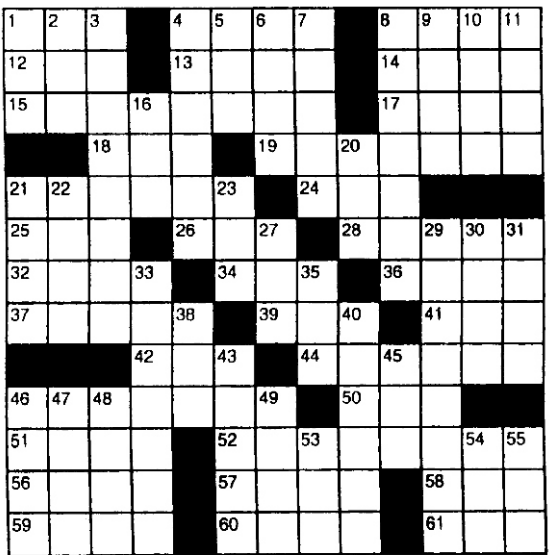
The MGH Classic-Gulshan Youth Tennis competition organised by Gulshan Youth Club began yesterday.

Seven clubs-- Gulshan Club, Officers' Club, Engineers' Club, Customs Club, Cadet College Club, Club Amazon and hosts Gulshan Youth Club-- are taking part in the competition.

The final will be take place on December 24 at the Gulshan Youth Club premises.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Venom ejector
4 Speedy
8 Base runner's goal
12 Grazing site
13 Ready for the picking
14 State with certainty
15 Scaly anteater
17 Reply to "Shall we?"
18 Press for payment
19 Oscar candidate
21 Score
24 Gist
25 That guy
26 Emulate Johnny Appleseed
28 Put one over on
32 Rainbow
34 Grecian vessel
36 Story
37 Denominations
39 "Uh-huh"



CRYPTOQUIP
T S F L D R B J Q B F G X A F V J U B J
Y F T U , P D M U J L D M
B K Z B N X A T Y X D Q B R V D P V
F G F Z D G X - D S S T N B D K ?
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN YOUR WHISKEY DRINK NEEDS TO BE REFILLED, I LIKE TO THINK OF IT AS BOURBON RENEWAL.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals Y
The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

8x3