

Gough always positive

MELBOURNE, Australia, Dec 28 (AFP): Hope springs eternal in stout-hearted English strike bowler Darren Gough, who hasn't discounted a victory against the odds over cricket kingpins Australia in the fourth Ashes Test here.

England were 65 for two in their second innings at the close on the third day today, still trailing Australia by five runs and needing to build a sizeable score to pressure the home side on a last-day wicket.

Gough, let down by missed catches from his teammates during the series, got his overdue reward today when he captured 5-96 off 28 overs. But he could not prevent the Australians from surging to a 70-run innings lead.

England lost the wickets of Michael Atherton for his first Test 'pair' of ducks and Mark Butcher to a freakish close-in catch by Michael Slater in their efforts to rub out the deficit. They resume Tuesday looking to first innings centurion Alec Stewart for another big score.

"We're in a great position," said the perky Yorkshireman. "Obviously, we're two down but we've got class batsman to come, especially Alec Stewart who has played positively."

"If we can get some runs on the board we could be looking to be bowling last against Australia for the first time, and that would be good."

Gough refuses to blame his butter-fingered teammates for costing him more than the 15 wickets he taken so far in the series.

"I've created opportunities through the whole series. I've tried to bowl consistently when I came here, that was my target," he said.

"I feel I've done that, except for one innings in Brisbane (first Test). Obviously a few have gone down, but it goes like that and you always have to keep believing that it will change as I have done in this game."

"I bowled here the same as I have in Adelaide and Perth. But that's what happens with a fast bowler, you go in spells. You can go a couple of games without getting a wicket then get four or five, and it gets your confidence back up."

Celtic stay in touch

GLASGOW, Dec 28: Defending champions Celtic kept alive their Scottish Premier League hopes by coasting to a 3-0 win over lowly Dundee at Dens Park on Sunday, reports Reuters.

Two goals in the first 43 minutes set up a victory which left Celtic in third place after 20 matches on 33 points, seven behind leaders Rangers who have a game in hand, and four behind second-placed Kilmarnock. Celtic face Rangers at Ibrox in the "old firm" derby next Sunday.

There was little doubt about the outcome against Dundee after Phil O'Donnell had given Celtic the lead in the fourth minute with a superbly executed strike.

Trapping the ball neatly on the edge of the penalty area, O'Donnell sliced between two defenders before sidefooting ball into the net for his fourth league goal of the season.

Celtic went further ahead in the 13th minute when a perfectly weighted cross from Paul Lambert enabled Norwegian international Vidar Riseth to head home his first goal for Celtic since joining them in September.

Relegation-threatened Dundee fought back during the opening minutes of the second half before a third Celtic goal effectively settled matters.

It came in an unfortunate manner for Dundee as a header by Swedish striker Henrik Larsson, the Premier league's leading scorer, was cleared off the line only for the ball to rebound off the back of Dundee goalkeeper Robert Douglas and into the net.

Cruyff rebuffs Nunez move

BARCELONA, Spain, Dec 28 (Reuters/ Internet): Johan Cruyff on Sunday rebuffed efforts by Barcelona club president Josep Luis Nunez to end a prolonged dispute between the two men.

Nunez had written to former Barcelona player and coach Cruyff suggesting dates in March and April for two testimonial matches the Dutchman is owed as part of a severance package when he was sacked in May 1996.

Nunez said he hoped the games would play a prominent part in the club's centenary celebrations and suggested they forget past recriminations.

But Cruyff said on Sunday: "I have to remind Nunez that the first step is to retract everything he has said about me."

Cruyff has been a bitter and constant critic of Nunez since he left Barcelona, although he is still a season ticket holder at the club and owns a home nearby.

Cruyff guided Barcelona to the 1992 European Cup title and provided them with four successive Spanish league championships between 1991 and 1994.

The Spanish sports daily AS speculated on Sunday that the reason behind Nunez's move for reconciliation was to try to bring Cruyff back as coach at the club at the end of the season.

Barcelona -- under another Dutch coach, Louis van Gaal -- are struggling in the middle of the Spanish first division and have been eliminated from the European Cup.

Cruyff and Nunez took each other to court and a recent judgement awarded both men one peseta each. The judge told them that they were being ridiculous in their actions.

Waugh wears England down



MELBOURNE, Dec 28 (AP/Reuters): Steve Waugh poounded a majestic century Monday to lift Australia into a good position in the fourth Test against England at the MCG.

Waugh finished unbeaten on 122, his 17th Test century, and passed 7,000 career runs in the process as Australia posted 340 in reply to England's 270.

Batting a second time, England were still five behind at 65 for two at stumps on an extended Day Three with opener Mike Atherton out for a pair of ducks for the first time in his career and Mark Butcher falling to a freak catch.

Waugh showed rare emotion after reaching his century with a faultless performance in difficult conditions. He added 88 with No 10 Stuart MacGill, who struck 43.

"I've always dreamed about getting a hundred here before a big crowd. I got a hundred against Sri Lanka here a couple of years ago but the crowd wasn't as big," Waugh said of his feat Monday in front of more than 43,000 fans.

"It was an important hundred in the context of the match which makes it all the more special. You always rate a hundred highly when your team is in a bit of trouble and they need you to score runs."

England paceman Darren Gough bowled superbly early Monday and looked to have done enough to give the tourists, 2-0 down with two Tests to play including this one, a strong chance of a first innings lead.

Gough finished with 5-96, his first five-wicket haul since the triumphant victory over South Africa at Headingley last August.

Australia resumed Monday on 59-2 and Angus Fraser had made the initial breakthrough of the day, getting a lucky lbw decision against Mark Waugh (36).

But it was the pace of Gough which enabled England to make serious inroads into Australia's formidable batting order by dismissing in-form Justin Langer for 44 and Darren Lehmann for 13.

Ian Healy joined Waugh for a 58-run stand and MacGill helped Australia to its strong position. The Australian innings was again in sharp contrast to England, which lost its last seven wickets for 70 runs Sunday.

Waugh dug in with 13 boundaries in his five-hour stay and helped Australia add 189 runs for the last five wickets.

With the 40th run of his innings, he overtook Sir Donald Bradman's Test match total of 6,996 and few minutes later he passed the 7,000 run mark, only the fifth Australian batsman to do so.

"I was aware of it and I was certainly nervous about going past Don Bradman," Waugh said of the milestone. "But it took me a lot longer to get the run than I had."

Waugh's 7,000 came in his 11th Test while Bradman took only 52 to make his runs at the astonishing average of 99.94. He joined David Boon, Allan Border, Mark Taylor and Greg Chappell in reaching the mark.

Waugh's century was his seventh in Ashes Tests and his unbeaten innings allowed him to lift his all-time average past 50.

Australia made a strong start to England's second innings when Damien Fleming had Atherton clean bowled a

ball after a strong shout for lbw was denied.

No. 3 Butcher fell second to an unlucky dismissal, hitting a shot off the meet of the bat only for it to lodge in the arms of short leg fielder Michael Slater who was trying to avoid getting hit.

England sent Dean Headley out as nightwatchman and he was yet to score with captain Alec Stewart unbeaten on 43.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the third day of the fourth Ashes Test between Australia and England at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Monday:

ENGLAND: First innings 270

AUSTRALIA: First innings (59-2 overnight)

M Taylor	c Hick	b Gough	7	
M Slatter	lbw	b Gough	1	
J Langer	c Hussain	b Gough	44	
M Waugh	lbw	b Fraser	36	
S Waugh	not out		122	
D Lehmann	c Hegg	b Gough	13	
I Healy	c Headley	b Fraser	36	
D Fleming	c Hick	b Mullally	12	
M Nicholson	c Hegg	b Mullally	5	
S MacGill	c Hegg	b Mullally	43	
G McGrath	c Hegg	b Mullally	0	
Extras:	(b-4, lb-6, nb-11)		21	
Total:	(all out in 98.3 overs)		340	
Fall of wkt:	1-13, 2-26, 3-98			
4-127, 5-151, 6-209, 7-235, 8-252, 9-340; 10-340				
Bowler:	O	M	R	W
Gough	28	7	96	5
Headley	25	3	86	0
Mullally	21.3	5	64	3
Ramprakash	2	0	6	0
Fraser	22	0	78	2

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WICB unaware of wrongdoing

PORTE OF SPAIN, Trinidad, Dec 28: West Indies have dismissed speculation that any of their players has been implicated in incidents involving bookmakers or match-fixing, reports Reuters.

"Nothing has ever been brought to our attention about anything like that," Stephen Camacho, chief executive officer of the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB), told the Trinidad Independent newspaper.

The Australian Cricket Board (ACB) admitted recently they had been marked by Mark Waugh and Shane Warne for accepting money from an Indian bookmaker for information nearly four years ago.

Pakistan are currently holding an inquiry into allegations of bribery and match-fixing among their players.

"If we were ever to have any such problems, we would have to take some strong action, as this would be a serious breach of the code of conduct," Camacho said.

"We have not really discussed this at the WICB stage as yet, but it will be an urgent matter for us when we have our next meeting."

Camacho, the former West Indies opener, added: "We have to believe in our players and their integrity and pride in playing for West Indies."

"We have not kept anything back or in hiding. We are speaking from what we know and our guys are clean."

Camacho said recent developments involving allegations of match-fixing had surprised the WICB.

"Before, this was just an isolated case in Pakistan. Now that we are hearing a lot more, around the world, it is causing some concern for everyone," he said.

Allegations of bribery and match-fixing are at the top of the agenda of a meeting of the International Cricket Council, the sport's governing body, at a meeting in Christchurch, New Zealand, next month.

Arjuna's father in hot water

COLOMBO, Dec 28: The Supreme Court has asked a junior minister in the national government, who also is the father of Sri Lanka's cricket captain, to pay compensation to a journalist for ordering his police bodyguards to attack him, reports AP.

A court official said Monday last week's Supreme Court ruling found Reggie Ranatunga, the deputy minister for transport, environment and women's affairs, guilty of instigating the assault on Jayantha Dias who heads the news division of the state-run television network. He was ordered to pay the journalist 50,000 rupees, worth 735 dollars.

Ranatunga, father of cricket hero Arjuna Ranatunga who led Sri Lanka to the 1996 World Championship, denied he ordered the attack and blamed his political supporters.

The court also ordered the government to pay 75,000 rupees 1,100 dollars to Dias. Two of the police bodyguards were asked to pay a total of 25,000 rupees (367 dollars).

Dias told the court he was filming protesters set fire to a truck that had hit a pedestrian on a highway near Colombo when the minister's motorcade pulled up.

When the camera turned on Ranatunga, he became angry and demanded that the tape be handed over, fearing he would be blamed in the torching of the truck, according to court documents.

When Dias refused, half a dozen of the minister's police escorts beat him and robbed him of 3,700 rupees (55 dollars). They then threw him into a police jeep and took him to a police station.

"Upon Dias refusing to accept the surrender of the tape, he attempted to seize the tape and the camera by force, through the instrumentalities of the others (bodyguards), and when that failed, it was he (Ranatunga) who instigated the assault," the court said in its judgment.

Burns said it "does seem extraordinary" that an individual could escape unpunished for something that constitutes a crime when carried out by two people.

The proposed bill also suggests making it unlawful for ticket touts to sell tickets in England and Wales for designated matches being played in other parts of Britain or abroad.

Burns said the scenes on television and reports in newspapers of hooligans on the rampage at the World Cup finals made the bill