

Grumpy Graveney

LONDON, Jan 5: While admitting England's cricketers were beaten by a better Australian team...

The umpiring mistake in the fifth Test, shown clearly on TV, particularly hurt, he said.

The difference between Michael Slater being given out in the second innings was 88 runs, roughly the margin of defeat...

Slater appeared to be run out by a direct Dean Headley throw while on 35 but the umpire ruled he was home.

Graveney said Slater's escape wasn't England's only piece of bad luck. Australian captain Mark Taylor had an advantage all the way through by winning the toss...

You have to remember we are playing against Australia, who are the top team in the world. We knew we had to play at our optimum to win but we didn't get much luck along the way...

The fact that England won the fourth Test and had a slim chance of winning the last and tying the series, showed that it wasn't completely one-sided, he said.

We played very well in the last couple of Tests which was pleasing for the supporters who had paid a lot of money to come out here, Graveney said.

Franz fancies German chances

BONN, Jan 5: Germany's bid chief Franz Beckenbauer believes the race to stage the 2006 World Cup finals is very close with Germany in with a good chance, reports Reuters.

There is a good chance that the 2006 World Cup will take place in Germany, Beckenbauer told weekly Sport Bild in an interview released on Tuesday.

England declared itself early but we have caught up, said the Bayern Munich president. At the moment we have the same chance as Brazil and South Africa.

Germany officially declared its bid last November and added weight to it the following month by appointing Beckenbauer, World Cup-winning captain in 1974 and triumphant coach in 1990 as head of the bid.

Getting the World Cup finals would be the best present you could possibly imagine for German football, Beckenbauer said.

The legendary libero was quoted as saying on Monday he was in favour of FIFA president Sepp Blatter's idea to stage the World Cup every two years instead of the current four-year rotation.

Bilardo not impressed BUENOS AIRES, Jan 5: Former Argentina coach Carlos Bilardo, who led his country to World Cup success in 1986, on Monday said he disagreed with FIFA president Sepp Blatter's plans to hold the tournament every two years instead of the current four, reports AFP.

MacGill made menace!

SYDNEY, Jan 5 (AP): Stuart MacGill was employed by England as a net bowler four years ago and Tuesday he finally made them pay for his art.

The 27-year-old overcame a controversial past littered with bans for bad-boy behaviour to become the highest wicket taker of Australia's sixth successive Ashes series.

England's hopes of reaching a record fourth-innings score of 287 to level the series turned to dust on the SCG pitch as MacGill claimed seven wickets in the second innings and 12-107 for the match.

With England's nemesis Shane Warne missing all but the final game, England might have expected some relief from wrist spin, which they are neither used to nor particularly skilled at playing.

Warne criticised the team during the fifth Test when he said it obvious his psychological edge remained over the tourists, who paid former Australian leg-spinner Peter Philpott to prepare them for the tour.

MacGill was another who had tried to help them out four years ago. The whole time they were in Western Australia, two or three weeks, I was employed as net bowler and used to hang out in the rooms with them, said MacGill.

I worked with each of them individually - fortunately they didn't remember any of it. There was a large smack of good fortune in the way MacGill got the part-time job, and the lucky touch has remained with him through a short eight-Test career.

I'd bowled to the English touring team the tour before in the '90-91 series, and then I bumped into Alec Stewart in a bar on the next series and he mentioned they were looking for bowlers, MacGill said.

MacGill, looking for more cricket work, took his skills to England for controversial stints in local leagues. He was handed a life ban from Lancashire's Northern League in 1994, "for uncouth and ungentlemanly behaviour," after sledging opponents and swearing at umpires during his

time with the St. Annes club. The ban was partially lifted, allowing him to play elsewhere and he went to Tiverton in the Devon League in 1997. He was banned for three games at the end of the season after more on-field problems.

His hopes of playing county cricket for Somerset were dashed by his reputation, but he is keen to play more cricket in England. He also seems to have curbed his temper on the field, although there are times when he is seething.

"When I'm bowling I just try and do my job and I feel taking wickets is my job, so I just get down to work," MacGill said of his approach.

But there is still something mischievous in England's latest destroyer, just like there is in Warne. "I've played against England, which is something you joke about in the backyard, I've won the Ashes, which is overwhelming, and going on from there to not only take five wickets against England but to do it twice..." said MacGill.

"God only knows what's going to happen this evening." Taylor said he did not think there was a standout candidate as successor for him when he eventually does decide to retire.

He said Steve Waugh, who skips the Australian limited-overs side, was the obvious short-term solution but others, like Warne and Ricky Ponting, could become long-term leaders.

Taylor, who was dropped from the one-day side last season, predicted a bright future for Australian cricket but said his main concern was that Australia's next captain should lead his country in both forms of the game.

"Our love of the game is probably second to none so there is no reason why we can't remain at the top or near the top for many, many years to come," he said.

Every man from me to the selectors and the board would like to see the next captain leading in both forms of cricket, which would make it better for Australian cricket.

Warne Taylor's choice

SYDNEY, Jan 5 (Reuters/Internet): Australian cricket captain Mark Taylor said on Tuesday Shane Warne's admission that he took money from a bookmaker should not count against him when selectors choose Australia's next captain.

"I know there is a lot of talk that he shouldn't captain again because of this so-called bribery investigation but I don't believe that," Taylor said.

"As I said at the time, I think he made a mistake and everyone is entitled to a mistake. I still see him as one of the candidates for the future."

Warne has long been identified as a natural successor to Taylor until he fell out of favour with the Australian public after admitting in early December that he took cash from an illegal Indian bookmaker in 1994 for information on pitch and weather conditions.

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Gaekwad laments at loose bowling

New Zealand eyeing series win

HAMILTON, Jan 5 (AP/AFIP): Half-centuries by New Zealand's Craig McMillan, Adam Parore and Chris Cairns and a record fifth-wicket stand turned around the third Test against India on Tuesday.

New Zealand resumed the day on 45 without loss after India had taken a 50-run lead, recovered from 85 for four to 323 for six at the stumps on the

nings, dismissed for 92, hit an attractive 84 while Parore, revived his Test career with a fighting 50 in two and a half hours.

The pair feasted against some lighthearted bowling and sloppy fielding to gradually put the game beyond India on a wicket still playing easy with a little assistance for the bowlers. It was Parore's first half-century in nine innings and followed his scored of 2, 1 and 21 in the series.

New Zealand's second innings batting disarray after the openers had put on their best stand of the series. An out-of-form Matthew Bell and Matthew Horne shared 46 runs when Jagavir Singh removed the latter in his second over of the morning.

New Zealand lost Stephen Fleming for 18 after an hour at the crease when the skipper played on trying to leave a ball. The crumple in the form of part-time leg spinner Sachin Tendulkar, who won lbw appeals against first innings hero Roger Twose and Bell.

Bell, battling hard to retain his opening batting position in the Test team, took 51 balls and 75 minutes to add to his overnight 18.

Tendulkar was the most successful bowler for the Indians with 2-30. India's coach Anshuman Gaekwad admitted the team's hopes of winning the third Test against New Zealand were all but gone after his bowlers failed to dislodge a stubborn homeside batting lineup.

"It will be difficult from here," Gaekwad conceded. "It is disappointing. This is not the first time it has happened in the series. We let the second Test slip away too."

Gaekwad blamed his bowlers for giving a lot of width and both sides of the wicket and felt the game slipped away from his side after they conceded 127 runs in the post-lunch session without taking a wicket.

"I had bowled on one side of the wicket things would have been different for us," Gaekwad said.

Gaekwad said there was a remote possibility that India might chase any target on the last day but depended on how quickly his bowlers could run through the New Zealand lower-order.

"We got nothing to lose. We are already 0-1 down and it won't make a big difference if we lose 2-0 after trying," the former Indian opener said.

"I don't think you deserve to win after bowling badly. Our body language changed when things weren't going our way. We can only talk about it but the fighting qualities have to come within."

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CENTRE OF ALL ATTRACTION: Man-of-the-match Stuart MacGill obliges the photographers. — AP/UNB photo

ASHES SERIES AVERAGES

Table with columns for Player, M, I, NO, Runs, HS, Ave, 50s, 100s. Includes batting and bowling averages for England and Australia.

Donald scare for hosts

CAPE TOWN, Jan 5 (Reuters/AFIP): South Africa's captain Hansie Cronje believes his team's hopes of a fourth successive Test victory over West Indies closed the

fast bowler Allan Donald. South Africa closed the third day of the fourth Test at Newlands on Monday 285 ahead overall, having bowled out West Indies for 212 to gain a first innings lead of 194 and then scored 91 for three.

However, Donald managed only six overs in West Indies' first innings - getting the breakthrough with three quick wickets on Sunday - before suffering a hamstring strain.

Donald who limped off the field on Sunday, gave his leg a try out on Monday but managed to complete just one over off a shortened run-up before calling it quits.

With Donald and Curtly Ambrose out of the game life could prove a lot sweeter for the batsmen at Newlands over the next two days. But as Cronje was quick to point out, "There are no easy sessions in Test cricket," his own team discovered that Monday when, after coasting along to 31 without loss they suddenly found themselves with their backs-to-the-wall on 31-3.

"We're in a strong position but it is going to take lot of work to bowl out the West Indies on what is a good pitch," said Cronje. "A lot will depend on Allan and obviously we will be working on him overnight to try and get him right."

left-arm wrist-spinner, took one for 61 in 16 overs and was comfortably the South Africa's most expensive bowler as West Indies, 89 for four overnight, edged past the follow-on mark of 207.

Carl Hooper was at the centre of their resistance with 86, the highest score by a West Indian in their short Test history against South Africa.

After blazing to his half-century in just 53 balls on Sunday evening he added 33 in 99 balls on Monday morning before being run out from the extra cover

(32 not out) and Jacques Kallis (28 not out) re-established their iron grip. South Africa have a 3-0 winning lead in the five-Test series.

SCOREBOARD Scoreboard at close of the third day of the fourth Test between South Africa and West Indies at Newlands on Monday: SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 406-8 declared (H Gibbs 42, J Kallis 110, D Cullinan 168; M Dillon 3-99).

WEST INDIES: First innings (overnight 89-4) Wallace c Cullinan b Donald 8; Murray c Boucher b Donald 0; Chanderpaul c Rhodes b Terbrugge 6; Lara hit wicket b Donald 4; Hooper run out (Cronje) 86; Ganga c Kirsten b Pollock 17; Jacobs c Kallis b Pollock 29; Gibson c Kirsten b Kallis 37; McLean c Cronje b Adams 14; Ambrose not out 4; Dillon c Boucher b Kallis 0; Extras: 7; Total: (All out in 85 overs): 212; Fall of wickets: 1-1; 2-10; 3-14; 4-34; 5-108; 6-146; 7-164; 8-199; 9-210.

Bowler O M R W Donald 6 1 20 3 Pollock 22 9 35 2 Terbrugge 20 8 37 1 Kallis 15 5 34 2 Adams 16 2 61 1 Cronje 6 1 23 0 SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings Kirsten c Murray b McLean 5; Gibbs c Jacobs b Dillon 28; Kallis not out 25; Cullinan lbw b McLean 0; Cronje not out 32; Extras: 1; Total: (for three wickets in 38 overs): 91; Fall of wickets: 1-31; 2-31; 3-31.

WC 2006 a Nigerian dream

JOHANNESBURG, Jan 5: Nigerian Sports Minister Enkoka Omerush said on Monday that his country would use the world youth championship finals in the country during April as a test of whether they can host the 2006 World Cup, reports AFP.

Nigeria made a dramatic late entry into the race to stage the quadrennial showpiece of international football at the weekend, Brazil, Egypt, England, Germany, Ghana, Morocco and South Africa are the other contenders.

Although the deadline for entries was on midnight Thursday, the Zurich offices of world governing body FIFA were closed over the new year weekend and the addition of Nigeria was only announced on Monday.

Omerush told a Nigerian radio station monitored here that the west African country already had a great love of the game, Omerush said.

"We sent a task force to the 1998 World Cup in France which was constantly in touch with the local organising committee. We will not be shy to seek assistance from Europe if necessary."

FIFA will decide in March 2000 who hosts the 2006 finals of the 32-nation tournament. Japan and South Korea will co-host the next finals in 2002.

Sri Lanka turn around

ADELAIDE, Jan 5: Ranatunga elected to bat in 40 degrees Celsius temperatures.

Controversial off-spinner Muralitharan took two wickets in his tour debut to guide world champions Sri Lanka to a 24-run defeat of Australia A in a one-day match today, reports Reuters.

Sri Lanka, led by a powerful 55 from Aravinda de Silva, hit 227 for seven in their 50 overs at the Adelaide Oval and dismissed Australia A for 203. The match was a warm-up for the triangular tournament with Australia and England.

Muralitharan took two for 43, one of three Sri Lankan bowlers to pick up a brace of wickets. It was a much better performance from the tourists than in their opening match against Australia A on Sunday.

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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 1 Hideaway 37 Co-star with Ritter and Sormers 40 Junior 41 Couturer 42 Cassini 43 Actor 44 Regal 45 Physical force 46 Neeson 47 Singly 48 Nigley 49 Zhigago's love 50 Pronto 51 November around 52 Tumbler 53 Map 54 That smart's 55 Guatemala money 56 Dracula sometimes 57 Sounds of contentment 58 Cistem 59 Vain 60 Sharpen 61 Blood-hound's sine qua non 62 Ivan of

2 Blackbird 3 Berlin's 'What'll -?' 4 Nihilism 5 Etichianism 6 Scionian spouter 7 Friend of Snow White 8 Residents 9 Brief spray 10 Lacking slack 11 Juror, theoretically 12 Schisgal solicism 13 Ohio squac 14 19 Feed-bag fill 15 Sailor 16 Waikiki 17 Winking 18 Gospels' follow-up 19 Race-track prize 20 Doubt 21 Bard's river 22 Alight 23 Whodunit basis 24 Aviv 25 Poser 26 Leopold's co-defendant 27 Toy shop purchase 28 Lamb's pen name 29 Sport 30 L-P link 31 Caesar's C 32 Pismire 33 Jamie - Curtis

CRYPTOQUIP BDK R X E Q Q K X U A X E W T E J G P Q K D B G T U A Q G T U X Z X T E V D K R Q K Z J P Q R V U Q T W Saturday's Cryptoquip: THAT CUCKOO THINKS YOU CAN TELL BABY SNAKES BY THEIR RATTLES. Today's Cryptoquip clue: Z equals C 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.