

## Shearer denies involvement

LONDON, Oct 6: England captain Alan Shearer has insisted he played no significant part in Ruud Gullit's departure from the Newcastle manager's position, reports AFP.

Shearer blamed a string of "disastrous results" rather than "player power" for Gullit's demise.

Shearer, also speaking for the first time of his reaction to being dropped to the substitutes' bench by Gullit, is adamant the only pressure brought to bear on the Dutchman before his resignation last month was to halt Newcastle's slide down the Premiership league table.

"I don't think Ruud resigned or was sacked because of player power. We had some disastrous results, and the decision was then taken by the chairman or whoever," said Shearer, in an interview with The Sun daily.

The striker's form along with his club's has improved since Gullit left to be replaced by former England manager Bobby Robson.

"Things needed changing, and the changes were made," he added.

Shearer does not hide his anger at having to sit on the substitutes' bench for first half of the Magpies' north-east derby with Sunderland.

"I had never been dropped in my career. So to find myself on the bench for a game as important as the one against Sunderland that Wednesday night was a shock, believe me," he admitted.

## Rangers not interested in 'super-league'

GLASGOW, Oct 6: Rangers will not join Celtic in their efforts to break away from the Scottish Premier League, club chairman David Murray said on Wednesday, reports AFP.

At Celtic's annual general meeting on Monday, chief executive Allan MacDonald said the Glasgow side must explore the possibility of linking up with top clubs from the Netherlands, Belgium and Portugal to form a super-league capable of securing television rights equal to those of the top nations in Europe.

Rangers' involvement in the venture is seen as crucial because without their Old Firm partner on board Celtic would enter the new league with no Scottish rival.

Test off-spinner Harbhajan Singh showed what lies ahead for the Kiwis in the three-Test series by grabbing four wickets on the docile wicket.

Harbhajan, included in the Indian squad for the first Test earlier in the day, finished with four for 62.

Earlier, the Indian young Test hopefuls, remaining at 269 for eight, were all out for 298. Wicket-keeper Sanir Digne, 31 not out overnight, could score one more run before going down to seamer Shayne O'Connor.

O'Connor and Digna Nash picked up three wickets each. Left-arm spinner Daniel Vettori, who missed a hat-trick when he bowled Virender Sehwag and Davinder Bundela off successive balls on Tuesday, finished with 71 for 2 off 32.

"Celtic are entitled to their opinions and have their own vision for the future, but I don't think it is very practical."

Meanwhile, Rangers' Premier League home game against Hearts on October 23 is set to be called off in order to help the Ibrox club's Champions League quest.

Rangers' 1-0 victory over PSV last week put them just behind Bayern Munich and Valencia in the race to reach the second group stage of the competition.

With two home games looming which could decide their fate, Hearts have agreed to Rangers' request to postpone the league game which falls between the two.

The decision is expected to be ratified by a meeting of the Scottish Premier League.

## Azhar left

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day was the best," Borde said after the two-hour meeting.

"Keeping the future in mind we felt this team will deliver the goods."

The selectors have kept their options open in the bowling attack by naming three seamers alongside as many spinners.

The Indian squad:

Sachin Tendulkar (captain), Sadagopan Ramesh, Devang Gandhi, Rahul Dravid, Sourav Ganguly, Ajay Jadeja, Manav Prasad (wicket-keeper), Sunil Joshi, Anil Kumble, Harbhajan Singh, Jayagopal Srinath, Venkatesh Prasad, Debashish Mohanty and Vijay Bharadwaj.

## Shamir Sakir

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The footballers did not let their mentor down. They prevailed over the personal adversities.

Despite winning the gold, the Iraqi coach Shamir could bear with the humiliation no more.

"I would never come back to Bangladesh," the Iraqi World Cupper moaned prior to his departure for Baghdad.

The treatment of Shamir by tour manager Gaffar might remind the nation of Gordon Cuthbert Greenidge, the ill-fated former coach of the Bangladesh cricket team. Like Shamir, the Caribbean coach also chose not to come to Bangladesh with his boys after the World Cup campaign, where they beat mighty Pakistan and fellow associate member Scotland in their maiden appearance in the mega event.

Much to the agony of millions of cricket lovers in the country, the awe-inspiring coach, who was sacked in the middle of the England tournament, remained absent then at a reception accorded by the Bangladesh Cricket Board at the National Parade Square in Dhaka, where the Prime Minister was present.



**LUNGI CRICKET:** The "gentleman's game" is rapidly gaining popularity among the masses of Bangladesh. Although these rural cricketers do not have any proper clothing to put on, kits to play with and codes to be abided by, the passion for the game is hardly mistaken. At a remote Thakurbari area of Magura district, Daily Star's correspondent Md Hossain Seraj framed these enthusiastic young men playing a game that is yet to be methodically regulated by the Bangladesh Cricket Board countrywide.

## Horne shines in Kiwi show



JODHPUR, India, Oct 6 (AFP): Opener Matthew Horne hit 85 to lead an impressive batting display by the touring New Zealanders in a three-day match against the Indian board president's team here on Wednesday.

Craig Spearman made 56 and skipper Stephen Fleming 32 as the Kiwis, replying to the home team's 298, reached 248 for five by close of play on the second day.

Craig McMillan was unbeaten on 44 as the tourists gained useful batting practice ahead of the first Test starting at Mohali on Sunday.

Test off-spinner Harbhajan Singh showed what lies ahead for the Kiwis in the three-Test series by grabbing four wickets on the docile wicket.

Harbhajan, included in the Indian squad for the first Test earlier in the day, finished with four for 62.

Earlier, the Indian young Test hopefuls, remaining at 269 for eight, were all out for 298. Wicket-keeper Sanir Digne, 31 not out overnight, could score one more run before going down to seamer Shayne O'Connor.

O'Connor and Digna Nash picked up three wickets each. Left-arm spinner Daniel Vettori, who missed a hat-trick when he bowled Virender Sehwag and Davinder Bundela off successive balls on Tuesday, finished with 71 for 2 off 32.

Overers. Board XI skipper Hrishikesh Kanitkar staked a claim for the three-Test series against the tourists with a determined 99.

Rathour c McMillan b O'Connor

67

Mullick c Parone b Nash

67

Kanikar c & b Harris

69

Shewag b Vettori

4

Bundela b Vettori

0

Digne b O'Connor

32

Zaidi lbw b O'Connor

6

Sanghi c Parone b Nash

28

Harbhajan c Spearman b Nash

28

Nehra lbw b Nash

8

Extras: (b-4, lb-2, w-5, nb-4)

5

Total: (All out in 97.3 overs) 288

Fall of wickets: 1-21; 2-63; 3-163; 4-168; 5-168; 6-240; 7-255; 8-256; 9-274; 10-298.

**Bowler:** O M R W

O'Connor 17 3 62 3

Nash 17.3 5 54 3

Vettori 32 5 71 2

McMillan 5 0 16 0

Wiseman 15 1 66 0

Harris 11 5 23 1

**NEW ZEALAND:** First innnings

Horne c Zaidi b Harbhajan

5

Bell b Zaidi

8

Spearman c Digne b Harbhajan

55

Fleming c Rathour b Harbhajan

32

McMillan not out

44

Harris lbw b Harbhajan

0

Parone not out

5

Extras: (b-4, lb-5, nb-9)

18

Total: (For 5 wickets in 80 overs) 248

To bat: S O'Connor, D Nash, D Vettori, P Wiseman.

Fall of wickets: 1-38; 2-146; 3-179; 4-232; 5-232.

**Bowler:** O M R W

Zaidi 18 3 49 1

Nehra 11 1 35 0

Sanghi 24 4 82 4

Harbhajan 22 3 62 4

Kanitkar 4 0 11 0

Shewag 1 1 0 0

**SCOREBOARD**

Scoreboard at stumps on the second day of the three-day match between Indian Board President's XI and New Zealand at Jodhpur on Wednesday.

**INDIAN BOARD PRESIDENT'S XI:** First Innings (overnight 269 for 8) Khoda run out (Wiseman/Parone) 32

**NEW ZEALAND:** First Innings

Horne c Zaidi b Harbhajan

Bell b Zaidi

Spearman c Digne b Harbhajan

Fleming c Rathour b Harbhajan

McMillan not out

Harris lbw b Harbhajan

Parone not out

Extras: (b-4, lb-5, nb-9)

Total: (For 5 wickets in 80 overs) 248

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**COACHES:** India's Ravi Shastri (left) and New Zealand's Greg Chappell (right) shake hands before the start of the match.

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