

Benaud feels devastated

MELBOURNE, Nov 4 (Internet report): Legendary broadcaster Richie Benaud has admitted he is devastated by the corruption revelations currently rocking the world of cricket.

An Indian match-fixing report released on Wednesday alleged that players from around the world - including nine former Test captains - had been involved in dealings with bookmakers.

And Benaud, himself a former Australian skipper, revealed that the developments of the last few days had left a bitter taste.

Benaud said he watched his first Sheffield Shield match at the Sydney Cricket Ground in 1940, which featured the world's greatest batsman, Don Bradman.

"From that night, every waking moment for me was spent working out how to win cricket matches," Benaud said in a television interview.

"Now I suddenly find that around the cricket world there are bastards who spend every waking moment working out how to lose cricket matches."

England's Alec Stewart, accused of taking 5,000 pounds from an Indian bookmaker to return for pitch and team information in 1993, faced the media for the first time yesterday to repeat his denial of the charges.

Cronje requires a 'miracle'

CAPE TOWN, Nov 4: Only something 'miraculous' would persuade the United Cricket Board of South Africa (UCBSA) to allow disgraced former captain Hansie Cronje back into the game, its president Percy Sonn said Friday, reports AFP.

The Board on Thursday officially banned Cronje - fired in April after admitting to taking money from gamblers - but hinted that it might overturn the ruling at some point in the future if the disgraced star repented.

But this was unlikely, Sonn told private television station eTV.

"Realistically speaking, I don't think that Hansie can come back to play or coach next week or the week after that, or next year or the year after that, unless something miraculously happens," Sonn said.

Cronje's lawyers are going ahead with legal action against the UCBSA on the grounds that the ban was unlawful, eTV said. The UCBSA's general council last month passed a resolution to ban Cronje for life from all aspects of the game, while giving him seven days to respond.

No representation was made before the deadline expired, a board source told the SAPA news agency.

Ponting to lead Invitation XI

SYDNEY, Nov 4: Australian batsman Ricky Ponting will lead a Northern Territory Invitational cricket team in a one-day tour match against the West Indies in Alice Springs this month, reports AFP.

Ponting, who was beaten to the Test vice-captaincy by wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist, will join Test bowler Damien Fleming in the invitational team for the November 14 match.

Victorians Darren Berry and Brad Hodge and Tasmanians Michael Di Venuto and Daniel Marsh are also in the side to take on the West Indies tourists, who are yet to be named.

The match is a rare event for Alice Springs, which has hosted only a handful of tour matches against Sri Lanka, Pakistan, England A and the West Indies.

Capriati in semis

QUEBEC, Nov 4: Top-seeded Jennifer Capriati advanced to the semifinals of the Bell Challenge on Friday, beating Canadian Sonya Jeaselean 7-5, 6-0, reports AP.

Capriati will face fourth-seeded Amy Frazier, a 6-2, 6-2 winner over Venezuela's Maria Alejandra Vento. In another all-American semifinal, second-seeded Chanda Rubin will play Mellican Tu.

Test match

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Lunchbreak will be at 11.30am and the tea break at 2.10pm.

**THE GUEST LIST**  
The list of dignitaries so far confirmed by the Board includes two Bangladeshi expatriates in England. They are -- Riuzzuddin and Badshah Quadar. Besides, the VIP list contains former ICC president Jagmohan Dalmiya, who played a very important role in Bangladesh's campaign for Test status. Sunil Gavaskar, Nissimul Ghani, Roger Knight, Lord Alexander, Peter Chingoka, David Richards, Bob Merriam, AC Muttiah, Jayanthi Lele, Kishore Rungta, Robin Marlar, Thilanga Sumathipala, Gordon Greenidge, Graham Dowling, Mohamader Amarnath, Campbell Jamison, Lt Col Stevenson and John Jamison.

**SHAHIDUL SHOW**  
A theme song, written by sports journalist of the Daily Manabjamin Shahidul Azam and sung by Shyva Dev, will be played during the breaks of the five-day match. Besides, a music video of the song, sponsored by Meril, will also be shown on the Bangladesh Television during its coverage of the match.



Martin Hawkins (L) and Alan Peacock, investigators of ICC's anti-corruption wing, leave after meeting with detectives of the Central Bureau of investigation in New Delhi yesterday. -- AFP photo

Zulu antics sink Kiwis

CAPE TOWN, Nov 4: Lance Klusener pounded fours off the last two balls as South Africa snatched a dramatic three-wicket win in the sixth and final limited over international at Newlands Saturday, reports AFP.

Man-of-the-match Klusener hit an unbeaten 59 off 42 balls to deny New Zealand a solitary win in the series.

South Africa won five matches in a row after the first was rained out.

Before Klusener's sensational onslaught it seemed New Zealand would win on the back of a maiden international century by Roger Twose, who shared a record 150-run fourth wicket stand with Chris Cairns.

Twose made 103 and Cairns 80 as they dominated New Zealand's total of 256 for nine.

Both men are returning home after the one-day games and will not be playing in the three-match Test series which starts on November 17.

Twose is regarded as a one-day specialist while Cairns will be returning for treatment on a knee injury.

Twose, 32, has long been the nearly man of international cricket with highest scores in the 90s in both Tests and one-day internationals. He had made 20 half-centuries before Saturday's breakthrough in his 75th one-day international.

He nearly missed out again when he was dropped on the boundary by Shaheek Abrahams off left-arm spinner Nicky Boje when he was on 97, equalling his previous highest score.

The stand between Twose and Cairns was the highest for any wicket for New Zealand against South Africa.

The pair enabled New Zealand to recover from a poor start in which they lost their first three wickets for 39 runs after being sent in on an overcast day on a good batting pitch.

Cairns hit four sixes, including two successive straight hits off Kallis and two sixes in an over from South African captain Shaun Pollock. He also hit seven fours in a thrilling 73-ball innings, while Twose hit two sixes and ten fours off 116 balls.

The total was the highest recorded in one-day internationals at Newlands, the previous best being 245 for eight by South Africa against Australia in 1996-97 but it was not quite enough to stop South Africa.

**SCOREBOARD**  
Scoreboard in the sixth and final limited overs international between South Africa and New Zealand at Newlands here Saturday.

**NEW ZEALAND**  
Nevin Abrahams b Telemachus 12  
Astle c Boje b Pollock 8  
Fleming c Rhodes b Donald 8

**PERTH, Nov 4:** West Indies cricket captain Jimmy Adams Saturday questioned whether the corruption which had blackened the game's image, could ever be completely removed, reports AFP.

"Will the root problem ever be solved?" he asked as his side arrived here at the start of their Australian tour, embracing a five-Test series and a triangular one-day contest also involving Zimbabwe.

"Will you ever get to a point where people (cricketers) will never be approached by bookies? How do you solve that? You will always have gambling. And that is the root problem. How do you remove that?"

Adams was commenting on an explosive Indian report issued this week claiming West Indies star batsman Brian Lara was among a group of international stars to have been paid money by an Indian bookmaker to fix matches or provide information.

Lara, who is alleged to have taken 40,000 US dollars to under-perform, refused to talk to the media here after the side's arrival.

Team manager Ricky Skerritt said Lara had placed the matter in the hands of his lawyer in England who had told him not to add anything to a statement issued there categorically denying he had taken money to under-perform in two games in 1994.

Adams said he believed it was possible for international cricket to be cleaned up, but that depended on the International Cricket Council (ICC).

"Brian has been keeping his chin up in the circumstances," Adams said. "I don't think anybody enjoys going through what he is going through, but he is in a pretty pleasant mood."

"We have a tightly knit unit, and Brian gets on well with the other players."

Skerritt said "Brian is obviously very concerned about this, because he is totally unaware of any of this activity, and has denied having ever been involved in any such activity."

"So we are focusing on the cricket, trying to give Brian as much support as we can, but we are going to try to do everything we can not to distract us from why we are here."

Twose c Kallis b Boje 103  
Cairns c Pollock b Telemachus 84  
McMillan lbw b Pollock 7  
Harris c Pollock b Telemachus 6  
Parore run out 1  
Sivris run out 8  
Walker not out 2  
O'Connor not out 1  
Total: (For 9 wickets in 50 overs) 256  
Extras: (lb-7, w-7, nb-2) 16  
Fall of wickets: 1-23; 2-24; 3-39; 4-189; 5-218; 6-38; 7-239; 8-249; 9-256

**Bowler**  
Pollock 10 1 44 2  
Telemachus 10 1 30 3  
Donald 10 0 47 1  
Kallis 5 0 52 0  
Abrahams 10 0 40 0  
Klusener 2 0 27 0  
Boje 3 0 9 1

**SOUTH AFRICA**  
Cullinan b O'Connor 10  
Kirsten c and b Harris 25  
Kallis lbw b O'Connor 0  
Boje c Parore b O'Connor 8  
Rhodes st Parore b Walker 69  
Boucher b Harris 46  
Klusener not out 59  
Pollock c sub (Tufey) b Walker 8  
Abrahams not out 16  
Extras: (lb-9, w-5, nb-3) 17  
Total: (for 7 wickets, 50 overs) 258  
Fall of wickets: 1/16, 2/16, 3/30, 4/65, 5/171, 6/173, 7/189

**Bowler**  
Cairns 10 0 45 0  
O'Connor 9 1 55 3  
Sivris 9 0 47 0  
Harris 10 0 45 2  
Walker 9 1 43 2  
Astle 3 0 14 0  
Did not bat: A. Donald, R. Telemachus.

Umpires: R. Koertzen, I. Howell (both Rsa). TV umpire: W. Diedericks (Rsa). Match referee: Talat Ali (Pakistan).

**Result: South Africa won by 3 wickets**  
Man of match: Lance Klusener.  
Series: South Africa won 5-0.  
Man of series: Nicky Boje.



JIMMY ADAMS

Skerritt said: "As the tour goes on - as Brian makes his hundreds - you will have access to Brian the cricketer."

The report said Gupta told Indian Central Bureau of Investigation officers he had paid Lara 40,000 US dollars to under-perform in two one-day matches during the tour of India in 1995.

The other players named in the report included disgraced former South African captain Hansie Cronje, former Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin, former England captain Alec Stewart, former New Zealand captain Martin Crowe and Australian batting star Mark Waugh.

Coach Roger Harper said that during his time as a player there were stories going around about what might be happening in relation to money changing hands.

"There were stories, but they were just rumours and stories. You heard things being said, but nothing to say that anything was really happening," he said.

"I had no reason to doubt or question any result or any performance on the field."

Harper said the team members would let Lara know they were behind him, because he had categorically denied all the allegations, and the players wanted him to know they would support him all the way.

"If Brian tells me he is not involved, that is good enough for me," Harper said. "I have every reason to trust him and believe what he says."

Jadeja dared the CBI to publish his purported conversations with Rajesh Kalra -- an arrested bookmaker who has been linked to a match-fixing scandal involving disgraced South African skipper Hansie Cronje and four of his teammates.

"It is common knowledge the police have transcripts of various conversations between a number of persons - including Kalra - they had under investigation, which culminated in the unearthing of the Cronje scandal," he said.

"I request the CBI or the police to make public the recordings of Kalra's conversations with me, as they would undoubtedly reveal the contents of the telephone conversations I am said to have had with Kalra," Jadeja said.

Jadeja had told the CBI that he also knew failed Bollywood actor Kishan Kumar - another bookie who was arrested by the Delhi Police in the Cronje scandal that erupted in April this year.

Australian Lleyton Hewitt plays a backhand return against Briton Greg Rusedski during his Stuttgart Masters quarterfinal yesterday. -- AFP photo



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Putin praises chess king

MOSCOW, Nov 4: President Vladimir Putin congratulated Russia's new chess king Vladimir Kramnik on Friday for unseating legendary champ Garry Kasparov and continuing the country's tradition of chess dominance, reports AFP.

"I am genuinely happy that our native chess school has given the world a new star," Putin said in a statement.

Kramnik, 25, became the world's 15th world champion when he defeated Kasparov in 15 games at the Brain Games Championship in London.

Nine of the world's fifteen world men's chess champions have been either Soviets or Russians.

Yevgeny, Wayne in last four

STUTTGART, Nov 4 (AP): What happened to the ATP's search for new talent?

When the men's tennis association recently launched its new promotional campaign, it gave it a "New Balls Please" slogan centered on a crop of young players who the ATP hopes will become the stars of tomorrow.

But of the chosen group, only one has reached the semifinals of the Stuttgart Masters Series - Lleyton Hewitt.

Sebastian Grosjean is relatively young at 22, but he is not featured in the ATP campaign.

The other semifinalists are definitely old material. Wayne Ferreira is 29, the oldest player in the tournament, who last won a title in 1999 (Tokyo), snatching a three-year drought. The South African is talking about retirement.

Yevgeny Kafelnikov is 26, and he already has two Grand Slam titles - the French Open in 1996 and the Australian Open in 1999, plus the Olympic gold medal in Sydney.

Two of the brightest hopes, two-time French Open champion Gustavo Kuerten and this year's US Open champion Marat Safin, both lost in the third round - as did Agassi.

Kafelnikov, at No 6 the highest-seeded player left in the field, rallied to beat Sjeng Schalken 4-6, 6-1, 6-4 to reach the semifinals.

He will play No 8 Hewitt, the only other seeded player left in the field. The Australian ousted Greg Rusedski of Britain 6-4, 6-4.

In another quarterfinal, Ferreira beat Andrei Pavel 6-0, 7-5 and will next play Grosjean, a Frenchman who ousted 28-year-old American Michael Chang 7-5, 1-6, 6-2.

Kafelnikov said the key to his victory was patience.

"I kept my momentum going. I was waiting for the right moment to attack," Kafelnikov said. "I think I did it successfully the last two sets."

Kafelnikov is coming off his fourth consecutive Kremlin Cup title in Moscow.

A former No 1, Kafelnikov is now one match victory away from gaining a place in the season-ending Masters Cup later this month in Lisbon, Portugal.

Ferreira reached his second semifinal of the year.

Clijsters routs Kournikova

LEIPZIG, Germany, Nov 4: Anna Kournikova will have to wait for her first title after getting overpowered Saturday in the semifinals of the Sparkassen Cup by rising 17-year-old Kim Clijsters of Belgium, reports AP.

Clijsters, the only unseeded player left, beat the world No. 10 Russian, 6-2, 6-3, pounding her forehead to win almost every long rally at the 535,000-dollar event.

Kournikova, slamming her racket against the court in frustration, lost the first set in just 20 minutes to Clijsters, who has charged up the ranking to No. 31 in less than two years.

Shiv Sena

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"At no time have I ever accepted money or any other form of consideration for under-performing in a cricket match, whether at domestic, international or any other level."

Jadeja's statement said the CBI charged him with match-fixing simply because he had discussed cricket with people he had met, which he argued was not a crime.

He added that he was not aware three people who talked to him about the game were bookmakers.

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What happened to the other K

LONDON, Nov 4: After 15 years of dominating chess, Garry Kasparov was Friday contemplating life as an ex-champion -- while the chess world struggled to understand his astonishingly under-par performance against his former pupil, Vladimir Kramnik, reports AFP.

The giant of the chequered board had to win Thursday's game in the world championship staged in London in order to have a chance of retaining his crown.

After a four-hour confrontation and 38 moves, Kasparov, who had the advantage of playing white, threw in the sponge and settled for a draw, giving his opponent an unassailable lead of 8.5 points to 6.5.

The young pretender Kramnik, still only 25, entered history, pocketing 800,000 pounds (about 1.1 million euros) in prize money.

The player who had defeated his former master punched the air twice in delight as the audience of about 200 clapped in appreciation.

Kasparov, 37, has dominated chess since winning his first world title in 1985.

But in the Brain Games Championship in west London, his performance has been such that many observers could not believe this was the Kasparov they knew.

The player once labelled the "Beast of Baku" after the capital of his native Azerbaijan and whom no opponent could name for a decade and a half seemed

to have lost the powerful ambition and fighting spirit that had been his hallmarks to date.

Afterwards, he said simply: "I didn't play my best during this championship."

"I was not outplayed on the board, I was out-prepared". He added that his openings, which players work out before games, had not worked.

Eric Schiller, Kasparov's friend for 20 years, ventured another explanation -- that the Grand Master has never recovered properly after his defeat by the IMB computer Deep Blue in 1997 in New York.

The Daily Telegraph said: "Although his title was not at stake, his self-confidence was the willpower which could crush human egos made no impact on microchips."

Other observers have come up with a far more prosaic explanation. He was beaten by an ice-cool, younger opponent, a chess genius in his own right who has been gaining in strength and finally overcame his master.

Kasparov spotted Kramnik's potential in 1987 and took him on as one of his elite students in Moscow. Now Kramnik is the first human to beat Kasparov in a series of games.

Kasparov is committed to playing three tournaments next year, but, according to the Daily Telegraph, he has little chance of regaining his crown.

"Comebacks are rare in chess," said the paper Friday. "The psychological damage inflicted by defeat is too severe."

The British media speculated that Kasparov was distressed at the custody battle with his first wife, Natasha, over their seven-year-old daughter, Polina.

According to The Times, the child lives with her mother in New York and Kasparov, who is said to pay 28,000 dollars a month to his ex-wife in alimony, may not be able to visit his daughter as often as he would like.

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Secret of their success

MOSCOW, Nov 4 (AFP): Vladimir Kramnik, slayer of the "Beast of Baku" (the now ex-world champion Garry Kasparov), is just the latest in a long line of "wunderkinder" produced by the Russian chess system.

The 25-year-old was beating relatives only months after learning how to play the game from his father at the age of four in the family home in an isolated resort on Russia's Black Sea coast.

By the age of 10, he had beaten two Grand Masters and became world junior champion six years later, a victory which saw him become one of Kasparov's elite students in Moscow in 1986.

While much of Russia's infrastructure has suffered a virulent decline following the collapse of the Soviet Union a decade ago, the depth of the Russian chess tradition has seen the game survive and flourish.

"The success of the Russian school comes down to the fact that it has maintained the traditions of the Soviet school of chess," said Andrei Selivanov, president of the Russian Chess Federation.

"There are more and more children playing and there are chess clubs all over the country," said Selivanov, who is also a deputy in the Russian lower house of parliament, the State Duma.

Despite the economic hardship suffered by many sports