

Pressure on Ganguly

REUTERS, Bangalore  
India's selectors admitted they were worried about the poor batting form of skipper Sourav Ganguly but said on Sunday it was too early to say whether he would be sacked.

"It is worrying for us he is not doing well," India's chief selector Chandu Borde told reporters after the third and final Test against England ended in a draw when the fifth day's play was washed out by rain.

India won the series 1-0 by virtue of their 10-wicket victory in the first Test in Mohali.

Ganguly has not scored a Test hundred for two years and, since taking over as captain 16 Tests ago, he has recorded only three half-centuries.

The left-hander again failed to pass 50 in four innings in the series against England, managing only 68 runs at an average of 22.66.

Borde said: "This patch comes in every cricketer's life. Unfortunately, in his case, it has prolonged quite a lot."

India's chief selector said Ganguly had been appointed team captain until the end of the one-day series against England in January and February.

"It is too early to say now (if Ganguly faced the axe), when we have selected him for the entire series," Borde said.

Ganguly later admitted to a news conference that he had experienced a tough year and was worried about his performance.

"Yes, obviously (I am worried)," he said.

"I've been getting out in the 40s too many number of times and that is a major concern. I've been getting too many starts and not converting them."

Eng can hold

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nearly level the series," former skipper Krishnamachari Srikkanth wrote in The Hindu newspaper.

He also criticised senior Indian batsmen for complacency and urged national selectors to pick only those who perform and not go by statistics or reputation.

"There should be no such thing as a permanent fixture, and none should take his place for granted," he wrote.

Man-of-the-series Tendulkar was outstanding, scoring 307 runs in four innings at an average of 76.75, but skipper Sourav Ganguly's poor Test batting form continued.

The left-hander has come under pressure to retain his job after making only 68 runs in four innings while Vangipurappu Laxman and Rahul Dravid also managed only one fifty each.

Former Test all-rounder Ravi Shastri also praised Hussain while criticising Ganguly.

"Hussain was outstanding... He batted and fielded well, rung in shrewd bowling changes, and had a plan for each of the Indian batsmen showing his preparation," he wrote in The Times of India.

"In contrast, Ganguly struggled to get runs or raise the level of performance of his men," he added.

Former England captain Ian Botham, writing in the same paper, defended Hussain's controversial move to ask left-arm spinner Ashley Giles to bowl around leg-stump, in particular to deny scoring chances to Tendulkar in Bangalore.

"There has been plenty written about the line..., but as long as it's effective I don't think there is anything wrong in adopting such a strategy."

"The England side may have lost the series but they certainly have gained in every department of the game. They picked themselves up marvellously after a heavy defeat, and looked the better side both in Ahmedabad and Bangalore," Botham added.



New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani lights the Olympic flame during a presentation at the Rockefeller Center in New York on December 23. Giuliani served as one of the many torchbearers in New York as the Olympic flame moves across the USA for the 2002 Winter Games in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Giuliani carries the torch

AP/AF, New York

Family and friends of the victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks took turns at carrying the Olympic torch Sunday after it arrived in New York.

"It is meant to bestow honour on the people of New York," said Ahmad Corbett, a spokesman for the Olympic committee.

The Olympic flame evoked a myriad of emotions as it was carried through New York -- from a solemn ceremony in front of the Statue of Liberty to a rousing welcome for Mayor Rudolph Giuliani at Rockefeller Center.

Giuliani paid tribute to victims of the September attacks, citing emergency workers killed while trying to save others: "I carry this flame as a representative of these wonderful people."

Thousands crowded Rockefeller Center to watch as Giuliani, wearing

a New York Police Department coat and Fire Department of New York hat, used the torch to light a cauldron under a large statue of the Greek god Prometheus.

The cauldron will keep the flame burning until Wednesday, when the torch will head for Connecticut and Rhode Island on its 65-day, 13,500-mile journey to the February 8-24 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City.

The flame arrived in midtown Manhattan after a ferry carried it from Queens past the Statue of Liberty.

Fourteen people -- police officers, firefighters and relatives of September 11 victims -- each held the torch as the ferry paused in front of the statue.

With the statue's flame lighting the sky in the background, several of the Olympic torchbearers held up pictures of lost colleagues and loved ones. The torchbearers, Olympic committee members and other guests sang "God Bless America".

Connor Geraghty, who lost his firefighter father, Edward Geraghty,

on September 11, carried the torch off the ferry with his mother, Mary Geraghty.

"I'm not doing this just for my husband but for all of the victims -- the rescue workers and the civilians -- for every single one of them. We want them to know that we represent all of them. That's what made this such an honour," Mary Geraghty said.

The torch was carried toward the plaza in Rockefeller Center and was passed off to other runners, including Lyzbeth Glick, whose husband, Jeremy, was aboard United Airlines Flight 93, which crashed in Pennsylvania on September 11.

Earlier Sunday, the torch was carried across the Goethals Bridge into Staten Island to begin the New York leg of its 125-city trek. After winding through Staten Island, the torch was taken across the Verrazano Bridge into Brooklyn.

More than 100 runners, nominated for the honour by friends and relatives, carried the torch on its trip through New York City.

Nash appeals against ban

REUTERS, Auckland

New Zealand all-rounder Dion Nash has appealed against his 13-day ban from domestic cricket for breaching the code of conduct by abusing an opposition player and an umpire in Auckland's four-day game against Otago last week.

The appeal was brought by Auckland Cricket who, while not arguing with the reasons for the ban, were concerned about its length and how it would affect the province's chances in the four-day championship and the first two games in the one-day competition.

A decision by New Zealand Cricket on the appeal is not expected until December 28 when Nash is expected to start his ban by missing Auckland's four-day championship game against Northern Districts in Hamilton.

The suspension could cost Nash a place in the New Zealand one-day squad which will be returning to Australia for a triangular series also involving South Africa.

The squad will be announced on January 3.

ODI tour of India Thorpe has two days to decide

REUTERS, London

England batsman Graham Thorpe has been told he has until Boxing Day to declare his availability for the one-day tour to India next month.

Chairman of selectors David Graveney told BBC Radio on Monday that the December 26 deadline would give him the "right sort of time span" to allow the England party to plan ahead.

Thorpe pulled out of the second Test against India in Ahmedabad on December 11 to fly home immediately, citing "personal problems".

Graveney told BBC Radio 4: "It's obviously a very difficult time for him. All we've said to him is to give him maximum support and time."

"But he also realises that we've got to be fair to everybody else and inform them in due time."

He stressed that Thorpe would be given longer before deciding whether he can go on the New Zealand leg of the winter tour in February and March.

Alec Stewart, who initially declined to tour India after allegations there that he was involved in match-fixing which were later rejected by the ICC, said last week he was now available for the one-day tour there.

Graveney refused to say whether he would be a possible replacement for Thorpe but added: "I'll certainly have a chat to him."

"I'm pleased that he's changed his mind and it's something we'll have to talk about."

"I'm not prepared to say either way. You've got to remember that people have already been selected."

England lost their three-match Test series in India 1-0 but had the upper hand in the rain-affected third Test in Bangalore which finished on Sunday. Stewart's replacement, James Foster, was widely regarded as one of the tour's success stories.

A player, soldier & patriot

Tennis

REUTERS, Zagreb

Wimbledon champion Goran Ivanisevic pledged to defend his homeland Croatia with his life, while taking oath as a soldier for a compulsory six-month service.

"I will defend and protect my country at the price of my life," a solemn Ivanisevic, clad in military uniform, shouted together with several hundred new soldiers lined up on a freezing morning in a Zagreb barracks.

"It was great, a great honour, though a bit cold," he told journalists after the admission ceremony.

"The army will allow me to follow my plans, go away and play tournaments," he said, adding he sought no other privileges. "I do everything other soldiers do, wait in line for food and all."

The 30-year old will lead Croatia in their Davis Cup tie against Germany in February. "It's going to be tough, although we have a slight advantage of playing at home," he said.

While still coming to terms with the military life he started with a two-week basic drill near his Adriatic hometown Split in November, the towering Croat said he liked the food but had no talent for weapons.

"I can disassemble an AK-47 (semi-automatic gun), but assemble it back together, phew, no way," he laughed.

Ivanisevic was formally drafted in September as a member of a sports squad, after passing a fitness test where he complained of poor eyesight which has forced him to consider wearing lenses.

But all in all, "this was absolutely



A file photograph of Goran Ivanisevic, dressed in a Croatian army uniform, shows the Wimbledon champion salute on the first day of his compulsory military service in a barrack near his home city of Split on November 28.

the best year of my life".

Ivanisevic beat Patrick Rafter to win his first Grand Slam title at Wimbledon in July, after ending as the tournament's runner-up three times in the past decade.

Ivanisevic, who ended the year as 13th in the world, has said he aims to ignore shoulder pain and play for two more years before retiring.

Arnaud gets free pass

Tennis

REUTERS/AFP, Melbourne

Sydney Olympics bronze medalist Arnaud Di Pasquale has been given a wildcard for next month's Australian Open, organisers have said.

Di Pasquale and world number three junior Marion Bartoli received the French wildcards under a reciprocal arrangement with the French Open, Australian Open officials said.

Paradorn Srichaphan of Thailand, ranked 120th in the world, and Cho Yoon-Jeong of Korea, ranked 115th, received the Asian wildcards to the Australian Open as winners of the men's and women's singles in the Asian Championships in Hong Kong which ended on Sunday. The two were awarded with the entries as part of a plan to develop tennis in the region.

Under the French wildcard agreement, the French Tennis Federation is allowed to nominate one male and one female player for the Australian Open wildcard in return for similar entry for Australian

players in the French Open. Former Australian Open champion Mary Pierce, 26, now ranked 129th in the world, was also given a wildcard this month.

The Frenchwoman won the title in 1995.

Organisers also awarded women's wildcards to local players Christina Wheeler and Cindy Watson while men's wildcards went to Australians Jaymon Crabb and Todd Larkham and American Taylor

Dent, son of former Australian Davis Cup player Phil Dent, the 1974 Australian Open runner-up.

Six more wildcards are yet to be announced.

The Australian Open, one of four Grand Slam tournaments played on the international circuit each year, starts on January 14 in Melbourne.

Americans Andre Agassi and Jennifer Capriati are defending champions. The two-week tournament attracted more than 500,000 spectators in January this year.

Meanwhile, Swede Magnus Norman, the former world number one who missed much of last season with a hip injury, has been ruled out of next month's Australian Open.

"He is making clear progress and has started jogging," Norman's coach Fredrik Rosengren was quoted as saying in the Swedish tabloid Aftonbadet.

"The Australian Open is completely out of the question. In January we expect to travel to the United States to practice on clay."

Rosengren hoped that Norman, 25, would be fit to enter a tournament starting February 11 in Chile. The Open starts in Melbourne on January 14.



ARNAUD DI PASQUALE

Leg theory kicks up a fuss

Cricket

REUTERS, London

England's leg-side bowling tactics during the third and final Test against India in Bangalore have sparked a mixed response from around the world.

In Bangalore, England's left-arm spinner Ashley Giles bowled over the wicket to Sachin Tendulkar, persistently maintaining a line into the rough outside the right-hander's leg-stump, denying the batsman the opportunity to play any shot except a risky sweep. He was eventually out for 90.

The tourists' coach Duncan Fletcher told reporters: "It was a policy that evolved as the tour went on. On a flat wicket, do you just bowl throw-downs and let him (Tendulkar) score or do you come up with a plan?"

Hussain wrote in his weekly column in The Sunday Telegraph: "I was more than a little disappointed to read the English press quoted back in the local papers and slamming our tactics."

"Not only do they expect me to come out here with an inexperienced side, they also expect me to ask their (India's) batsmen where they want me to bowl at them."

"I apologise for bowling out

India for 290 and 230 on flat wickets."

Former India captain and opening batsman Sunil Gavaskar was, however, critical of England's tactics.

"England can say they (the tactics) worked as they got Tendulkar out for less than 100 but, in doing so, they once again confirmed they are a boring side that drives spectators to despair," he said.

"Tendulkar could have gone on padding away deliveries... but he is made of sterner stuff and he thought more in terms of the crowd than his wicket and perished in trying to give the crowd something to cheer about."

Some of the most stinging criticism of England's bowling came from British newspapers, with former Somerset captain Peter Roebuck, writing in The Sunday Times during the Test series between Australia and South Africa, pulling no punches.

"The sight of Englishmen bowling leg theory to Sachin Tendulkar has provoked fury and confirmed the impression that Englishmen do not care about the game," Roebuck wrote.

"The English have produced bodyline-contrived finishes, the modern leg-before rule, declaration bowling and other regrettable cynicisms."

Former England off-spinner Vic Marks, writing in The Observer newspaper, called for

the game's legislators to outlaw the methods employed by Giles in India.

"Once the batsman has padded away two deliveries pitched outside his leg-stump, the umpire should be obliged to call 'no ball' to any further deliveries in that over pitched outside leg-stump that are padded away by the batsman," Marks suggested.

"One run would be added to the score and an extra delivery would be required to complete the over."

"This is not breaking too much new ground. Already the umpire is obliged to call 'no ball' if a fast bowler has already bowled two head-high short-pitched deliveries in an over. The same principle could be applied to spinners."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS  
1 Wheedle  
5 Sound booster  
8 Croupier's tool  
12 Rapid chord  
14 Couturier Cassini  
15 Unrivaled computer founder  
17 Greek conso-nants  
18 Chubby Checker moves?  
20 Nerd  
23 Read cursorily  
24 Rem-brandts, e.g.  
25 Uses plastic  
28 Type units  
29 Board meeting prop  
30 Dale's mister  
32 "Easter Parade" star  
34 Your Majesty

35 Gridlock noise  
36 Hazzard siblings  
37 Costello's partner  
40 Weep loudly  
41 Placed data, often  
42 Close and cozy  
47 Rodents for "Malice"  
48 Ship-related  
49 Brewery creations  
50 Dropout's second chance?  
51 Semester

2 Sour-dough's hope  
3 Gorilla  
4 Historic Persian king  
5 Logic-puzzle data, often  
6 Grafton's "for Malice"  
7 "Wish you were here" notice  
8 Regatta activity  
9 Reaction re Yorick  
10 Lane co-worker  
11 Protein sources

13 Smooth-talking  
19 Imperfection  
20 Buck's mate  
21 House section  
22 "Born Free" young'un  
23 Leg part  
25 Monks' music  
26 Actor Estrada  
27 Ticked off  
29 Coagulate  
31 Referendum choice  
33 — scholar  
34 Send in  
36 Porter's "Let's —"  
37 Mater preceder  
38 \$50, in "Monopoly"  
39 Shade of blue  
40 Poker variety  
43 Dundee denial  
44 Expert  
45 Flitch  
46 Shade source

Solution time: 24 mins.

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CRYPTOQUIP  
S B C B A Q Q L B I Z V C O F O S N  
R B I S D M O B I Q U D R P K M  
V D K M O S . Q P K R O A L O N L D F O  
K O S F O Q . B U Q A O O Z .  
Saturday's Cryptoquip: IF PEACHES WERE LIVING THEY WOULD PROBABLY BE VERY CRUEL, HAVING HEARTS OF STONE.  
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: O equals E  
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.