

Bradman is business

Cricket

REUTERS, Bowral

The death of Donald Bradman a year ago has turned into a money-spinner for unscrupulous profiteers who prepared well to cash in on the Australian batsman's fame.

The value of cricket bats, post-cards and photographs autographed by Bradman and letters written by the reclusive Australian has soared since his death at the age of 92 last February.

Autographed cricket bats are now selling for up to 6,000 Australian dollars (2,220 pounds) and signed photographs of "The Don" for up to 1,000 dollars.

But the Bradman Foundation, which runs the Bradman Museum in his childhood home of Bowral, 80 kms southwest of Sydney, said some people had been preying on the cricketer and were now gaining from the memorabilia boom.

Richard Mulvaney, executive director of the non-profit Bradman Foundation, said Bradman was inundated with requests for his autograph as his health became increasingly frail in his final years. He died after a bout of pneumonia.

Bradman Foundation staff, recording Bradman's correspondence, realised a couple of years ago that he was receiving lots of requests for autographs from similar names and addresses.

"It was obvious they were preying on an elderly man who could not tell the difference between a bona fide fan and a spiv (conman),"

Mulvaney told Reuters in his office adjacent to the perfectly manicured Bradman oval in picturesque Bowral.

"It was a ruse to confuse Sir Donald and obtain hundreds of signatures but it was also harassment. When we drew his attention to this con, he was very upset."

Despite a police investigation into the practice, Bradman continued to sign items. He worried about exploitation, particularly after letters in which he wrote about the death of his wife Jessie in 1997 were offered for sale, then withdrawn.

Bradman, who ran a stockbroking firm after retiring from Test cricket in 1948, did not like talking on the telephone but was a prolific letter writer.

Mulvaney said the foundation, which has set up its own corporation to produce and sell Bradman merchandise, suggested Bradman stop signing anything or sending out autographs.

"But he wouldn't have it. He felt there were many genuine people out there and he had an obligation to them," he said.

Mulvaney said the demand for Bradman's signature rocketed in the mid-1990s as sports memorabilia shops started to appear in Australia, providing a new market that sent prices surging.

Superstars and Legends, the largest franchise of memorabilia shops in Australia, said the demand for anything touched by Bradman was a phenomenon previously unseen in Australia and yet to be rivalled by any other sports person.

Last year former Australian cricket captain, Greg Chapell, sold

remains unrivalled more than 50 years after he quit the game.

During his 20 years playing world cricket, Bradman notched up 6,996 runs in 52 Tests at an average of 99.94, scoring 29 centuries. He captained the Australian team from 1935-48.

"He was in great demand before he died but since he passed away it has risen even further and prices are up as much as 300 per cent," product development manager Alex Fulkoski told this news agency.



SIR DONALD BRADMAN

"But we are also seeing quite a lot of product out there. People were well prepared for his death."

Fulkoski said Bradman was "in a league of his own".

"We just haven't seen this level of demand for any other sports star or athlete. Don Bradman is an icon."

Some prices are astonishing. Last year former Australian cricket captain, Greg Chapell, sold

five personal letters from Bradman for 26,000 Australian dollar.

The letters were written during the 1977 World Series Cricket saga and were Bradman's reaction to comments Chapell made to the press. The letters are said to show an insight into Bradman's almost obsessive interest in the Australian captaincy.

But the letters went to auction and never hit the public arena -- much to the relief of the Bradman Foundation -- after they were purchased by an anonymous group of business people calling themselves Some Australians Value Ethics (SAVE).

"These letters should be cherished with respect and not used for personal gain," said the group via a public relations firm. It handed them over to the Bradman Museum.

As the prices have risen, so have the number of forgeries.

Sydney-based forensic examiner Chris Anderson has taken on the job of authenticating Bradman signatures after Australian police seized several batches of items with fake autographs.

Anderson has collated a database of Bradman signatures from 1920 until 2000, aided by the foundation, for authentication.

"Since his death people have come to us wanting to check his signature on items they think could be of value," Anderson said.

"Everyone knows people are keen to get hold of signed Bradman items. He's a sporting hero and people want a part of that."

Friendly cricket Coats clip BATB's wings

SPORTS REPORTER

Coats Bangladesh Limited defeated British American Tobacco Bangladesh (BATB) by five wickets in a friendly cricket match at the BATB ground in New DOHS on Friday.

Sent into bat, BATB were dismissed for 113. Dr Jahangir top-scored with 17 while Rashed made 16. Rashed was the most successful Coats bowler taking three for 11. Aftab, Shamol and Ahsan took two wickets apiece.

In reply, Coats made 116 for five. Rashed also shone with the bat hitting 33 while Adil made 19. BATB's Mehabub took three for 22.

Rajshahi cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Bandhan Krira Chakra and Bright Star Club won their respective matches of the Premier Division cricket league yesterday.

In the first match of the day at the local divisional stadium, Bandhan defeated United Sporting Club by two wickets.

Winning the toss, United decided to bat first and collected 185 runs losing nine wickets in the stipulated 42 overs.

In reply, Bandhan reached the target for eight in 41.1 overs.

Bright Star Club beat Mukti Sangha by 70 runs in the second match of the day at the local district stadium.

Bright Star won the toss and batted first. They collected 196 runs losing nine wickets in the stipulated 45 overs.

In reply, Mukti made 126 losing all the wickets in 41.1 overs.

M\$ Gilchrist?

AFP, Perth

Dynamic wicketkeeper-batsman Adam Gilchrist is set to become the first Australian cricketer to earn two million dollars (one million US) a year, a report said Saturday.

Gilchrist, 30, will shortly sign the most lucrative bat sponsorship deal in Australian history, The West Australian reported.

The deal, with sports goods company Puma, alone will be worth 300,000 dollars (150,000 US) a year, and with cricket payments, other sponsorships and endorsements, his annual earnings will top two million dollars, the daily said.

Indian cricket star Sachin Tendulkar, who makes more than 20 million dollars (10 million US) a year, is reportedly the only other cricketer in the world to make more.

Australian captain Steve Waugh, leg-spinner Shane Warne and fast bowlers Glenn McGrath and Brett Lee reportedly earn just over one million dollars (500,000 US) a year each.

According to the report, Gilchrist offers the most attractive package to the corporate world.

His extraordinary ability to change the course of a game with his thunderous batting, his wholesome image and outstanding communications skills appeal to people across the spectrum of age and standing.

Gilchrist's manager, Stephen Atkinson, said: "The sponsorships are great, but Adam is mindful that cricket is where it starts and that, if it is not his priority, the other things could become redundant."

"He is a senior member of the highest profile national team in Australia, but his qualities as a person and his reliability are what make him stand out."

For his part, Gilchrist said: "Cricket is the absolute priority for me and my number one job is to score runs and take catches."

"If I am not focused on my cricket, it is not beneficial to anyone - me, the team or the sponsors."

"But sponsorships can open up various avenues after cricket, and I hope to establish long-term partnerships with my sponsors that will continue after I have finished playing."

Gilchrist is an automatic choice for Australia in Tests and one-day internationals.



PHOTO: AFP

American Monica Seles plays a backhand return against Russian Anna Kournikova in the Pan Pacific Open semifinal yesterday.

Seles, Hingis face off

Tennis

AFP, Tokyo

Monica Seles outclassed Anna Kournikova in the semifinals on Saturday to set up a re-match between former world number ones against Martina Hingis at the Pan Pacific Open tennis tournament.

The American third seed, who lost to Hingis in three sets in the Australian Open semifinals a week ago, pulled off a tough 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 victory over the Russian in one hour, 21 minutes.

Top seed Hingis, the winner here in 1997, 1999 and 2000, needed just one hour to beat Silvia Farina Elia of Italy 6-0, 6-4 to earn a final berth for a sixth year running.

"I've been working on it (her game) for three months, so it's nice it's paying off," said Hingis, who came back in action to win at Sydney after a three-month layoff

for ankle surgery which cost her the number one ranking.

"I have this great feeling to play here, because somehow I feel like more responsible always coming from having played well in Australia, like sixth consecutive finals there as well as here," added the 21-year-old, who was runner-up to Jennifer Capriati in Melbourne.

Only one service break, both in the second game, decided the winner of the first two sets as Seles and Kournikova went into the final set, and the Russian got ahead 2-0 up in the decider.

But Seles fought back to even at 2-2 and staged off one break point at 30-40 in the seventh game to keep it for 4-3.

Seles hit her strokes in full swing to force Kournikova to make an error four times consecutively from 0-15 to score a crucial break again in the eighth game, which eventually decided the winner.

"On this (fast) surface, you just have to go for it and that's what I tried to do and my opponent tried to

do today. And today, I just won more important points," said Seles after her fifth win over Kournikova in six matches.

Kournikova, whose ranking plummeted to 99th after a foot injury last season, appeared "happy" with her play after her disappointing first-round loss at the Australian Open two weeks ago.

"It was a great match and it was a tough one, too. I didn't have any chances in the first set and then suddenly I was playing easily in the second. Then in the third, it was just going both ways up and down," said Kournikova.

"Monica was just stronger mentally. I think that I have nothing to disappoint about. I am playing much better than I did two weeks ago and the beginning of the year."

"I'm really happy that finally I'm starting to find my form, play confident and go for my shots. I'm looking forward to my next few tournaments," added the 20-year-old.

Davis Cup opener Tough task for Aussies

Tennis

AFP, Sydney

Australia's depleted Davis Cup team fear their first round clash with Argentina in Buenos Aires will be even tougher than first thought.

Australia have reached the last three finals, winning in France in 1999, but are without world No 1 Lleyton Hewitt and dual US Open champion Patrick Rafter for their opening 2002 tie in South America.

Andrew Ilie and Scott Draper will make their Davis Cup debuts on February 8-10. Ilie, ranked 62, and Draper (218) are the lowest-ranked pair to play for Australia for years.

Wayne Arthurs (76) and Todd Woodbridge (2 in doubles) make up the rest of the Australian team to face an Argentine side led by world No.12 Guillermo Canas along with

Gaston Gaudio, No.43, Sydney International finalist Juan Ignacio Chela and doubles specialist Lucas Arnold.

Arthurs has described the clay courts of the misnamed Buenos Aires Lawn Tennis Club as even slower than Roland Garros but a typically defiant Ilie emerged from his first hit on Centre Court to claim Argentina might struggle with the burden of being overwhelming favourites.

"The court plays pretty slowly but the ball is quick through the air," said Arthurs in a statement issued by Tennis Australia here. "It's slower than the clay courts at the French Open. The clay here is stickier, whereas Roland Garros is more powdery."

Ilie said it could be difficult for Canas and company to match the expectations of Argentina's passionate and rowdy supporters who expect nothing less than victory

over a second-string Australian squad.

"The conditions are quite tough but it's going to be tough for Argentina, too," he said.

"The combination of the heat, the humidity, the court and a home crowd will put added pressure on the Argentinian players and could work in our favour."

Ilie is yet to win a singles match this year. The big-hearted but unpredictable player was beaten in the first round of the Australian Hardcourt Championships in Adelaide, Sydney International and Australian Open tournaments last month by Frenchman Paul-Henri Mathieu, American Andy Roddick and Spain's Albert Portas respectively.

The winner of the Australia-Argentina match progresses to a second round meeting with either Germany or Croatia, who clash in Zagreb next week.

Pepsi h'ball begins today

BSS, Dhaka

The Pepsi 14th National Handball Championship (men) begins at the Mirpur National Indoor Stadium today.

State Minister for Finance and Planning Anwarul Kabir Talukder will inaugurate the meet at 3 pm as chief guest.

The participating teams are: Bangladesh Rifles, Bangladesh Police, Chittagong City Sports Association, Rajshahi City Sports Association, Dhaka, Rangpur, Kushtia, Natore, Faridpur, Jessore, Khulna and Bandarban District Sports Association.

Flemo defends tactics

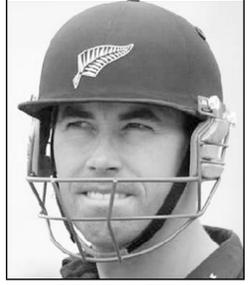
Cricket

REUTERS, Perth

New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming has defended his team's decision to concoct a heavy one-day defeat by South Africa on Friday, saying it gave the Kiwis a better chance of making the finals ahead of Australia.

Fleming said his team had no alternative other than to try and manufacture a massive defeat because of the way the triangular series rules were set up.

"We're extremely disappointed that we exhausted all other avenues of getting through...but when it comes down to it, pure survival is



STEPHEN FLEMING

the goal," Fleming said after his team crashed to a 67-run defeat at the WACA in Perth.

"They're the rules and we're going to use them. We don't particularly like it but if it gets us to the finals and gives us a chance of winning, who would say you're wrong doing that?"

New Zealand would have qualified automatically for a place in the finals if they had beaten South Africa but, under the complicated rules in place at the tournament, their next best result was to concede a heavy defeat.

Once it became apparent the Kiwis had little hope of overhauling South Africa's impressive total of 270 for five, Fleming ordered his players to bat slowly and ensure they scored less than 216. They finished on 203 for eight.

By doing that, New Zealand ensured South Africa collected a valuable bonus point to jump from last to first place and guarantee themselves a place in the finals.

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Showing sign

FROM PAGE 13

changes in a combination of wickets have failed to produce their best form in the contest.

The most likely change appears to be the sacking of long-time opening batsman Mark Waugh and his replacement with prolific left-hander Darren Lehmann, who was added to the Australian squad this week.

In six games in the contest, Mark Waugh has totalled only 92 runs, with a top score of 55 not out, for an average of 18.40.

Another possible, though less likely, change is the dropping of star leg-spinner Shane Warne, who has sometimes labored in this series for his modest six scalps for an average of 45.17.

Australia's selectors may consider the side's chances will be improved on the fast, bouncy Perth pitch if they play four specialist pacemen, Glenn McGrath, Jason Gillespie, Brett Lee and Andy Bichel, leaving the balance of 10 overs to be shared by part-time bowlers.

Steve Waugh can send down a few medium-pace overs, while Ricky Ponting, Damien Martyn and Lehmann (or Mark Waugh) also have limited bowling claims.

Mashud's maiden double

FROM PAGE 13

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Dhaka v Sylhet

Venue: Sylhet Stadium

SYLHET: First innings 152 (Nasirul 27, Tanna 21, Hasibul 21, Rafique 3-33, Fahim 3-59)

DHAKA: First innings (overnight 276-8) Mehrob c Rajin b Hasibul 29 Sajjad lbw b Hasibul 24 Jahangir c & b Kapali 108 Aminul lbw b Nayeem 12 Halim Shah b Tanna 27 Rafique lbw b Taposh 6 K Mahmud b Kapali 12 Kadir not out 7 Neeayam c Imon b Kapali 19 Fahim c Intiaz b Mistu 60 Saiful lbw b Mistu 0 Extras: (b-20, lb-3, nb-17, w-5) 45 Total: (All out in 130 overs) 394 Fall of wickets: 1-22, 2-56, 3-76, 4-166, 5-193, 6-232, 7-237, 8-268, 9-339

Bowler O M R W Sajjad 29 2 81 2 Rafique 26 13 37 2 Neeayam 6 0 17 1 Fahim 19 10 22 3 K Mahmud 10 6 14 0 Saiful 5 2 7 0 Mehrob 4 1 16 0

Extras: (b-20, lb-3, nb-17, w-5) 45 Total: (All out in 130 overs) 394 Fall of wickets: 1-22, 2-56, 3-76, 4-166, 5-193, 6-232, 7-237, 8-268, 9-339

Bowler O M R W Hasibul 29 2 81 2 Taposh 20 6 50 1 Mistu 9 1 30 2 Nasirul 3 1 11 0 Nayeem 18 4 40 1 Kapali 23 3 78 3 Parvez 9 3 10 0 Tanna 14 3 38 1 Rajin 5 0 24 0

SYLHET: Second innings Parvez c Saiful b Rafique 25 Intiaz lbw b Rafique 5

Nasir c Sajjad b Neeayam

Tushar c Kadir b Fahim

Rajin c Kadir b Fahim 49 Kapali not out 5 Neeayam lbw b Fahim 0 Hasibul not out 10 Extras: (b-7, lb-5, nb-5, w-2) 19 Total: (For 6 wickets in 70 overs) 125 Fall of wickets: 1-17, 2-18, 3-24, 4-94, 5-103, 6-104

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Rusedski in last four

AFP, Milan

Briton Greg Rusedski recovered from a slow start to win his quarter-final clash with Sjeng Schalken and book a last four berth in the 356,000 dollar ATP event here on Friday.

The number seven seed lost the opening set - his first of the week - 6-4, but bounced back to take the next on a tiebreak before brushing his Dutch rival aside 6-2 in the third.