

Opportunity at hand for India

CRICINFO, undated

India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have improved their ratings after the ICC Test Championship table was updated on Tuesday.

Although perversely, the year's biggest achievers, India, have earned the smallest rise of the three, because their famous home series win against Australia in March 2001 now falls outside the rating period.

As a result, India have slipped from fourth to fifth on the official table, although they will soon have an opportunity to put this right when they lock horns again with Australia in October.

If India win this eagerly awaited series, they will jump straight into second place, and a repeat of their 2-1 win would give them a rating of 111.

Although Pakistan were beaten 2-1 by India in a three-Test series earlier this year, these are the only two matches they have lost in the last 12 months. Their rating has also been helped by the fact that matches played in the 2000-01 period no longer count towards the standings. This was a year in which Pakistan lost at home to England and then drew in New Zealand and England.

Australia, of course, remain well clear at the top of the table. The update has improved their rating by two points to 129 and their lead at the top has extended to 22 points.

The updated ratings have been announced on July 20 because there are no further Test series to be completed before the end of the month.

Sparkling Sachin

FROM PAGE 13

When asked to make comments on young left-arm paceman Irfan Pathan, Sachin called him an exciting prospect for India.

"He is a very talented bowler. A God's gift I feel. The swing that he has, not so many left-armers could do that consistently like him. And it's something he should value and I am sure he knows what it is all about. I think we should not put pressure on him by telling him that you are the strike bowler and you do this and that. He is 20, 21. He will get better and we should stand behind him and support him when it's needed. If he is doing well he will maintain that way but when he does not, that is when the support is required. It's our responsibility."

The giant Durham bowler's contributions have been pivotal to the team's resurgence.

He has harvested 53 wickets at 16.69 runs apiece in his last eight



PHOTO: HASIBUR RAHMAN

Sabura Khatun, who set five national records, shows the V-sign after winning one event in the 21st national age-group swimming championships at the Bogra district swimming pool yesterday.

Eng have the trump card

Cricket

REUTERS, London

It's unlikely that Michael Vaughan will threaten to make West Indies grovel during their four-Test series starting on Thursday.

It's simply not his style. It would be a far less reckless declaration, however, than Tony Greig's similarly worded taunt almost 30 years ago.

England duly lost that series and continued losing.

During the 25 years up to 1998, West Indies won 10 out of 13 rubbers between the teams, with the other three stalemated.

The boot, however, will be firmly on the other foot as the sides head for Lord's and Vaughan seems to hold the big trumps.

England have just moved up to second in the world rankings on the back of six Test wins out of seven. They have dominated West Indies, struggling in eighth in the ICC Test Championship table, in their past two series. And Steve Harmison is in their changing room.

The giant Durham bowler's contributions have been pivotal to the team's resurgence.

He has harvested 53 wickets at 16.69 runs apiece in his last eight

Tests. Nine wickets at 8.77 against Bangladesh, 23 at 14.86 in West Indies -- including seven for 12 in the second innings in Jamaica -- followed by 21 victims at a shade over 22 each versus New Zealand.

West Indies' young pace attack, with the aggressive, bouncing Tino Best and the round-armed Fidel Edwards to the fore, looks raw by comparison.

England, however, have some worries.

First there is the absence of batsman Mark Butcher, replaced by Robert Key on the eve of his 43rd Test in a row after suffering neck whiplash in a minor car crash.

Then there are the fitness problems of all-rounder Andrew Flintoff, who is set to play as a specialist batsman.

Vaughan's other significant worry is closer to home.

Since taking over as captain a year ago, his batting has stalled. Before the promotion, he averaged 50.98 and, for a while, was regarded as the world's best batsman.

Since, he has been worth 33.25 a visit. A debate over whether Vaughan is big enough to shoulder the burden has already begun, albeit in whispers.

Brian Lara's batting, in contrast, has never suffered from the additional responsibility of captaincy,

and particularly so against England.

He averages almost 68 against them -- compared to an overall Test average of 53.71. His particular appetite for England trundlers has been heavily underlined by 375 against them in Antigua a decade ago, and by 400 not out at the same venue in April.

Significantly, though, neither innings were enough to win either match.

Any set of national selectors would want Lara in their line-up.

But, bowlers being more likely match-winners, most sides might still choose Harmison ahead of Lara and therein lies the main West Indian problem over the next month.

SQUADS

ENGLAND (from): Michael Vaughan (captain), Marcus Trescothick, Robert Key, Andrew Strauss, Graham Thorpe, Andrew Flintoff, Geraint Jones, Ashley Giles, Simon Jones, Matthew Hoggard, Steve Harmison, James Anderson.

WEST INDIES (from): Brian Lara (captain), Ramnaresh Sarwan, Chris Gayle, Devon Smith, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Dwayne Smith, Ridley Jacobs, Ravi Rampaul, Tino Best, Fidel Edwards, Jermaine Lawson, Pedro Collins, Omar Banks, Carlton Baugh, Dwayne Bravo, Sylvester Joseph.

Sabura shatters three records

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Sabura Khatun stole the show on the second day of the 21st National Age-group Swimming Championship when she made three national records in Bogra yesterday.

Returned to action after nearly two years due to a legal dispute over her possession between Ansar and BJMC, Sabura clocked 6min 23sec to break Merina Akhter's record in the 400m individual medley.

In the 800m free-style, the pool queen finished with 11m 40.14sec to floor another national record.

The derailing of the hosts also won the 200m free-style with a record timing of 2min 37.20sec. The previous best was 2min 50sec.

Still no decision on Fischer

AFP, Tokyo

Japanese officials said Wednesday they were still processing the case of wanted US chess legend Bobby Fischer and that an imminent decision on whether to deport him to the United States was unlikely.

Fischer, 61, who was detained last week for alleged violation of immigration law, "is still the subject of deportation proceedings," an official with the immigration office at Tokyo's Narita airport said.

Nat'l hockey

FROM PAGE 13

that begins today at the Moulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

A total of 16 teams, split into four groups, will take part in the first phase and only the group champions will join automatic qualifiers holders Dhaka and runners-up Dhaka University in the six-team super league.

Tournament committee secretary Zahidur Rahman Pushkin at a press conference yesterday informed that sponsors ANAS Group would bear the entire expense of Tk 3.5 lakh for the tournament.

GROUPS

A: Faridpur, Comilla, Dinajpur DSAs and Bangladesh Air Force.

B: Mymensingh, Patakhali DSAs, Bangladesh Army and Bangladesh Railway.

C: Jessore, Jhenidah, Magura DSAs and Bangladesh Navy.

D: Narayanganj, Rajshahi DSAs, BKSP and Bangladesh Police.

Three cheers

FROM PAGE 13

suspended play for about six minutes and when it resumed Gour sent Air Force captain Masum Parvez off.

Red card: Masum Parvez (Air Force).

Yellow cards: Zahidul Haq ad Humayun Kabir (Air Force).

TEAMS

BROTHERS UNION (from): Ali, Liton, Nazrul, Sujon, Rajani, Arman, Titto, Abul, Monwar, Tapu, Alfaz, Parvez Babu and Ritu.

BANGLADESH AIR FORCE (from): Masum, Ejaz, Masud, Mizanur, Humayun, Mahbub, Zahidul, Shahiduzzaman, Jamal, Faisal, Abdul, Tara, Ruhul and Hasnat.

Referee: Bharat Chandra Gour.

Just looking

FROM PAGE 13

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the Super League match of the Asia Cup between Bangladesh and India and Bangladesh at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground in Colombo yesterday.

BANGLADESH
Bashar b Pathan 2
Ashrafur run out 35
Saleh b b Pathan 0
Kapali c David b Nehra 10
Faisal b b b Harbhajan 17
Masud c David b Tendulkar 12
Manjarul b Tendulkar 21
Rafique b Tendulkar 0
Mahmud c Laxman b Sehwaig 22
Razzak b Pathan 21
Aziz not out 37

Extras: (b-4, lb-4, w-23, nb-6) 30
Total: (All out in 49.1 overs) 177
Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-10, 3-56, 4-92, 5-92, 6-117, 7-117, 8-141, 9-176

Bowler O M R W
Pathan 8.1 0 32 3
Balaji 7 0 32 0
Nehra 9 0 26 1
Harbhajan 10 2 20 1
Tendulkar 10 0 35 3
Sehwaig 5 0 24 1

INDIA
Sehwaig c Kapali b Aziz 16
Tendulkar not out 82
Ganguly c Kapali b Rafique 60
Laxman not out 1

Extras: (b-9, w-4, nb-6) 19
Total: (For 2 wickets in 38.3 overs) 178
Did not bat: Dravid, Yuvraj, Kaif, Pathan, Balaji, Nehra, Harbhajan

Fall of wickets: 1-19, 2-173

Bowler O M R W
Aziz 7 0 49 1
Razzak 10 0 40 0
Mahmud 8 1 28 0
Rafique 7 2 30 1
Manjarul 6.3 0 22 0

Result: India won by eight wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Sachin Tendulkar.

Toss: India.

Umpires: David Shepherd (England) and Billy Doctrove (West Indies)



PHOTO: STAR

A goalmouth action from yesterday's Nitol-Tata National Football League encounter between Brothers Union of Dhaka and Bangladesh Air Force at the Momenshahi Stadium.

Charitable Warne

Cricket

REUTERS, Melbourne

Long a controversial figure, Australian cricketer Shane Warne has been following in the footsteps of his former captain Steve Waugh by getting involved in charity work.

Waugh, named in January as the Australian of the Year, is admired as much for his humanitarian efforts as for his sporting feats.

The 38-year-old Waugh retired from Test cricket earlier this year as the game's most-capped player. He has secured endorsement contracts in India and is well known for his charity work since 1998 for the children of leprosy victims in the Calcutta area.

No-one disputes joint world record-holder Warne's cricketing skills but his many off-field scandals, including a 12-month doping ban in February 2003, have badly dented his public image.

When returning to cricket in March for the tour of Sri Lanka after serving the suspension for taking a banned diuretic, the 34-year-old Warne claimed 26 wickets in Australia's 3-0 series victory.

In the two-match home series against Sri Lanka earlier this month, Warne took 10 wickets to equal Sri Lankan Muttiah Muralitharan's world mark of 527.

The Australian immediately demonstrated both why he is per-

ceived as a big-hearted hero of the people and why he continues to draw criticism.

The leg-spinner told reporters he had worked harder for his wickets than Muralitharan, because the Sri Lankan often bowled on spin-friendly wickets and Warne had to battle away on pitches more suited to pace bowling.

However, Warne also announced he would auction the ball used to equal the world record.

"I wanted to do something for children and I hope this raises a lot of money for those in need," said Warne, before returning to his English club Hampshire.

Warne's brother and manager Jason said this week the cricket ball auction would soon be launched on the player's website.

"There are going to be three Australian charities chosen that work at the coalface with underprivileged and sick kids," Jason Warne told Reuters in a telephone interview.

"It's definitely something that he wants to be an international thing."

"As far as charity work in the last 18 months is concerned, the foundation (The Shane Warne Foundation) is something he has been working on for quite a few years. Last year with his time off, he actually had the time to do it."

Jason Warne said his brother had been moved by the experience of making a trip to the United States last year with Australian children

who were suffering from cancer.

"Even though it was something he really wanted to do, that trip really provided the impetus to get him focused and to get it all put in place," Jason Warne said.

"As far as the foundation goes, the year off was probably what he needed to be able to do it."

But not everyone is moved by Warne's efforts.

A reader of Tasmania newspaper The Mercury, Daniel Clarke, said in a letter to the editor published last weekend: "Isn't it hypocritical that Australian cyclists are disgraced by drug use, Olympians are investigated for potential drug use, and yet Shane Warne, convicted for taking a drug, is congratulated on equalling a world record when he should still be under suspension?"

World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) chief Dick Pound expressed his disappointment last year that the cricketer had not been given the minimum two-year suspension under WADA guidelines.

A letter in the Geelong Advertiser newspaper from Bob Dare, also published at the weekend, said: "My advice to Mr Warne is that he accepts his record quietly and quit criticising Muralitharan's achievements."

"Muralitharan has had to bowl against the Australian batting -- the best in the world -- and that is something that Warne has not had to do!"

Lankans lash Pakistan

FROM PAGE 13

chances on eight and 18 before Jayasuriya was eventually caught at slip off Sami.

Marvan Atapattu (19) added a further 33 runs before driving a catch to Shoaib Malik at point, a dismissal that was followed soon after by Gunawardene slashing a catch to backward point for 26.

Mahela Jayawardene (19 not out) and Kumar Sangakkara (14 not out) knocked off the required runs during a 36-run fourth-wicket stand.

Razaq was Pakistan's most successful bowler, taking two for 21 in six overs.

Pakistan, who had won the toss and elected to bat in steamy overhead conditions, were soon in trouble on 25 for two as Zoysa dismissed Imran Nazir (14) and Malik in quick succession.

Captain Inzamam-ul-Haq (nine) and Yasir Hameed (22) put on 20 runs for the third wicket before the middle order fell apart, three wickets tumbling in 10 balls.

Inzamam was bowled via the inside edge off Muttiah Muralitharan, Yousuf Youhana was

run out by a reflex pick-up and throw from silly point second ball and Younis Khan was removed for one.

All-rounder Razaq, with 43, was one of just three batsmen to reach double figures as Sri Lanka's bowlers, backed up with sharp fielding, took control.

Razaq then ran out Hameed in the 24th over after calling his batting partner for an impossible run on the legside.

The innings ended when Shoaib Akhtar became the third batsman to be run out.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the Asia Cup super-league match between Sri Lanka and Pakistan at the Premadasa Stadium on Wednesday:

PAKISTAN
Nazir c Jayawardene b Zoysa 14
Hameed run out 22
Malik c Dilshan b Zoysa 4
Inzamamul b Muralitharan 9
Youhana run out 0

Younis c Jayawardene b Maharoo 1
Razaq c Dilshan b Maharoo 43
Moin c Sangakkara b Zoysa 3
Sami b Jayasuriya 9
Akhtar run out 1

Sabbir not out 0
Extras: (lb-7, nb-1, w-8) 16
Total: (All out in 39.5 overs) 122
Fall of wickets: 1-19, 2-25, 3-45, 4-46, 5-52, 6-72, 7-88, 8-120, 9-122

Bowler O M R W
Vaas 7 3 14 0
Zoysa 10 3 29 3
Maharoo 6 0 25 2
Muralitharan 8 1 14 1
Chandana 7 0 28 0
Jayasuriya 1.5 0 5 1

SRI LANKA
Gunawardene c Nazir b Razaq 26
Jayasuriya c Younis b Sami 20
Atapattu c Malik b Razaq 19
Sangakkara not out 14
Jayawardene not out 19
Extras: (lb-4, nb-4, w-17) 25
Total: (For three wickets in 32 overs) 123
Fall of wickets: 1-51, 2-84, 3-88

Bowler O M R W
Akhtar 8 1 29 0
Sami 9 0 34 1
Sabbir 8 1 25 0
Razaq 6 2 21 2
Malik 1 0 10 0

Result: Sri Lanka won by seven wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Nuwan Zoysa (SRI)

Toss: Pakistan

Umpires: Billy Bowden (NZL) and Peter Parker (AUS)

Match-referee: Mike Procter (RSA)

Henin sidelined

AFP, Los Angeles

Still recovering from a lingering virus, defending champion Justine Henin-Hardenne of Belgium has officially withdrawn from WTA tournaments in San Diego and Montreal the next two weeks.

"I was advised by my doctors to wait yet again to return to competition," Henin-Hardenne said in a statement released Tuesday at the WTA Tour event in Los Angeles. "As you can imagine, I am thoroughly disappointed."

U-19s start

FROM PAGE 13

only 88 balls, had another valuable partner in Nafees Ahmed and together they put on 67 runs. Nafees made second-team highest 79 off 82 balls.

The other notable scorers were Mushfiqur Rahman (30 off 29 balls) and Rubaiyat Haq (20 off 16 balls).

In reply, the local side were 133 for 6 in 27.2 overs when rain set in.

Left-arm spinner Nadif Chowdhury, who scalped highest scorer Prowling (75), was pick of the Bangladesh bowler claiming three for 23 in 4.2 overs while another left-arm spinner and captain Enamul Haque finished with 2-33 and right-arm pacer Nazmul Hossain took the other wicket for 25.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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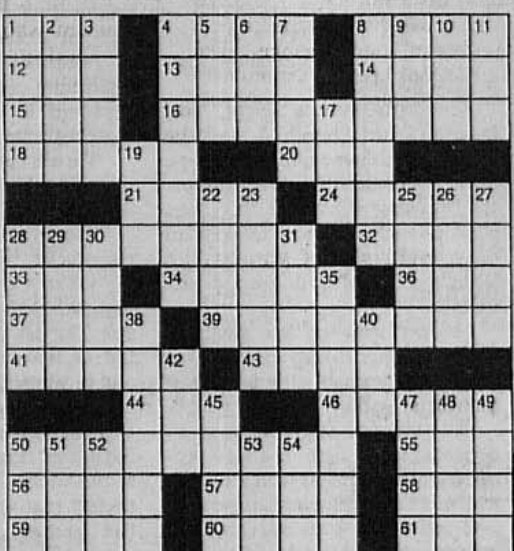
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6-16 CRYPTOQUIP

M X G T P J A Q M O L I N ' Q

I G I E G B Q O L I G P N U A M X

L H Y Y J Q C Y H L T : " N C G L Q G

E L B G U A M X P Q . "

Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF GIRAFFES ARE INVOLVED IN A VERY CLOSE RACE, I GUESS IT'S TRULY NECK AND NECK.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: Q equals S

The Cryptquip 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.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Sadat Sobhan (3rd from left), co-chairman of Bashundhara Group, hands over a cheque of Tk 2 lakh to GS Mostafa