



LET'S KICK DOWRY OUT! This photo taken yesterday shows a banner displayed on top of a team-bench at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur that says 'if a woman is killed for dowry, the perpetrator will be punished by the penalty'. The banner is part of a Bangladesh Football Federation initiative to create awareness against the evils of dowry.

## Rajib atop alone

SPORTS REPORTER

International Master Enamul Hossain Rajib took a sole lead in the Destiny-2000 Open FIDE Rating Chess Tournament after the sixth round at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room yesterday.

In a battle for the top spot, Rajib beat fellow IM Abdullah Al Rakib to secure full six points.

In the day's other matches, Nasir beat Shafiq, Shakil beat Moni, Parag beat Ali, Monir beat Jamal, Uten beat Zahid, Javed beat Liza, Asad beat Sohel, Mustafa beat Mahmood, Amir beat Shahid, Lavlu drew with Amin, Nipa drew with Iva, Palash drew with Shahin and Delwar shared points with Reza.

## Sharp TT from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The First Sharp Blade Open Table Tennis competition begins today at the Woodenfloor gymnasium.

The Bangladesh Table Tennis Players' Welfare Association has organised the tournament.

## Aussies aim

FROM PAGE 13 last year's 125-run World Cup final win against India in Johannesburg, said Australia had yet to select a starting side.

"Given we have spent the past week at Southampton (close to Hampshire's Rose Bowl base where Michael Clarke has also starred for the southern county this season) we haven't had an opportunity to look at the conditions at Lord's."

"We will finalise the side tomorrow (Saturday) morning as we look to match our line-up to the conditions. It's a fairly flexible squad, so there are plenty of options there."

Australia have yet to win the Champions Trophy, a 'mini World Cup', but Ponting whose side begin the event against rank outsiders the United States at the Rose Bowl on September 13, predicted his side would have no trouble peaking for the tournament.

"By the time we have played Pakistan, followed by our lead-up match against Hampshire, I'd like to think we'd be playing somewhere near our best for the start of the Champions Trophy."

Now guided by former South Africa coach Bob Woolmer, Pakistan should be a better team for their Dutch experience.

And after that defeat the ex-England batsman said he couldn't wait for another crack at the world champions.

"The more you play against them (Australia), the more you learn how to play, and the more you can get your team closer to them."

## A new era begins

AFP, Paris



A new look France will set out on the road to the 2006 World Cup finals against Israel here on Saturday boosted by the return from injury of captain Patrick Vieira.

The Arsenal skipper has been out of commission since France's failed Euro 2004 campaign but is confident of adding to his 72 caps at the Stade de France.

"I am fit to play Saturday night. I've been training for 10 days with Arsenal," Vieira, who was nursing an injured thigh, said.

Vieira's return is timely as the 1998 World Cup champions look to a brave new world after the retirement this summer of four of their anchormen - Marcel Desailly, Zinedine Zidane, Bixente Lizarazu, and Lilian Thuram.

Talismanic goalkeeper Fabien Barthez had planned to join the slippers and pipe in front of the fire club but the Marseille stopper on Thursday said he would commit himself to the country for the next two years.

With experienced defenders Desailly, Thuram and Lizarazu no longer around Desenech has plenty of reconstruction work to attend to.

"The priority is to build on solid bases," he stressed.

"But in terms of the defence it's not important whether it consists of three, four or five players - defence is all about spirit - we saw that with the Greeks at Euro 2004."

A measure of the yawning gap in experience between the France team in action at the European Championships and the one that will turn out on Saturday can be gleaned from the fact that in Portugal Santini's defenders boasted 250 caps between them - Saturday's back line totals a mere 34.

While the hosts will be expected to get their World Cup campaign off to a flying start their opponents Israel insist they are not there to make up the numbers.

"I'd love to start this campaign on a

## FIXTURES OF EUROPEAN WC QUALIFIERS

SATURDAY

**Group 1:** Finland v Andorra, Romania v Macedonia  
**Group 2:** Turkey v Georgia, Denmark v Ukraine, Albania v Greece  
**Group 3:** Russia v Slovakia, Estonia v Luxembourg, Latvia v Portugal  
**Group 4:** Republic of Ireland v Cyprus, Switzerland v Faroe Isles, France v Israel  
**Group 5:** Slovenia v Moldova, Italy v Norway  
**Group 6:** Northern Ireland v Poland, Azerbaijan v Wales, Austria v England  
**Group 7:** Belgium v Lithuania, San Marino v Serbia-Montenegro  
**Group 8:** Iceland v Bulgaria, Croatia v Hungary, Malta v Sweden

## Somerset seek Fleming

BBC ONLINE, London

Somerset have confirmed they want New Zealand skipper Stephen Fleming to lead them next summer.

Fleming is the longest serving captain in international cricket, having first been appointed in 1996.

"He knows how to lead teams in the dressing room and that's what we need," chief executive Peter Anderson told BBC.

South African skipper Graeme Smith is a possible alternative should the club fail to persuade Fleming to join them.

New Zealand played Somerset at Taunton on Thursday in a warm-up game ahead of the ICC Champions Trophy.

But Anderson refused to confirm whether he had taken the opportunity for talks with Fleming.

"I wouldn't say until anything is down on paper because there is many a slip between cup and lip."

## Flint-astic England

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had come in 56 balls with eight fours but England were struggling at 105 for four.

Flintoff gave the England fans a capacity crowd something to cheer when he launched Sehwag for six.

Meanwhile Collingwood was lucky to see a diving Mohammad Kaif drop a sharp chance at shortleg off Harbhajan.

But when the Turbanator's spell was over, with England 135 for four off 30 overs, the balance of power in the match shifted.

Flintoff struck a huge straight six, off Sehwag, on the largest ground in England before letting paceman Balaji for a clean straight six.

Balaji then dropped Flintoff, on 80, at deep square leg following a miscued pull off Irfan Pathan that went straight to the field.

England scored 100 runs off the last 10 overs and 60 off the last five.

### SCORECARD

First innings scoreboard in the second one-day international between England and India at The Oval on Friday:

#### ENGLAND

Trescothick c Balaji b Harbhajan 27 Solanki c Dravid b Sehwag 48 Vaughan c Dravid b Harbhajan 4 Straus c Ganguly b Sehwag 2 Flintoff c Dravid b Agarkar 99 Collingwood not out 79 Jones not out 12 Extras: (b1, lb6, w28, nb2) 36 Total: (5 wkts, 50 overs) 307 Fall of wickets: 1-71, 2-93, 3-98, 4-105, 5-279.

Did not bat: A Giles, A Wharf, D Gough, S Harmison.

**Bowler** O M R W

Pathan 10 1 58 0

Balaji 8 0 77 0

Agarkar 6 0 60 0

Harbhajan 10 2 14 2

Sehwag 10 0 51 2

Gavaskar 3 0 18 0

Yuvraj 3 0 23 0

**India:** Virender Sehwag, Sourav Ganguly (capt), Venkatsai Laxman, Rahul Dravid, Yuvraj Singh, Mohammad Kaif, Rohan Gavaskar, Irfan Pathan, Harbhajan Singh, Lakshmi Pathal, Ajit Agarkar.

## Henin toils, Agassi rolls

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it; Henin-Hardenne said.

"She was running all over the court and I had to work very hard."

Twice champion Agassi briefly looked in trouble against Germany's Florian Mayer when he lost the second set 6-2 having edged a tight opener 7-5.

Normal service was resumed when the 34-year-old sixth seed won the third 6-2 and Mayer retired early in the fourth with a leg injury to save Agassi further exertion.

"You never expect that, I don't know what his injury was but it didn't look good. I still felt like I had 40 good minutes left in me to finish the match though," said Agassi, who now faces Mary Pierce.

Eleventh seed Venus Williams found herself 4-1 down against Indian-born American qualifier Shikha Uberoi before hitting back to win 11 of the next 13 games for a 7-5, 6-1 victory.

Men's ninth seed Gaudio ripped his shorts apart in disgust during his four-set defeat by Sweden's Thomas Johansson, while women's fourth seed Myskina was humbled 7-6, 6-3 by fellow Russian, 17-year-old qualifier Anna Chakvetadze.

But the American fifth seed recovered from a wobbly start to win 6-4, 6-2 and stretch her winning

streak to 19 matches.

"It took me a while to get going and I definitely have to try to do something to get a quicker start in the next match," said Davenport, who will face dangerous Russian Elena Bovina.

There were few empty seats later on, however, as Wimbledon champion Sharapova produced a mixed bag of crunching winners and sloppy errors in her 6-0, 6-7, 6-1 victory over fellow Nick Bollettieri graduate Jelena Jankovic.

"I don't think I'm playing the best tennis but you don't want to be playing your best in the first two rounds," said Sharapova, who now faces Mary Pierce.

Champs Trophy

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extended to the second day in case of rain on the first, and the Duckworth-Lewis system coming into play only if rain disrupts the second day's play as well.

A match that is interrupted on the first day will thus be continued on the second, instead of being abandoned, with a new match beginning from scratch -- unlike in the last Champions Trophy final, where two half-matches were played instead of one full one. Only if two days are rained out in a row, wiping out a league game between two big teams, might the net run-rate come into play.

David Beckham has admitted that the 2006 World Cup is likely to be his last chance of winning a major tournament with England.

The England skipper will be 31 by the time of the finals in Germany in two years time and he recognises that his all-action style of play is unlikely to encourage longevity on the international stage.

"Maybe my legs will keep going for a few more years but maybe it is my last shot at a World Cup, to win something as big as that," Beckham said on the eve of England's opening qualifier against Argentina.

"There is a lot more football to be played but it would be nice to go into that competition and win it."

Having fallen at the quarter-final stage at the last World Cup and at Euro 2004, Beckham knows that his confidence in the current England squad being good enough to win a major tournament may look misplaced.

## Diego Jr joins Genoa

TICKER, Genoa

Diego Maradona Jr., the teenage son of the Argentine soccer legend, has joined Italy's Serie B outfit Genoa.

The 17-year old Maradona appeared at a news conference Thursday, claiming he is not troubled by the expectations that come with his last name.

"I am calm," Maradona said. "My surname is not a burden for me. It might be for others, but not for me."

The younger Maradona reportedly was considering quitting soccer due to the constant media attention he received. His father is Diego Maradona, who led Argentina to the 1986 World Cup title and is one of the biggest stars in soccer history.

Maradona Jr. is a midfielder who

had a trial with Scottish Premier League club Dunfermline earlier this summer. He accepted Genoa's offer following the financial crisis that hit Napoli. Last month, the Naples team

was declared bankrupt by an Italian court, one week after being thrown out of Serie B due to a lack of financial guarantees.

"It is an honor for me to be here," Maradona Jr. said. "I hope I can repay the trust this club has placed in me."

The teenager said he is in no hurry to play with the big boys in Serie A.

"I am here to play a good season with the youth team and that is my primary aim," he said. "I start this adventure with my feet firmly on the ground, then if there is a possibility to play for the first team, we will see."

The elder Maradona, 43, has

battled drug problems in recent years.

In May, was hospitalized in Argentina with what was said to be severe cardiac and pulmonary problems. He was transferred to a clinic specializing in drug rehabilitation but had to be sedated to prevent him from leaving.

The match at the Morumbi stadium pits the top and bottom teams in the 10-nation South American qualifying group. Brazil, unbeaten after seven games, lead with 13 points while Bolivia are bottom with six.

Adriano, who stepped in after

Ronaldo was rested for the Copa America, has never started a match alongside the Real Madrid player although he has played briefly

alongside him three times after coming on as a substitute in friendlies.

"This is the best moment of my career and a partnership with Ronaldo would make it even better," Adriano told reporters at Brazil's training camp in Teresopolis.

"He's always been someone I look up to and now I'm making a

dream come true."

"Football is like life. It evokes strong feelings. That's how I've gotten into my part," soprano Karlsson said.

With a mix of classicism and avant-garde, a giant screen towers over the choir flashing "pop-art" football pictures signed by Laing.

A television sports commentator sits facing a small screen, belting out his comments while a hooligan chorus wearing t-shirts with the logo "Troy FC" let loose a torrent of abuse and belches.

Agitation among players in the center circles.

The violence, intolerance and racism, a familiar curse of contemporary football, is expressed through dramatic violins accompanied by African percussion instruments and accords. The effect is clear.

"But it's not obvious that we'll attract traditional opera amateurs," admits producer Ulrika Lind, who makes no secret of her ambition to suck in organizers of the 2006 World Cup in Germany with the opera's themes of fair-play and the fight against racism.

Laing meanwhile is exasperated by what he calls the "blindness" of the Swedish Football Federation when it comes to addressing these issues.

"I have contacted them to get them involved, and they told me that there was no racism in Swedish football."