



Did U Know?

Graeme Smith became the first captain from South Africa to record a century in one-day internationals. Hansie Cronje's 94 against West Indies at Lahore on November 3, 1997 was the previous best by a South African skipper.



Luis Figo

(Real Madrid superstar)

"England has always been a dream because of the respect they have for the professionals over there and for the prestige associated with playing there. But, of course, I realise dreams don't always come true."

Relishing a chance to play in the English Premier League.



ESPN

Classic International Matches
England v Holland
1994 WWC Qualifier
Taped version at 5:30 pm
English Premier League Highlights
Taped version at 7:30 pm
Sportscentre
Live at 8:30 pm
Toyota Football Up Close
Taped version 11 pm

STAR Sports

Primera Liga
Real Madrid v Espanyol
Taped version at 10 am
English Premier League
Liverpool v Fulham
Taped version at 12 pm
Primera Liga
Barcelona v Atletico Madrid
Same day delayed at 6 pm
Sportsline
Live at 8 pm

Pakistan call for neutral umps for ODIs

REUTERS, Karachi

Pakistan have called on the International Cricket Council (ICC) to introduce neutral umpires for one-day internationals, according to a source close to the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB).

In a letter written to ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed, the PCB has also asked for a review of all umpiring decisions in the one-day VB Series in Australia.

PCB director of media Abbas Zaidi confirmed a letter had been sent on the subject of umpiring but declined to give details. "It is a confidential document and we would not like to discuss it in public," Zaidi said on Sunday.

A source told this news agency that Pakistan felt the umpiring in the triangular series, which also involved West Indies, had been inconsistent and that the ICC needed to review some of the decisions given in their games.

"It is not a complaint about the umpiring. But the Pakistan board has suggested that, like in Test matches, neutral umpires should now supervise the ODIs," a source said.

"Another suggestion is that umpires should make more use of the modern technology available to them while ruling on contentious caught behind or leg before decisions."

The ICC introduced an elite panel of umpires for Test matches in 2002, with officials coming from neutral countries for each series. For one-day internationals, one neutral umpire and one from the host country are appointed.

Pakistan captain Inzamamul

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Another easy win for BD A



SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh A team clinched the one-day series against United Arab Emirates when the visitors took an unassailable 3-0 lead in the four-match series after they posted a seven-wicket victory at the Sharjah Stadium on Saturday.

The second string national team won the first two back-to-back matches by eight wickets and 64 runs respectively.

The fourth and final match of the series will be played today. The team will then leave for Harare on February 9 to play three Tests (4-day) and five one-dayers against their Zimbabwe counterparts.

In Saturday's game, Bangladesh A put on another comprehensive performance when they raced to 140-3 in 26.4 overs after restricting the home side to a paltry 134.

Raqib Al Hasan maintained his form with the bat when the youngster smashed an unbeaten 62 off 76 balls to help the tourists wrap up a quick victory. Saqib, who was promoted to open the innings after batting in the middle-order in the first two matches, cracked seven fours

and one six. He was also adjudged man-of-the-match.

Shamsur Rahman settled for a rapid-fire 25, cracking three fours and a six in just 19 balls.

Earlier, the UAE elected to bat first after winning the toss but failed to survive a torrid spell by Bangladesh new-ball pair Sheikh Russel and Shahadat Hossain Rajib who scalped both openers with just four runs on the board.

Naemuddin made 24 and Mohammed Tauqir 25 as the UAE recovered from a precarious 57-5 to crawl past the 100-mark before being bundled out in 45.4 overs.

Left-armers Russel, who grabbed a five-wicket haul in the previous match, finished with 3-16 from 8.4 overs. Speedster Rajib and Saqib Al Hasan chipped in with two wickets each.

CORES IN BRIEF

UAE: 134 all out 45.4 overs (Naemuddin 24, Usman 10, Tauqir 25, Saleem 16, Asad 18, Taskeen 10; Russel 3-16, Rajib 2-32, Saqib 2-28, Riyad 1-3).

BANGLADESH A: 140-3 in 26.4 overs (Saqib 16, Raqib 62 n.o., Nafees 14, Shamsur 25; Tauqir 2-22, 1-29).

Div I hockey starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Green Delta First Division Hockey League will begin tomorrow at the Maulana Bhashani National Stadium.

Bangladesh Sporting Club take on Combined Sporting Club at 1:30 pm and Dhaka Wanderers Club meet Shantinagar Sporting Club at 3:30 pm in the opening day's fixtures.

Nine teams will compete in the League. They are: Bangladesh SC, Dhaka Wanderers, Shishu Kishore Sangha, Victoria SC, Farashganj SC, Bachelor SC, Mukta Bihanga Tarun Sangha, Shantinagar SC and Combined SC.

SA storm into lead

REUTERS, Cape Town

South Africa capitalised on a Herschelle Gibbs century to crush England by 108 runs in the fourth one-day international at Newlands on Sunday.

Gibbs scored 100 as South Africa made 291 for five, the highest score of the series, after being put in.

England, in reply, collapsed to 183 all out in 41.2 overs, Makhaya Ntini taking three wickets for 29 as the home side went 2-1 up in the

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Gibbs powers Proteas



AFP, Cape Town

Herschelle Gibbs hit his 14th one-day international century as South Africa posted a big total of 291 for five in the pivotal fourth limited-overs international against England at Newlands Sunday.

Gibbs and Jacques Kallis (71) shared a third wicket stand of 143 off 189 balls to set up a big total for the home side after they were sent in on a good batting pitch by England captain Michael Vaughan.

Justin Kemp pressed home South Africa's advantage by pounding 57 off 35 balls with four sixes and four fours before being run out off the last ball of the innings.

The seven-match series is tied at 1-1.

Gibbs played his third successive innings of 50 or more since he moved down the batting order to number four. All his previous one-day international hundreds were

made as an opening batsman.

The stand between Kallis and Gibbs started slowly against some steady bowling from Darren Gough, Kabir Ali and Paul Collingwood after South Africa lost their first two wickets for 50 runs.

The pair needed 85 balls to put on their first 50 runs but Gibbs in particular picked up the pace after making a half-century off 73 deliveries.

On 71 Gibbs skied a drive against Kabir Ali and Darren Gough at long-off to leap to hold a good catch but fell over the boundary in taking it. It was the first of three sixes by Gibbs, who raced through his second 50 off only 41 balls.

But he was out off the next ball he faced, slogging Steve Harmison to long-off. His 115-ball innings included eight fours and three sixes.

Kemp played a spectacular innings, with Kabir Ali taking the heaviest punishment, conceding 36 runs off his last two overs.

Harmison was included in the England team in place of Matthew Hoggard but he proved inaccurate

and expensive, conceding 65 runs and sending down five wides.

Vaughan returned as England captain after missing the third match in Port Elizabeth because of a stomach virus. Vikram Solanki, who top-scored for England in Port Elizabeth, was left out.

South Africa, who won the third match by three wickets to level the seven-match series at 1-1, were unchanged.

Vaughan's decision to send South Africa in was presumably based on England's successful record in chasing targets under his captaincy and the fact that it is a day match in which conditions were unlikely to alter markedly in hot, sunny weather.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the South African innings in the fourth limited-overs international against England at Newlands on Sunday:

SOUTH AFRICA

Smith lbw b Ali 16
De Villiers lbw b Gough 9

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PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

TIME TO TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT: Bangladesh batsman Aftab Ahmed (R), hero in the ODI series against Zimbabwe, plays football with his Chittagong Divisional squad mate Sabbir Khan at the MA Aziz Stadium yesterday during a warm-up session.

Sachin on the sidelines

India begin Pak preps today



AFP, Mumbai

Sachin Tendulkar's absence stands out glaringly as India's rusty cricketers flex their limbs from Monday to prepare for next month's highly-anticipated series against Pakistan.

Tendulkar, the most prolific batsman in contemporary cricket with 34 Test and 37 one-day centuries, has still not fully recovered from a tennis elbow injury sustained in August last year.

The 31-year-old, who last played in Bangladesh in December, was

advised by doctors not to pick up a bat for six weeks, a period that ends in mid-February.

Tendulkar will miss the Challenger one-day series, featuring the country's top 36 players, which starts here on Monday, and a major part of the subsequent inter-zonal Duleep Trophy first-class tournament.

But sources close to the star player indicated that Tendulkar will be fit to play in the Test series against Pakistan starting on March 4.

"He has taken doctors' advice very seriously," a Mumbai teammate said. "I don't think he wants to play in pain again as he did for most

of the season."

Tendulkar was rushed back from injury for two of the four Tests against Australia in October and also played against South Africa and Bangladesh -- scoring a double-century against the minnows.

As Tendulkar rests, the other Indian probabilities will spend the next three weeks gearing up for the Pakistan series. Most of the top stars have not played competitive cricket since the Bangladesh tour.

The probabilities have been divided into three teams for the Challenger series with Test captain S o u r a v

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PHOTO: AFP

ANOTHER JEWEL IN THE AUSSIE CROWN: Jubilant Australia team members pose with the VB Series trophy after the second final against Pakistan at the Sydney Cricket Ground yesterday.

Waugh might be coaching South Africa

BBC ONLINE, undated

Australian Steve Waugh, the most successful captain in Test history, could be a candidate to become coach of the South African national team.

Newspaper reports have linked Waugh and compatriots Tom Moody and Geoff Marsh with the job.

And Waugh's manager, Robert Joske, was quoted as saying: "It is something we would consider."

South Africa are currently coached by Ray Jennings, but his contract expires in May after a tour to the West Indies.

They have been beaten by India and England since Jennings took over and unless they can repeat their 2001 victory in the Caribbean, the United Cricket Board of South Africa may look to make a change before next winter's tour to Australia.

Waugh captained Australia in 57 of his 168 Tests, 41 of them victories, before retiring in January 2004. He recently coached the World XI in a tsunami relief game in Melbourne and is keen to remain in the game in some capacity.

"We haven't heard from South African cricket authorities in relation to the job," said Joske.

"But if an approach was made, or the opportunity arose, we would definitely sit down and talk it through."

"We have a strategic plan that we have put together for Steve's retirement and our approach is that every valid approach that comes his way should be seriously considered."

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Murali happy

CRICINFO, undated

The throwing controversy, a heavy monkey on the back of bowlers everywhere, provoked more responses after the International Cricket Council raised tolerance levels to 15 degrees.

While some -- bowlers, notably -- supported the decision, others questioned the motives behind the new, more lenient, rule. The responses once again indicated how divided the cricketing world was on a ruling that sought to end a decades-old point of conflict.

Muttiah Muralitharan, perhaps the most divisive figure in international cricket, told The Sun-Herald that he was satisfied with the resolution, optimistic that it would end the controversy over his unique bowling action.

"I'm very happy the rule is in force. Hopefully that will be the end of it. But you never know because people can see different angles (to the story)."

Another marked bowler, whose action is currently under observation, Harbhajan Singh, backed his chances of coming through the controversy.

"I have taken over 300 international wickets and I am confident that I will come out strong from this. I have always thought that my doosra is more wrist than elbow, but now I hope that I can just keep bowling."

Aussies take VB Series

AFP, Sydney



AFP, Sydney

Australia clinched the triangular VB Series 2-0 on Sunday after brittle top-order batting and an inspired spell by

paceman Glenn McGrath shattered Pakistan's hopes of an upset in the limited-overs tournament.

The hosts posted 239 for 9 off their 50 overs and claimed a 31-run victory after Pakistan were dismissed for 208 in reply.

After losing the first match in the best-of-three finals series on Friday, Pakistan had to win at the Sydney Cricket Ground to keep the contest alive.

And when they restricted the world champions to a relatively low score on an excellent batting wicket, it seemed they were in with a chance.

But McGrath claimed 5-27 off 7.4 overs including the key wicket of all-rounder Abdul Razzaq just when he offered his team a glimmer of hope.

As was the case in Melbourne Pakistan were their own worst enemies, with some careless shots and needless run-outs proving their undoing in matches which could have been theirs for the taking.

In Melbourne they had crashed to 27 for 4, in Sydney it was 38 for 4 and despite the obvious potential of

the middle-order batsmen, no one could build the strong innings needed.

Yousuf Youhana offered hope with 51, which included five boundaries, but spinner Brad Hogg clean bowled him with a wrong 'un to send Pakistan spiralling to 97 for 6.

Razzaq defied the Australians with a late 43 off 58 balls. He and Shahid Afridi emerged as Pakistan's last chance of salvation.

But that slender hope was ended by some brilliant fielding from Brett Lee. He fired in a delivery from the boundary straight to Adam Gilchrist, who whipped off the bails a fraction of a second before Afridi could slide his bat in for a second run.

His 31 from 21 balls once again showcased his ability to belt the ball from the first delivery but was not enough to carry Pakistan to a challenging position.

Captain Inzamamul Haq, who came in at number five, had scored five half centuries during the series. But he lost form at a crucial time to be trapped lbw for a duck on the third ball he faced.

Although he went quietly, Inzamam would have been within his rights to question why his team had earlier been denied a similar appeal against Gilchrist.

It was Gilchrist who had set up the Australian innings with a 40-run flurry off 30 balls but his input could have been cut short. Pakistan were refused what appeared to be a

legitimate lbw appeal while he was on 12.

The Australians, who won the toss, took just seven overs to bring up the 50.

But the pace of the game changed when Razzaq had Gilchrist caught by Shoaib Malik in the ninth over with the score on 55.

Pakistan's bowlers then rose to the challenge, bowling straight off a good length to curb the run rate.

Australian pace bowler Lee was named man-of-the-series after capturing a total of 16 wickets.

"Pakistan pushed us all the way in the last two games but luckily we came through with our noses in front," said Australian captain Ricky Ponting.

Inzamam said his team had improved as their Australian tour progressed.

"These last couple of games in this one-day series ... the boys are working really hard and playing really good cricket," he said.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the second final of the triangular VB Series between Australia and Pakistan at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday:

AUSTRALIA
Gilchrist c Malik b Razzaq 40
Clarke b Hafeez 38
Ponting c Inzamam b Afridi 41
Martyn b Razzaq 43

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PCB's reluctance to Ahmedabad

REUTERS, New Delhi

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is reluctant to accept Ahmedabad as one of the venues on their three-Test tour of India.

"The PCB have conveyed to us their reluctance to play in Ahmedabad," Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) vice-president Rajeev Shukla told this news agency on Saturday.

Ahmedabad had been a controversial choice. It is the main city of the western Gujarat state which was rocked by one of India's worst communal riots in a decade in 2002.

The BCCI released only a tentative schedule for the series and had been waiting for the Pakistan board to give the final nod on the basis of a report by a two-member team who visited the venues last week.

Shukla said the Indian board had referred the matter to the foreign and interior ministries and was also trying to convince the PCB to play in Ahmedabad.

Pakistan are scheduled to arrive on February 25 for their first Test tour of India in six years.

The other proposed Test venues are Mohali and Bangalore. Five one-dayers are set for Cochin, Vishakhapatnam, Delhi, Jamshedpur and Kanpur.

Ties between the countries have improved in the last year. The Indian team played their first Test series in Pakistan for over 14 years in 2004 after a government ban on bilateral cricket with Pakistan was lifted.



PHOTO: AFP

Wimbledon champion Maria Sharapova of Russia holds up the trophy after winning the Pan Pacific Open final yesterday.