



Rahul Dravid's innings of 110 in a Test match at Eden Gardens is his highest against Pakistan in India, bettering his 53 at Madras in 1998-99.



Sir Alex Ferguson (Manchester United manager) "He has enormous talent. He has two good feet, an extraordinary technique, he works well and above all he is very fast."

NZ-AUS 2ND TEST

Rain prevents any play on Day 1

AFP, Wellington

A confident Australian cricket coach John Buchanan declared that three days was plenty of time to beat New Zealand in the second Test after the first day was washed out by rain here today and the prospect of play on the second day looked doubtful.

that could leave as little as 300 overs of playing time, but Buchanan said that was more than enough for this side to shoot for their seventh consecutive Test win since their 13-run loss to India in November.

Australia, who have retained the same XI from their nine-wicket win in the first Test, have barely gone past the fourth day in their six Test victories over New Zealand and Pakistan this season.

In Brisbane in November, New Zealand just staggered past lunch on the fourth day as they collapsed for 76 in their second innings, while in Adelaide New Zealand just made it to day five only after Australia opted not to enforce the follow on

India might tour Pakistan in Dec

INTERNET REPORT, New Delhi

The Indian team could tour Pakistan as early as December, for the second time in two years, to play three Tests and five one-day internationals, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Shaharyar Khan says.

"It (the return tour by India) may even be in the end of December - but basically (they would tour in) January-February," Khan told IANS.

"We are just going to work out the dates," said Khan, here to attend the International Cricket Council meetings and is meeting his Indian counterparts.

India had toured Pakistan, for the first time in almost 15 years, in March-April last year for a highly successful three Tests and five one-dayers.

The Pakistan team is now in India to play three Tests and six one-day internationals.

Khan said India could pay a return visit as early as December and latest by January for the same number of matches because the two countries play on reciprocal basis.

Although Pakistan are playing an extra one-day in India, Khan said PCB would not insist on six one-dayers.

Musharraf's mum visits Aligarh

AFP, New Delhi

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf's mother Friday visited the Indian university she attended more than 60 years ago, as part of a trip that comes amid warming ties between the South Asian rivals.

Octogenarian Zarin Musharraf mingled with students and later placed a wreath at a memorial to the founder of Aligarh Muslim University, Syed Ahmed Khan, the Press Trust of India news agency said.

She was accompanied by President Musharraf's son Bilal and brother Javed to the university, about 120 kilometres (75 miles) southeast of the Indian capital New Delhi, PTI said.

Musharraf and her late husband Mushrafuddin were both students of the prestigious university in the early 1940s. They lived in India before the 1947 partition of India and Pakistan at the time of independence from British rule.

Get 300, says Kumble

AFP, Calcutta



Leg-spinner Anil Kumble said that a target of 300-plus would be enough for India to win the second Test against Pakistan at the Eden Gardens here.

"I think a 300-plus target will be ideal to win the Test. It won't be easy to bat on the fourth and fifth days," said Kumble, after his 3-98 effort restricted Pakistan to 393.

India, who had scored 407 in their first innings, were 133-3 at stumps on the third day for an overall lead of 147 on a pitch expected to

help spinners on the final two days.

"It'll be good to have a score in that range so that the spinners can have an attacking field," said Kumble on Friday.

The Indian spinner, who bagged three wickets in seven overs to trigger a middle-order collapse, took the prize scalp of Pakistani vice-captain Younis Khan (147).

"We knew it was a matter of just one wicket and we got two in the space of very few runs," said Kumble, referring to the dismissals of Younis Khan (104) and skipper Inzamam-ul-Haq (30).

"Now we need to bat session wise to build a healthy lead."

Kumble, who took six wickets in

the drawn first Test at Mohali last week, praised century-makers Younis and Youhana, who threatened to put the match beyond India's reach with their 211-run stand for the third wicket.

"Younis and Youfuss batted very well, especially their running between the wickets was superb. But still, you can't expect a second-day pitch to help spinners," said Kumble, the fifth bowler to take more than 450 Test wickets.

"The pitch didn't help us even in the last Test here against South Africa in December. It helped spinners on the fourth day and we expect it to do the same this time around," said Kumble.

Some hope for Lara

BBC ONLINE, undated

West Indies are set to name a 13-man squad for the first Test against South Africa after an 11th hour twist in a sponsorship dispute.

CL Financial have offered to buy out the £11m contract of team sponsors Digical and the personal deals of seven players with Cable and Wireless.

The seven, including skipper Brian Lara, were left out of an initial group chosen to train for the series.

But the new deal offers hope that some of them may be recalled.

"CL Financial is interested in resolving the dispute in the interest of West Indies cricket," said Andre Monteil, executive director of the company, which is based on Lara's home island, Trinidad.

News of their intervention came at a time when the West Indies Cricket Board was examining the players' contracts with Cable and Wireless to see whether picking them would compromise the deal with Digical, the biggest in the history of Caribbean cricket. The WICB had made clear it will not pick any of the seven until lawyers say those individual deals will not impact the Digical agreement.

Last weekend, Digical rejected a six-point proposal from Grenada Prime Minister Keith Mitchell which suggested team and personal sponsorships could co-exist.

South Africa will arrive in the Caribbean on 25 March, with the first Test beginning in Guyana six days later.

PREVIEW: PREMIERSHIP

Palace not in Chelsea awe

Football

AFP, London

Crystal Palace have made a habit of confounding predictions this season.

Tipped as virtual certainties to make an immediate return to the Football League, the south Londoners have proved to be the most resilient of the 2004/05 crop of Premiership newcomers.

There may only be two points between them and the drop zone, but Iain Dowie's side demonstrated in last weekend's goalless draw with Manchester United that they are not easily intimidated.

And defender Emmerson Boyce has promised a similar fearless display when Palace visit Stamford Bridge on Saturday hoping to interrupt Chelsea's apparently unstoppable march towards the Premiership title.

"We will be hoping to put on a good display football-wise, but first and foremost we will be going to

stop Chelsea play," Boyce warned.

Chelsea, who beat Palace 2-0 at Selhurst Park early in the season, go into Saturday's match knowing five wins and two draws from their remaining nine matches will put them beyond the reach of nearest rivals Manchester United, even if they need to win all their remaining games.

Jose Mourinho's side could be bolstered by the return of Dutch winger Arjen Robben, who is nearing full fitness once more after breaking two bones in his left foot last month but could be allowed to rest until after next week's break for international matches.

Manchester United defender Gary Neville admitted this week that it would take a "monumental disaster" for Chelsea to blow the title at this late stage.

But catching Chelsea is not the only issue on the United agenda as they prepare to face Fulham at Old Trafford on Saturday.

Only the top two go straight into the group stages of next season's Champions League and Arsenal, in third, have closed the gap on Sir

Alex Ferguson's side to two points.

The Gunners are at Blackburn on Saturday in a lunchtime dress rehearsal for next month's FA Cup semi-final between the two clubs.

The most important Merseyside derby in years is the highlight of the three matches on Sunday.

Liverpool, having laboured to a goalless draw with Blackburn in midweek, simply have to beat Everton at Anfield if they are to retain any hope of catching their neighbours in the race for fourth place in the table and the final qualifying spot for next season's Champions League.

FIXTURES

Table with 2 columns: Day and Match. Saturday: Blackburn v Arsenal (1245 GMT), Bolton v Norwich (1715 GMT), Charlton v West Brom, Chelsea v Crystal Palace, Manchester Utd v Fulham, Portsmouth v Newcastle, Tottenham v Man City. Sunday: Birmingham v Aston Villa (1200 GMT), Liverpool v Everton (1605 GMT), Middlesbrough v Southampton.

ICC call for changes

FROM PAGE 12

report include:

1. That no country would lose its Test status;

2. That any calendar must be able to accommodate the ICC events (World Cups, Champions Trophies and Super Series);

3. That all Test countries would be entitled to have a minimum of two Tests and three ODI matches scheduled against each other Test-playing country on a minimum of once at home and once away during the course of this six-year cycle;

4. That any calendar must accommodate Asian Cricket Council events including the Asia Cup and the Asian Test Championship; and

5. That the calendar must accommodate those series that are played on a shorter schedule than the six-year cycle such as

Australia v England, India v Pakistan and England v West Indies.

This report, including a draft six-year program, will be developed over the coming months and be presented to the board for further consideration.

In light of the inability of the United States of America Cricket Association to address the fundamental governance issues of the game in the USA, the Executive Board decided to immediately terminate its initiative to stage international cricket in the USA to generate funds to develop the game in this country.

The ICC executive committee has decided to recommend to its annual general meeting in June that Kenya be stripped of its status as an ODI member and will revert to being an associate member. The executive, who have been meeting in Dubai, also

announced that the Africa Cricket Association (ACA) would be looking into the ongoing crisis in the country.

At the same time, the ICC will continue with the initiative of an independent commission to develop a new constitution for cricket in Kenya. This commission, which was established last year, has been in limbo since the announcement of the formation of Cricket Kenya in January.

Kenya's loss of one-day membership almost exactly two years after they reached the World Cup semi-finals will be a bitter pill to swallow and is clearly a result of the bitter in-fighting which has blighted Kenyan cricket for so long. But it will retain its one-day status for matches against Test-playing countries and also against other members of the top six associates.

Bashar returns

FROM PAGE 12

and Rajshahi (eight points each) along with Sylhet with six points. They will however, need to improve in the four-day game where they languish in fourth on 12 points behind Dhaka (24), Chittagong (18) and Rajshahi (18).

When all the teams have been boosted by the return of some key players from international commitments, Chittagong still find themselves in serious injury crisis.

Chittagong will miss all their big name batsmen Azam Iqbal, Nafees Iqbal, Afab Ahmed, Nazimuddin and pacers Wayaskarani Palash and Tareq Aziz Khan.

Dhaka and Rajshahi meet in the top-of-the-table battle at the Fatullah Stadium while Sylhet host lowly Barisal at the Sylhet Stadium. The bottom-side Barisal was yet to open their account in the one-day game

Muktis made

FROM PAGE 12

Yusuf, who substituted Bulbul, finally reduced the margin in the 63rd minute when he powered the ball into the roof of the net after Egir's header was partially stopped by Aminul.

Russel earned six corners in the last ten minutes but Mukti's tired defenders held on with Aminul leading the way. Egir hit the crossbar during the salvo from a flag-kick while national number one custodian Aminul tipped Yusuf's dipping backvolley over the bar to inspire an injury-time counter attack through Moni and Kanchan that was finished by a header from Nigerian striker Paul Nwachukwu who made it 3-1.

Nat'l women chess

SPORTS REPORTER

International Women Master Rani Hamid and Shamima Akhter Liza won their respective seventh round boards to maintain their joint lead in the 26th National Women Chess Championship yesterday.

Reigning champion Rani beat Farzana Hossain and Liza beat Zakia Sultana at the federation hall-room to improve their tally to 6.5 points.

Nazrana Khan Eva, who defeated Saima Almas in this round, was one point short of the leaders.

Ctg marathon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Maltova Recharge Marathon was held in the port city yesterday. Bangladesh batsman Nafees Iqbal inaugurated the 3.5-km race at Prabartak intersection in the morning.

After the race ended at MA Aziz Stadium, former cricketer Nurul Abedin distributed prizes among the winners. Nearly fifty participants took part.

Glaxo SmithKline Bangladesh Country Manager Kapil Dhamesh was also present at the prize giving ceremony.

ScanCement Cup golf held

SPORTS REPORTER

Brig Gen Abidur Raza Khan (Retd) won the men's title while Young Oh Yu clinched the women's crown in the ScanCement Cup Golf Tournament at the Kurmitola Golf Club course yesterday.

A total of 325 golfers including 19 ladies took part in the two-day meet. Chief of Army Staff and president of Kurmitola Golf Club Lt General Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury distributed prizes.

PREVIEW: PRIMERA LIGA

Perez keeps brave face

Football

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid president Florentino Perez demanded that his players didn't lose heart this week in the midst of what will probably become the club's worst barren spell in more than two decades.

"But our future will be assured if we win the coming 10 games. If we do that then we can still win the league," said the contraction magnate, who insisted he is also rebuilding the club on strong foundations.

How much faith the Real players have in his words will be tested at home to Malaga on Sunday.

Madrid are 11 points behind their bitter rivals and league leaders Barcelona, and the 29-times champions of Spain look like going a second successive season without a trophy of any kind.

One thing is certain though, Real coach Wanderley Luxemburgo will shake up his side on Sunday after taking only four points from their last five games.

David Beckham returns after suspension but Jose Maria 'Guti' Gutierrez retains his place as a starter thanks to Danish international Thomas Gravesen notching up five yellow cards in almost record time.

Gravesen arrived from English Premiership side Everton in the winter break and has added steel to

Real's midfield but has found Spanish referees keener to caution him for his uncompromising style than their English counterparts.

England international Michael Owen also looks set to start with Ronaldo still suffering from pain in his left thigh after two recent bruising encounters against Juventus and Getafe.

Santiago Solari is set to reap the benefits of his late, spectacular goal in last Sunday's 2-1 loss at Getafe and start on the left wing in place of Luis Figo.

Barcelona travel to Deportivo La Coruna on Saturday, where they won 3-2 last season with Ronaldinho getting two of the Catalan club's goals.

The World Player of the Year is keen for a similar return from this season's trip to Galicia but warned his team-mates that the league was not yet won.

"We are still all aware that there is a long way to go. Despite our advantage, the league isn't yet won and we still have to respect our rivals," Ronaldinho cautioned on Thursday.

Nevertheless, some of his colleagues were prepared to talk about when, rather than if, Barca win the league.

"We haven't won any titles in the last few years but that doesn't mean to say this club has become any less popular, and when we win the league, we'll become even more

popular," boasted Deco. Deco is one of three Barca players - Xavi Hernandez and Rafael Marquez being the others - who have four yellow cards to their names.

With the derby at Real Madrid just two games away, there could be the peculiar sight of the trio trying to earn themselves a booking against Deportivo in order not to risk missing the derby.

"It would be a real shame to lose out on the derby. It's the one match no one wants to miss. But trying to get a booking, we don't play that way," said Xavi rather self-righteously on Wednesday.

Mind you, those were almost the words of Beckham himself after he deliberately acquired a yellow card in last October's World Cup match against Wales in order to avoid a trip to Azerbaijan.

FIXTURES

Table with 2 columns: Day and Match. Saturday (kick off times in GMT): Real Betis v Albacete (1700), Espanyol v Real Sociedad (1900), Deportivo La Coruna v Barcelona (2100). Sunday: Athletic Bilbao v Levante (1600), Real Mallorca v Sevilla (1600), Numanzia v Racing Santander (1600), Valencia v Getafe (1600), Real Madrid v Malaga (1800), Real Zaragoza v Atletico Madrid (2000).

PREVIEW: SERIE A

Friendship can wait

Football

AFP, Rome

Former team-mates Carlo Ancelotti and Bruno Conti used to room together, but their friendship will be put to one side on Sunday when joint Serie A leaders AC Milan play Roma here in the capital.

Ancelotti's Milan need the points to maintain their championship push, while Conti, who took charge of Roma on Monday, is desperate to keep alive his team's slim hopes of clinching a place in next season's Champions League.

The pair became pals when they played alongside each other at Roma between 1979 and 1987 and they won the title there in the 1982/83 season.

Ancelotti welcomed the appointment of Conti, who played in the Italy team that won the 1982 World Cup final against Germany.

"It will be very emotional to see

him in the Roma dug-out," said the 44-year-old. "We used to share a room together at Roma and he was like a brother to me."

"I think he is the right person for the job, because he loves the club and understands the ambience surrounding it."

Conti replaced Luigi Del Neri, who resigned following Roma's third straight Serie A defeat. Promoted from youth team coach, Conti's first game at the helm was Wednesday's Italian Cup quarter-final tie against Fiorentina which Roma won on penalties to claim a place in the last four.

Roma are seventh in the table, nine points behind fourth-placed Sampdoria, but Conti has refused to give up on a Champions League place.

Milan, seeking their eighth consecutive league victory and their 10th in all competitions.

Last season Milan won 2-1 at the Olympic stadium with Andriy Shevchenko scoring both goals for

the 'Rossoneri', but the Ukrainian striker is unlikely to feature this weekend as he is still recovering from a fractured cheekbone.

Juventus, who are level on 63 points with title-holders Milan with 10 games left, play on Saturday at home to Reggina, one of only three teams to beat the 27-time champions this season.

Juve's dynamic Czech midfielder Pavel Nedved has returned to training after being knocked unconscious in a Champions League match away to Real Madrid on February 23 and could make the substitutes' bench

FIXTURES

Table with 2 columns: Day and Match. (All 1400 GMT kick-off unless stated) Saturday: Siena v Lazio (1700), Juventus v Reggina (1930). Sunday: Chievo v Brescia, Inter Milan v Fiorentina, Livorno v Cagliari, Messina v Bologna, Parma v Palermo, Roma v AC Milan (1930), Sampdoria v Atalanta, Udinese v Lecce.

Sporting revisit England

UEFA CUP

AFP, London

Sporting Lisbon were heading back to the northeast of England after being drawn here Friday against Newcastle United in the UEFA Cup quarter-finals.

The Portuguese side knocked out Middlesbrough in the last round and they also played against Newcastle in the earlier group stages of the competition - a 1-1 draw at St James Park.

Newcastle won the precursor of the UEFA Cup, the Fairs Cup, in 1969, but the only former winner of the existing trophy are Italians Parma, triumphant in 1995 and 1999.

In the last eight they go up against Austria Vienna who knocked out the last Spanish survivor Real Zaragoza.

No Spanish and no German sides made it through to the last eight

France's Auxerre, orchestrated by the canny Guy Roux, open at home against CSKA Moscow who went into the UEFA Cup after failing

to go through in the Champions League.

In the remaining tie, in-form AZ Alkmaar of the Netherlands must wait until they find out who they play as Steaua Bucharest of Romania and Villarreal of Spain have yet to complete their tie from the previous round.

The sides drew 0-0 in Bucharest in the first leg.

RAW & FIXTURE

The draw for the quarter-finals of the UEFA Cup made here on Friday:-

Steaua Bucharest (ROM) v Villarreal (ESP) v AZ Alkmaar (NED) CSKA Moscow (RUS) v Auxerre (FRA) Newcastle United (ENG) v Sporting Lisbon (POR)

Austria Vienna (AUT) v Parma (ITA)

Semi-finals Austria Vienna or Parma v CSKA Moscow or Auxerre

Newcastle or Sporting v Steaua/Villarreal or AZ Alkmaar

* Quarter-finals will be held on April 7 and 14 with the semi-finals on April 28 and May 5. The final is in Lisbon on May 18

One Milan giant

FROM PAGE 12

of their quarter-finals.

The French league leaders and this season's top scorers in Europe go up against Guus Hiddink's PSV Eindhoven, while Barcelona's conquerors Chelsea were paired with four-times former winners Bayern.

Chelsea chief executive Peter Kenyon said Blues manager Jose Mourinho would not be overly concerned at having to play the first leg against Bayern at Stamford Bridge.

"I think Jose is quite indifferent to it," he said. "Its going to be a big night in London, we are just delighted here."

"You have got to give respect to Bayern. They have won it four times and it will be a massive game. But the road to the final was never going to be easy and this proves that."

Cadet College beat Dhaka Club

Cadet College Club won the first friendship cricket match against Dhaka Club at the Gulshan Youth Club Ground yesterday, said a press release.

Battling first, Dhaka Club scored 133-7 in the allotted 30 overs.

Cadet College Club reached the target (136-9) in 25 overs.

Rossy of Cadet College Club was adjudged man-of-the-match.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Participants of the ScanCement Cup Golf Tournament are seen with the Chief of Army Staff and president of Kurmitola Golf Club Lt General Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury (fifth from right) at the KGC course yesterday.

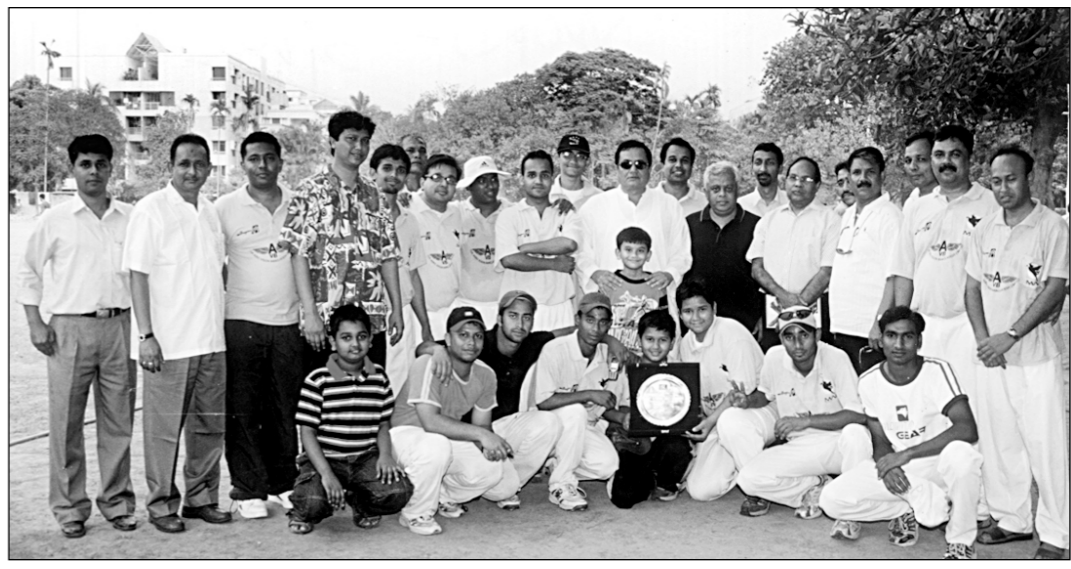


PHOTO: COURTESY

Players and officials of Cadet College Club pose with the trophy after beating Dhaka Club in a friendly cricket match at the Gulshan Youth Club Ground yesterday.