

## That's called a classic

### Football

INTERNET SOURCE, Madrid

Real Madrid coach Vanderlei Luxemburgo's brave decision to play an attacking trident of Raul, Ronaldo and Michael Owen paid dividends as his side beat Barcelona 4-2 in an 'El Clasico' thriller to keep their dreams of winning the Primera Liga alive.

All three, plus midfielder Zinedine Zidane, found the back of the net as Real closed the gap at the top of the table to six points with seven games remaining.

The triumph will give Real a huge morale boost in the run-in to the end of the season, but they could still have reasons to regret Ronaldo's late 72nd-minute free kick which established the final score.

With individual goal difference separating the teams in the event of a draw at the end of the campaign, that goal gave Barca what could be a vital edge.

Real knew that anything other than three points would mean goodbye to their championship aspirations, so they played with a sense of urgency from the start.

They were ahead as early as the sixth minute as Zidane took advantage of a sluggish Barca defence to head home a Ronaldo cross unmarked from four yards out.

Zidane suffered in the process, however, because as his momentum carried him forward after nodding the ball in, Barcelona keeper Victor Valdes crashed into him and pushed him into the post where the French legend smacked the upright with his face.

Barcelona looked to be half asleep, but could have got back into the game five minutes later as Ronaldinho's looping header skimmed the top of the Real crossbar.

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REAL RAUL ROLL: An ecstatic Real Madrid superstar Raul (L) is being chased by teammate Michael Owen after he had scored the third goal against Barcelona at Madrid on April 10.

PHOTO: AFP

## NCL RESUMES TODAY Spotlight on Dhaka

SPORTS REPORTER

The focus will be on Dhaka and Rajshahi when the penultimate round of the Sixth Ispahani National Cricket League begins at three different venues across the country today.

While Rajshahi, who are leading the one-day table of the six-team competition with 14 points, will try to consolidate their position with a victory against hosts Barisal, Dhaka on the other hand will be looking for greater glory after their 50-over match against Chittagong.

Dhaka, who will be playing without their captain Khaled Mahmud for the second match in a row, now need only a victory in the four-day match against Chittagong at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium to retain the first-class title.

Dhaka are currently leading the four-day table with 38 points, ten points clear from their nearest challenger Rajshahi. Even a first-innings lead against Chittagong will assure them of the title for the second year running with a match in hand against Khulna.

Dhaka won their last round against Barisal convincingly despite missing their star performers including inspirational captain Mahmud, who is now training with the England-bound cricketers.

Sylhet, who has a chance to pip Rajshahi to the one-day post, will host Khulna.

## Ashraf's year

### Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Ashraf was voted the best sportsman of the year 2004 yesterday.

The talented batsman was the popular choice of 164 sports journalists, who took part in the poll of bangladeshherkhela.com, the lone Bangla website that introduced its annual award last year.

Ashraf, who scored a magnificent 158 against India in Chittagong last December, won the battle ahead of fellow Test cricketer Mohammad Rafique and SAF Games gold winning shooter Sharmin Akhter in a colourful function at the Shiphakala Academy.

"Winning an award is very special. It reminds me of that innings against India. Although I'm not among the runs but this prize will inspire me to do better in the future," said Ashraf moments after receiving his first-ever achievement award from the journalist community.

The youngest Test centurion Ashraf received a trophy and a cheque for Tk 50,000 from Post and Telecommunications Minister Barrister Aminul Haque.

Ashraf, who scored 520 runs in eight Tests including four half-centuries apart from that brilliant hundred at an average of 40, got

highest 217 points.

Country's leading wicket-taker Rafique, who won the inaugural accolade in 2003, finished just four points behind Ashraf.

Sharmin, who won the 10m Air Rifles event in 9th SAF Games in Islamabad, secured 118 points.

The bangladeshherkhela.com also honoured the first three captains of the post-liberation Bangladesh -- Zakaria Pinto (football), Shamim Kabir (cricket) and Abdus Sadek (hockey) during a two-hour ceremony televised live on Channel-i.



Ashraf with his crest

## Martin hits SL for 6

### Cricket

AFP, Wellington

New Zealand fast bowler Chris Martin destroyed the cream of Sri Lanka batting with career best figures of six for 54 as the Black Caps dominated the opening day of the second Test at the Basin Reserve here Monday.

Sri Lanka were all out for 211, recovering from seven for 86, and New Zealand were 52 without loss

at stumps.

Playing his 23rd Test, Martin's return topped his previous best of six for 76 against South Africa in March last year, while Thilan Samaraweera survived on luck to topscore for Sri Lanka with his eighth Test half-century before being the last wicket to fall for 73.

For much of Sri Lanka's innings Martin toiled away as the only New Zealand bowler to threaten their talent-laden top order, despite ideal conditions for bowling.

With a cool southerly breeze at

his back Martin had his first wicket within three balls after New Zealand won the toss and elected to bowl.

He unleashed a sharp inswinger and had first Test centurymaker Marvan Atapattu edging a full delivery to Lou Vincent at third slip.

In his third over, Martin had Kumar Sangakkara caught by James Marshall at gully for 16 and four balls later he trapped Mahela Jayawardene trapped leg before wicket for one.

Opener Sanath Jayasuriya then prodded at one in Martin's next over

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## Security takes centre stage

### 4th Indo-Pak ODI today in Ahmedabad

AFP, Ahmedabad

Elite troops and police on Monday swamped this western Indian city, the scene of bloody communal riots three years ago, as India and Pakistan prepared to clash in a key one-day cricket match on Tuesday.

Security officials are leaving nothing to chance in Ahmedabad where at least 2,000 people, mostly Muslims, were killed in 2002 after the death of 59 Hindus in a train carriage fire blamed by state authorities on a Muslim mob.

Pakistan had initially declined to play a five-day Test match in the Gujarat state commercial capital but later agreed to take part in a one-day match after the Board of Control for Cricket India and local officials guaranteed high-level security.

The sell-out crowd of 47,000 will have to show proof of their identity before they are granted entry into the Motera Stadium on the outskirts of the city which resembled a well-guarded fortress on the eve of the match.

Gates will open three hours before the scheduled start, to give enough time to check each spectator, who will also not be allowed to bring in water bottles or food packets despite the 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) heat.

For the first time ever, local organisers have insured the Pakistan team for a total of 445,000 dollars as security cover.

Gujarat Cricket Association (GCA) president Narhari Amin said each of the 16 Pakistan cricketers and four support staff would be insured for 22,000 dollars for their shorter than usual two-day stay in Ahmedabad.

"This insurance is to safeguard

us against any eventuality," said Amin.

Some 15,000 police, commandos and other security personnel will be on hand to guard the cricketers at the hotel and the stadium.

Moreover, the GCA has also erected a glass enclosure around the teams' dressing rooms so that they could watch the match without being besieged by fans and autograph seekers.

The two teams, who arrived on Monday afternoon, will leave for New Delhi immediately after the match on way to Kanpur where the fifth match will be played on Friday.

Senior police officer PK Jha said he was confident the match would pass off peacefully.

"We know the security arrangements will cause inconvenience to cricket fans but our top priority is to

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### STADIUM FACTS

India and Pakistan have never met at the Sardar Patel Stadium in Motera, Ahmedabad, a ground that has witnessed -- in 20 seasons since it first hosted a game -- scores rise from around 190 to above 300. The last time a game was played here, India overtook West Indies' 324 with 14 balls to spare.

First ODI match: 05/10/1986

Last ODI match: 15/11/2002

Matches played: 9

Matches won by home side: 5

Matches won by touring side: 3

Matches won by neutral side: 1

Highest individual innings: 144 S Ganguly 2000-2001 India v Zimbabwe

Best bowling: 3/9 C Hooper 1993-1994 India v West Indies

Highest team innings: 325/5 West Indies 2002-2003 v India

Lowest team innings: 100 India 1993-1994 v West Indies

Highest run chase achieved: 325/5 India 2002-2003 v West Indies

## Toss vital: Inzy

### Sourav plays down its significance

AFP, Ahmedabad

Pakistan captain Inzamam-ul-Haq said Monday that winning the toss was a big advantage in the ongoing one-day series against India.

"Teams batting first after winning the toss in the current series have posted huge scores which are very difficult to chase," Inzamam said ahead of today's fourth one-dayer.

The first three games of the ongoing six-match series were won by teams batting first.

"I have been saying all along that batting first is a very big advantage, especially in these hot conditions. Half the battle is won if you bat first on such flat tracks," said Inzamam.

"When a team is chasing a big

total, it is bound to lose early wickets while going for quick runs. That is what happened with India in the last match."

India skipper Sourav Ganguly, however, played down the significance of the toss.

"Toss is an important factor, but I don't think it is enough to make a match lop-sided," said Ganguly, who has been struggling for runs in the ongoing series.

"I have had some fine moments here and hope to get back in form in tomorrow's game," said the Indian captain, who has scored just 13 runs in three matches.

India lost the previous match at Jamshedpur when they scored 213 in reply to Pakistan's 319-9.

The hosts had won the first two matches batting first, scoring 281-8 at Cochin and 356-9 at Visakhapatnam.

## Waugh, Moore tie the knot

AGENCIES, Sydney

Mark Waugh, who retired from Test cricket in 2002, married Kim Moore, a racing trainer, in Sydney on Sunday.

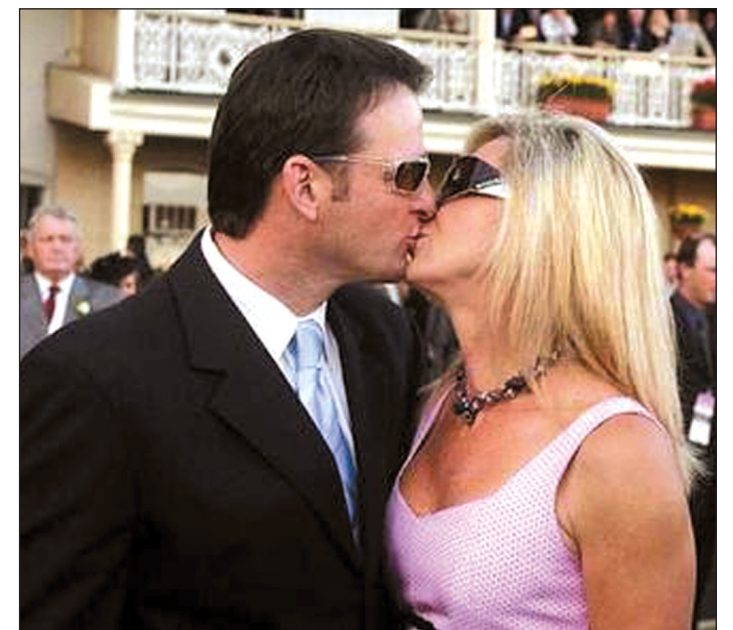
A long-time punter and horse owner, Waugh tied the knot at The Hills Lodge Boutique at Castle Hill.

The wedding was completed a year after Waugh, 39, broke off his 17-year relationship with Sue Porter, who had followed him throughout his international career.

His twin brother Steve Waugh, Ricky Ponting and Ian Healy attended the civil service, which did not include a best man or bridesmaid. The media rights have reportedly been sold to a women's magazine.

It is the first marriage for Waugh while for Moore is the second.

The couple departs this week for a honeymoon in Fiji.



Mark Waugh and Kim Moore share their joy at the Randwick races on Saturday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

### What to WATCH

#### BTV & DD Sports

India vs Pakistan  
Fourth ODI  
Live at 9:30 am

#### ESPN

Sportscentre  
Live at 8:30 pm  
UEFA Champions League  
Bayern Munich vs Chelsea  
Live at 12:30 am (Wednesday)

#### STAR Sports

Sportslive  
Live at 8:00 pm  
UEFA Champions League  
Inter Milan vs AC Milan  
Live at 12:30 am (Wednesday)  
Sri Lanka vs New Zealand  
Second Test, Day Three  
Live at 4:30 am (Wednesday)

#### TEN Sports

West Indies vs South Africa  
Second Test, Day Five  
Live at 8:00 pm