



THE CHELSEA CARAVAN: Chelsea players Didier Drogba (L) and Mikael Forsell (2nd L) ride around the pitch on a groundsman buggy during the celebrations following the game against Charlton at Stamford Bridge in London on Saturday.

India, Sri Lanka to play 8 ODIs in August?

India and Sri Lanka will clash in at least eight one-day internationals in August, according to a proposal drawn up by Sri Lanka's government-run cricket board.

India will join the West Indies and hosts Sri Lanka in a tri-series over August 2-14 before Sri Lanka travel to India two days later for five more one-dayers, an official said on Sunday.

The five matches in India are to make up for the one-day series in April which was cancelled due to the reluctance of Indian players to take part soon after a gruelling tour by Pakistan.

The Indian board has not yet reacted to Sri Lanka's proposal.

The West Indies will tour the island nation for two Test matches in July followed by the triangular where each team plays the other twice in the league before the final.

After the proposed five-match series in India, the Sri Lankans will return home to face Bangladesh in two Tests and three one-dayers in September.

India will tour Zimbabwe in the same period for two Tests and a tri-series also featuring New Zealand.

Sri Lanka are also scheduled to tour India in November for three Test matches, according to the 10-year programme drawn up the International Cricket Council (ICC).

Abahani

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ball possession and reduce the margin through Walid.

Yellow cards: Shipon, Ujjal (Abahani) and Mamun, Johnny (Farashganj).

The first semifinal between Sheikh Russel Kriya Chakra and Arambagh Kriya Sangha will be held today.

The second semifinal is due tomorrow but Muktiyoddha, who meet East Bengal in Dhaka in an AFC Cup match on Wednesday, are expected to field a weak team against Abahani featuring guest players.

TEAMS

ABAHANI: Nizam, Obaidur, Pradeep, Shipon, Lajuk, Ndem, Joy, Ujjal, Parvez (Faisal), Ibrahim and Cristiana (Farhad).

FARASHGANJ: Piru (Zia), Khaled, Scyllia, Faisal, Apu, Kabir, Johnny, Amirul (Rony), Kelesku, Walid and Mamun.

Referee: Azad Rahman.

Skipper Smith

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Wavell Hinds, the part-time bowler for West Indies in such tight situations, made the breakthrough when he had Dippenaar bowled in the 23rd over.

Smith and Kallis helped the South Africans make steady progress to their target, but the South African captain's landmark was looming, and he eventually reached it when he slashed a delivery from his namesake Dwayne Smith to third man for the last of his 13 boundaries.

BRIEF SCORES

WEST INDIES: 253 all out in 48.5 overs (Sarwan 72, Chandernaul 49, Smith 46; Ntini 4-46, Langeveldt 2-41, Nel 2-43)

SOUTH AFRICA: 255 for two in 45 overs (Smith 103, Dippenaar 56, Kallis 51, Gibbs 40; Smith 1-21, Hinds 1-25)

Result: South Africa won by eight wickets.

Toss: West Indies.

Man-of-the-match: Graeme Smith.

Mom worry for Brazilians

is another exported Brazilian concerned for the welfare of his family members.

"The fear of kidnapping has become bigger by the day," revealed Cacau. "My mother is afraid and is asking whether she can come to Germany."

This month the mother of Brazilian defender Marinho, who plays for Brazilian first division side Corinthians, became the fifth kidnapping of the mother of a top player in the past six months.

In December 2004 the mother of Brazilian international Robinho was kidnapped at gunpoint and returned after 41 days when a 40 million euro ransom had been paid.

FC Santos star Robinho, 21, is one of the most promising talents in Brazil with Real Madrid and Chelsea reportedly weighing up a multi-million bid for the Samba sensation.

Brazilian police are still hunting for the mother of FC Porto striker Luis Fabiano, who was abducted in March.

Henin on course

"I played a very solid match and I am very pleased," said Henin.

"Against Patty Schnyder you have to stay aggressive all the time. If I play one millimetre from my best it will be another match entirely.

"I was going for the corners and making winners and it was very good."

Henin's form must make her unofficial favourite for Roland Garros. She was outstanding during her straight sets victory over top-seeded Maria Sharapova on Friday and if anything was better still on Saturday.

The match was played almost throughout in a slight drizzle, and the grey, heavy conditions which were unpleasant for almost everyone, actually appeared ideal for Henin.

The brilliant Belgian was given more time in which to prepare, making available for her an even wider arsenal of attacking strokes than usual, and resulting in a torrent of multi-layered attacks which swept Schnyder aside.

"It's better that you just accept the conditions," said Henin, obliquely referring to Schnyder's difficulties with them.

"Of course it's better to play tennis in nice sunny conditions, but the conditions were probably worse for the spectators than the players."

Schnyder had previously got past Miami and Indian Wells champion Kim Clijsters and US Open champion Svetlana Kuznetsova, but now against the inspired Henin she lasted only 51 minutes.

It was still drizzling at the end of a miserable experience which Schnyder would have liked to avoid by delaying the match until the weather improved.

"They still do whatever they want so there is not point in arguing," she said.

"I argued last night in our doubles match and they made us play for ever, so I wasn't into arguing."

Petrova made hard work of a win which looked close when she served for the match at 5-4 in the second set and then led 5-3 in the tie-breaker.

She also took a ten-minute injury time out in the third game of the final set, when the official trainer came on court to apply treatment to Petrova's left thigh.

Not long after the restart the tenacious mobile Jankovic broke back to reach 3-4 and was within two points of reaching 4-4 before a last push by Petrova made her a very relieved-looking winner.



Bangladesh Ansar's Hasib, who won, in action against Shanta Jhenidah during their match of the Meril 27th National Table Tennis Championship at the Suhrawardi National Indoor Stadium in Mirpur on Sunday.

Sharapova still eyeing No 1 spot

AFP, Rome

Maria Sharapova insists her dream of becoming world number one for the first time is still very much on course as she heads into the Rome Masters, which starts on Monday, as the top seed.

The Russian teenager was thwarted in her bid to top the rankings when she lost to Justine Henin-Hardenne in the quarterfinals of the German Open last week.

But despite her defeat in Berlin, Sharapova insisted she wasn't wilting under the pressure.

"I am 18 years old and everyone think I should be number one next week. I am not going to go away and cry," said the Wimbledon champion.

Sharapova's chances of winning in Rome, a warm-up for the French Open, have been boosted by the absence of former triple Grand Slam titleholder Henin-Hardenne.

The top eight seeds, five of which are Russian, have all been given byes to the second round.

Sharapova begins her campaign against either compatriot Alina Jidkova or Spain's Anabel Medina Garrigues.

Federer back in action

AFP, Hamburg

World number one Roger Federer returns to action after a three-week break to defend his title at the Masters Series ATP event which begins here on Monday.

Federer regards last year's success at the Rothenbaum stadium as one of his most important because it suggested he may be capable of winning a Grand Slam on clay, the surface on which he has yet to win one.

But Federer's return to action is based neither on psychological advantage nor sentimental preference but upon physical progress, for he feels that his problems with his feet have receded.

He had been struggling with blisters on both soles for several weeks - without making excuses - which makes his record of 35 wins in 37 matches this year all the more special.

The second of those defeats occurred in his last match, against the 18-year-old Frenchman Richard Gasquet in Monte Carlo, though this may be a blessing in disguise because it helped persuade Federer to miss the Masters Series in Rome this week.

That may help insure against his greatest opponent last year - exhaustion - and a fresher Federer may rapidly warm to his task again, even though the Hamburg weather can sometimes turn brass monkeys blue.

He may need to be rolling right away because his opening match may be none-too-easy. He faces Fernando Verdasco, the improving 21-year-old left-handed Spaniard who upset Andy Roddick in Miami six weeks ago.

Akram asks

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panels. How can they check your fitness?" he said, adding Pakistan will badly miss Akhtar on the West Indies tour.

"With Akhtar dropped and Mohammad Sami injured, Pakistan bowling lacks depth and would find it hard to cope against a resurging West Indies," he said.

Abramovich breaks silence

AFP, London

Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich on Saturday broke his self-imposed silence to hail his club's first Premiership title in 50 years.

"I view this championship as just the beginning of a new era for Chelsea and would like to reiterate my long-term commitment to the club," he wrote in the programme for Saturday's match against Charlton.

The Russian billionaire, who has pumped over 300 million pounds into buying a galaxy of top players and bringing in one of the world's top managers in Jose Mourinho, added: "Much has been said about the financial outlay over the past two years.

"However, this must be seen in the context of placing Chelsea on a

level playing field with the other top clubs in England and Europe for a sustained period.

"We have made solid investments on the field in players, management, training facilities and an academy that will nurture the next generation of home-grown talent.

"Of the field, a team of executives and senior managers has been put together to grow the business and capitalise on the playing success.

"All of this is a deliberate, long-term strategy with the aim of building the most successful football club in the world in the next 10 years and beyond.

"Under chairman Bruce Buck, chief executive Peter Kenyon and Jose Mourinho, we have a strong leadership team that shares my vision."

He offered his congratulations to the board of directors, Peter

Kenyon, Jose Mourinho, John Terry, the staff and players on bringing the title to Stamford Bridge.

"Winning the league this year is especially moving as it comes on the 50th anniversary of Chelsea's last title and at the beginning of the club's centenary year celebrations.

"I would especially like to congratulate the fans. You have waited patiently and this victory has only been possible thanks to your support. I am very honoured to share in your joy.

"My heart also goes out to the long-term supporters who did not live to see Chelsea reach the pinnacle of English football once again, and I would like to dedicate this trophy to them.

"Fifty years is much too long to wait - and I am confident that we will not have to wait that long again."

PREMIERSHIP

Focus shifts to bottom

AFP, London

The battle for Premiership survival will go to the final day of the season after Norwich climbed out of the bottom three with a 1-0 win at home to 10-man Birmingham at Carrow Road on Saturday.

Elsewhere Crystal Palace were heading out of the relegation zone against fellow strugglers Southampton until a 90th minute equaliser from Danny Higginbotham rescued a point for the visitors.

Both clubs had a man sent-off - two of five Premiership red-cards on Saturday.

Meanwhile, West Brom, were left bottom of the table despite a 1-1 draw away to Manchester United in Saturday's late kick-off match.

The results meant that no club had been relegated before the last round of matches a week on Sunday.

These will see West Brom (31

points) at home to Portsmouth, Palace (32 points) at Charlton for a south London derby, Southampton (32 points) hosting United and Norwich (33 points) away to Fulham.

At the other end of the table, Everton cemented their grip on fourth place and a Champions League spot with a 2-0 win against 10-man Newcastle while Middlesbrough edged UEFA Cup rivals Tottenham 1-0.

Should Champions League finalists Liverpool fail to beat Arsenal on Sunday then Everton will be assured of fourth place.

Earlier Chelsea, who won the Premiership last week, were presented with the trophy after beating Charlton 1-0 in their final home match of the season.

In other matches, Bolton qualified for the UEFA Cup following a 1-1 draw against Portsmouth while Manchester City won 2-1 at Aston Villa as Fulham enjoyed a 3-1 victory away to Blackburn.

At Old Trafford, Ryan Giggs's

21st minute quickly-taken free-kick, with keeper Russell Hoult stranded because of a groin injury, put United ahead against West Brom.

But Polish reserve keeper Tomasz Kuszczak then produced a string of saves to keep West Brom in the game before Robert Earnshaw scored from the spot in the 63rd minute after Geoff Horsfield was fouled in the box by John O'Shea.

The result left United three points behind Arsenal in the race for second-place and automatic entry into the Champions League proper.

TOP SIX										
English Premiership table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):										
Chelsea	36	28	7	1	68	13	91			
Arsenal	35	23	8	4	76	33	77			
Man Utd	36	21	11	4	55	22	74			
Everton	36	18	7	11	43	36	61			
Liverpool	36	16	7	13	49	37	55			
Bolton	37	15	10	12	46	42	55			

Coria, Nadal face-off

AFP, Rome

Teen sensation Rafael Nadal reached the final of the Rome Masters on Saturday after battling back from a set down to beat Spanish compatriot David Ferrer 4-6, 6-4, 7-5.

The fifth seed, going for his fifth singles title this year, will face Guillermo Coria in Sunday's final after the Argentinian beat eight-time Grand Slam champion Andre Agassi 7-5, 7-6.

Ninth seed Coria will be out for revenge having lost to Nadal in the Monte Carlo final last month.

Nadal admitted Friday's three-setter against Czech 15th seed Radek Stepanek had taken a lot out of him.

"I felt a little bit tired, mentally and physically, but I've played a lot of matches this year" he said.

"David played better than me in the first two sets, but I finished the match playing at my highest level.

"I fought for every ball and the important thing was that I came good at the end."

Nadal insisted he never doubted himself, even when Ferrer saved two match points to break his serve and level at 5-5 in the deciding set.

"I had some problems, but then he had some problems, too," he said.

Coria, who held two match points in last year's French Open final only to lose to Gaston Gaudio, admitted

Kluivert wants out

AFP, London

Dutch international striker Patrick Kluivert is set to return to Spain and end his disappointing spell at Premiership outfit Newcastle he told the News of the World on Sunday.

The 28-year-old has scored just four times in 18 Premiership appearances for the Magpies - who have an option to sign him for an extra two years - since moving from Barcelona last summer and he is desperate to go back to Spain where he enjoyed a lot of success.

Kluivert, who scored 91 goals in 183 league appearances for Barca, is a target for several Spanish clubs including Valencia, Seville and the latter's city rivals Real Betis.

Kluivert, scorer of 40 goals in his 79 internationals, has ruled out moving to Turkish side Fenerbahce.

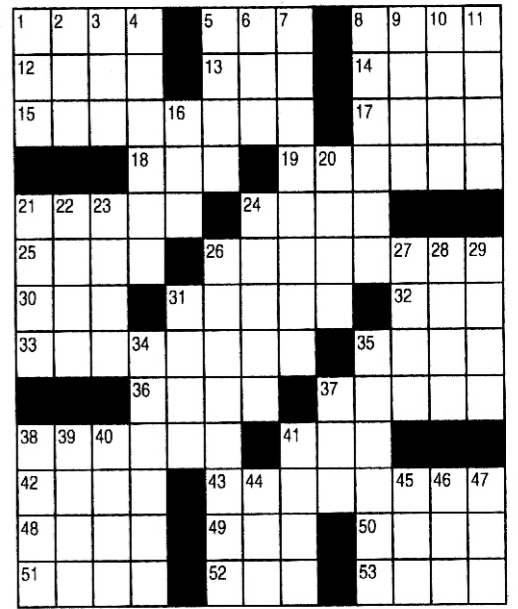
"I am going back to Spain and not Turkey," he told the newspaper.

Kluivert has also all but ruled himself out of playing for the national side anymore stating in March that even if he was selected he probably wouldn't go.

Kluivert had a miserable Euro 2004 where his poor relations with the then national coach Dick Advocaat saw him play no part in the tournament as he sat on the bench with Manchester United striker Ruud van Nistelrooy and Roy Makaay of Bayern Munich being preferred.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS**
- 1 Hideaway
 - 5 Mid-June honoree
 - 8 Canadian flag symbol
 - 12 Competent
 - 13 Raw rock
 - 14 Dixie Chicks "Goodbye -"
 - 15 Pizzeria wares
 - 17 Largest of the seven
 - 18 Praise in verse
 - 19 Sentence structure
 - 21 Pituitary, e.g.
 - 24 Super-market section
 - 25 Shift start for many
 - 26 Insulin et al.
 - 30 Work with
 - 31 Factor in a repair bill
 - 32 Actor Wallach
- DOWN**
- 1 Fond du Lac, Wisc.
 - 2 Lawyers' org.
 - 3 Under the weather
 - 4 Gerry-mander
 - 5 Finished
 - 6 Exist
 - 7 Restaurant
 - 8 Shed
 - 9 Right on the map
 - 10 Bocelli solo
 - 11 Linen source
 - 21 One of the Simpsons
 - 23 From the start
 - 24 Customs
 - 26 Level the playing field
 - 27 Got to have
 - 28 Singer Fitzgerald
 - 29 Ledge
 - 31 Haiku, for one
 - 34 Gutsy
 - 35 Translate, in a way
 - 37 Chum
 - 38 Cicatrix
 - 39 "Hi, sailor!"
 - 40 Horne or Olin
 - 41 Read bar codes
 - 44 Ms. Sumac
 - 45 Siesta
 - 46 Prior night
 - 47 View
- Solution time: 21 mins.**
- U T A F L A S H F O G
P O W E A G L E O R R
S O L A R Y E A R R A E
I R E V I A S T L Y
H A M M E R F E A T
E L L I T E N O R I E T
M E L D O U D A G A R
I S L E T T O R R I E
E M I R G E N T L Y
C A N I N E S R O
H U N C E N T U R I E S
A N T A S T I A N L I V E
P T A N E A R S K E W



CRYPTOQUIP

K X X Q N K X F C N K X J S W X

S N H H E N M Q A R L X Y Z A C C O M Z

W O P H A I L N I I P F R R J : " Z Y O P A

N M R E F M O H W P A M C . "

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF YOU CHEERED FOR SOMEONE PULLING UP PLANTS, ONE COULD SAY YOU'RE ROOTING FOR HIM.