

Greg asks to bat better

AFP, Dambulla

Indian coach Greg Chappell is looking forward to a better batting performance from his team against Sri Lanka in Indian Oil Cup triangular one-day series match here on Wednesday.

India batted much below expectations in their opening game against the hosts on Saturday, making 205 before losing the contest by three wickets. Skipper Rahul Dravid alone kept his reputation intact, top-scoring with a solid 54.

"We need to bat better. A total of 250 was what we needed on Saturday, but we were 40 or 50 runs short," Chappell said on Tuesday.

"I am happy with our bowling and fielding in both the games. We just need to get more out of our batting. The good thing is batting is our strength for a while, so hopefully that will come back."

Bowlers set India's victory in the second match on Sunday as Harbhajan Singh, Ashish Nehra and Virender Sehwag each bagged two wickets to restrict the West Indies to a modest 178.

India then rode on Dravid's second successive half-century to complete the job with 14 overs to spare.

Chappell was not worried about Sehwag's twin failures in the ongoing tournament, saying the opening batsman would soon rediscover his form.

Hard-hitting opener Sehwag failed in both the matches, scoring 14 against Sri Lanka and two against the West Indies.

The Indian coach welcomed the return of Sourav Ganguly, saying the batsman's experience would stand the team in good stead.

"He is an experienced player and the leader in the group. Whether he is captain or not he is a senior player. We will be relying on him a lot, not only for his leadership but also batting," said Chappell.

Ganguly, with 9,967 runs in 271 one-dayers, joined the squad on Monday after serving a four-match ban. He was captain when suspended for his team's slow over-rate against Pakistan in a home one-day series in April.

Women's h'ball from today

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The Bengal Plastic under-19 women's handball tournament begins today at the handball ground and Dhanmondi Women Sports Complex.

A total of eight teams, split into two groups, will take part in the 4-day long meet.

The teams are: Jessore, Munshiganj, Khulna, Jamalpur, Chittagong, Narail, Panchagarh and Rangpur.

Ansars, Maniknagar kabaddi champs

SPORTS REPORTER

Ansar VDP School emerged champions in the school kabaddi tournament while Maniknagar Government Primary School lifted the mini school kabaddi title yesterday.

Ansar edged Nawabpur Government High School 44-42 in an entertaining final at the Outer Stadium while Maniknagar beat Darus Salam Primary School 58-46 in the mini final at the same venue.



Did U Know?

India's victory over West Indies in Indian Oil Cup on July 31 was their 29th win in 77 matches against the Caribbeans. It was also their 17th win in 44 away matches against them.



Inzamamul Haq

(Pakistani cricket captain) "I am glad that the ICC reduced Sourav's (Ganguly) ban and hopefully he will soon regain his lost place. But frankly speaking, I am not a big supporter of match bans because it can put the careers of some captains on the line."



PHOTO: AP

TIME TO DANCE THE TANGO! Real Madrid's Brazilian star Roberto Carlos leaves the Civil Registry office after obtaining Spanish citizenship in Madrid on Tuesday. Carlos' new status will allow him to play for Madrid as an EU player, permitting new Brazilian signings Robinho and Julio Baptista to complete the team's full complement of three non-EU recruits.

Roberto Carlos is Spanish!

AFP, Madrid

Brazil defender Roberto Carlos obtained Spanish citizenship Tuesday, making him eligible to play for Real Madrid as a European Union player.

Roberto Carlos' status means Madrid's new Brazilian signings - Robinho and Julio Baptista - join Ronaldo to complete the team's

allowance of three non-EU players.

"After so many years in Spain, I feel proud to have been nationalized. This is something which is very important for me," Roberto Carlos was quoted by news agency Europa Press.

Roberto Carlos, 32, joined Madrid from Inter Milan in 1996 and has since won both the Champions League and Spanish league three times. He also won the World Cup with Brazil in 2002.

Warne comes to his senses

AFP, London

Spin legend Shane Warne, who admits he has chased so many women his marriage finally buckled, says he would turn down a beautiful woman to be able to bowl England out in the second Test at Edgbaston.

"I'll take the cricket every time," the 35-year-old says.

"I'd give up sex to bowl a few more of those balls this summer. That's for sure."

Warne is referring to the leg-break that bamboozled Mike Gatting in the 1993 Old Trafford Ashes Test.

Warne's life has never been the same since and his 589 Test wickets make him unquestionably the greatest spin bowler of all time.

Worse still, he says he has done it all on a diet of pizzas and milkshakes.

"My diet is still pizzas, chips, toasted cheese sandwiches and milkshakes," he told GQ magazine.

"I have the occasional six week burst where I stick to fruit and cereal. It's bloody kills me but I guess you have to do it."

Warne admits he has made many mistakes but never looks back.

"I've made some poor choices when I've had too many but I've made some when I've been sober," he says.

"The problem is there's still a big kid inside me who likes to have fun. Maybe I need to grow up ... and maybe I don't."

"I may have done a few things differently. But when you are thrust into the limelight at 22, like I was, it can be hard to deal with it in a mature, sensible way."

"You can't describe what that ball to Gatting did. It changed my life

forever, on and off the pitch. I started being judged on every move I made."

But he knocks the women he has dated who have spilled the beans to the newspapers.

"It's poor form for cricketers or



SHANE WARNE

celebrities or movie stars that there are so many women out there selling their stories for cash.

"It's just another form of prostitution. What happens between two people, whoever they are, should stay between them."

And he recognises a soul mate in England soccer captain David Beckham who has been caught by the tabloids more than once.

"We've been through a few similar things that I'd love to chat to him about over a beer or two," he says.

But the Australian is in no doubt about his place in cricket's hall of fame.

"No matter how many more wickets I take, I was voted one of the five best cricketers ever in the Wisden poll by my peers. And they can never take that away from me."

Russel-4, Mukti-0

FROM PAGE 12 noded the ball wide of an open net from barely two yards.

The Reds brought another half-fit player Rajani in defence but Russel, who drew goalless with Muktijodha in the first leg match that they deserved to win, went to the break with a three-goal cushion when Bulbul drilled in a low drive into Aminul's near post from 20 yards.

Muktijodha made two more changes after the break, bringing Nigerian forward Jeremiah and forward Kanchan to strengthen the attack. But even switching to 4-4-2 did not give them any respite as

Bulbul completed the league's fifth hat-trick on the hour. Left unmarked inside the six-yard box, the diminutive striker placed a first-time left-footer into the net when he met a perfect chip from in-form left-winger Tanvir.

Russel, who pushed their collection to 18 points with five wins from 12 games, had two more chances but Bulbul slammed the ball into the side netting while Majid shot the ball straight to Aminul to save the Reds' blushes.

Muktijodha, who remain on 22 points after their fourth defeat, are now under threat to lose their third

Inter's plan to accommodate Figo

AFP, Rome

Inter Milan are looking to offload three players over the next couple of days to finance the signing of Luis Figo.

According to Tuesday's edition of the Gazzetta dello Sport, Inter must first sell tough-tackling midfielder Edgar Davids, winger Andy van der Meide and defender Francesco Coco before they can conclude a deal for Real Madrid's unsettled Portuguese star.

Davids is on the verge of joining Premiership side Tottenham Hotspur, while his Dutch compatriot Van der Meide is also reported to be attracting interest from a Premiership club.

Ajax were looking to sign Coco but were put off by the full-back's proneness to injury.

However, the Gazzetta believe Ajax might be prepared to take Coco on loan for at least a season.

Figo, whose contract with Real runs out next year, was FIFA's World Player of the Year in 2001.

He is Portugal's most capped player, having made 111 international appearances since making his debut in 1991 and is also the country's third-highest scorer with 31 goals.

Inter have already signed two players from Real Madrid with Santiago Solari and Walter Samuel joining the big-spending Serie A club.

ENG-PAK SERIES 83 overs a day in the Tests

REUTERS, Karachi

England cricketers will have a reduction in their working hours for the international series later this year in Pakistan.

Under the rules of the governing body, the International Cricket Council (ICC), 90 overs a day minimum should be bowled during Tests.

But a Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) official told Reuters on Tuesday that this would not be possible during the tour which will be held during the Pakistan winter from October 26. Instead the teams must only bowl 83 overs.

November and December in Punjab are winter months with bad light and fog normally reducing playing hours and dew problems affecting one-dayers in the evening hours.

"The one-dayers which are being played under lights will start early around 1130 in the morning (instead of 1345) so that we have an early finish," director of PCB cricket operations, Saleem Altarf said.

England play three Tests in Multan, Faisalabad and Lahore in November and four of the five one-dayers divided between Rawalpindi and Lahore in December.

The tourists have also agreed to play a one-dayer in the southern port city of Karachi but rejected a proposal to play a Test there for security reasons.

Pakistan to use neutral umpires in Eng ODIs

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan will use two neutral umpires in the one-day matches against England after the International Cricket Council (ICC) allowed them to try out the idea, an official said on Monday.

"Our suggestion that two neutral umpires should be used (in all one-day internationals) instead of the prevailing one was not accepted by the ICC, but they have allowed Pakistan to use two neutral umpires for our England series," Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Shaharyar Khan told reporters.

Currently two neutral umpires officiate in Test matches while one umpire from the home country stands with a neutral umpire in one-day internationals.

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But the Australian is in no doubt about his place in cricket's hall of fame.

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No MU deal, says Ballack

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich midfielder Michael Ballack has denied reports he has come to a gentleman's agreement to join Manchester United after the 2006 World Cup.

Ballack is understood to want to leave Bayern after one final season in the Bundesliga and The Guardian reports that the preliminary details of a free transfer have been provisionally agreed for him to sign a pre-

contract agreement at Old Trafford next January.

But the player's agent, Michael Becker, said no deal had been struck. "There's no pre-contract, no gentleman's agreement," he said.

"The only people we're talking to at the moment are Bayern."

United were understood to believe they have a gentleman's agreement in place with Ballack who has 57 international caps plus 61 goals in 206 Bundesliga matches.

His arrival would signal the end of Roy Keane's career at Old Trafford. But Bayern insisted Tuesday they

had already offered Ballack a much-improved new contract.

"Everything's in Ballack's hands. I'd advise him to seize the opportunity," said Bayern president Franz Beckenbauer.

But Bayern coach Felix Magath admitted there was a danger they could lose the play-maker, who will be 29 in September.

"Of course we want him to stay, but it's in his hands," he said.

Ballack turned down Real Madrid to join Bayern from Bayer Leverkusen in 2002.

Parreira at full Real force

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Real Madrid star trio Ronaldo, Robinho and Julio Baptista will contest for places up front after being named in the Brazil squad by manager Carlos Parreira for a friendly against Croatia, and a vital 2006 World Cup qualifier against Chile.

The reigning World Champions will prepare for their World Cup qualifier on September 4 with a friendly against Croatia in Split on August 17.

While Ronaldo and new Real Madrid recruits Robinho and Julio Baptista have been included in the squad there is no place for Barcelona star Ronaldinho, who is suspended for the Chile match.

Coach Carlos Alberto Parreira said he was keeping the nucleus of the team which won the Confederations Cup in Germany last June.

The main difference was the return of Ronaldo, who was left out of the Confederations Cup at his own request, but also missed out on the preceding World Cup qualifiers against Paraguay and Argentina in which he had expected to play.

"I hope to see a motivated Ronaldo, in form and ready for the World Cup," Parreira told reporters.

"He's been training hard and we hear that he is much thinner."

Parreira said he had intended to leave out Robinho, who refused to play for Santos after the Confederations Cup unless they agreed to sell

him to Real.

Real finally agreed to pay the Brazilian champions \$30 million for the 21-year-old on Saturday and Robinho, who will stay at Santos until the end of the month, returned to the side for Sunday's 4-2 win over Corinthians.

"He hadn't been playing so he wouldn't have been picked," said Parreira. "But by the time we face Croatia, he will have played three or four games and I expect him to be able to play at least a half."

Sao Paulo defender Cicinho gets a call up as does Inter Milan's goalkeeper, Julio Cesar and PSV Eindhoven's defender Alex Rodrigo.

Parreira has decided to test his new recruits and try a new formation against Croatia in a bid to find a winning formula for their World Cup qualifier against Chile two weeks later.

"If we play correctly then we can guarantee our place in the finals," said Parreira.

Brazil stand second in the South America World Cup qualifying group zone on 27 points, 4 points behind Argentina after 15 of 18 matches. A win against Chile would see them qualify for next year's finals in Germany.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Dida (AC Milan/ITA), Julio Cesar (Inter Milan/ITA)

Defenders: Cafu (AC Milan/ITA), Roberto Carlos (Real Madrid/ESP), Cicinho (Sao Paulo/BRA), Gilberto (Hertha Berlin/GER), Lucio (Bayern Munich/GER), Juan (Bayer Leverkusen/GER), Alex Rodrigo (PSV Eindhoven/NED), Luisao (Benfica/POR)

Midfielders: Kaka (AC Milan/ITA), Juninho Pernambucano (Lyon/FRA), Ze Roberto (Bayern Munich/GER), Emerson (Juventus/ITA), Renato (Sevilla/ESP), Gilberto Silva (Arsenal/ENG), Ricardinho (Santos/BRA), Julio Baptista (Real Madrid/ESP)

Forwards: Ronaldo (Real Madrid/ESP), Adriano (Inter Milan/ITA), Robinho (Real Madrid/ESP), Ricardo Oliveira (Real Betis/ESP)

Back-to-back Tests no problem: Buchanan

AFP, Birmingham

Australia coach John Buchanan insisted here Tuesday he had no qualms about seeing his side's ageing attack involved in back-to-back Ashes Tests against England.

Australia, winners of the previous eight Ashes series, are 1-0 up in the present campaign after last month's crushing 239-run first Test win at Lord's.

But there is just a two-day gap scheduled between the second Test, which starts at Edgbaston on Thursday and the third Test at Old Trafford.

Before this Ashes campaign got underway England seamer Matthew Hoggard questioned whether 35-year-old duo Glenn McGrath and Shane Warne, Australia's star bowlers, could stand up to the rigours of back-to-back games.

The pair took 15 wickets between them at Lord's, a match where fast bowler McGrath, who had nine in the game, joined leg-spinner Warne as one of only four bowlers in history with 500 Test wickets.

McGrath's long-time new-ball partner Jason Gillespie is the 'wrong' side of 30 as is his rival for a Test place Michael Kasprovic, with 28-year-old speedster Brett Lee the young man of the Australians' bowling line-up.

By contrast left-arm spinner Ashley Giles is the only frontline England bowler over 30.

"These next 14 days are pretty crucial to the whole tour," Buchanan said.

"One of the aspects of playing back-to-back Test matches is the fitness and mental toughness of individuals in both teams."

"It's a pretty big issue. The weather will dictate that a bit. There's no doubt that a team that is fit and mentally strong will have some advantage by the end of these two games."

"Everybody will be tested if that's



JOHN BUCHANAN

the case, particularly bowlers.

"But one of the strengths of our

side has been we are able to and individuals are able to front up game after game. I don't see at this point in time being any different.

"If you're in a winning frame of mind, confident frame of mind or you are playing well that confidence aids your physical recovery and therefore also your mental strength."

"If England play as well as they can play, potentially I see a little bit of a rollercoaster ride."

"But if we play the way we know we can play over this period of time, and right at this moment in time there are good signs that we will, then I would expect to come out certainly in front by the end of this 14-day period."

Australia captain Ricky Ponting, during the tourists' drawn warm-up match against Worcestershire, suggested Australia would field an unchanged line-up at Edgbaston despite Gillespie going wicketless at Lord's.

But Buchanan insisted there was still a chance for Kasprovic, who took five for 67 against Worcestershire as opposed to Gillespie's two for 45, to force his way into the team.

"Probably the main contentious position would be the fast bowling spot."

"All the bowlers acquitted themselves quite well up there (Worcester) I thought, and had some useful time so really it's up

Australia stay atop on ICC Test table

AFP, New Delhi

World champions Australia retained their place at the top of the latest International Cricket Council (ICC) Test rankings even as Pakistan and Sri Lanka slipped to their lowest positions.

Australia have the highest rating of 133 since the new system of calculation was introduced in June, 2003, and can jump to 138 if Ricky Ponting's men swamp England 5-0 in the ongoing Ashes series, an ICC release said.

Number two England and number three India also improved their ratings in the annual update carried out on Tuesday which cancels out Test series played before August 1, 2002.

England go up three points to 114, but if they were to lose to Australia by 4-1 or 5-0, it would fall back to 111, the release said.

India, who lost three away series in Sri Lanka, South Africa and the West Indies between August 1, 2001 and July 31, 2002, benefit by four points because of the update and takes its rating to 111.

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