Bangladesh too good for Malaysia

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Under-17 cricket team stormed into the final of the International Golden Hope Challenge cricket tournament in Malaysia with their third straight win.

The Bangladeshi youngsters, who defeated the hosts and Sri Lanka in the first leg of group-phase, handed an 88-run defeat on Malaysia yesterday.

Iftekhar Nayeem smashed 60 and captain Saquib Al-Hasan 47 as Bangladesh scored 243 for nine in their 50 overs.

Mokter Ali and Suhrawardy Shuvo bagged two wickets each to halt the Malaysian innings for 155-7.

Mariner fly past Victoria

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka Mariner Youngs got off to a flying start in the Cute Premier Handball League when they defeated Victoria Sporting Club 29-14 in the opening match yesterday.

Avijit slammed nine goals for the winners who led 18-11 at the break, Sunny scored half a dozen goals and Ripon five for Mariner. Sujan and Milon dominated for the losers, sharing ten goals evenly between them.

In the day's other match, Old Ideals recorded a 26-18 victory over Surjodoy Krira Chakra.

Earlier, country's eminent chess player International Woman Master Rani Hamid declared the 8-team league open at the Outer Stadium handball court.

Nat'l booters

FROM PAGE 12

the month of Ramjan. Chandpur, Cox's Bazar and Rajshahi will be among the four hosts for the second phase. The other place will fall to Chittagong or Jessore.

This time, the booters of the teams eliminated from the first phase will be allowed to play in the latter stages.

A total of 53 teams including five services teams will participate in the qualifiers. Each team will get Tk 11,000 as appearance money in the qualifiers and Tk one lakh for the super six.

Fourth Test

FROM PAGE 12

on enjoyment and leaving others to make the predictions.

McGrath's forecast of a 5-0 whitewash has been consigned to the cricketing dustbin. It did not seem that rash a statement at the start of the tour but seems risible now.

Talking of risible forecasts, many tried to muffle their laughter when England's selectors announced a few years ago they planned to be the world's best side by 2007.

Victory at Trent Bridge would replace any remaining chuckles with a widespread belief that those selectors, as well as Lillee, may yet be proved right.

TEAMS

ENGLAND (probable): Marcus Trescothick, Andrew Strauss, Michael Vaughan (captain), Ian Bell, Kevin Pietersen, Andrew Flintoff, Geraint Jones, Ashley Giles, Steve Harmison, Simon Jones, Matthew Hoggard.

AUSTRALIA (probable): Matthew Hayden, Justin Langer, Ricky Ponting (captain), Damien Martyn, Michael Clarke, Simon Kattich, Adam Gilchrist, Shane Warne, Brett Lee, Glenn McGrath, Shaun Tait.

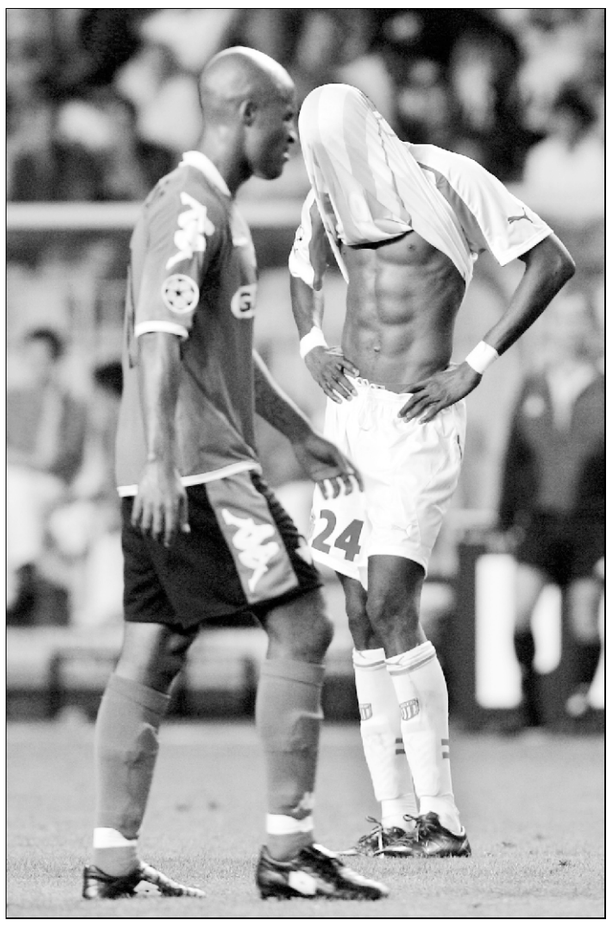


PHOTO: AFP

IT'S ALL OVER: Monaco's Togolese forward Emmanuel Adebayor (R) doesn't hide his disappointment after the match against Real Betis at the Louis II stadium in Monaco on Tuesday.

Monaco go out

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, *Paris*

Defending champions Liverpool survived a Champions League scare on Tuesday before booking their place in the multi-million dollar group stages where they will be joined by a little-known Swiss team who were playing amateur football nine years ago.

Liverpool were decidedly under-par at Anfield where a 1-0 defeat to CSKA Sofia of Bulgaria in their final qualifying round, second leg tie didn't prevent them progressing 3-2 on aggregate.

A 16th-minute goal from Valentin Iliev sentenced the Merseysiders to their first Champions League home defeat for 12 months as coach Rafael Benitez's decision to rest several key players backfired.

They were without injured captain Steven Gerrard and four other players while the team's goal-scoring problems showed no signs of ending with Djibril Cisse and Fernando Morientes having little understanding up front.

Liverpool have managed just one goal in their last three games yet Benitez insists he is happy with his strikers despite speculation linking the club with a bid to buy back Michael Owen from Real Madrid.

"A centre-back and a winger are what I want right now. We created a lot of chances against CSKA Sofia. Although we didn't score I'd be more worried if we weren't creating the chances," said Benitez.

Little Thun will supply the romance of this year's Champions League, so often the domain of the continent's financial musclemen.

Nine years ago, they were still amateurs plying their trade in the Swiss third division but on Tuesday they beat 1979 finalists Malmo of Sweden 3-0 for a 4-0 aggregate to take their unlikely place amongst Europe's elite for the first time.

Leading 1-0 from the first leg in Sweden two weeks ago, they snatched the lead on Tuesday through Brazilian import Tiago Bernadi in the 26th minute.

Veteran Swiss striker Mauro Lustrinelli added a second goal on the night five minutes before the interval. Lustrinelli then put the tie firmly beyond the reach of Malmo by making it 3-0 in the 66th minute and 4-0 on aggregate.

Also making it through to the next round for the first time were Italian side Udinese who defeated Sporting Lisbon of Portugal 3-2 on the night for a 4-2 aggregate.

Vincenzo Iaquinta, with a penalty, Cesare Natali and Brazilian star Douala were on target for the Italians while Barreto and Pinilla replied for Sporting, last season's UEFA Cup runners-up.

Sporting were joined at the exit by 2004 finalists Monaco as well as 1986 winners Steaua Bucharest of Romania.

Didider Deschamps's Monaco, beaten by Porto in the final in 2004, drew 2-2 with Real Betis but went out 3-2 on aggregate

Two goals from Brazilian Ricardo Oliveira ensured Betis the draw with his first coming in the 17th minute before Lopez Gerard pulled one back.

Camel Meriem then missed a penalty which would have given Monaco some hope but the French side did go in front in the 62nd minute through Toifilou Maoulida.

Betis dealt the killer blow in the 76th minute when Oliveira breezed past the Monaco defence to score a fine individual goal.

"It's a huge disappointment," said Deschamps. "We'll have to digest this. It will take a few days. But no one's dead and we've got 10 months of competition ahead of us."

Steaua were knocked out by Norwegian champions Rosenborg 3-2 and 4-3 on aggregate while Panathinaikos of Greece completed the night's qualifiers with a dramatic extra-time winner to beat Wislaw Krakow 4-1 on the night and 5-4 on aggregate.

Eight more ties will be decided on Wednesday.

FA CUP

Sporting Bengal winners in defeat

AFP, *London*

Football Association chief Brian Barwick believes the presence of Asian community sides in the prestigious English FA Cup will be a huge boost for football in the country.

Sporting Bengal, drawn from the east London borough of Tower Hamlets, played for the first time in the competition at the weekend and despite a 2-0 defeat in the extra preliminary round, Barwick insists the ground work has been done.

"I think this game was a huge step forward in terms of the prominence of Asian football in this country," said Barwick who watched Sporting's defeat to Ware.

"I spoke to the Sporting Bengal directors and their ambition is to be in the competition again and get through a round of The FA Cup.

"They felt it was a significant moment in their brief history and they loved being a part of it - and I felt they gave a good account of themselves. Unfortunately it is the nature of cup football that one team has to lose."

Despite the loss, Bengal club chairman Suroth Miah refused to be too downhearted.

"Of course we are disappointed with the result because we thought we could win the match," he told www.TheFA.com.

"But weve done a lot to promote football within our Asian communities and hopefully, more of our players will get involved in the sport around the country.

"Weve enjoyed our adventure and plan to come back stronger next year."

The other all-Asian team, London ASPA, lost by the same margin to Halstead Town.

Robinho had bigger offers

MADRID

Real Madrid phenom Robinho has revealed that other clubs tabled higher contract offers before he arrived from Santos this summer.

"Financially the Madrid deal is good, but it's not the best my agent passed on to me," he stated. "I considered offers from both Benfica and PSV Eindhoven which were better for me personally in terms of remuneration."

The Brazil international also divulged that the ordeal of being a high paid athlete in his homeland proved to dangerous to continue.

"I had real hopes that of helping Santos lift the Libertadores, but it was not to be," shrugged Robinho.

"After the kidnapping of my mother, I decided that it was time to think more about my family's welfare."

The Brazilian dazzler is set to join his new teammates for preseason training after playing his final game for Santos on Sunday night.

He told AS: "I know that Real Madrid is a team full of stars and the competition to play will be hard. I hope to find a place in the team in just a short time.

"I am going to need a period of adaptation, but I think that it is not going to be very long."

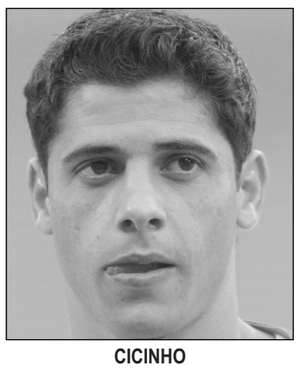
On leaving Santos, Robinho added: "These past days a multitude of memories have passed through my mind of everything I have experienced here, of all the joys that I had. I am already feeling nostalgic."

--Internet Source

Cicinho a Real option

REUTERS, *Madrid*

Real Madrid have reached an agreement with Sao Paulo that gives them an option to sign Brazil defender Cicinho.



CICINHO

The Primera Liga club said the deal would allow it to buy the 25-year-old attacking right back in the future if it wanted to.

Real signed Uruguay right back Carlos Diogo from River Plate as cover for Spain international Michel Salgado last month.

Cicinho, who was part of the Brazil side that crushed Argentina 4-1 to win the Confederations Cup in June, had been linked with several other European clubs including Manchester United, AC Milan, Inter Milan and Juventus.

MLS taught a lesson

Football

AP, *Madrid*

Ronaldo scored twice and David Beckham once to lead Real Madrid over a Major League Soccer All-Star team 5-0 Tuesday night in an exhibition game for the Santiago Bernabeu Trophy.

Jose Maria "Guti" Gutierrez and Raul Gonzalez also scored in the game, named after Madrid's former president.

In Real Madrid's first match at Santiago Bernabeu Stadium since last season, Beckham scored the first goal in the 23rd on a free kick that went in off a post.

D.C. United forward Jaime Moreno limped off immediately after the goal, hampered by Michel Salgado's tackle. He was replaced by the MetroStars' Amado Guevara.

Revolution goalkeeper Matt Reis dived to tip away Roberto Carlos' low shot in the 31st after Beckham split the defense with a through ball.

Ronaldo, who had been whistled earlier by the crowd for a supposed lack of effort, scored in the 40th when he avoided tackles by Frankie Hejduk and Pablo Mastroeni.

Second-half substitute Jeff Cunningham tested Real Madrid goalkeeper Diego Lopez with a rising shot in the 49th minute. Lopez, replacing injured regular Iker Casillas, saved shot by Dallas' Ronnie O'Brien and Guevara.

The MetroStars' Youri Djorkaeff replaced Los Angeles' Landon Donovan in the 62nd minute and briefly faced Real Madrid's Zinedine Zidane, his former teammate on France's 1998 World Cup championship team. Zidane was replaced by Guti a minute later.

Ronaldo scored in the 73rd and Gutierrez in the 81st, taking the ball around Douglas Sequeira. Gonzalez got his goal in the 90th on a chip over Reis following a backheel by Javier Portillo.

English defender Jonathan Woodgate appeared as a substitute in his Real Madrid debut, 12 months after joining the club. Woodgate injured his left thigh 16 months ago while playing Newcastle.

Real Madrid is preparing for its Spanish League opener at Cadiz on Sunday.

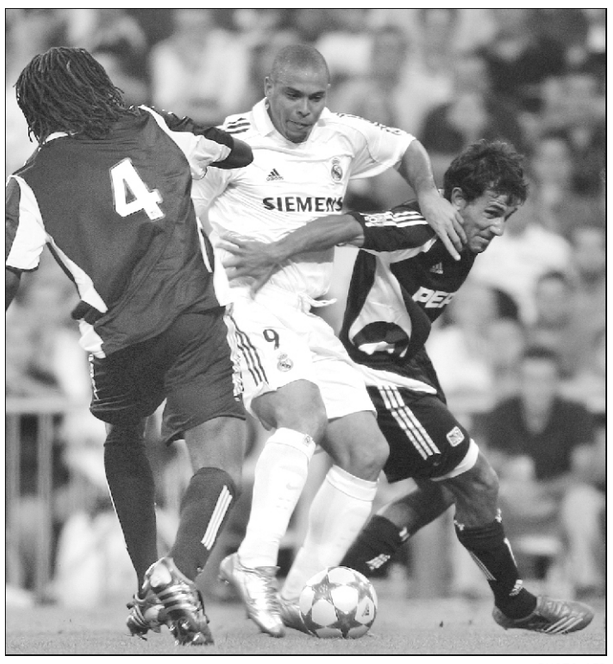


PHOTO: AFP

Real Madrid superstar Ronaldo (C) fights with MLS Select's (US Major League Soccer) Shalrie Joseph (L) and Pablo Mastroeni at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid on Tuesday.

Ashes captivates Asia

FROM PAGE 12

manager of Karachi's Mehran hotel.

Private TV channels have also reported big demand. GEO TV sports editor Syed Mohammad Sufi said viewers had been calling the channel for score updates despite regular bulletins.

Millions of dollars have also been placed with bookmakers -- even though betting is illegal in Pakistan -- with Australia still favourites.

"If you take into account the circuit of Pakistan, India and Dubai, billions of rupees (millions of dollars) are at stake with people wishing England upset Australia so that they make money," said a bookmaker speaking on condition of anonymity.

In neighbouring India, interest has also been huge with newspapers and TV stations providing blanket coverage.

Bar managers said customers were asking to watch the Ashes even when India were playing on another channel, while bookmakers were also doing brisk business.

"Customers wanted to watch the Ashes even on days when India were playing in a tri-series in Sri Lanka. This has not been seen in the past," said Rajneesh Malhotra, a hotel food and beverages manager in Delhi's satellite town of Gurgaon.

Bleary-eyed Australian fans have meanwhile been ignoring the time difference to watch the series, with SBS Television reporting record audiences after it took up the free-to-air rights to show the action from 7:30 pm to 2:30 am Sydney time.

The thrilling end to the second Edgbaston Test outrated SBS's soccer 2002 World Cup coverage with 1.12 million viewers in the country of 20 million, rising to just over two million as it was decided in England's favour by only two runs.

During the third Test, and with leg-spinner Shane Warne poised on 599 Test wickets, SBS scored a 17.5 percent national audience share, its highest rating for the first day of an Ashes match. Rupert Murdoch's Foxtel is also getting high ratings for its pay-television coverage.

In Hong Kong, where sports bars have been packed with expatriate cricket fans, there was an outcry when satellite broadcaster NOW TV switched to New Zealand's inconsequential romp against Zimbabwe instead of the nail-biting Edgbaston finale.

"Many of our members were very upset," said Burji Shroff, captain of the Kowloon Cricket Club amateur side.

The series is even making a small impact in Thailand, which was never colonised and has no cricketing tradition. Tourists are crowding sports bars, expatriates are watching it on pay-per-view and English-language newspapers have noted unusually high interest.

"Interest amongst the English and Australian communities is certainly higher than usual because the matches have been more competitive than many expected and we have received a number of e-mails on the topic for our letters section," said Bangkok Post sports editor Roger Crutchley.

Vincent slaughters Zim

FROM PAGE 12

New Zealand went into the final over needing 12 runs to break the world record but their momentum was slowed when Jacob Oram was caught by Brendan Taylor off Mahwire for a first-ball duck.

Taylor and Stuart Carlisle made a steady start to Zimbabwe's reply with a stand of 62 that ended in the 15th over when Taylor was caught in the gully by Styris off medium pacer Cairns for 36.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the first one-day international between Zimbabwe and New Zealand in the Videocon Cup tri-series at Bulawayo on Wednesday:

NEW ZEALAND

Vincent c Utseya b Blignaut 172
Fleming c Streak b Ireland 93
McMillan c Mahwire b Blignaut 47
Cairns c Mazakadsa b Ireland 14
McCullum not out 51
Oram c Taylor b Mahwire 0
Adams not out 0
Extras: (b-1, lb-8, nb-3, w-8) 20
Total: (For 5 wkts in 44 overs) 397
Fall of wickets: 1-204, 2-326, 3-334, 4-380, 5-397
Did not bat: Styris, Marshall, Mills, Bond
Substituted: Vettori

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Streak	9	0	61	0
Mahwire	7	0	78	1
Blignaut	9	0	96	2
Ireland	7	0	52	2
Ewing	7	0	53	0
Utseya	5	0	48	0

ZIMBABWE

Taylor c Styris b Cairns 36
Carlisle lbw b Oram 25
Masakadza c McCullum b Adams 18
Wishart c McCullum b Cairns 3
Coventry c Mills b Adams 25
Blignaut c Oram b Vettori 1
Taibu b Vettori 13
Streak b Mills 45
Mahwire c and b Vettori 3
Ewing run out (McCullum) 20
Utseya not out 1
Extras: (lb-5, w-4, nb-6) 15
Total: (All out in 43 overs) 205
Fall of wickets: 1-62, 2-75, 3-81, 4-111, 5-112, 6-123, 7-141, 8-165, 9-203
Substituted: Dabengwa

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Bond	5	2	15	0
Mills	7	0	23	1
Cairns	9	1	74	2
Oram	9	0	37	1
Vettori	8	1	29	3

ODI HIGHS

Total	Overs	Teams	Venue	Year
398-5	50	Sri Lanka v Kenya	Kandy	1996
397-5	44	Zimbabwe v New Zealand	Bulawayo	2005
391-4	50	England v Bangladesh	Nottingham	2005
376-2	50	India v New Zealand	Hyderabad	1999
373-6	50	India v Sri Lanka	Taunton	1999
371-9	50	Pakistan v Sri Lanka	Nairobi	1996
363-7	55	England v Pakistan	Nottingham	1992
363-3	50	South Africa v Zimbabwe	Bulawayo	2001
360-4	50	West Indies v Sri Lanka	Karachi	1987
359-5	50	Australia v India	Sydney	2004
359-2	50	Australia v India	Johannesburg	2003
356-9	50	India v Pakistan	Visakhapatnam	2005
354-3	50	South Africa v Kenya	Cape Town	2001
353-5	50	India v New Zealand	Hyderabad	2003
351-3	50	India v Kenya	Paarl	2001

Minister ducks Armstrong doping report

REUTERS, *Paris*

French Sports Minister Jean-Francois Lamour said on Wednesday he could not confirm allegations that seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong had used the blood-boosting drug EPO.

"I cannot confirm (this)," Lamour told RTL radio. "I know, thanks to the laboratory, that there were cases of EPO in 1999 because this laboratory has re-tested the samples...but this is information that is totally unnamed."

Armstrong, who retired after winning this year's Tour, has denied ever taking performance-enhancing drugs.

French newspaper L'Equipe, saying it had access to laboratory documents, reported on Tuesday that six of Armstrong's urine samples collected on the 1999 Tour de France showed "indisputable" traces of EPO (erythropoietin).

The Chatenay-Malabry lab has said the samples they tested did not have names attached and they could not confirm if any of the samples were Armstrong's.

Asked if he doubted the American was guilty, Lamour replied: "I have my doubts. Why? Because I do not have the second part of the information, that is to say the identification. It seems only the journalist has that, for the moment."

L'Equipe published what it claimed to be a results sheet from the laboratory which appeared to show six figures revealing traces of EPO. The newspaper also published documents from the French cycling federation showing the same figures under Armstrong's name.

Armstrong recovered from testicular cancer to become the most successful rider in the Tour's history.

Federer, Sharapova top US Open seedings

REUTERS, *New York*

The respective world number ones Roger Federer and Maria Sharapova were named as top seeds for next week's US Open on Tuesday after the United States Tennis Association followed the official rankings.

Wimbledon champion Federer, who has won nine titles this year, will return to New York as a strong favourite to defend the US Open crown he won 12 months ago by beating Australian Lleyton Hewitt in the final.

The French Open champion Rafael Nadal of Spain was seeded second ahead of Hewitt, while 2003 champion Andy Roddick was seeded fourth and Russia's Marat Safin fifth.

After becoming the first Russian woman to top the rankings earlier this week, Sharapova was seeded ahead of American Lindsay Davenport, the runner-up at the Australian Open and Wimbledon this year.

Amelie Mauresmo of France was seeded three with Belgium's Kim Clijsters at number four, one place ahead of defending champion Svetlana Kuznetsova of Russia.

Non-inclusion

FROM PAGE 12

best players can do that come October," said Akhtar, who has 144 wickets in 36 Tests and 192 in 123 one-day internationals.

Akhtar added that the ICC had done well to organise the event against world champions Australia.

"It gives all the players a chance to get to know each other and show how cricket can unite nations and players," he said.

India missing Tendulkar

Cricket

AFP, *New Delhi*

India's cricket selectors want Sachin Tendulkar so badly that they will go to any length to have the master batsman back at the crease.

The five selectors, headed by former Test stumper Kiran More, provisionally included Tendulkar in the squad for next month's two Test matches in Zimbabwe even before the batsman had begun training after an elbow surgery.

Tendulkar, who has not even started batting at the nets, refused to predict if he will be ready for the first Test against Zimbabwe at Bulawayo from September 13.

"I have to take it step by step, I just can't just go and start playing," Tendulkar, 32, said after a brief hit-out with a light synthetic ball in his home city of Mumbai.

"I would like to go (to Zimbabwe) but the final decision on whether I will play or not is the doctor's."

The selectors are not to blame. With India floundering on the field, not having the most prolific batsmen in contemporary cricket in the team is painful.

"You can't substitute a Sachin," said More. "I don't care if he has not played cricket for some time.

"The moment he confirms he is fit to play, we will rush him wherever the Indian team is."

The tennis elbow injury, sustained 12 months ago while preparing for a one-day tournament in the Netherlands, has interrupted Tendulkar's career and severely dented India's prospects.

Unable to lift even a cup of tea, Tendulkar missed the Champions Trophy in England in September and the first two home Tests against world champions Australia in October.

He returned for the remaining two Tests of the series and played further matches against South Africa, Bangladesh and Pakistan before the season ended in April.

Tendulkar, however, had not realised then that coming back so soon after the injury would cause a tendon tear and require surgery to remove the dead tissues in the elbow.

"I do not think I rushed my comeback last year," he insists.

"I did not need surgery then. I had the operation in May because of the tendon tear and this will obviously take longer to heal.

"I played in the 2003 World Cup in South Africa with an injured finger. I was just eager to play.

"Sometimes it clicks, sometimes it does not."

Tendulkar, however, is not taking any chances now even if the prospect of playing a lowly side like Zimbabwe is tempting.

"A long term plan is more important so I will not be worried if it takes a couple of weeks more," said the batsman with a record 23,776 international runs and 72 centuries against his name.

"I will know how much impact my elbow is going to take only when I practice more.

"Frankly it is too early to say when I will be back."

The wear and tear of 16 years in international cricket has begun to take its toll, but a fully fit and recharged Tendulkar is just what India and world cricket needs.

Hopefully, the appetite for runs has not dried up.

Tendulkar, who has spent half his life playing for India -- he made his Test debut in 1989 aged 16 -- has 10,134 runs from 123 matches and needs just one more century to break compatriot Sunil Gavaskar's world record of 34.

Tendulkar is already the most successful one-day batsman in history with 13,642 runs from 348 matches with 38 hundreds.

India, ranked third in the official Test rankings but lying a disappointing seventh in one-dayers, can't wait to have Tendulkar back in a gruelling season which includes 16 Tests and a minimum of 38 one-dayers till next June.

CROSSWORD *By Eugene Sheffer*

ACROSS

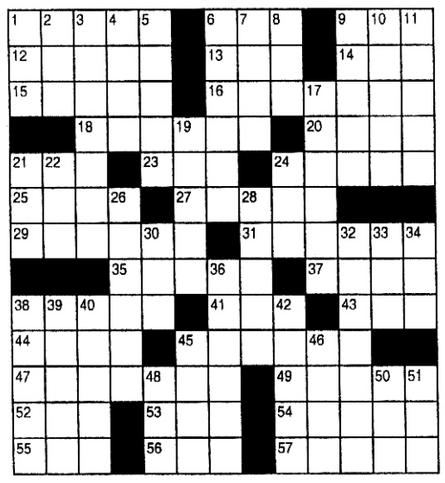
1 Felt compassion
6 Trinity member
9 Wire measure
12 Renter's document
13 "— Blue?"
14 — budget
15 Re Ra
16 Compromising position?
18 Of the lower vertebrae
20 Actress Russo
21 Jones partner
23 Scull tool
24 Kurt of MTV
25 Exam format
27 Japanese noodles
29 Road Runner's pursuer
31 This or that
35 Tyra Banks, e.g.
37 Missile shelter
38 Do something about
41 Prune
43 Card player's call
44 Subsequently
45 Go poof
47 Progress
49 Talked like Elsie
52 Bruins legend
53 B&B
54 Saw
55 Lisa, to Bart
56 "Heavens!"
57 Fabric

DOWN

1 Capp and Capone
2 One of the brass (Abbr.)
3 Corridor
4 Birthright barterer
5 Skin (Pref.)
6 Vast area of sand
7 Mr. Sharif
8 Goose egg
9 Took blades to blades
10 Foolish
11 Tier
17 Facades
19 Exposed
21 Happy companion?
22 Plata partner
24 Muumuu accessory
26 Strathclyde lake
28 Crenshaw, for one
30 Oodles of ounces
32 Interstate
33 Yale grad
34 Nancy's man
36 Comic Boosler
38 Pal of D'Artagnan
39 "SNL" alumna Oteri
40 Niobe's flow
42 Hemingway's fishing boat
45 Barn-roof adornment
46 Pop
48 Fake hair
50 "I" strain
51 Place for a TiVo

Solution time: 25 mins.

G	E	L	T		P	A	M		A	C	E	S
E	R	I	E		E	W	E		C	A	R	E
L	I	M	N		A	L	S		U	L	N	A
S	C	E	N	I	C		H	A	M	M	E	R
			I	V	E			S	E	N		
J	E	T	S		F	I	S	H	N	E	T	S
O	R	R			U	K	E			S	A	O
G	R	A	P	P	L	E	R		A	S	P	S
		N	O	R			E	N	D			
P	E	Q	U	O	D		N	O	O	D	L	E
E	M	U	S		A	M	I		R	A	I	N
A	M	I	S		M	A	T		E	L	M	O
K	A	L	E		S	P	Y		S	E	A	S



CRYPTOQUIP

HE VMO ZKHWHZGK KGR SOCO COZCBHVHWT, H VMHWQ HV ZFBKJ RO KFFQHWT EFC WOS RKFFJ.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT THE NEW LONDON-BASED ADVICE COLUMNIST NAMED WESTMINSTER ABBY?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: O equals E

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.