

# Super Test starts today

## Australia consider World XI favourites



AFP, Sydney

Australia embarrassed the world all-stars in last week's one-day Super Series but skipper Ricky Ponting insisted Thursday they were favourites to win the six-day Super Test starting at the Sydney Cricket Ground Friday.

The world XI was lambasted from all quarters for its tame submission in last Sunday's final one-dayer, humbled by 156 runs, yet Ponting believes they still deserve to be favourites to knock over Australia in the Test.

The Australians trounced the World XI 3-0 in the ODI series, looking hungry and keen to atone after the fall-out over losing the Ashes to England last month.

"Even though we won the one-day series convincingly I still think they have to start favourites in this game just for the absolute quality of players that they've got all the way down their list," Ponting said at his match-even press conference Thursday.

"It's an amazing team and one that will challenge us in every aspect of the game, but if we play our cricket we'll challenge them in every aspect as well, that's the exciting thing about this Test match."

Australia have boosted their bowling firepower by including all-rounder Shane Watson and leg-spinner Stuart MacGill, discarding their usual four-man bowling attack by going in with five bowlers.

Watson, who was man-of-the-match twice last week with bat and ball, takes over from sacked Damien Martyn and MacGill forms a dream

leg-spinning tandem with Shane Warne on the spin-friendly SCG pitch. Batsman Brad Hodge will have to wait longer for his Test debut after he was named 12th man with Michael Clarke to bat in Martyn's batting slot.

"Michael Clarke will bat at No.4. He's pretty excited about it, he's another one whose game has developed over the last couple of years and he's looked at home every time he's come to the crease in both forms of the game and he has a big future," Ponting said.

There were plenty of mentions Thursday of the lessons from the Ashes defeat to England, who will have two of their stars, Andrew Flintoff and Stephen Harmison, in the world team.

"It was the big moments in the

Tests in England that let ourselves down, which the Australian cricket team had been renowned for winning over the years, but they were the ones we actually lost so we've addressed those areas," Ponting said.

"We know that we have to play better cricket for longer periods in Test cricket if we want to win.

"We made mental and physical mistakes in the Ashes series and our team preparation was slightly off.

"That's been the main area we've looked at tightening up and improving and so far it's worked well, it worked particularly well in Melbourne last week and it's worked very in the lead-up to this

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## Tigers get back for training

SPORTS REPORTER

The national team came together for the first time on Thursday since their return from Sri Lanka when they joined the fitness camp at the Mirpur National Stadium indoor cricket facilities.

Only four cricketers of the 22-member squad were absent when coach Dav Whatmore and trainer Stuart Karppinen briefed the Tigers about their tasks during the domestic season.

Habibul Bashar, now in Australia to attend ICC's meeting of captains, and paceman Nazmul Alam, touring Sri Lanka with the Development Squad, were missing apart from injured pacers Mashrafe bin Mortuza and Tapash Baisya.

Tapash is expected to travel to UK for treatment of a niggling ankle injury.

Karppinen has designed the fitness programme where the cricketers will be involved during gaps of their domestic matches. The players will train with their clubs before match day and will have to attend the national team's camp on the remaining days to prepare for their next international commitment in the Asia Cup in February next year.

## Brazil are a class ahead

REUTERS, Paris

Brazil remain the team to beat but the France squad is "mentally and collectively strong" and will pose a threat to the world champions at next year's finals, coach Raymond Domenech said on Thursday.

"Brazil seem to be above every other team. They have this capacity to accelerate when they need to, they have so much power," the

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PHOTO: AFP

KUNG-FU KICK! Uruguay's Alvero Recobo (C) sneaking in the winner past the Argentine goalie during their crucial World Cup qualifier at Montevideo on Wednesday.

# Uruguay stay in the hunt



REUTERS, Montevideo

Uruguay beat neighbours Argentina 1-0 in their World Cup qualifier on Wednesday to earn a playoff against Australia for a place in Germany next year.

Alvaro Recoba scored the winner two minutes into the second-half to set off wild celebrations at the historic Centenario stadium, venue for the inaugural World Cup final in 1930.

The defeat cost Argentina top spot in the group as Brazil finished ahead of them on goal difference after beating Venezuela 3-0 at Belim. Both teams finished with 34 points and an identical head-to-head record.

Ronaldo scored his first international goal for over a year to help the world champions thrash Venezuela.

Uruguay, who beat Australia in a playoff to qualify for the 2002 World Cup, finished fifth in the 10-nation group with 25 points from 18 games.

Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador and Paraguay had already taken the four direct South American places.

Uruguay began one point ahead of Colombia and Chile and the game went ahead among suggestions, angrily refuted by both teams, that Argentina could make life easy for their neighbours.

The qualifiers for the 2002 World Cup ended with the same fixtures

and, on that occasion, Uruguay guaranteed fifth spot in what commentators said was a surprisingly uncompetitive 1-1 draw.

This time, the two sides produced a typically full-blooded River Plate derby which could have gone either way.

Uruguay made an aggressive start but Argentina quickly settled and took control of the midfield.

The visitors had the first real chances when Juan Roman Riquelme's low drive flew close to the post and Sebastian Battaglia fired over from 12 metres after the ball fell kindly at his feet.

Uruguay hit back as Diego Forlan fired over on the turn and Recoba forced Roberto Abbondanzieri to make a flying save from a curling 25-metre free kick.

Abbondanzieri nearly gifted Uruguay a goal before halftime with when rushed out of his goal and missed the ball but Recoba failed to get his shot in.

The breakthrough came after the restart when Recoba beat his marker to the ball to flick Diego Forlan's header past Abbondanzieri.

Recoba then wasted an excellent chance to make the game safe.

Set free by Forlan, he sped past Abbondanzieri but tried to go it alone instead of passing back to his team mate who was free in front of an empty goal.

Shortly afterwards, Recoba was substituted.

Richard Morales headed over from Gustavo Varela's cross in the 80th minute as Uruguay continued to threaten on the break.

At the other end, Carlos Tevez tested Fabian Carini with a long-range shot which was easily dealt with by the Uruguay goalkeeper while Juan Pablo Sorin was agonisingly close with a near post header from a corner.

During the second half, two supporters attempted to run onto the pitch but were swiftly and roughly dealt with by police.

On the second occasion, Uruguay coach Jorge Fossati tried to punch the fan.

Fossati, who in August spent two nights in hospital with chest pains, was also involved in a tussle with Sorin and was a picture of joy and relief when the final whistle went.

Real Madrid superstar Ronaldo

had last scored for his country against the same opponents in Maracaibo on Oct. 9 last year and had since played six games without hitting the target.

"I hope I don't suffer another drought as long as that one," Ronaldo said.

Adriano and Roberto Carlos scored the other goals.

Ronaldo, who finished as top scorer in the group with 10 goals, had an early chance to score when he beat his marker, only to shoot weakly at goalkeeper Rafael Dudamel.

Shortly afterwards, Adriano sent a free header into Dudamel's arms after Cafu had crossed from the wing.

In the 28th minute, however, Ronaldinho found Adriano with a cheeky chipped pass and the Inter

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## Did U Know?

Pakistan's Wasim Akram is the first bowler to claim 500 ODI wickets. The legendary 'sultan of swing' reached the land during 2003 CWC in South Africa.



## Sepp Blatter

(FIFA president)

"It was 'simply insane' for a player to earn 6-8 million pounds (8.75-11.6 million euros, 10.5-14 million dollars) a year, as the very top earners now do."

Blasting hugely wealthy players and club owners.



## SET MAX

Australia vs World XI  
Super Series Test  
Day One, Live at 6:30 am



GP Corporate Cricket League  
Araf Apparels v Security Express (FCS)  
Jumuna Bank v Biman (BKSP)  
Metro Real Estate v Acme (DCS)

# Captaincy goes to Dravid

## Ganguly has to prove fitness for selection



AFP, Mohali

Rahul Dravid was confirmed as India's cricket captain on Thurs-day, ending Sourav Ganguly's five-year reign as the country's most successful skipper.

The five-man selection committee, headed by former Test wicketkeeper Kiran More, named Dravid, 32, captain for a series of seven limited-overs internationals against Sri Lanka and five one-dayers against South Africa to be played at home from October 25 to November 28.

"It was an unanimous decision by the selectors to appoint Dravid as captain," secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India Karunakaran Nair told reporters here, but declined to take questions.

Dravid's elevation to the top job was widely predicted in the media over the last few days as Ganguly struggled with injury, poor batting form and a damaging spat with coach Greg Chappell.

Ganguly, whose 21 Test and 76 one-day wins as captain is an Indian record, missed the recent domestic one-day trial matches here due to a tennis elbow injury.

The left-hander, who is due to

undergo a fitness test next week, must prove his batting form in domestic cricket before being eligible for selection again in the national squad.

With India also due to play Test series against Sri Lanka, Pakistan, England and the West Indies in a



RAHUL DRAVID

gruelling schedule till July, the selectors clearly did not want to take chances with an uncertain Ganguly at the helm.

Dravid, a prolific top order batsman and long-time deputy to Ganguly, led India in five Tests and 17 one-dayers in the captain's absence, with mixed results.

Under Dravid, India won and lost two Tests each against Australia and Pakistan last season, while the fifth against New Zealand was drawn.

In 17 one-dayers as captain, Dravid won seven matches, lost nine while one was rained off.

Dravid, whose wife Vijeta gave birth to their first-born son in Nagpur on Tuesday, was away in Australia playing for the world team in the International Cricket Council's (ICC) Super Series.

Dravid, who was selected as the ICC player of the year in 2004, has scored 7,871 runs at an average of 58.30 in 91 Tests with 20 centuries.

In one-day cricket, he has made 8,429 runs in 265 matches with 10 centuries.

Ganguly, 33, was captain on the recent Zimbabwe tour where India lost the one-day final to New Zealand before defeating the weakened hosts 2-0 to record their first Test series win outside the sub-continent since 1986.

But the tour was marred by a highly-publicised row between Ganguly and coach Chappell, the former Australian captain and batting great who took over the Indian team in June.

Chappell last month wrote an

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PHOTO: STAR

Deaf cricketers go through a stretching session outside the Mirpur indoor facilities as part of their training on Thursday. They will take part in the World Deaf Cricket Competition in Lucknow from November 8.

CORPORATE CRICKET LEAGUE

## Second round of matches today

SPORTS REPORTER

The second round matches of the GrameenPhone Corporate Cricket League will be held today at three city venues.

Araf Apparels will try to recover from a first-round defeat when they take on newcomers Security Express, another first-round loser, at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

Jamuna Bank clash with Bangladesh Biman at the BKSP, both teams eyeing the top position in their group after winning their competition openers comfortably.

At the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, debutants Metro Real Estate are pitted against star-studded Acme Laboratories, both looking forward to their first points.

## Development Squad rain-hit in Lanka

SPORTS REPORTER

The second and final four-day match between visiting Bangla-desh Development Squad and their Sri Lankan opposition was called off on Thursday after the second day's play was washed out due to rain at the R

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