

## Under-fire stars put NSW atop

AFP, Sydney

Embattled Australian Test stars Simon Katich and Michael Clarke both smashed centuries Tuesday to put New South Wales on top at stumps on the first day of the Sheffield Shield match against South Australia.

NSW skipper Katich and Clarke shared an unbroken 193-run third-wicket partnership against an under-strength SA attack to leave NSW at 338-2 at stumps, answering critics who have called for their Test spots to be reviewed.

Clarke, whose promotion to number four in the Test line-up has been criticised by some high-profile pundits, scored 115 not out from 170 balls with 13 fours and one six.

Katich, who was told by selectors that it was "time to deliver" after averaging 27.55 in the recent Ashes series, hit 16 fours and faced 246 balls for his unbeaten 139.

Katich, who made 0 and 2 and suffered a fractured finger in last week's Super Test against the World XI, needed a big score today with selectors due to announce the team on Thursday for the November 3-7 Test against West Indies in Brisbane.

NSW left-handed opener Phil Jaques hit eight fours and one six in his 104-ball knock before he was out after lunch.

The South Australian attack was missing injured Test duo Jason Gillespie and Shaun Tait.

## Ward quits

AFP, London

Former England batsman Ian Ward has announced his retirement from first-class cricket to concentrate on his fledgling media career.

The 33-year-old, who won five Test caps in 2001, has decided not to see out the final two years of his contract with Sussex, whom he joined from Surrey last year in the hope of reviving his Test career.

"I have really enjoyed my time at Sussex and the club has been very good to me. I am disappointed I wasn't able to make more of a contribution this year," said Ward.

"I'd never missed a match through injury before so to miss so many games in the second half of the season was very frustrating."

"Sussex are a great county to play for and know I'll miss it when the new season starts, especially the camaraderie in the dressing room and the adrenaline rush you get as an opening batsman facing quick bowlers."

## Pakistan ready

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in Pakistan following a bombing outside the touring New Zealand team's hotel in 2002 which killed 14 people including 11 French engineers.

The security arrangements for the England tour extend to emergency evacuation plans in case of another earthquake.

Pakistani special forces troops will keep watch over the visitors' 14-man squad from the moment they arrive here Wednesday, and their hotel will be cordoned off by police.

Star all-rounder Andrew Flintoff and pace bowler Steve Harmison will arrive later in the week, after completing a fund-raising programme for quake victims in Dubai.

## Salahuddin

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(SA Sultan). It is very appropriate," Salahuddin told on Tuesday referring to the football body's announcement.

"I also appreciate it but I need more time to think," he said when asked whether he would now consider coming back to the football's governing body once the BFF publicly said that it had realised its mistake.

## Div selectors

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Sirajuddin Alamgir, Minhazul Abedin and Akram Khan.

**KHULNA:** Faruque Ahmed, Maruful Islam, Sheikh Salahuddin and Habibul Bashar.

**RAJSHAHI:** GM Nawsher, Ahmed Arif, Golam Faruque Suru and Rajin Saleh.

## Bon voyage

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Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) bowed to the widespread media criticism and decided to honour the National Team Management Committee's (NTMC) recommendation to select Ashraffuddin Chunnu as team leader and Sayeed Hassan Kanan as manager.

Earlier BFF named Monir Ahmed as team leader and Ashraffuddin Chunnu as manager ignoring the NTMC's recommendation, which sparked off a resignation en masse from the NTMC. The two were finally renamed as national team officials on Monday.

The team management also includes Argentine coach Diego Cruciani, trainer Ariel Colman, assistant coach Jubair Nipu and physician Debasish Chowdhury.

## Clarke suits No 4 fine

## Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Australian batsman Michael Clarke has hit back at critics who say his swashbuckling style is unsuited to number four on the Test batting line-up.

The 24-year-old has come under fire since he was promoted from number six earlier this month when predecessor Damien Martyn became the scapegoat for Australia's first Ashes defeat in 16 years.

Clarke urged former players to contact him directly with criticisms of his style, rather than air their complaints publicly.

"They are entitled to their own opinion, no matter who it is. I'd probably like those sort of guys to give me a call, if they've got any ways of helping me and fixing my technique," he said.

"They get paid to write stories and say what they have to say, so I'll just continue working as hard as I can and hopefully prove a few people wrong."

series against the West Indies beginning in Brisbane next week.

Clarke, who has been tipped as a future Australian captain, said he would not be changing his style, commenting: "It's got me this far."

He denied he was better suited to number six, where there is more margin for error, and said his experience playing number four at state level would stand him in good stead.

"That's my ideal position," he said in remarks published in The Sydney Morning Herald Tuesday. "It's where I've batted for New South Wales for a while and hopefully I can cement my spot there for Australia."

Clarke exploded onto the Test cricket scene last year with a hundred on debut against India and averaged almost 50 runs an innings during 2004.

But his average dropped to 30.13 in 2005 after he was contained by England's bowlers in the

Ashes.

"Through the Ashes, I felt I learnt a lot about my own game, had to work very hard to make runs over there and I think my batting is definitely improving," he said.

"I hope it continues to improve. I'm disappointed I haven't made a big score in Test cricket of late, but I feel like I'm hitting the ball pretty well and I've just got to try and go on with it when I get a start."

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## PREVIEW: SERIE A

## Juve stare at record

## Football

AFP, Rome

Leaders Juventus will set a new record for the best ever start to a Serie A season if they win at home to Sampdoria on Wednesday.

Capello said his team could not be compared with the 1985-86 side that won the championship under Giovanni Trapattoni.

"Football has changed a great deal since then," he stressed.

"We play a very different style. They also had Michel Platini and there is nobody like him around today. You cannot make comparisons."

Worryingly for Juve, Sampdoria, currently lying in eighth position, won the same fixture last season.

Juventus are still expected to be without influential French midfielder Patrick Vieira. The former Arsenal star is still recovering from the groin strain he suffered while away on international duty earlier this month.

Sampdoria will be without striker Francesco Flachi after his sending-off against Siena at the weekend.

"We will continue calmly without thinking about records and concentrate on keeping ourselves ahead of our rivals."

AC Milan visit Empoli while third-placed Inter Milan, a point behind their city rivals, host Roma.

Inter's Brazilian striker Adriano has been ruled out having suffered a partial dislocation of his collar bone in Sunday's 1-0 victory at Udinese.

Florentina, in fourth place after last Saturday's 4-1 thrashing of Parma in which Luca Toni scored a hat-trick, play away to bitter Tuscan rivals Siena.

## FIXTURES

Wednesday's fixtures (all 1830 GMT kick-off unless stated)

Ascoli v Udinese, Cagliari v Livorno, Empoli v AC Milan, Inter Milan v Roma, Juventus v Sampdoria, Lazio v Chievo, Palermo v Lecce, Parma v Messina, Reggina v Treviso, Siena v Fiorentina

## 'Winning, winning unreal'

## Football

AFP, London

England football star Frank Lampard, who saved Chelsea with an equaliser against Everton at the weekend, said winning every match this season had never been a realistic goal.

Lampard, on current form perhaps the best attacking midfielder in the world, added it was trophies not statistics which counted.

The league leaders' top scorer - his equaliser on Sunday was his ninth of the season - also dismissed the theory that Chelsea are obsessed by records.

Chelsea lost their 100 percent league record in the 1-1 draw at Goodison Park which ended hopes of beating Tottenham's record of 11 straight top flight victories.

But the midfielder revealed it was almost a relief to be rid of constant talk of records, even though his manager Jose Mourinho claimed before the weekend that the title could be won by Christmas.

Lampard said: "People can talk about records, and they do, all the time. But the manager has said he is not that bothered about them. Our aim is to win championships but we know we are not going to do that by

winning every game, that is not possible. We are realists."

"We get sucked into talking about records, the questions are always the same, and if you don't say 'no' straight away when something is suggested it comes across that we are saying we will break every record going."

"We don't, we want to win medals, and that's the difference. There's a fine line between arrogance and confidence and we are a confident bunch."

"But that comes from the hard work we have put in, the results we have got and our manager. We are confident when we speak about ourselves and we are confident in the dressing room. But we know what our real goals are and that is to win championships."

Chelsea were the only likely winners once Lampard's strike had cancelled out a James Beattie penalty but Didier Drogba had an effort ruled out for offside and Everton hung on for a point.

"We can't win every week even though we will try our hardest," said Lampard, "so it's not a bad thing that it is now all about a winning run ending. It stops the talk of us winning every game this season and it means we can start another run."

"We obviously wanted to win the

game but we faced going to a very tough place to play. They made it very hard for us and you can't always go away and expect to win every game."

"It is not reality to think of winning every game, especially at places like Everton. We are always focused, we are still several points clear at the top and still very confident we can continue to play some very good stuff."

"We just need to carry on the way we have been. We didn't lose and we just need to get ourselves back on the right track next week."

Lampard stressed that the draw at Goodison Park owed as much to Everton's battling spirit as it did to Chelsea missing chances.

"We should have won the game with the chances we carved out but I do not want to take any credit away from Everton because they really have to fight and they did that against us."

"Everton are a better side than where they are in the table, without a doubt. There is not much difference in their side from last season, in fact they have added to the squad."

"They seem to have been unlucky at times this season and I am sure they will fight their way out of this because they shouldn't be where they are."

## Vaughan's caution

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knew the kind of cricket we needed to play.

"We'll certainly keep our feet on the ground but we have to draw confidence from the fact we beat Australia and played some fantastic cricket in the summer."

"We are going to need all those attributes to beat Pakistan away from home," added the 30-year-old.

Pakistan pitches traditionally offer plenty of assistance to spin bowlers and although Bob Woolmer, the Pakistan coach and former England batsman recently contradicted his captain Inzamam-ul-Haq by saying he wanted to play the series on good, rather than turning, wickets, Vaughan was in no doubt about what sort of surfaces would confront his team.

"He will be missed because he has become a fantastic bowler with reverse swing, but it creates chances for Liam Plunkett, James Anderson and Alex Loudon," admitted Vaughan.

"It will be a real challenge, but an exciting challenge. We just need to stick to our basics and get our plans right."

and the success Stuart MacGill and Shane Warne (both leg spinners) had against the best players in the world.

"That shows what success we had against Warne. He managed to take 40 wickets but we took him for a few an over."

England coach Duncan Fletcher said the lack of hype in comparison to the Ashes would also work in the squad's favour.

"After what took place it should be one of the best tours to go on. There should be very few distractions and I think that will be good for the side."

England will be without injured reverse swing specialist Simon Jones, one of their Ashes stars.

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England play their first tour match

in Rawalpindi, a three-day game, starting on October 31 with the first Test at Multan commencing November 12.

**SQUADS**

**TEST:** Michael Vaughan (captain), James Anderson, Ian Bell, Paul Collingwood, Andrew Flintoff, Ashley Giles, Stephen Harmison, Matthew Hoggard, Graeme Jones, Alex Loudon, Kevin Pietersen, Liam Plunkett, Matthew Prior, Andrew Strauss, Marcus Trescothick, Shaun Udal.

**ODI:** Vaughan, Anderson, Collingwood, Flintoff, Giles, Harmison, Jones, Pietersen, Prior, Plunkett, Liam Plunkett, Strauss, Trescothick.

**ITINERARY**

Oct 31-Nov 2 3-dayer Rawalpindi Nov 6-8 3-dayer Lahore Nov 12-16 1st Test Multan Nov 20-24 2nd Test Faisalabad Nov 29-Dec 3 3rd Test Lahore Dec 7 One-dayer Lahore Dec 10 1st ODI Lahore Dec 12 2nd ODI Lahore Dec 15 3rd ODI Karachi Dec 19 4th ODI Rawalpindi Dec 21 5th ODI Rawalpindi

## Eriksson backs red Beckham

APP, London

England coach Sven Goran Eriksson has come out in support of his captain David Beckham despite his weekend red card for Real Madrid.

Less than a month after becoming the first player in England history to be sent off twice -- for two yellow card offences in the win over Austria at Old Trafford -- the 31-year-old was sent packing in the surprise home defeat to Valencia on Sunday.

Beckham was dismissed in the same manner as Manchester United's Wayne Rooney last month, for sarcastically applauding the referee following a caution.

The incident raised obvious question marks over Beckham's attitude ahead of the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

But Eriksson said there was no chance of Beckham being replaced as captain.

"I don't have any problem with Beckham as captain," he said.

"I have not spoken to him about the dismissal. I don't know what happened but you do get sent off in football."

"He is going to be captain in Germany. These things happen in football, they always happen."

"My advice to all the players before every game is that we want to win but to finish the game with 11.