



Manchester United striker Ruud van Nistelrooy celebrates his strike against Aston Villa during their Premiership fixture at Villa Park in Birmingham on Saturday.

England, Italy choose WC bases

AFP, undated

Sven-Goran Eriksson's England team have made the southwest German city of Baden-Baden their base for the 2006 World Cup.

The English Football Association confirmed their booking at the 'Schlosshotel Buhlerhohe', a deluxe 90-room hotel in an 18-hectare castle park 800 metres above sea level.

"I am thrilled by this hotel," said England coach Eriksson. "We have a training pitch five minutes from the hotel and it is not too far for our World Cup matches."

England start their World Cup campaign against Paraguay in Frankfurt on June 10 and then face Trinidad and Tobago on June 15 in Nuremberg.

The final Group B match sees England, whose only World Cup win came on home soil in 1966, face Eriksson's home nation Sweden on June 20 in Cologne.

If England top Group B they will play their last sixteen match on June 25 in Stuttgart - just over an hour by train from their Baden-Baden base.

Another giant, Italy will base themselves in Duisburg for the group stage, the Italian football federation (FIGC) confirmed on Saturday.

The city is situated in the west of Germany in the heart of its industrial Ruhr area. Duisburg has the largest inland port in Europe and is known for its steel industry.

The Italian squad will use the facilities of Bundesliga club MSV Duisburg and they will stay at the Landhaus Milser hotel near Dusseldorf airport.

The Azzurri begin their campaign against Ghana in Hanover on June 12 before taking on the United States in Kaiserslautern five days later.

Their final group game is against the Czech Republic in Hamburg on June 22.

Div I cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Younis recorded a hatrick as Jatrabari Kirra Chakra scored a massive 75-run victory over Dhanmondi Club in the First Division Cricket League at the Dhaka University ground yesterday.

Younis took three wickets in the 22nd over to return figures of 4-16 while Mohammad Jaidi also picked up four for 46 to dismiss Dhanmondi for 87 runs in 25 overs.

Earlier, Jatrabari thrived on a 55 by Mohammad Nadim to score 162 before being all out in 43.5 overs after deciding to bat.

We can win WC

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But Vaughan's record of winning 59 per cent of one-day matches at the helm is better than any other England skipper since Mike Gatting, who won 26 of 37 matches between 1986 and '88.

Vaughan, who was also at home to see the birth of his son Archie last week, said he is on course to be fit for England's tour of India in February.

"I went and saw the England physio a week after the operation," he added.

"I'll start full rehab on Monday and the plan is to start hitting cricket balls in the middle of January.

"So far it's all gone well but the real test is when I start twisting and turning," he added.

Even going after Day 2

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Who continues to confound batsmen.

The man who lost the record, former Australian pace bowler Nathan Dennis Lillee, was at the ground and rated Warne the greatest player of the modern era.

"He is a magician," Lillee said. It was the highlight of an intriguing day which was almost a snapshot of the previous day's cricket.

Both teams saw their middle-order stifled then fall cheaply, with South Africa losing four wickets for 61 in the session between lunch and tea.

Wicketkeeper Mark Boucher said the match was going down to the wire.

But Boucher said South Africa held a slight edge. "It was nice to get a little bit of a first-innings lead ... with the night-watchman in we can capitalise on that tomorrow," he said.

Boucher said the wicket was still good and if they could get the Australians out for under 250 South Africa would be in a strong position.

"Hopefully we can pick up a quick wicket tomorrow morning and then have them not many for two down and then the pressure is back on them again."

Warne was not so sure, predicting paceman Glenn McGrath would play a big role as the wicket began to wear.

"I think the cracks will start to open up a little bit and the way Glenn is ... he's pretty relentless with his line and length," Warne said.

"When the cracks start to open up and there's a bit more variable bounce I think he could be a big danger man in the second innings."

Resuming from an overnight 38 for 0, South Africa seemed poised to take control of the game. The first setback came with the score at 83 when captain Graeme Smith became the first victim of the day.

Smith's Australian counterpart

Ricky Ponting dived beautifully to take a two-handed catch in the slips after first change bowler Nathan Bracken had found the edge with the opener on 34.

His demise brought Herschelle Gibbs to the crease with AB de Villiers and paceman Brett Lee began to turn up the heat.

Just before lunch he rattled the grille on de Villiers' helmet and two balls later got a crucial breakthrough when Gibbs dragged him onto the stumps for 21 -- leaving the Proteas going into the break at 128 for 2.

But it was the second session that cost the tourists dearly.

Warne, who had been looking ominous on a wicket better known for its pace, started the rot when he took the key wicket of de Villiers in the second over after lunch.

De Villiers played inside the line and the ball clipped his pad on the way through to the stumps, bringing Warne equal with Lillee's record and leaving the South Africans at 135 for 3.

Jacques Rudolph was caught by Ponting off Lee for eight.

Boucher dug in with a gritty 62 before he fell victim to a brilliant Hayden catch off Warne for his 87th wicket while Pollock made a handy 34 before being bowled by Lee.

Lee closely mirrored the opening day's efforts of South African pace-man Makhaya Ntini when he finished with 5-93 while Warne finished with 3-92.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at close of play on the second day in the first Test between Australia and South Africa in Perth on Saturday:

AUSTRALIA: First innings 258 (Ponting 71, Hodge 41, Langer 37; Ntini 5-64, Nel 3-29)

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings (overnight 38-0) De Villiers b Warne 68 Smith c Ponting b Bracken 34

Gibbs b Lee	21
Rudolph c Langer b Lee	8
Prince lbw b Warne	28
Kemp c Hodge b McGrath	7
Boucher c Hayden b Warne	62
Pollock b Lee	34
Nel not out	4
Langeveldt lbw b Lee	0
Ntini c Hodge b Lee	12
Extras: (b-4, lb-2, nb-12)	18
Total: (All out in 81.2 overs)	296
Fall of wickets: 1-83, 2-127, 3-135, 4-145, 5-167, 6-187, 7-264, 8-282, 9-283	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
McGrath	18	3	59	1
Lee	22.2	1	93	5
Bracken	12	3	46	1
Warne	29	4	92	3

AUSTRALIA: Second innings Langer not out 15 Hayden c Boucher b Langeveldt 20 Lee not out 0 Extras: (nb-3) 3 Total: (For 1 wkt in 11 overs) 38 Fall of wicket: 1-37

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Pollock	5	1	12	0
Ntini	5	2	24	0
Langeveldt	1	0	2	1

HIGHEST WKT-TAKERS IN A CALENDAR YEAR

List of highest Test wicket takers in a calendar year after Shane Warne broke Dennis Lillee's world record during the first test against South Africa in Perth on Saturday.

- 87 - Shane Warne (Australia) 2005
 - 85 - Dennis Lillee (Australia) 1981
 - 80 - Allan Donald (South Africa) 1998
 - 80 - Muttiah Muralitharan (Sri Lanka) 2001
 - 77 - Joel Garner (West Indies) 1984
 - 75 - Kapil Dev (India) 1983
 - 75 - Muttiah Muralitharan (Sri Lanka) 2000
 - 74 - Kapil Dev (India) 1979
 - 74 - Anil Kumble (India) 2004
 - 73 - Malcolm Marshall (West Indies) 1984
- (*current season still complete)

India without Dravid

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Singh or Mohammad Kaif to be given another opportunity in the middle order.

The make-up of their batting line-up is also Sri Lanka's main concern with only Atapattu and Mahela Jayawardene producing the consistency expected by coach Tom Moody.

"I thought we did not concentrate hard enough (in Delhi). We did not get the players to perform when needed."

"But we are capable of doing better and hope to put up a good show in the next match," Atapattu commented.

They may give a debut to opener 20-year-old opener Upul Tharanga following 10 one-day appearances, with Avishka Gunawardene the man most likely to make way.

Sri Lanka have no happy memories of their only previous Test at the Gujarat Stadium to draw on, losing by an innings and 17 runs in February 1994.

TEAMS

INDIA (from): Rahul Dravid (captain), Virender Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir, Wasim Jaffer, Sachin Tendulkar, Venkatesai Laxman, Yuvraj Singh, Moha-mmad Kaif, Mahendra Dhoni, Irfan Pathan, Ajit Agarkar, Harbhajan Singh, Murali Kartik, Anil Kumble, Rudra Pratap Singh.

SRI LANKA (from): Marvan Atapattu (captain), Avishka Gunawardene, Kumar Sangakkara, Mahela Jayawardene, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Upul Tharanga, Thilan Samaraweera, Jehan Mubarak, Chaminda Vaas,

Farveez Maharoof, Dilhara Fernando, Muttiah Muralitharan, Lasith Malinga, Sajeewa Weerakoon, Malinga Bandara.

German peace prize for Ali

AFP, Berlin

US boxing legend Muhammed Ali arrived in Berlin on Friday to receive a major German peace prize for his efforts to promote civil rights and the work of the United Nations.

The former world heavyweight champion will on Saturday accept the Otto Hahn peace medal, named after a German nuclear physicist, the German Society for the United Nations said.

Ali has been selected "for his lifelong engagement in the American civil rights movement and the global cultural emancipation of blacks as well as his work as a UN Goodwill ambassador," Christine Kalb, the regional president of the society, told a press conference.

The prize is awarded every two years. Previous winners include former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev and Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal.

Otto Hahn (1879-1968) won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1944 and after the war became a vocal nuclear arms control advocate.

Gerrard believes they can win Club C'ship

REUTERS, Yokohama

Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard says the current Liverpool team is the strongest he has played in and is brimming with confidence ahead of the World Club Championship final against Sao Paulo on Sunday.

The England midfielder, speaking to reporters on the eve of FIFA's showcase in Yokohama, said the European champions were now in a position where they feared no one.

"Playing for Liverpool is all about trophies and playing finals," said the 25-year-old, who joined the club as a trainee. "We don't want to get on the plane home empty-handed."

"It's the best side I've played in in the years I've been with the club."

Liverpool eased past Costa Rica's Deportivo Saprissa 3-0 on Thursday, setting a new club record of 11 successive clean sheets in the process.

Libertadores Cup holders Sao Paulo beat Saudi Arabia's Al Ittihad 3-2 in their semi-final.

Japan has proved a happy hunting ground for Sao Paulo, who won the World Cup -- the tournament's forerunner, involving the champions of Europe and South America -- in 1992 and 1993.

PREMIERSHIP MU stay in the hunt

AFP, Birmingham

Wayne Rooney breathed life back into the Premiership title race after inspiring Manchester United to a 2-0 victory over Aston Villa here Saturday.

The United striker was at his dazzling best as his club cut champions Chelsea's lead at the top of the table to six points with their seventh away league win of the season.

The win also ensured that the Villa manager David O'Leary will spend the Christmas period casting anxious glances over his shoulder towards the relegation zone.

Ruud van Nistelrooy's close-range finish put United ahead after nine minutes from Darren Fletcher's pass.

Wayne Rooney doubled United's lead five minutes after the interval following good work by Park Ji-Sung.

Villa's only serious threat to United's supremacy was a shot from Milan Baros that struck the bar.

Eriksson calls for peace by football

REUTERS, London

England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson and his partner Nancy Dell'Olio on Friday called for the world to mark International Peace Day by replacing conflict with soccer matches.

The couple's Truce International campaign is hoping the "kick a ball for peace" initiative will end up marking the United Nations annual peace day (September 21) with soccer instead of war.

"Football is something very, very special," Eriksson told a media conference. "Everyone around the world knows who Beckham and Zidane are. It's the biggest sport in the world. So to do something for peace is really important."

"It's a big, big aim but it's a beautiful aim," he added.

The Swede was speaking after an advance showing of a new film "Merry Christmas," which tells the story of a temporary truce in World War One when British, French and German troops fraternised and played soccer in no man's land on Christmas Day.

WC hotel prices irk English fans

AFP, Frankfurt

England football fans have criticised the huge hike in hotel prices which they claim will occur during the World Cup finals next summer.

Kevin Miles, the head of the Federation of English Football Supporters (EFSF), claimed he has been told that hotels in Frankfurt, where England will open their campaign against Paraguay on June 10, are prepared to quadruple prices.

"I spent a week in a hotel in Frankfurt town centre and paid 65 euros a night," said Miles who met officials of the German FA (DFB) here on Friday.

"I asked at reception what the price of the same room would be during the month of June and I was told 270 euros."

Germans told to put aside their pens

AFP, Frankfurt

Germany's football stars have been told to forget any idea of writing football columns for newspapers or internet sites ahead of and during their hosting of the 2006 World Cup.

National team manager Oliver Bierhoff said Friday the rules would apply as of May 15 and up until the end of the competition.

"From May 15, 2006, and during the entire World Cup no players will be authorised to write columns for newspapers or be involved in commercial activities on the internet," Bierhoff announced.

"We've decided to be clear on the issue: before and during the competition we have to be fully concentrated on the results of the team and nothing else."

Bierhoff's announcement comes barely a week after seven players with the national team signed commercial agreements with internet providers.

Striker Kevin Kuranyi was one of those who signed a contract with software giant Microsoft to create and update a personal diary of their time at the 2006 World Cup.

Germany's football management have also moved to make sure that none of their players gets injured or overplays ahead of the June competition.

Schalke 04 striker Kuranyi and his strike partner Lukas Podolski, who plays for Cologne, have been strongly advised to refuse an invitation by Brazilian star Ronaldo and France playmaker Zinedine Zidane to play in the third edition of the "Match against Poverty" scheduled for December 22 in Dusseldorf.

Wenger didn't want it



AGENCIES, undated

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger would have preferred to face Real Madrid later in the Champions League but is confident his side can reach the quarterfinals.

"Ideally, we'd prefer to play them much later but that's the problem, you don't choose," he told reporters on Friday after the draw for the first knockout round featuring the last 16.

"It is a difficult draw but makeable. It's exciting as well. Of course, the first game in Madrid will have a huge impact on qualification as that's where it will be decided."

The teams will meet for the first time in history in a first-leg encounter at the Bernabeu on Feb. 21.

Frenchman Wenger believes that match will probably decide the outcome of the whole tie but has backed his young side to overcome the might of their Spanish opponents.

"You expect Madrid to be better in February than now because of the quality of their players and their financial power to buy one or two players in January. But it doesn't change a lot."

"I believe we'll also be better in February as our players are developing well and our young players are becoming stronger and stronger. I'm confident we can do it."

Real Madrid were also relishing the challenge of the English side.

The nine-times European champions believe Arsenal's lack of experience in the final stages of the competition and their open style of play make them ideal opponents in the first knockout round.



ARSENE WENGER

"We are satisfied with the draw," Real's director of football Arrigo Sacchi told the club's website. "It's obvious that any of the five teams

we could have drawn would have been hard, because they all finished top of their groups."

"But we are up against the side with the least experience in Europe and that could show."

Real, who were knocked out by Juventus in the first knockout stage last season, host the Londoners at the Bernabeu in the first competitive European meeting between the two clubs on Feb. 21 and play the return at Highbury on March 8.

David Beckham will get his first chance to play for Real in England since joining from Manchester United two years ago. The midfielder was more cautious, saying he expected a tough tie.

"It will be the first time that I will have played in England for Real Madrid and it will be a really great experience," he said.

"We are going to have to get past a good team with some great players. They've got Arsene Wenger who is an excellent person and a great manager and has done a fantastic job in charge of Arsenal."

"They'll have a lot of support from their fans and their players will be boosted by that, but we are Real Madrid and we should remember that because it is going to be a very hard match."

Frank-ly speaking



AFP, undated

Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard insisted on Friday that revenge will not be on his mind when his Spanish champions face Chelsea in a rematch of last season's stormy Champions League showdown.

Both legs of that volatile tie were marred by controversy as Chelsea went on to win 5-4 on aggregate.

"Revenge is not the word for this match," said Rijkaard after seeing his team drawn again to face Jose Mourinho's side in the last 16 of this year's tournament.

"It will be an interesting match between two teams doing very well in their leagues. I believe this will be a great match not just for us but for the entire world."

Chelsea defied the odds last season by winning a thrilling second leg 4-2 at Stamford Bridge to go through 5-4 on aggregate after losing 2-1 at the Nou Camp.

But events off the pitch generated even more headlines.

Mourinho served a two-match touchline ban after he accused Rijkaard of meeting with referee Anders Frisk in the official's dressing room at half-time in the first leg.

The allegations triggered a string of anonymous threats against the official, prompting him to hang up his whistle.

The controversy did not end there.

After scoring three goals in the opening 20 minutes at Stamford Bridge, Chelsea found themselves pinned back by a Ronaldinho-inspired fightback.

Two goals from the Brazilian got the score back to 3-2 on the night with the Catalan club poised to go through on away goals.

John Terry then scored a late header with significant help from his team-mate Ricardo Carvalho, who appeared to deliberately impede the goalkeeper Victor Valdes.

The end of the match was marred by skirmishes in the tunnel after a Chelsea steward allegedly called Barcelona's black striker Samuel Eto'o a "monkey".

Rijkaard and Ronaldinho were

both involved in the clashes after the match and the Barcelona coach admitted that the defeat was hard to bear because of the bitter legacy left by Mourinho's first leg claims.

Mourinho, for his part, described the win as even more satisfying than his 2004 Champions League triumph with FC Porto.

"I always said before the game and after that I have the highest respect for Mourinho and what he is doing with Chelsea," added Rijkaard on Friday.

"He is a great coach. In the end every coach wants the same, that is winning and every person does it in his own way. He has the right to act like he wants to act and he is very successful with it so who am I to criticise?"

Barcelona's stunning form this season and the fact that the second leg will be at their base this time around means they will start as favourites.

Chelsea have been dominant in the Premiership again this campaign but their form in Europe, which included a defeat by Real Betis, has been distinctly unimpressive.

And although Mourinho's men have been as solid as ever, they have yet to display the kind of attacking flair that enabled them to score four goals against Barca last season.



FRANK RIJKAARD

Indian parliament will

FROM PAGE 12

Sharad Pawar said he was against raising the issue in parliament.

"If people start using the parliament to say who should be in the team, it would cause irreparable damage to cricket and cricketers," he said, adding he would not ask the selectors to review their decision.

"His exclusion was shocking, but I have no role in it. My responsibility being the cricket board president is not to interfere in the selection process and I will never have any role in the selection process," said Pawar, who is also agriculture minister in the federal government.

Ganguly has scored 5,150 runs in 86 Tests and 10,123 in 279 one-day internationals.

The left-hander is only the fourth batsman to complete 10,000 runs in one-day cricket after compatriot Sachin Tendulkar, Pakistan's Inzamamul Haq and Sri Lankan Sanath Jayasuriya.

The third and final Test against Sri Lanka begins at Ahmedabad on Sunday.

Meanwhile, CricInfo adds, Jagmohan Dalmiya, the former president of BCCI, has questioned the axing of Ganguly and has urged Pawar to reinstate him in the national side.

In a letter to Pawar, Dalmiya cited earlier cases of players being recalled and wished that Ganguly got back into the side for the Ahmedabad Test against Sri Lanka.

"Since you have realised that Sourav should not have been dropped from the team after performing well in the Delhi Test, I would earnestly appeal for your kind intervention in the matter and to advise the secretary to reinstate Sourav in the squad for the Ahmedabad Test," wrote Dalmiya.

"It was known fact that justice was not meted out to Ganguly. The position of the BCCI president cannot be devoid of reasonableness and hence, this appeal for 'justice delayed' rather than 'justice denied'."