

PCB denies ICC

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sources close to the team that one of the on-field umpires during the Test had privately expressed his concern over some deliveries Shoaib bowled to the Pakistan management but did not report it officially.

The fires were fuelled further by Greg Chappell's comments during the subsequent Test at Karachi, in which he is alleged to have said there was "something seriously different" about Shoaib's action. Those remarks set off a separate furore altogether, with the PCB, at one point asking the ICC to investigate whether what Chappell had said constituted a violation of the ICC code of conduct.

Shaharyar said that matter had now been laid to rest. "We were concerned about the comments made about his action. I went to the ICC and said if Chappell has actually said them they are against the code of conduct. They said if we lay a formal charge, the case will be examined. Subsequently we have not laid a charge because the statements have not been corroborated. We received a reply from the ICC saying, Chappell had been informally spoken to and he said he had been quoted out of context. If he says it is out of context then we don't lay a charge and it is over."

Sri Lanka

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the series and we are determined. We are hopeful of this tour although we won't have a few of our senior players, who have been rested. I think it was quite essential for them. But we have some really talented youngsters with us. So, hopefully we can give them some exposure. That's why this is a very important tour for us," he explained.

Jayawardene also thought that leading Sri Lanka is not a big task or an extra burden.

"I don't think leading Sri Lanka is that much of pressure. I think the team are composed of some very young talented guys and some really good senior players, who backed me."

Rajshahi

FROM PAGE 12
Nadif Chowdhury.
Undaunted by the massive opposition total, Barisal openers Imran Ahmed (35 off 89 balls) and Hannan Sarkar (47 off 104 balls) batted 32 overs without being separated.

SCORES IN BRIEF
Rajshahi: 283 and 120-2 in 37 overs (Jahurul 60, Farhad 46 batting, Talha 1-13, Kamrul 1-12).
Dhaka first innings: 177 all out in 59.5 overs (Uttam 13, Kamrul 23, Mokhesur 21, Al Shahrar 12, Sajjad 33, Riyad 20, Kadir 25, extras 21, Shafiq 2-24, Shahjada 1-45, Kamrul 2-37, Mushfiq 1-32, Farhad 3-18).

Sylhet: 360 all out in 102.4 overs (Imtiaz 114, Mabud 42, Rezaul 105, extras 28, Shipu 1-63, Manjural 1-53, Ziaur 2-61, Shahin 3-102, Tushar 1-41) and 103-1 in 33 overs (Rahman 44 batting, Imtiaz 43, Shahin 1-30).

Khulna first innings: 138 all out in 39.5 overs (Sadat 27, Aslam 33, Sajjad 25, Tapash 1-65, Rezaul 1-24, Hissabul 5-20, Enamul 1-3-17).

Chittagong first innings: 471 all out 147.2 overs (Masum 80, Salahuddin 69, Nazimuddin 60, Ehsanul 114 batting, Wasel 34, Dhiman 34, Sabbir 21, extras 28, Sajid 2-79, Arfat 1-57, Nadif 4-71, Humayun 1-15).
Barisal first innings: 84-0 in 32 overs (Imran 35 batting, Hannan 47 batting).



Did U Know?

Billie Jean King was the first player in the Open era to win back-to-back US Opens (1971-1972).



Zinedine Zidane

(France football captain)
"I have another six months or a year, it's true. At most, I have another year and a half. I am closer to the end than the beginning." On his retirement plan.

Eto'o Africa's best again

Football

AFF, Abuja

Cameroon striker Samuel Eto'o won his third successive Confederation of African Football (CAF) Player of the Year Award after he was picked ahead of Chelsea stars Didier Drogba and Michael Essien at an elaborate ceremony here Thursday.

The 53 member nations of CAF voted for the winners of the annual awards. Eto'o won by the narrowest of margins, 108 points to Drogba's 106, while Essien placed a distant third with 50 points.

The Barcelona star also won the prestigious honour in 2003 and 2004 to now equal the record of Ghana's Abedi Pele, who won the award in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Last year, Eto'o helped his team to win the Spanish league crown.

An elated Eto'o dedicated his award to his mother and all the children of Africa.

"I wish to thank my mother, first and foremost. Secondly, I dedicate this award to all the people who helped me in my career," he said. "Above all, I dedicate this to all the children of Africa."

He said he was lucky to have won the award for the third time running.

"I have always dreamt of this moment and so I followed the exploits of such great players like Roger Milla, who made me continue to dream and believe in the strength of Africa," he said.

"I also knew that if I listen to my coaches, teammates and my parents, I will be a great player also. The struggle became harder and harder but I got some luck to become an African legend because for the third time running, I have won this prestigious award."

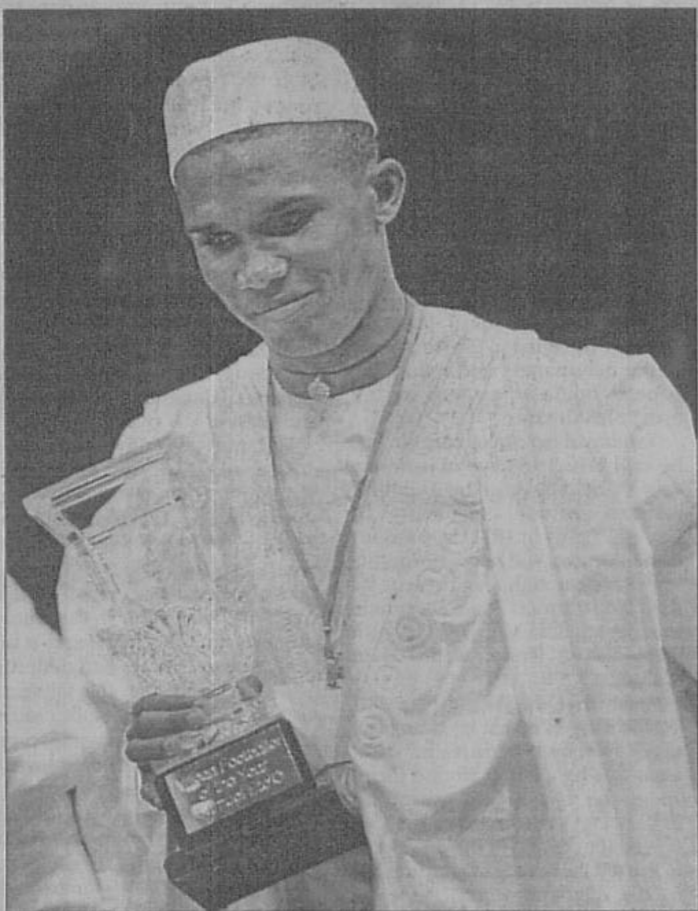
Samuel Eto'o poses with the African Footballer of the Year award on Thursday.

"So, young African brothers, you have to serve this beautiful continent."

Nigeria midfielder John Mikel Obi, 18, was named Africa's best young player for the past year after he inspired the country's team to reach the final of the FIFA World Youth Championship in the Netherlands. He beat compatriot Taye Taiwo 29 points to 28.

Nigeria's Perpetua Nkwocha retained the African women's top prize she first won in 2004.

African club champions Al Ahly, who put together a 55-game unbeaten run beginning from 2004, were picked as the Club of the Year while Stephen Keshi was voted Africa's best coach for guiding unfancied Togo to the 2006 World Cup in Germany.



Samuel Eto'o poses with the African Footballer of the Year award on Thursday.

FA Cup

L'pool aim to break MU jinx

Football

REUTERS, London

Liverpool have not beaten Manchester United in the FA Cup for 85 years but are confident the drought will end in the fifth round on Saturday at Anfield.

That barren run spans nine cup ties, including the 1996 final when Eric Cantona's late volley clinched the double for United, and the latest episode is sure to be as passionate an affair as any final.

"Games against United are always big ones for players to play in and I'm sure it's going to be a great game on Saturday," said Liverpool's European Cup-winning keeper Jerzy Dudek.

"It hurt losing to them in the last minute at Old Trafford last month so hopefully we can make amends this time."

Rio Ferdinand's 90th minute winner at Old Trafford in their 1-0 Premier League victory was the latest instalment in one of the great rivalries in domestic club football.

"We were playing away then but now are at home and that is going to give us an advantage," Liverpool

manager Rafael Benitez said after the fifth round draw.

"It's a difficult game for us but if you are to win trophies you have to play and beat the best teams in the competition."

Their last FA Cup meeting in January 1999 ended in dramatic fashion when goals by Dwight Yorke and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer in the 88th and 90th minutes gave United a 2-1 win at Old Trafford.

United's Welsh winger Ryan Giggs, who played in the 1996 final and that 1999 fourth round tie, hopes to be fit as Alex Ferguson's team continue their bid for a record 12th FA Cup.

"It's a game I don't want to miss. United-Liverpool is one of the biggest games we play," said Giggs. "There's a lot at stake (with the rivalry) but a place in the next round is vital."

"We want to win every competition we are in (but) the FA Cup is special, especially to this club because we have won it so many times," he told United's website.

The 32-year-old Giggs, who has played in 53 FA Cup matches, added: "They have always been tight games with only a goal separating them. I think it will be the

same on Saturday. A mistake or a bit of magic can win or lose you the game."

Anfield will have prepared a warm welcome for United's Gary Neville, who ran the length of the pitch to celebrate Ferdinand's goal in front of the Liverpool fans by screaming, clutching his shirt and pointing to his club badge.

The England fullback was charged by the FA for improper conduct but he has denied the charge and will have a personal hearing next week.

United's hopes of extending their 85-year unbeaten run could rest on the shoulders of Dutch striker Ruud van Nistelrooy, who is two goals short of 150 for the club.

"It is a target I would love to achieve and to score two goals against Liverpool would be fantastic," Van Nistelrooy told the club's website as he bids to become only the seventh United player to reach that target.

"With the Liverpool game and then the Carling (League) Cup final against Wigan (on Sunday Feb. 26), we have two massive games coming up. Against Liverpool we will need to play well for the entire 90 minutes. Our performance cannot drop."

England swoop for Capello?

INTERNET, undated

Fabio Capello has been approached by the Football Association with a view to him becoming the head Coach of England, according to reports in Italy.

The English FA have been looking for a new man to take over after the World Cup this summer, ever since the decision was taken last month for Sven Goran Eriksson to step down after the tournament.

Candidates that have so far been linked to the post include former Celtic boss Martin O'Neill, Manchester City manager Stuart Pearce and Alan Curbishley of Charlton Athletic.

However, it has since emerged that the FA are interested in luring a more high-profile name, with Capello's exemplary success record at club level putting him top of their wish list.

Capello has been repeatedly linked with a move to Real Madrid, where he won the Primera Liga in his only season in Spain 1996, but with Capello having indicated recently that he would be interested in trying a new adventure, the England job could well appeal.

'Openers need to do well'

AFF, Mumbai

England opener Andrew Strauss said Friday his team needed to get good starts in order to do well in India where they will play three Tests and seven one-dayers.

"The top order batsmen have to take the responsibility for scoring runs early on. That's what we're paid to do and what we have done fairly consistently over the last 24 months," Strauss said.

Strauss, who has scored 1,766 runs in 21 Tests and 1,371 runs in 44 one-dayers, said there was bounce on the practice pitch during the morning session here on Thursday but it started getting scuffed up by the afternoon.

"That's going to be the idea really, coming up with game plans to deal with the ball turning prodigiously at some stage in Test matches," said the 28-year-old left-handed batsman.

England play an unofficial three-day practice game against the Cricket Club of India at Mumbai from Saturday and a first-class three-day game against an Indian Board President's XI in Baroda from February 23.

The Test series begins on March 1 in Nagpur with Mohali and Mumbai as the other venues. The one-day series starts with a match in New Delhi on March 28.

Ponting against

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matic statement. "If it takes teams like Australia playing teams like Bangladesh for the developing Test nations to improve their skills, then I'm all for it," Ponting said. "I'm looking forward to the challenge of leading Australia in Bangladesh."

Australia is set to tour Bangladesh for a two-Test series in April and Ponting's comments are sure to set off sparks ahead of the series. Bangladesh's biggest cricketing success to date came against Australia, whom they defeated in a one-dayer last year. Since their entry into the big league, Bangladesh have played 40 Tests - losing 35 and winning only one, against Zimbabwe - and have won just 10 of 113 ODIs.

Summit Cup golf held

SPORTS REPORTER

Captain D K Panni (ret'd) clinched the men's title while Supa Georgi won the women's crown in the Summit Cup Golf Tournament (Pro-Am) at the Kurmitola Golf Club on Friday.

A total of 399 golfers including 33 ladies took part in the two-day meet.

Chief of Army Staff and president of Kurmitola Golf Club Lt Gen Moen U Ahmed inaugurated the meet and later he distributed prizes among the winners.

M Aziz Khan, chairman of Summit Group along with other high officials, attended the prize giving function.

OTHER RESULTS

Senior winner: Abu S Alam; Junior winner: Master Zaheedi; Best Gross: Saad Rahim; Ladies Best Gross: CD Hwang; 2nd Best Gross: Masud Ahmed; Runner-up: Iftekhar Rahman; 2nd Runner-up: Brig Gen Anwar Farid (ret'd); Front Nine winner: Air Cdre Rashidul Haque (ret'd); Back Nine winner: Min Gu; Nearest to Pin: Petter Matheiss; Longest Drive: KJ Youn; Winner Nine Hole: Lt Gen Moen U Ahmed; Runner-up Nine Hole: Shayet Hossain Eshan; Senior Winner Nine Hole: Maj Gen Azizur Rahman (ret'd); Winner Pro-Am: Md Jiban Ali; Runner-up Pro-Am: Md Milon Ahmed.

PRIMERA LIGA

Real see turn in tide

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

Five straight league victories and a slump for leaders Barcelona have raised Real Madrid's hopes that the tide is finally turning in their favour.

Real produced a storming, if ultimately futile, 4-0 victory over Real Zaragoza in the King's Cup on Tuesday after losing the first leg 6-1, and they will take that spirit into this weekend's match against Alaves.

"We've proved that we are a competitive team and we are now more united too," Brazilian full back Roberto Carlos told Marca on Thursday. "We are a stronger and more dangerous side."

"From now on we know what sort of attitude we've got to have. We can be up there fighting to win both the league and the Champions League and if we play like we did against Zaragoza I'm sure we'll win one of them."

"The title race has become very interesting because Barcelona have let slip an important advantage. We are now up there in the frame and there are plenty of points to play for."

Real, without a trophy for three years, made an awesome start at the Bernabeu, firing three goals in the first 10 minutes as they attempted to claw back the deficit.

Roberto Carlos scored a fourth

on the hour, but although they laid siege to the Zaragoza area for the rest of the game they were unable to get the all-important fifth that would have sent them through to the Cup final.

With one eye on next week's Champions League knockout tie against Arsenal, Real, who are seven points adrift of Barca in third spot in the standings, are likely to rest several players against Alaves.

Defenders Cicinho and Jonathan Woodgate and midfielder Zinedine Zidane are favourites to sit it out along with suspended midfielder Thomas Gravesen.

After spending much of the season in the relegation zone Alaves have hauled themselves up to 15th place in the table having lost just once in their last five outings.

But the Basque side were plunged into chaos on Thursday when outspoken club president Dimitry Piterman sacked coach Juan Carlos Oliva after just a month at the helm.

Only two weeks ago Barcelona were 12 points clear at the top of the table, but successive defeats against Atletico Madrid and second-placed Valencia have cut the gap to six.

This Saturday the champions face a tricky fixture at home to struggling Real Betis who have lost two in a row and are desperate for points to stave off the threat of relegation.

"We have to play well against Betis because three very important

points are at stake and a victory would give us a big boost ahead of the Chelsea match," Brazilian full back Silvinho told a news conference this week.

The Catalans, who play Chelsea in the Champions League at Stamford Bridge next Wednesday, will be boosted by the return of Ronaldinho, who missed both defeats through suspension, and Portugal midfielder Deco.

Argentine teenage sensation Lionel Messi and French winger Ludovic Giuly are both injured, while defenders Carles Puyol and Juliano Belletti are doubtful after pulling up in training.

Buoyed by their 1-0 victory over Barca last week, Valencia can keep the pressure on the leaders by extending their unbeaten run to 13 matches when they travel to San Sebastian to play Real Sociedad on Sunday.

FIXTURES

(kick-off times in GMT)
Saturday
Villarreal v Espanyol (1700), Real Madrid v Alaves (1900), Barcelona v Real Betis (2100), Sevilla v Celta Vigo (2100)
Sunday
Cadiz v Osasuna (1600), Deportivo La Coruna v Real Zaragoza (1600)
Racing Santander v Athletic Bilbao (1600), Real Sociedad v Valencia (1800), Malaga v Real Mallorca (1800), Getafe v Atletico Madrid (2000)

SERIE A

Roma go for record 10th

Football

REUTERS, Rome

AS Roma aim to equal the all-time record of 10 successive Serie A wins by beating Empoli on Sunday.

The 2001 champions, fifth on 48 points from 25 matches, have closed in on the Champions League places and a victory could lift them above Fiorentina, who face Roma's city rivals Lazio.

Roma's record attempt will ensure they get top billing on Sunday. The top three in the division play on Saturday to give them an extra day's rest before their Champions League fixtures next week.

Leaders Juventus (66 points) travel south to play Messina with a 12-point lead over AC Milan and Inter Milan, who scrap it out against Cagliari and Livorno respectively.

Should Roma defeat Empoli they will become one of only four teams -- the others being Juventus in the 1931-32 season, AC Milan in 1950-51 and the Bologna side of 1963-64 -- to notch up 10 Serie A wins in a row.

They have needed a little luck to get this far, but their recent form has been sparkling.

Last month they knocked Juventus out of the Italian Cup and on Wednesday they won 2-1 at Belgium's Club Brugge in the UEFA

Cup, despite playing with 10 men formost of the match.

Roma's revival has erased memories of last season's turmoil when four coaches tried and failed to impose order on a team that went off the rails after Fabio Capello's departure to Juventus. The capital side had to fight until the penultimate round of matches to avoid relegation.

The arrival of former Udinese boss Luciano Spalletti at the start of this season initially produced erratic results, but now his team's incisive passing game has been hailed as the most attractive in the division.

Several players have been outstanding, including Brazilian winger Mancini -- scorer of seven goals in seven games since coming back from injury -- and captain Francesco Totti, who finally seems to have got his volatile temper under control.

"That's the biggest difference this year," said midfielder Damiano Tommasi after the win at Bruges. "The team never loses its head."

The chances of Empoli stopping Roma look slim. The Tuscan side has slipped into the relegation zone after losing 11 of its last 14 matches.

Should Roma climb to fourth this weekend, Fiorentina's players will have only themselves to blame. A 12-point advantage over Roma at the start of last month has been

whittled away and they will be relieved to be back at the Franchi stadium, where they have won all but one of their 13 games this season.

Of the top three, Inter have the most difficult match. Back-to-back defeats against Fiorentina and Juventus have blown their title ambitions to pieces and they begin the battle for second place with a trip to Livorno, who will be full of confidence after beating Fiorentina last week.

Juventus and Milan warm up for the Champions League with matches against teams that hover one point above the relegation zone.

Juve striker David Trezeguet will miss the trip to Messina after spraining his ankle during training.

AC Milan striker Andriy Shevchenko is expected to return from injury to partner Alberto Gilardino or Filippo Inzaghi, who scored a hatrick in last week's 4-1 win over Reggina.

FIXTURES

(all 1400 GMT kick-off unless stated)
Saturday
AC Milan v Cagliari (1930), Livorno v Inter Milan (1700), Messina v Juventus (1700)
Sunday
Cievo v Palermo, Fiorentina v Lazio, Lecce v Reggina, Roma v Empoli, Sampdoria v Ascoli, Treviso v Parma, Udinese v Siena

Clooney can depict Mourinho in film

Football

AFF, Lisbon

US actor George Clooney, nominated for three Oscars this year, said Friday in a magazine interview he would be open to playing Chelsea's Portuguese coach Jose Mourinho in a movie.

"It would be fun. Although I have more grey hairs. But that is nothing that couldn't be solved," he told Portuguese weekly news magazine Sabado.

Last month Mourinho said Clooney, 44, would be the right actor to depict him after it was reported that film producers want to immortalise the Chelsea coach on the big screen.

"I think they should get George Clooney to play me. He's a fantastic

actor and my wife thinks he would be ideal," British media reported



GEORGE CLOONEY

Mourinho, who turned 43 last month, assaying.

Mourinho's sense of style along with his rugged good looks has turned him into an icon for thousands of women.

The Chelsea coach was voted the sixth sexiest man, ahead of Clooney who came in 11th place, earlier this month in a survey of more than 10,000 British readers of popular magazine New Woman.

Hollywood star Brad Pitt took the top place in the British magazine's list of the 100 Sexiest Men in the World.

Clooney is nominated in three Oscar categories this year: best supporting actor for Middle East oil thriller "Syriana" and best director and best original screenplay for his political drama "Good Night, and Good Luck".

The Oscars will be presented March 5.

NZ-WI first ODI today

FROM PAGE 12
Bangladesh, while New Zealand are fourth.

They've also had a restricted diet of one-day cricket with their last outing back to August 2005, while the New Zealand have beaten Sri Lanka 4-1 and lost to Australia 1-2 already this summer.

While the form book is heavily in New Zealand's favour, Fleming applied a note of caution.

"We're not necessarily comfortable front-runners and we've been pretty poor in the past, but at home we have a pretty good record," he said.

"They've brought a young

squad, in some areas inexperienced, and we have to try and expose that."

Despite the Twenty20 loss, Chanderpaul took heart from the West Indies performance.

"It gave the guys some confidence. The bowlers came back and performed well for us to tie the game," he said.

"The way they played last night, the guys will probably come into this game more confident than at Eden Park."

"I think everybody looks at us as the underdogs, but we know what cricket we can play and hopefully we can play some really good

cricket on this tour."

TEAMS

NEW ZEALAND (from): Stephen Fleming (captain), Daniel Vettori, Nathan Astle, Shane Bond, James Franklin, Peter Fulton, Jamie How, Hamish Marshall, Michael Mason, Brendon McCullum, Jeetan Patel, Scott Styris, Lou Vincent.

WEST INDIES (from): Shivnarine Chanderpaul (captain), Ramnareh Sarwan, Chris Gayle, Darren Ganga, Wavell Hinds, Runako Morton, Dwayne Bravo, Dwayne Smith, Dinesh Ramdin, Raul Lewis, Ian Bradshaw, Fidel Edwards, Jerome Taylor, Dion Butler.

Eriksson sees future Eng leader in Rooney

Football

REUTERS, Stockholm

England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson said Friday that Manchester United striker Wayne Rooney has matured to the extent he sees him as a possible future national captain.

"When he came into the team he was 17 years old and hardly said a word. When he did say something I did not understand what he said because of his accent," he told Swedish news agency TT.

"But now he has not only grown on the pitch, but also as a person. I