



PHOTO: AFP

Italy's Alessandro Del Piero (R) vies with German midfielder Torsten Frings during their friendly match at the Artemio Franchi Stadium in Florence on Thursday.

INTERNATIONAL FRIENDLIES

Italy humiliate Germany

Argentina, France go down

Football

REUTERS, London

Italy scored the most emphatic victory of the night with a 4-1 win over Germany when soccer's major powers began their final preparations for the World Cup finals in earnest on Wednesday.

Germany, the hosts for this summer's extravaganza, were not the only big losers on the first night of important warm-up friendlies exactly 100 days before the finals begin on June 9.

Argentina, tipped as potential World Cup winners, fell 3-2 to Croatia who won with an injury-time goal in neutral Basel, while France lost for the first time since July 2004, beaten 2-1 in Paris by visitors Slovakia.

World Cup finalists Sweden also had a night to forget, crashing 3-0 to Ireland in Dublin, a little consolation for the Irish who narrowly failed to reach the finals themselves.

World champions Brazil braved freezing conditions in Moscow to beat Russia 1-0, while England, also tipped to do well in Germany, came from behind to beat Uruguay 2-1 in Liverpool with another stoppage-time winner.

ITALY 4- GERMANY 1

Italy, looking to win the World Cup for the first time since their third triumph in 1982 when they beat West Germany, were too good for the Germans in Florence.

They raced into a 3-0 halftime lead at the Franchi stadium with goals from Alberto Gilardino, Luca Toni and Daniele De Rossi.

Juventus striker Alessandro Del Piero added Italy's fourth soon after the restart to give the Azzurri their most convincing win since Marcello Lippi took over as coach in August 2004.

Defender Robert Huth grabbed

a late consolation goal for Juergen Klinsmann's well-beaten side as Germany suffered their heaviest defeat against the Italians since losing 5-2 in a friendly in 1939.

CROATIA 3- ARGENTINA 2

It was a case of deja vu for Argentina, who lost 3-2 to Croatia in neutral Switzerland after conceding a stoppage time goal.



PHOTO: AFP

Ronaldo controls the ball during Brazil's friendly against Russia in Moscow on Wednesday.

ceding a stoppage time goal.

Argentina conceded a late goal to England in a 3-2 defeat in neutral Switzerland in November -- but appeared set for a better night after two goals in the opening six minutes from Carlos Tevez and Lionel Messi cancelled out Ivan Klasnic's third-minute opener for Croatia.

Barcelona teenager Messi's first goal for Argentina was to prove irrelevant, however, as Croatia turned things around in the second half with headers from Darijo Srna and Dario Simic -- who scored with a stoppage-time header.

FRANCE 1- SLOVAKIA 2

There was also a shock defeat for France, who lost under coach Raymond Domenech for the first time since he took over from Jacques Santini after Euro 2004.

Substitutes Szilard Nemeth and Jozef Valachovic netted for the Slovaks in the second half before Les Bleus pulled a goal back with a penalty from Sylvain Wiltord 15 minutes from time.

Slovakia failed to qualify for the World Cup in Germany in June while France had gone 17 games without defeat since their quarterfinal elimination by Greece at Euro 2004.

RUSSIA 0 - BRAZIL 1

Brazil began the final preparations for the defence of their title with a 1-0 win in Moscow over Russia where Ronaldo scored the only goal after 14 minutes.

"This was the coldest match I have ever been involved in with any sort of team at any level," Parreira told reporters. "I've never been in a situation like this before. I was freezing on the bench."

The goal warmed Brazil though, who played more defensively than usual and survived a series of Russian attempts in the second half.

ENGLAND 2-URUGUAY 1

England's year began with a victory too, thanks to Joe Cole's winning strike three minutes into stoppage time against Uruguay.

The South Americans, who failed to reach the finals, had taken the lead with a spectacular volley from midfielder Omar Pouso after 26 minutes and held it until Peter Crouch equalised for England with a header 15 minutes from time.

OTHER MATCHES

There were also wins for the Netherlands, who beat fellow finalists Ecuador 1-0 in Amsterdam, Portugal, who beat fellow finalists Saudi Arabia 3-0 Dusseldorf and Switzerland, who won 3-1 at Hampden Park against Scotland, who have not won a friendly international there for 10 years.

Spain twice came from behind to beat fellow finalists Ivory Coast 3-2 in Valladolid to extend their unbeaten run to 19 games. Central defender Juanito headed the winner five minutes from the end.

The United States also did well to beat fellow finalists Poland 1-0 in a snowstorm in Kaiserslautern.

But the weather proved too much for Belgium, whose match against Luxembourg was called off after 64 minutes with the Belgians leading 2-0 because a blizzard in Luxembourg made conditions impossible to continue.

Klinsmann under fire

REUTERS, Berlin

Germany's top newspapers laid into national soccer coach Juergen Klinsmann and his players on Thursday after their 4-1 humbling by Italy and predicted a debacle for the host nation at this summer's World Cup.

"Mamma mia we're bad!" the country's biggest-selling daily Bild trumpeted on its front page next to a picture of a grim-looking Klinsmann.

"Only 99 days to the World Cup and our national team is playing worse than ever before," the paper said. "If we play like that at the World Cup we'll be obliterated."

Bild awarded all Germany's players its worst rating of six, which stands for "did not earn the money", while giving the impressive Italians a mixture of twos and threes, the equivalent of "strong" and "average" respectively.

"1:4 - Germany shrinks to a soccer dwarf," was the headline in Thursday's Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. The paper blamed Klinsmann's tactic of instructing his defenders to pressure the Italian midfield players higher up the pitch for the loss.

It also criticised Klinsmann for leaving the experienced Christian Woerns out of Germany's World Cup plans after the Borussia Dortmund defender blasted the national coach's management style in the media.

"The four-man defensive line played in such a way that the excluded Christian Woerns was the only German winner of the evening, albeit a sad one," the paper said.

It was Germany's worst result against Italy since a 5-2 defeat in a friendly in 1939. The 1990 World Cup winners have not beaten a top class side since 2000 in a 17-match winless streak.

New Real chief issues warning

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid's new president Fernando Martin issued a stern warning to his players on Thursday that those not committed to the cause would not be welcome at the club.

"I don't want a team of millionaires. I want a team of marvellous sportsmen who work 24 hours a day to achieve the best for our fans," Martin told a news conference.

"Those players who think they can stay here giving only the minimum amount of effort are wrong. Those who fight and sweat for the shirt know they will have mine and the club's full support."

"I am not afraid to take tough decisions if people don't give their all for Real Madrid."

Martin's predecessor Florentino Perez, a close ally, resigned after six years at the helm on Monday, saying one of the reasons for his disillusionment was the lack of commitment shown by some players. "I will set up an independent commission to evaluate the effort of each of the players, and their sporting and personal conduct," Martin added.

Rajshahi closing

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SYLHET-CHITTAGONG

At the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, brothers Golam Mawla (60) and Golam Mabud (31) put on 73 for the opening partnership as Sylhet were all out for 239 in exactly 50 overs. However, it was national under-19 left-arm spinner Nabil Samad whose 5-32 from eight overs halted a threatening Chittagong at 203. Tamim Iqbal smashed 43 off 33 balls and Gazi Salahuddin 62 from 67 deliveries before man-of-the-match Nabil, who had contributed a 19-ball 23, ran through the tail.

SCORES IN BRIEF

KHULNA: 184 all out in 48 overs (Sadat 64, Shamsur 28, Sahagir 30, Shafaq 5-24, Farhad 2-39).
RAJSHAH: 188-8 in 48 overs (Farhad 26, Naeem 28, Mushfiq 16 n.o., Shuvo 26, Sadat 3-51).
Result: Rajshahi won by two wickets.

DHAKA: 190 all out in 49.1 overs (Uttam 38, Mehrab Jr 56, Kamrul 30, Sharif 29, Sajid 2-14, Arfat 2-39, Sonnet 2-24, Nadif 2-46).
BARISAL: 191-5 in 38.2 overs (Imran 66, Hannan 30, Nadif 42 n.o., Rezaul 2-38).
Result: Barisal won by five wickets.

SYLHET: 239 all out in 50 overs (Rahman 60, Mabud 30, Ezaz 21, Rezaul 32, Nabil 23, Faisal 2-37, Yasin 3-35, Sabbir 2-49).
CHITTAGONG: 203 all out in 41 overs (Tamim 43, Salahuddin 62, Ilias 23, Hasibul 2-37, Mawla 2-24, Nabil 5-32).
Result: Sylhet won by 36 runs.

ONE-DAY TABLE

Teams	M	W	L	Pts
Rajshahi	7	7	0	14
Dhaka	7	4	3	8
Chittagong	7	3	4	6
Khulna	7	2	5	4
Sylhet	7	2	5	4
Barisal	7	2	5	4

Chappell chastised



AFP, New Delhi

India's cricket coach Greg Chappell was taken to task Thursday after reportedly telling a British newspaper that Sourav Ganguly had wanted to stay on as team captain for financial reasons.

Indian cricket board secretary Niranjan Shah said Chappell, the Australian batting great who took over as coach of India in June, had been asked to limit his public comments to the game.

Ganguly had complained to him about remarks attributed to Chappell in a British newspaper, which quoted him saying he wanted Ganguly removed from the captaincy because the demands of the position were affecting his batting performance, Shah said.

"Ganguly was upset most by Chappell's comments that he wanted to cling on to the India captaincy for financial reasons," Shah said.

"We have written a letter to Chappell asking him to refrain from making such comments in future. He should restrict himself to talking about the players' performance," he said.

There was no immediate comment from Chappell on the cricket board's missive.

In remarks published in the Guardian newspaper, Chappell was quoted as saying of Ganguly: "We clashed because his needs as a struggling player and captain and those of the team were different."

"It was in his own interest to give himself mind space to work on his batting so that it could be resurrected, but he was not prepared to do that."

"What I didn't realise at that stage was how utterly important to his life and finances being captain was," Chappell was quoted as saying.

Ganguly is India's most successful Test captain with 21 wins.

After his clash with Chappell surfaced during India's tour of Zimbabwe in September, he was sacked from the captaincy in October.

Chappell later wrote in an e-mail to Indian cricket chiefs that was subsequently leaked to the public that Ganguly was "unfit" to lead India and questioned his commitment to the team.

Shah said Ganguly's future as an international cricketer had dimmed when he was left out of the side for the current first Test against England in Nagpur.

Chief selector Kiran More told reporters last week the 33-year-old former captain was unlikely to be selected again because of the selectors' - and Chappell's - desire to promote young talent.

The Guardian quoted Chappell saying that he may not have succeeded New Zealander John Wright as India's coach if Ganguly had not backed him.

"Certainly there is no way I would have got the job here without his (Ganguly's) influence," the former Australian captain said.

"I helped him with his batting, so maybe he thought I would be his mate and support him now. I am sure he

thought he would be able to run me as he did John in the latter part of his time as coach."

According to the Guardian, Chappell said he had asked Ganguly to step down from the captaincy on the Zimbabwe tour, saying the advice was aimed at helping him revive his career.

"In essence I told Sourav that if he wanted to save his career he should consider giving up the captaincy," Chappell was quoted as saying.

"He was just hanging in there. Modest innings were draining him. He had no energy to give to the team, which was helping neither him nor us."

It has been a roller coaster season so far for Ganguly, who has scored 5,221 runs from 88 Tests with 12 centuries.

The left-hander was selected for the first two home Tests against Sri Lanka before being axed from the third and was a controversial selection for the subsequent tour of Pakistan.

In Pakistan, Ganguly did not get to bat in the first Test in Lahore, was dropped for the second in Faisalabad and made 34 and 37 in the third in Karachi which Pakistan won by 341 runs to clinch the series 1-0.

An opportunity lost

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must say there is a lot of improvement than the previous games," said Whatmore.

"Yes, it was a great effort to capture four wickets in the morning, Rajib (Shahadat Hossain) bowled really well that allowed the opponents to take only a lead of 19 runs but unfortunately it went in vain due to poor batting. There was problem with shot selection against a top wicket-taker," he added.

Whatmore said that there was a realistic chance for his team to take the lead beyond 200.

"We got a lead of 163 runs but it was possible to make it 200. There are a lot of things you know changes and you require to change your plans too. You need to stay as long as possible and make some healthy partnerships that we failed to do," said the Australian.

"I think he (Nafees Iqbal) will not be proud of such a shot," said Whatmore while referring to Nafees Iqbal's wild shot outside the off-stump.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard at stumps on the third day of the first Test between

Bangladesh and Sri Lanka at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium on Thursday.

BANGLADESH: First innings 319 (Ashraf 136, Iqbal 34, Bashar 29, Nafees 27, extras 33; Malinga 4-57, Muralidaran 3-87, Bandara 2-61)

SRI LANKA: First innings (overnight 313-6)

Vandort c Mashud b Raseel 0
Tharanga c Ashraf b Rafique 42
Shahadat c Ashraf b Enamul 69

Jayawardene c Shahadat b Rafique 30
Samarawane c Omar b Shahadat 58
Dilshan b Enamul 22
Maharroof b Shahadat 72
Bandara not out 19

Fernando c Nafees b Shahadat 6
Muralidaran c Nafees b Shahadat 5
Malinga run out 0

Extras: (lb-2, w-1, nb-12) 15
Total: (All out in 97.1 overs) 338

Fall of wkts: 1-0, 2-86, 3-149, 4-149, 5-178, 6-295, 7-316, 8-330, 9-338.

Bowler O M R W
Raseel 18 1 75 1
Shahadat 22 3 83 4
Rafique 29 6 76 2
Enamul 24 1 5 76 2
Kapali 1 0 6 0
Ashraf 3 0 20 0

BANGLADESH: Second innings

Omar b Fernando 31
Iqbal c Sangakkara b Fernando 6
Bashar lbw b Bandara 12
Nafees c Fernando b Muralidaran 38
Ashraf c Tharanga b Muralidaran 1
Mashud c Dilshan b Muralidaran 15
Kapali lbw b Muralitharan 9
Rafique st Sangakkara b Muralidaran 40
Shahadat c Malinga b Bandara 0
Enamul lbw b Muralidaran 1
Raseel not out 2

Extras: (b-13, lb-3, w-3, nb-7) 26
Total: (All out in 58.5 overs) 181
Fall of wkts: 1-47, 2-56, 3-68, 4-69, 5-122, 6-131, 7-135, 8-150, 9-168.

Bowler O M R W
Malinga 13 2 41 0
Maharroof 2 0 5 0
Bandara 20 2 55 2
Muralidaran 19.5 6 54 6
Fernando 4 1 10 2

SRI LANKA: Second innings
Vandort not out 6
Tharanga not out 19
Total: (For no loss in 7.4 overs) 25

Bowler O M R W
Raseel 4 3 5 0
Shahadat 3.4 0 20 0

Toss: Bangladesh
Umpires: Asad Rauf (PAK) and Steve Bucknor (WIS)

Journeyman rule Day 2

FROM PAGE 16

paceman for six over long-on and later struck three successive fours in an over off the same bowler.

England were finally bowled out 35 minutes after the lunch-break when debutant paceman Shanthakumaran Sreesanth trapped Panesar leg-before for his fourth victim.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the second day of the first Test between India and England at the Vidharba Cricket Association Stadium in Nagpur on Thursday:

ENGLAND: First innings (overnight 246-7)
Strauss c Laxman b Sreesanth 28

Cook b Pathan 60
Bell c Dravid b Harbhajan 9
Pietersen b Sreesanth 15
Collingwood not out 134
Flintoff lbw b Kumble 43
Jones lbw b Pathan 14
Blackwell b Pathan 4
Hoggard c Dhoni b Sreesanth 11
Harmison st Dhoni b Harbhajan 39
Panesar lbw b Sreesanth 9

Extras: (b-7, lb-7, nb-12, w-1) 27
Total: (All out in 127.5 overs) 393
Fall of wkts: 1-56, 2-81, 3-110, 4-136, 5-203, 6-225, 7-244, 8-267, 9-327.

Bowler O M R W
Pathan 23 5 92 3
Sreesanth 28 5 95 4
Harbhajan 34 5 93 2

Kumble 40 13 88 1
Tendulkar 2 0 11 0

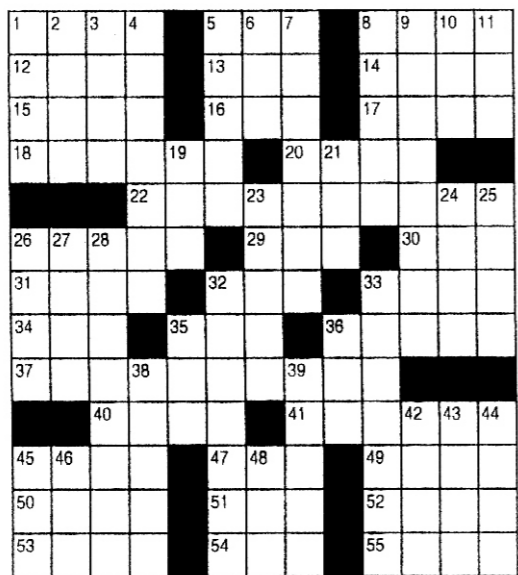
INDIA: First innings
Jaffer not out 73
Sehwag c Pietersen b Hoggard 2
Dravid not out 40
Extras: (b-13, lb-1, nb-2, w-5) 21
Total: (For 1 wkt in 48 overs) 136
Fall of wkt: 1-11.

Bowler O M R W
Hoggard 12 4 23 1
Harmison 10 3 26 0
Flintoff 9 4 25 0
Panesar 13 3 30 0
Blackwell 4 0 18 0

Toss: England
Umpires: Ian Howell (RSA) and Aleem Dar (PAK)

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 40 Methods 4 TV's 21 LummoX
1 Evidenced an injury 41 Have at it 45 Chester -- Arthur 5 "Mayday!" 8 Biography 12 It's an imposition for one 13 Chance 14 Probability 15 Porlent 16 -- out a living 17 Souchong et al. 18 Wine bottle 20 It may be a proper subject
DOWN 1 United nations 2 Golf legend 26 Ump 30 Chit letters 31 Bohemian 32 Prevent 33 Commotion 34 Nipper's co. 35 Spread seed 36 Permission 37 Ear appendage?



CRYPTOQUIP
OGWS VGW JQSTEDUTHV
OQH DSEWUWJLSTLDDHN
PTUWZ, ZL BLD HDAALHW
HGWPWNV ZW - PTNWZ ?
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF YOU TAKE A LONG WALKING TOUR OF A WASHINGTON CITY, YOU MIGHT COME HOME SEATTLE-SORE.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: O equals W

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.