

Australia awarded officially

CRICINFO, undated

Australia have received a cheque for 500,000 dollars for being this year's top side in the LG ICC Test Championship and LG ICC ODI Championship.

They collected the reward ahead of the second day's play at Fatullah after retaining a comfortable advantage in both official tables over the course of the 12-month period. This is the second consecutive year in which Australia have benefited from their dominance of both the Test and ODI tables on the 1 April cut-off date.

"The LG ICC Rankings have proved to be an excellent way of measuring the relative achievements of teams in both Test and ODI cricket and for the second year in a row Australia has come out on top," said Malcolm Speed, the ICC's chief executive. "There was a lot of focus on their Ashes defeat earlier in the year but it is interesting to note that the only two Test matches they lost in 12 months of cricket were by two runs and three wickets. They should be congratulated for once again proving to be the most consistent team in both forms of the game."

Cricket Australia chief executive James Sutherland paid tribute to the performance of the Australian team and the administrative bodies that support the players off the field. "Finishing on top of the tables in successive years is testament to the fantastic achievements of many people in Australian cricket over the past 24 months. We are extremely proud of the players and support staff who have helped Australia to this position and look forward to the challenge of trying to make it three in a row in 2007." Australia's dominance of both Test and ODI cricket is marginally less convincing that it was 12 months ago -- their Test ranking is one point lower than in 2005 and their ODI ranking has dropped eight points over the year -- but they still retain a comfortable cushion in both LG ICC tables.

A record of nine wins, three draws and two defeats in Test cricket leaves Australia 18 points clear of their nearest rival England in the Test table. In ODI cricket the gap to second-placed South Africa is 13 points after Australia's record of 20 wins, one tie and 10 defeats in ODI cricket.

Incidentally, the award came on the same day that the Australians found themselves in a precarious position against the minnows of Bangladesh.

PRIMERA LIGA

Barca struggle at Santander

REUTERS, Madrid

Lowly Racing Santander gave Barcelona a fight on Sunday before the Primera Liga leaders came back to draw 2-2 and restore their 11-point lead at the top of the table.

Henrik Larsson put Barca in front after 18 minutes but Racing struck back almost immediately with two goals in four minutes, from Antonito and Oscar Serrano, to turn the game on its head.

Samuel Eto'o levelled the scores after 33 minutes and although Barca dominated thereafter they appeared content to secure the point.

The Champions League semi-finalists have 70 points with six games remaining.

Valencia, who beat Celta Vigo 1-0 on Saturday, are level on 59 points with Real Madrid, but second on head-to-head results.

Real slipped to third after being held 1-1 at home by relegation-threatened Real Sociedad on Saturday, while Osasuna's 2-1 win at Alaves earlier on Sunday put them a point back in fourth place.

Dav's savours

FROM PAGE 12

Shahadat not out 3
Enamul Hayden b MacGill 0
Extras: (lb-16, w-2, nb-11) 29
Total: (All out in 123.3 overs) 427
Fall of wkt: 1-51, 2-238, 3-265, 4-295, 5-351, 6-398, 7-416, 8-418, 9-424.

Bowler O M R W
Lee 19 5 68 0
Clark 25 4 69 0
Gillespie 23 7 47 2
Warne 20 1 112 0
MacGill 33.3 2 108 8
Clarke 3 0 7 0

AUSTRALIA: Firstinnings

Hayden lbw b Mortaza 6
Hussey b Rafique 23
Ponting lbw b Shahadat 21
Martyan b Rafique 4
Clarke b Enamul 19
Gilchrist not out 51
Warne c Mashud b Enamul 6
Lee not out 13
Extras: (lb-2) 2
Total: (For six wkt in 52 overs) 145
Fall of wkt: 1-6, 2-43, 3-50, 4-61, 5-79, 6-93.

Bowler O M R W

Mortaza 15 2 41 1
Shahadat 10 2 33 1
Rafique 17 5 40 2
Enamul 9 3 18 2
Ashraful 1 0 11 0

Toss: Bangladesh

Umpires: Aleem Dar (PAK) and Nadeem Ghauri (PAK)



Wayne blames Owen

AFP, London

The tabloid revelations over Wayne Rooney's gambling habits have sparked a rift between the Manchester United star and his England teammate Michael Owen, reports said Monday.

Rooney was alleged to have accrued gambling debts of 700,000 pounds with a bookmaker introduced to him and other members of the England squad by Owen, weekend newspaper reports said.

Sources close to Rooney have said the player is now furious with Owen for putting him in touch with bookmaker Steve Smith, who is a business associate of the Newcastle player.

"Michael Owen should be someone who puts his arm around Wayne's shoulder. Wayne is pretty pissed off with Michael for introducing him to these people," the source told The Daily Mail.

Owen introduced Rooney and other England squad members to Smith after becoming tired of running the team gambling school, reports said.

Up until that point, Owen took the bets but recruited Smith to take care of matters when the sums of money being wagered became too large.

The Times noted that while sources close to Rooney had tried to point the finger at Owen, none of the other members of the squad who have dealt with Smith, including John Terry, Frank Lampard and Rio Ferdinand, have had any complaints.

Rooney meanwhile gave no indication that the furor was affecting his game, scoring one goal and setting up another in United's 2-0 win over Arsenal on Sunday.

"If you look at my performance that answers the question," he said when quizzed on his gambling habits.

MacGill shine

FROM PAGE 12

moment though I am looking forward to getting a bat and see what I can do."

The leg-spinner also praised the Bangladeshi bowlers on very clever bowling towards the end of the page although he did say that the deteriorating pitch might have played a part in that.

"The pitch has deteriorated very fast and it's gone to the stage that it's a pitch where you don't want to bat last on. But I don't want to detract from the performances of the Bangladeshi bowlers. They have bowled well with a clear idea of what to do."

And on his prospects in the team after his performance MacGill was his usual reserved self. "Compared to the others I am relatively fresh. They are perhaps feeling under the weather after a very long summer."

MacGill was also glowing in his assessment of Bangladeshi batsmen. "When I played against Bangladesh last, I said that if they continued to improve at the rate that they did for the length of that series then they would be a very good Test team in a short time. And unfortunately for us, it has been the case seemingly up to the point where we have not managed to keep up."

Australia's other bright point of a day that they would rather soon forget was Adam Gilchrist, who completed 5000 career runs, on way to scoring an unbeaten half century. The wicketkeeper also completed his 350th career dismissal, when he stumped compatriot Khaled Mashud off the bowling of Stuart MacGill, in only his 83rd Test match.

Booters crash

FROM PAGE 12

minute with a placing shot after Muhidinov set him with a through.

A solo effort by substitute Shujao Nematov sealed the victory when he raced past hapless centre-backs Rajani and Nazrul before placing a low drive into the final corner eight minutes from time.

Tajikistan coach Sharif Nazarov was a happy man at his side's magnificent show after a not-so-impressive performance in the group stage.

"Bangladesh did not perform well and everything looked disorganized in their front. I think their problem was lack of temperament," Nazarov said.

"Losing to Kyrgyzstan in the group match motivated my players, who put on their best show in the tournament so far. I think the weather condition favoured us because the temperature was lower," he added.

Bangladesh coach Diego Cruciiani was furious after the match and only attended the post-match conference after repeated requests.

"It's difficult to speak. They were nervous under pressure and afraid of the opponents," said the Argentine of their charges.

"Everything went wrong. We missed Joy badly but I thought we had a chance after the equalizer. I thought they would organise and mark the opponents but unfortunately that was not the case."

"There was lack of both concentration and team spirit against a side that played very fast and showed too much power. If Tajikistan play the way they did today, they will go all the way," said Cruciiani, who was unhappy with stand-in captain Aminul's performance under the bar in a crunch match.

Kahn accepts reserve role



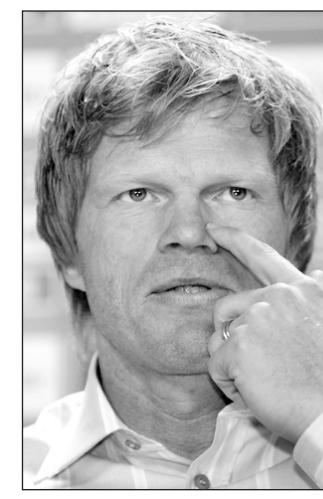
AFP, Munich

running guessing game over who would keep goal for Germany at the World Cup.

"Jürgen Klinsmann has taken his decision, I've accepted it, I've thought about it and I've decided to do what's best for the team," said Kahn, adding that he has "no conflict" with his rival Lehmann.

"We've got to rise above talk of a rivalry between Kahn and Lehmann. We need to be positive so we can achieve our goal," said Kahn, revealing he had received several messages of support from his international teammates.

"Other members of the team and players from different clubs called me after the announcement and told me you have to be there, it's important for the team," Kahn said.



OLIVER KAHN

Zidane aims at WC triumph

AFP, Berlin

France midfielder Zinedine Zidane said Monday he wants to end his international career in July with a second World Cup triumph in Germany.

Speaking to German football magazine Kicker, the Real Madrid talisman said: "It would be good if I could finish my international career in the French team with a big and beautiful success. I want to become World champion again -- that's my goal."

After the World Cup, Zidane is adamant he will not be making a u-turn and he also plans to retire from club football by the end of next season.

"It is absolutely certain. The World Cup is my last big challenge at that level. With Real Madrid I still have another year on my contract to go before 2007. And then I will decide, in total peace, what I will do," added the former World and European player of the year.

Zidane is also hoping that France can make up for their nightmare 2002 World Cup in Japan and South Korea where they failed to make it out of a group containing Uruguay, Denmark and Senegal, without even mustering a single goal.

"France has the potential, with big players, to go far in the competition," he added.

"To do so we have to be at the top of our form in June. We have to improve our game. If we play like we did in most of our qualification matches then we won't have much hope."

"I am convinced that the team will improve because we have much more potential than we demonstrated in qualifying."

PREMIERSHIP

United blank Gunners



Football

APP, Manchester

Wayne Rooney kept Manchester United in the hunt for the Premiership title with a brilliant individual performance to inspire Sir Alex Ferguson's team to a 2-0 victory over Arsenal at Old Trafford here Sunday.

Rooney opened the scoring early in the second-half and then created the second for South Korea midfielder Park Ji-Sung as United maintained the pressure on title-holders Chelsea and dented Arsenal's hopes of securing qualification for the Champions League via a top-four finish.

With a congested fixture list looming, Arsenal Wenger surprisingly put his top scorer Thierry Henry from his starting line-up, but Arsenal were a threat even without the talismanic France striker.

The visitors twice went close inside the opening four minutes through Emmanuel Adebayor and Robin van Persie as they attempted to stun United with an early breakthrough.

Moments later, Edwin van der Sar

was then forced to save well from Dutch international teammate van Persie.

United, with Ruud van Nistelrooy starting in place of the in-form Louis Sahar, lacked a cutting edge going forward until Rooney tested Germany goalkeeper Jens Lehmann with a long-range strike in the 21st minute.

Both teams were finding it difficult to create clear-cut scoring chances, but United should have been awarded a penalty two minutes before half-time after Kolo Toure deflected Rooney's goalbound effort onto the post.

Rooney had been brilliantly picked out by van Nistelrooy's defence-splitting pass and, after rounding Lehmann, the 20-year-old England forward fired goalwards only to see Ivory Coast defender Toure block the ball with both hands. Rooney appealed for a penalty, but referee Graham Poll waved play on.

However Rooney, who had woken up to a Sunday tabloid newspaper report alleging he had huge gambling debts, was not to be denied and he opened the scoring nine minutes into the second-half.

The move began when Nemanja

Vidic's challenge on van Persie released the ball to fullback Mikael Silvestre on the left flank.

France international Silvestre aimed his cross into the penalty area and Rooney took one touch to control before firing an unstoppable strike past Lehmann from 12 yards.

Wenger introduced Henry and Freddie Ljungberg in a bid to salvage a point, but Park settled the game for United when he netted 12 minutes from full-time.

Rooney's powerful run down the right flank took him into the penalty area and the 30 million pounds (52.5 million dollars) striker looked set to shoot at goal, but he unselfishly squared the ball for Park, who had the simple task of tapping into an empty net.

TOP SIX

Team	P	W	D	L	G/F	G/A	pts
Chelsea	33	26	4	3	64	20	82
Man Utd	33	23	6	4	66	30	75
Liverpool	34	21	7	6	48	22	70
Tottenham	33	16	10	7	48	33	58
Blackburn	33	16	6	11	45	39	54
Arsenal	32	16	5	11	53	25	53



PHOTO: AFP

Manchester United striker Wayne Rooney (L) shrugs off a challenge from Arsenal defender Philippe Senderos during their Premiership match at Old Trafford on Monday.

Guwahati's fate in Roshan's hands



Cricket

APP, New Delhi

The future of Indian city Guwahati as an international cricket venue will be determined by Sri Lankan match referee Roshan Mahanama, an official said on Monday.

Angry fans turned violent at the city's Nehru Stadium on Sunday after the fifth one-day international between India and England was abandoned without a ball being bowled due to bad weather.