

## Singh puts pressure on Pathan

PTI, Potchefstroom

Batting may have been a perennial source of concern on this tour for India, but on the bowling front it has been a problem of plenty.

With Punjab's young VRV Singh impressing as back-up bowler in the warm up game against the Rest of South Africa, coach Greg Chappell was wearing a happy look at the options at his disposal.

"VRV Singh has been bowling close to 145mph and with good control too," muttered Chappell after he sat through with team's video analyst Ramakrishnan in the press box on the third afternoon of the four-day game here on Saturday.

VRV Singh has lost little time in adjusting to the high altitude and the kind of line and length to bowl on the wickets in South Africa. He has come in for high praise from some of the team's seniors, including maestro Sachin Tendulkar.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Players of the American International School of Dhaka pose with the South Asian Inter-Scholastic Association basketball championship trophy after they defeated American Embassy of Delhi in the final of the competition in Kathmandu last Sunday.

## Batting remains the worry

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

It's not often that a team wins a four-day game by 96 runs, with a day to spare, and finds itself with more questions than answers.

The Indians bowed out a fairly strong Rest of South Africa side for 138 and 224, but the manner in which their own top order capitulated in both innings is cause for tremendous worry heading into the Test series.

Even before the game, the focus was on how to deal with the pace attack that South Africa will unleash at the Wanderers next Friday. And with that in mind, the net sessions, especially with the bowling machine had been extremely specific. A lot of the time, it was set to a "Pollock length", so that the Indian batsmen could explore ways of scoring runs against a man renowned for giving nothing away. As Greg Chappell told Cricinfo: "If one can't score from a particular bowler, it's only a matter of time before he gets you out." After all, that's how Glenn McGrath has operated for more than a decade.

One of the few saving graces was the batting of Sourav Ganguly and Irfan Pathan. Ganguly's first-innings 83 was all about sheer bloodmindedness and experience. He had his uncomfortable moments, being hit on the helmet and then dropped at gully, but more than a decade of experience allowed him to keep going. He was getting into line, and he played some superb strokes through the off side, even when Jacques Rudolph tried to choke off the runs

by having seven men there.

And he wasn't playing some kids either. Morne Morkel will take the new ball for South Africa, sooner rather than later, and Alfonso Thomas is part of that dying breed, a medium-fast swing bowler who's tremendously accurate. Nantie Hayward had his moments too, while Friedel de Wet gave nothing away. "Sourav played very well," said Chappell later. "His feet were moving well, and he showed the discipline that is required to make runs. His example inspired Irfan."

Pathan carried on the good work in the second innings as well, even as the rest folded for next to nothing, but his first-innings century was relegated to the shadows by Ganguly's return. Right from the first handshake with Chappell at the nets after Ganguly's arrival in Potchefstroom, the TV crews and others have tried to magnify every single gesture made by both men, often arriving at ludicrous conclusions.

On the morning after his 83, Ganguly arrived at the nets wanting to practise the cut shot. Chappell sent down about 20 balls, and the little episode was caught on camera by the ESPN crew, there to interview the coach in the build-up to the Test series. The others went into a tizzy when they realised that ESPN had such footage, and it was hard to believe that so much was made of something as innocuous as a coach giving throw-downs to one of his players. Both men are professionals, with nearly 200 Test matches between them, and neither has anything to gain by sabotaging the other in these desperately lean times for Indian cricket.

If there was a negative, it was the manner of Ganguly's dismissal in the second innings. Having ducked under one bouncer, he got himself into a real tangle against another short-pitched ball, looping up the simplest of catches off the right glove. The South African bowlers, who will no doubt have watched it, will certainly have made a mental note to bowl fast and straight, with the ball pitched short of a length. Such a scenario will force Ganguly to play either the hook or the pull to make runs, or wait for the odd ball pitched on a driving length.

In that regard, Pathan's batting had only complicated selection matters. He's clearly not intimidated by short-pitched fast bowling, and the assurance with which he got into line will tempt the team management to explore the idea of fitting him somewhere in the batting line-up. For the moment, he can't hold down a place on the strength of his bowling, but with the likes of Wasim Jaffer and Virender Sehwag so short on runs and confidence, it'll be interesting to see what decision they make.

Even with Munaf Patel looking increasingly unlikely to play in Johannesburg, there are few such worries about the bowling. Sreesanth bowled good outings at lively pace, while Zaheer Khan was simply outstanding. The delivery that nipped back sharply to castle Jean Paul Duminy in the second inning was perhaps the best of the match, but to an extent, even he was eclipsed by VRV Singh, the wild-card pick who had divided opinion when he was called up for the Tests.

For as long as most of us can

remember, Indians have been at the receiving end when it comes to raw pace. Now, they have someone who can dish it out. Chappell, who had been anxious to have him in the touring party, came into the press box on Saturday afternoon and spoke of how excited some of the seniors had been. "Sachin said at lunch time [on Friday] that he had really enjoyed watching from slip, and that he felt VRV had touched around the 145kmph mark," said Chappell. "They were standing so far back at slip."

Cyril Mitchell, the former umpire who was match referee for the game, also spoke of how impressed he had been with the bowling from both sides. "There wasn't much wrong with the pitch at all," he told Cricinfo. "But the over-head conditions helped swing, and most batsmen are no longer used to playing high-quality swing bowling at pace."

With Anil Kumble certain to slot in for the Test, India certainly appear to have the bowling resources to stretch a South African line-up that were horribly exposed by the likes of Stuart Clark not so long ago. Whether they have batting to put runs on the board is another matter. Rahul Dravid's return will undoubtedly help, as will an innings of substance from Sachin Tendulkar. Chappell and others feel that Tendulkar's problems are more in the mind than anything else, and if he can get his headspace right, who knows what's possible. As Lara, McGrath and Warne have shown recently, writing off the old-stagers is an exercise fraught with danger.

## ALS lift 2nd b'ball title

SPORTS REPORTER

American International School (AIS) of Dhaka lifted the South Asia Inter-Scholastic Association (SAISA) basketball championship for the second time in a row in Kathmandu on December 3.

In a close match, the Dhaka-based school fended off American Embassy School of Delhi 48-44 in the final. They beat Lincoln School of Kathmandu in the semifinal.

SAISA is a conference of international schools in the subcontinent that compete in various sports and other activities.

Ryan Luby was awarded most valuable player for the school side by coaches David Feren and Cody Taggart.

## Sania, Li move into qtrs

AFP, Doha

Chinese top seed Li Na and Indian favourite Sania Mirza cruised into the Asian Games quarterfinals of the women's singles on Sunday and declared themselves fighting fit.

Li took just 56 minutes to dispose of Indonesia's Sandy Gumulya 6-1 6-3 despite her left ankle needing heavy strapping during the match.

Li, who made history at Wimbledon this year when she became the first Chinese woman to reach the quarterfinals of a Grand Slam, said she strained it during an earlier match, but it would not hurt her performance here.

"It's not bothering me," she said.

The world number 21 meets Uzbekistan's Iroda Tulyaganova in the quarters, but said her major threat to winning gold came from teammate Zheng Jie.

"I'm taking one game at a time rather than thinking about the final but China is my main competition," she said.

Zheng, a doubles Grand Slam winner, also moved into the final eight after India's number two Shikha Uberoi retired hurt.

## Now A teams

FROM PAGE 17  
Shahjada are the only players not to have played for the national team.

**BANGLADESH SQUAD:** Gazi Salauddin, Javed Omar Balim, Tushar Imran (Captain), Rajin Saleh, Alok Kopali, Manzural Islam Rana, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad, Tapash Baisya, Nazmul Hossain, Mohammad Sharif, Enamul Haque and Mohammed Shahjada.

## Abahani take

FROM PAGE 17  
pool players apart from young guns Enamul Haque, Nazmul Hossain, Tamim Iqbal, Nadif Chowdhury, Dollar Mahmud, Nabil Samad, Shamsur Rahman and seasoned campaigner Ehsanul Haque.

Mohammedan Sporting Club signed in Hasibul Hossain, Rashedul Haq, Faisal Hossain, Sahagir Hossain, Nadimuddin Mintu, Arafat Sunny, Junaid Siddiqui, Tapash Baisya and Imtiaz Hossain. The giants kept the services of national captain Habibul Bashar and Aftab Ahmed.

Last year's second placed side Sonargaon Cricketers kept pool players Mohammad Ashraful and Mohammad Rafique while also roping in Arshaful's partner in the national partnership record earlier this month Marshall Ayub, Mohammad Sharif and Dhiman Ghosh.

But all-rounder Neeyamur Rashid left his club of seven years Abahani and signed for newcomers Partex along with Ahsanullah Hasan. Among the major names, Partex roped in Sylhet captain Rajin Saleh.

Brothers Union have lost most of their players as Ehsanul Haque, Nafis Iqbal, Nazmul Hossain, Enamul Haque, Arafat Salahuddin, Ziaur Rahman, Rashedul Haq and Arafat Sunny all exited the club this season. But Brothers are expected to confirm the services of Deboobrota Paul, Imran Ahmed, Hannan Sarkar, Alamgir Kabir, Abul Bashar and Sajju Datta.

The transfers go on today and end tomorrow evening.

## No Vaughan in Ashes

Cricket

AFP, Perth

Michael Vaughan has conceded he has no chance of making an unlikely Ashes comeback down under.

Talk of the 2005 Ashes hero, who is on the comeback trail after knee surgery earlier in the year, returning late in the current Ashes series gathered momentum when he played in two one-day matches for the England Academy here over the last week.

He was then recalled to the senior side for the two-day match against Western Australia, seemingly accelerating his comeback.

However, Vaughan confided to another former England skipper, Michael Atherton, that his aim was to return for the triangular one-day series, starting in mid-January.

Vaughan then all but confirmed

his chances of an Ashes recall were gone when he elected not to bat in the tour match on Sunday, instead allowing other Test hopefuls to gain valuable batting practice.

Acting England captain Andrew Strauss said Vaughan was expected to bat at No. 4 on Sunday, but after the openers put on 183 it was decided it was more important to give time in the middle to players who might take part in the Ashes.

"I think Vaughany was due to come in at four," Strauss said here Sunday.

"But as the day went on it became more a question of getting guys who may be involved in Test matches at some point a run out in the middle, so Vaughany slid down the order."

Vaughan, who hasn't played Test cricket since November last year, spent the whole day in the field on Saturday and appeared to move freely, chasing balls down and making one spectacular diving stop.

But writing in the Daily Telegraph, Atherton quoted Vaughan as saying he simply wouldn't be ready for a Test recall in the next three weeks.

"If I could have fitted in a three-day game next week there would be more of a chance, but that's not possible," Vaughan told Atherton.

"Realistically, I've no chance of playing in the Test series."

"The problem is that there is nothing you can do to replicate something like a day in the field with its sudden twists and turns."

"I need to be sure I will last out."

"The one-day series is more realistic."

Vaughan, who led the English side to victory in the historic 2005 Ashes series, didn't fire in his two appearances with the bat for the England Academy.

He was dismissed for a seven-ball duck in his first outing, before making just nine in his next innings.

## Graveney confident of England fightback

Cricket

AFP, London

England's chairman of selectors David Graveney insisted Sunday he was confident his side have enough fighting spirit to turn the Ashes Test series around.

England are under pressure going into next week's third Test in Perth with hosts Australia holding a 2-0 lead in the five Test series after a surprising victory in Adelaide last week.

But Graveney nevertheless remains confident.

"We know where we have been under par. The Australians are quite rightly talking a big game and we know we are playing a really tough team. But we have had some success and have great resolve. Everyone has to pull together – we can turn this around," he told Radio Five Live's Sportsweek programme.

Whether Monty Panesar will be called up is open to debate amid speculation that captain Andrew Flintoff and coach Duncan Fletcher disagreed over whether he should

be called up for the Adelaide Test.

Graveney would only say he was comfortable with the selection process.

"I was happy to go along with what Duncan and Freddie had decided," he said.

"It is not necessarily about which spinner plays or both spinners playing. In the first Test our seam bowling was not on the money."

"In the second Test we played really well, scored over 500 runs and everyone knows what happened on Tuesday."

"We just had a mad hour with the bat and succumbed to the pressure applied by the number one ranked team in the world."

"Perhaps there is the possibility of playing with two spinners in Perth as the wicket is now slow instead of being the quickest in the world."

Newspapers reports have claimed skipper Flintoff and coach Fletcher clashed over Panesar's non-selection.

But Graveney said: "I'm not going to speculate on Freddie overruling Duncan. They would have reached this decision together."

Former captain Michael Vaughan is unlikely to figure as he

continues his comeback from a knee injury with the Academy side.

Graveney added: "Our target is for Michael to be available for one-day games. I know he has fielded all day and did not suffer from a reaction in his knee. But it is unlikely he will feature in these Test matches."

Fletcher has been criticised after Panesar, so successful in his first year in Test cricket, was left out of the England team for the first two Tests.

Graveney told BBC Five Live's Sportsweek programme: "I'm disappointed with the amount of criticism that's been aimed at Duncan solely."

"The way that we've organised English cricket is around collective responsibility -- when things go badly, that's a collective responsibility."

"The selectors -- Duncan, me and Geoff Miller -- deliver a squad to the coach Duncan and captain Flintoff."

"No-one makes a decision on their own. The process has been in place of many tours before, on which we've had a lot of success."

"We've got great resolve in this team -- we've had some success, but we now everyone has to pull together."



PHOTO: AFP

West Indies batsman Lendl Simmons has his castles destroyed while trying an expansive square cut off the bowling of Pakistan seamer Naved ul Hasan during the third one-day international at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Sunday.

## PCB boss under scrutiny

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The role of Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Nasim Ashraf in the inquiry in to the doping scandal that rocked Pakistan cricket has come under scrutiny with the publication of a letter written by him to the first anti-doping commission, which banned Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif, and allegations from the head of the commission that attempts were made to influence their decision. Ashraf has termed the allegation as "absolute hogwash."

The letter, addressed to Shahid Hamid, the head of the commission, was obtained by The Nation, a leading English language daily based in Lahore. In the letter, sent three days before the final verdict was given, Ashraf asks the commission to consider a set of points before reaching a final verdict.

As well as asking the commission to make sure players have the opportunity for full legal representation and that independent experts are appointed to evaluate analytical material, the chairman suggests that "the concentration of Nandrolone found in the two samples is quite consistent with the use of contaminated food

supplements."

Hamid confirmed to Cricinfo that he had received the letter and that he found it "totally unacceptable and out of order," adding that it amounted to an attempt to put undue pressure on the judgment of the commission.

The decision to ban Shoaib and Asif for two years and a year respectively was eventually overturned by a subsequent appeals committee, headed by Justice Fakhruddin G Ebrahim, earlier this week. But Hamid stood firm in the belief that the initial judgment was correct. "I fully stand by our verdict and am absolutely sure that we made the right decision at the end of it all."

Ashraf, however, rubbished suggestions that he had tried to influence the commission in any way. Speaking to Cricinfo from Dubai where he was attending an ICC meeting, Ashraf said, "The suggestion that I tried to influence any of the decisions is absolute hogwash. The full contents of the letter actually prove that this was indeed a totally independent commission. The letter actually contradicts the story that any influence was exerted."

Ashraf insisted that both processes had been fair and transparent. "Both tribunals were completely independent and a due

process was followed throughout to reach the respective verdicts."

Below are the six points the chairman asked the commission to consider:

1. Players must have full opportunity to be legally represented.
2. Notes to be taken of their evidence and these notes should be sent in written form to the legal counsel of the players so that they can give comments hereby avoiding any misunderstanding of their testimony.
3. The analytical material must be evaluated by independent expert appointed by the disciplinary commission.
4. The PCB team doctor, PCB coach and any other coaches and doctors involved officially or unofficially must be asked to give testimony. This is particularly important in this light of the fact that the concentration of Nandrolone found in the two samples is quite consistent with the use of contaminated food supplements.
5. Independent experts in the field must be asked to testify before the Commission before a final decision is reached.
6. A final meeting should be held with the players to give them opportunity to make final representations if they so wish with the aid of their legal counsel.

## Easy win for Pakistan

FROM PAGE 17

favour and on a seaming wicket we should have done well," said Lara, who played down the power failure.

"Not really, these things happen. We had a competitive score at the half way stage but we didn't put the ball in the right areas and you can't bowl so many wides and extra deliveries."

West Indies, sent in to bat, owed their recovery to Simmons who added 52 for the second wicket with Gayle (41) and 61 for the fourth wicket with Daren Ganga (20) after the tourists lost Lara for a first-ball duck.

Simmons hit seven boundaries in his 130-ball patient knock before he was bowled by Naved in the 47th over.

Lara, who decided to open the innings, missed a straight delivery from Naved and was leg-before for a first ball duck.

an unchanged team after key batsman Shivmarine Chanderpaul failed to recover from a knee injury. Pakistan missed vice captain Younis Khan who missed the match due to his brother's death.

Mohammad Yousuf, who missed the second match due to his wife's illness, returned for the only change in the side which played at Faisalabad.

The fourth match is scheduled for Multan on December 13. The fifth and final match will be played in Karachi on December 16.

### SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the third one-day international between Pakistan and the West Indies at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Sunday:

#### WEST INDIES

Gayle lbw b Naved	41
Lara lbw b Naved	0
Simmons b Naved	70
Samuels c Farhat b Iftikhar	13

Ganga b Rehman	20
Morton b Rehman	7
Smith b Gul	23
Ramdin not out	10
Bradshaw not out	0
Extras: (lb-3, nb-6, w-14)	23
Total: (For 7 wkts in 46.3 overs)	207
Full of wickets: 1-1, 2-53, 3-72, 4-133, 5-159, 6-187, 7-207.	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Gul	8	0	46	1
Naved	8.3	3	37	3
Iftikhar	7	1	21	1
Razzaq	5	1	25	0
Rehman	10	2	33	2
Malik	5	0	29	0
Hafeez	3	0	13	0

#### PAKISTAN

Hafeez c Taylor b Gayle	31
Farhat c Samuels b Collymore	58
Akmal c Ramdin b Gayle	28
Yousuf not out	23
Malik not out	21
Extras: (b-1, lb-13, w-17)	31
Total: (For three wkts in 33.4	

overs)

Fail of wickets: 1-64, 2-103, 3-148.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Taylor	7	0	28	0
Bradshaw	6.4	0	39	0
Gayle	6	0	32	2
Smith	6	0	47	0
Collymore	7	1	23	1
Samuels	1	0	9	0

Note: West Indies innings restricted after bad light stopped play and light towers malfunctioned. Pakistan's target was revised to 191 in 35 overs under the Duckworth-Lewis rule.

**Result: Pakistan won by seven wickets.**

**Man-of-the-match: Naved-ul Hasan.**

Toss: Pakistan  
Umpires: Nigel Long (ENG), Asad Rauf (PAK)

Match referee: Alan Hurst (AUS)