



Did U Know?

Shaun Pollock has taken 2 for 24 in the second innings of the first Test against India at New Wanderers Ground on Saturday. It took his career aggregate to 401 wickets and he became the 10th player and first South African to have taken 400 wickets.



Sourav Ganguly

(India's former cricket captain) "I felt I was good enough to contribute in international cricket. I hope it will continue. I still want to play both forms of the game."

After being recalled to the national squad recently.



ESPN

Sportscenter India
Live at 8:30 pm

Aussies stay unchanged

REUTERS, Sydney

Australia named an unchanged 12-man squad on Tuesday for the fourth Ashes Test starting in Melbourne on December 26.

The selectors stuck with the same players who won the third Test in Perth by 206 runs on Monday to take an unassailable 3-0 lead in the series and regain the Ashes from England.

All-rounder Andrew Symonds retained his place along with seamer Mitchell Johnson, who was the 12th man in Perth.

SQUAD

Ricky Ponting (captain), Justin Langer, Matthew Hayden, Mike Hussey, Michael Clarke, Andrew Symonds, Adam Gilchrist, Shane Warne, Brett Lee, Stuart Clark, Glenn McGrath, Mitchell Johnson.

'No hard feelings'

AFP, Sydney

Australian captain Ricky Ponting says he has buried the hatchet with England coach Duncan Fletcher following his team's crushing Ashes win.

Magnanimous in victory, Ponting said he sought out Fletcher after Australia took an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five-Test Ashes series to regain international cricket's oldest trophy at Perth's WACA ground Monday.

"I've got no hard feelings between Duncan and me," Ponting said after the win. "There were a few a few months ago, but there's none now."

"I went down into their rooms and shook all their players' hands and then I went back to ours and had a beer."

Fletcher and Ponting clashed during the last Ashes series in England when the Australian skipper was run out by substitute fielder Gary Pratt in the fourth Test at Trent Bridge.

Ponting, who had complained about unsporting use of substitute fielders, unleashed a four-letter tirade at the England coach after he smiled at the batsman as he walked to the dressing room following the dismissal.

Ponting was fined 75 per cent of his 12,500 dollar (9,750 US) match fee for the outburst.

Eighteen months on, Ponting has been hailed for his leadership and tops the Ashes batting statistics with 524 runs in three Tests. Fletcher is under pressure to retain his jobs after his selections were blamed for England's defeat.

Twenty20 rolls into action



SPORTS REPORTER

"Let's see if I can hit the ball hard," said a smiling Habibul Bashar, captain of Bangladesh.

He is making his Twenty20 cricket debut when his side Mohammedan Sporting Club take on Indira Road Krira Chakra in one of six opening day matches at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium today.

There was a reason for the 33-year old Tigers skipper to make the meaningful comments as he was not considered to lead the team when Bangladesh played their first-ever Twenty20 international against Zimbabwe in Khulna last month.

"That was the selectors' decision but I am excited to play the new form of the game for the first time because I think it's a very exciting form of cricket. I think players like us also have something to contribute in the match," said Bashar who had missed the opportunity to play the competition when Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) first introduced it in the second

version of the Corporate Cricket League.

The shortest form of the game was introduced to attract the spectators at the ground and viewers on television and that's why entertainment is key in the game and many branded it all about a 'fun of cricket'.

"Yes, it is all about an entertainment for the spectators but mind it, ICC (International Cricket Council) instructed us to introduce the competition in the domestic level as there will be a World Cup next year in South Africa. So, you can't think it only a fun game now," explained the country's premier batsman.

Former Bangladesh captain Akram Khan, skipper of defending champions Old DOHS, also saw some brighter parts in the game as he believe that players can use the competition to improve their hard-hitting abilities which ultimately help them in the one-day game.

"No doubt it's a game to entertain the crowd but our players can use the competition to enhance their hard-hitting ability. There were evidences in recent time that our players couldn't slog properly in the one-day games and they also failed

to respond when situation demanded quick runs. So there is impact of the competition in our cricket more than entertainment," said the burly batsman, who was a crowd-favourite for his big shots in his glorious career.

The experienced campaigner also disagreed with the popular view that it's completely a batsman's game where the bowlers are simply a non-entity.

"I think it's a different challenge for the bowlers where they can make their mark in other way like what I said for the batsman to learn the hard-hitting ability for the bowlers it could be opportunity to learn the technique of checking batsmen's shots in the slog," explained Akram.

He however warned that without good flat tracks, the whole matter could become a farce.

"I think good, flat pitches are a must for this kind of competition. You all know how bad it was when we first played Twenty20 in the Corporate Cricket League. So, I am eagerly waiting to see which kind of

SEE PAGE 18 COL 8

Dhaka, Rajshahi reach semis

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka and Rajshahi romped into the semifinals of the National Cricket Championship by winning their respective quarterfinal matches at different venues in the city yesterday.

An 89-run opening stand between Asif Iqbal and Golam Fayyaz powered Dhaka to a nine-wicket victory as they scored 102 in 22.5 overs for the loss of one wicket in reply to Barisal's 99 all out in 41.3 overs at BKSP.

Asif scored 34 off 60 balls while Fayyaz was unbeaten on a 76-ball 56.

Earlier, Faisal Ahmed claimed three wickets for 21 runs in 10 overs while Sharifullah Sharif and Sunny Reza took two wickets each to destroy the Barisal innings.

At the Dhaka University Jagannath Hall ground, Rajshahi registered a 40-run victory over Narayanganj.

Rajshahi rode on Johny's 74 to put up 208 on the board in 44.5 overs and then shot Narayanganj out for 168 in 43.2 overs.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

BFF names 36 for Olympic qualifiers

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation yesterday named a 36-member squad for home and away Olympic pre-qualifiers against Hong Kong.

The under-23 squad will train under new coach Saiful Bari Titu from December 22. The players have been requested to report to manager Amirul Islam at the BFF Bhaban at 10am on the same day.

The two matches will be played on February 7 and 14.

SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS: Shakil (Arambagh), Tarek (Brothers), Himel (Badda), Zia (Farashganj)

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

Abahani getting active



SPORTS REPORTER

After the first six days of transfers for the B. League drew a blank, Abahani are expected to be among the first teams to register footballers for the inaugural Professional Football League.

With the transfer window to remain open for two months, none of the 12 teams showed any interest to join the scene in the first week but Abahani have decided to register 17 footballers within the next 24 hours.

The first season's transfer will eventually be just registration of

players and Abahani manager Satyajit Das Rupu claimed that the popular Dhanmondi outfit have completed formalities of signing the contracts with 17 footballers.

The sky-blues have not won any major domestic title in the last five years, frustrating their huge number of fans, but they actually opened talks with these players as soon as the previous season ended in 2005 in a bid to really go for silverwares.

The long waiting -- over one year in which time no football has been played in the capital -- seems to be over as they have finally managed to clung the set of players as unlike recent years, fund was not a problem.

It has not been a secret who are coming but Rupu said the club have decided to introduce the newcomers officially to the media today before submitting the list to the federation.

"It's a different league and a new era in our football. So we have decided to change things. We have secured contracts of 17 players and we will introduce them tomorrow," said the former national footballer Tuesday night.

One team will be able to register maximum 23 local players and Abahani will take time to fill in the gaps after ensuring their core.

"There might be one or two big names but most of the remaining

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



PHOTO: STAR

NEW LOOK: An aerial view of the newly-laid athletics track in the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Australia go berserk



AFP, Sydney

Australians were revelling in their national cricket side's Ashes victory Tuesday, hailing it as sweet revenge for the shock loss to England last year.

Australia Post rushed to print stamps commemorating the win, while Prime Minister John Howard praised the "magnificent" victory in Perth on Monday that gave the home side an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five Test series.

"Winning back the Ashes after only 16 months has really warmed every Australian heart, and they've done a fantastic job in our name," Howard told reporters.

The win dominated front pages across the country, with Sydney's Daily Telegraph trumpeting "It's Ours" and Melbourne's Herald Sun declaring "You Beauty" at the thought the Ashes were coming home.

The Sydney Morning Herald predicted "Now for a 5-0 drubbing"

in an ominous warning for the hapless England squad that lost international cricket's oldest prize.

"Sound the trumpets, raise the flags, dust off the gongs and discard the sackcloth: Ricky Ponting's Australians have won back the Ashes and all is right with the world," said the Australian newspaper.

After three convincing Australian victories, the Telegraph lamented the lack of competition from England in an editorial headlined "defeatist tale of dead ducks".

"So much for the idea of a close and hard-fought contest," the editorial said.

"You'd have to say, as sporting slaughters go, this was comprehensive."

The newspaper lashed England batsman Kevin Pietersen over comments penned Saturday, when his side still had a remote chance of salvaging a draw from the third Test in Perth, in which the right-hander regretted losing the series.

Australia and England.

"Australia plays every ball, and every wicket, like winning matters," he said.

Neutral observers and cricket purists may have been hoping for a close competition but the Herald's John McDonald said Australians wanted their team to go on to complete a 5-0 whitewash and humiliate their bitter rivals.

"Ask any Australian if he or she would prefer to see a close, hard-fought contest or a walkover. When it comes to the Ashes, no Australian victory can be too crushing, no defeat too bitter," he said.

The Australian's Mike Coward said England had underestimated Australia's hurt after losing the Ashes last September and the motivation it gave Ponting's team.

"Not being Australian by birth or inclination, neither England coach Duncan Fletcher nor captain Andrew Flintoff understood the genuine sense of despair the Australians felt at the loss of the little urn that reposes at Lord's," he said.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

Sree amazes one and all

PTI, Johannesburg

Indian wins abroad have usually been historic but this one against South Africa will be really special, because a genuine fast bowler has been discovered.

Shantakumaran Sreesanth is not hype but a reality and his figures of (8-99) at the Wanderers have celebrated cricketers struggling for encomiums and praise.

"I can only think of Chetan Sharma in my time who left such an impression abroad so early in his career," remarks Ravi Shastri, dipping deep into his experience of 25 years of association with top class cricket.

If Sharma's name evokes a scowl, it's worth remembering that the Haryana cricketer and his 10-wicket haul at Edgbaston in his 12th Test was the reason India secured a rare major series win abroad in 1986 -- a feat which was only recently emulated in the West Indies after 20 years.

Another Indian legend Sunil Gavaskar rakes up a comparison

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

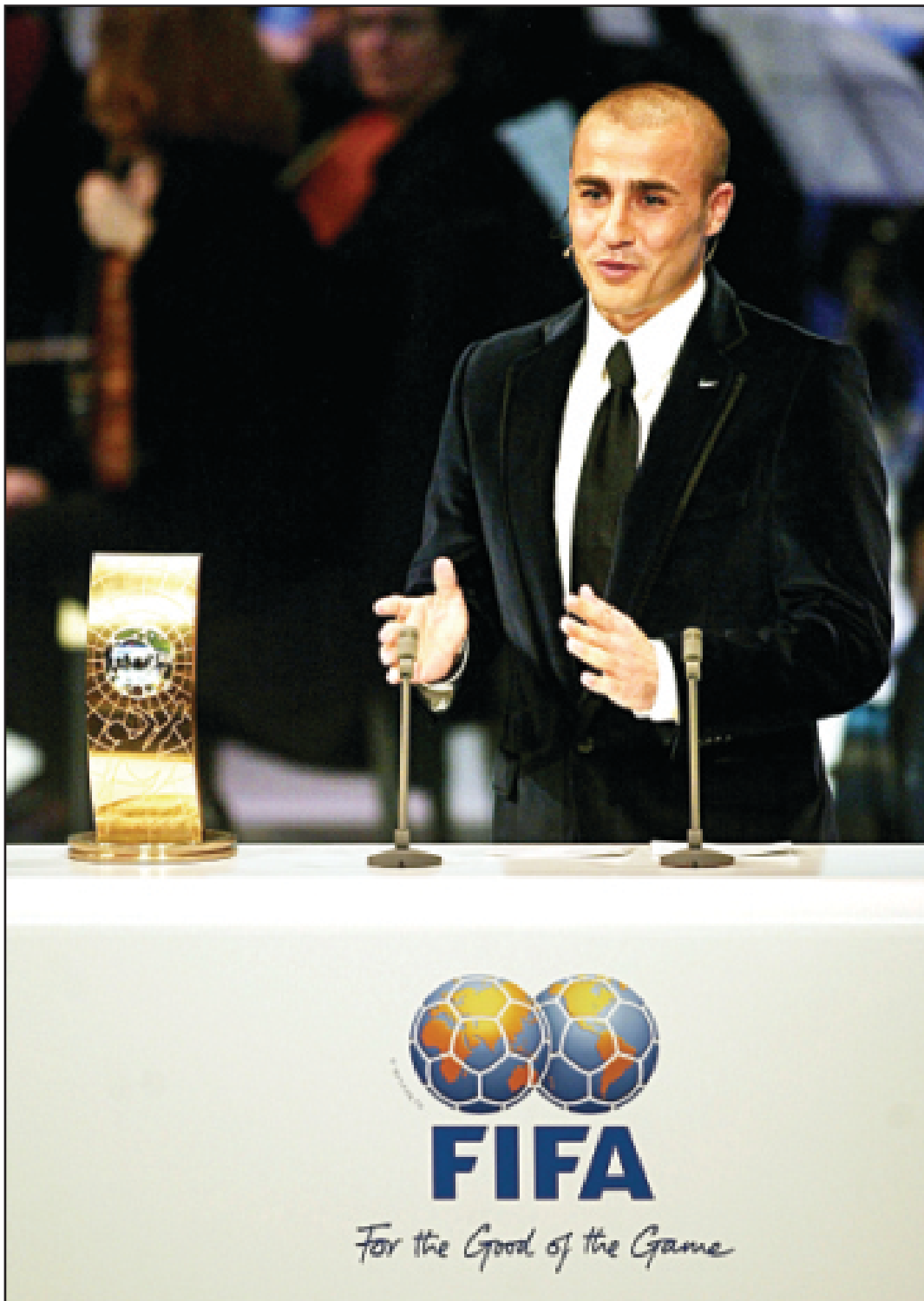


PHOTO: AFP

MASTER OF THE DEFENCE: Italy's World Cup winning captain Fabio Cannavaro speaks during the FIFA World Player Gala in Zurich on Monday.

The world Cannavaro's oyster



AFP, Zurich

Italy's World Cup winning captain Fabio Cannavaro was named the FIFA World Player of the Year on Monday, beating playmakers Zinedine Zidane and Ronaldinho to become the first defender to win the award.

Cannavaro received the award at glittering gala evening in Zurich, after gaining 498 votes in the poll of national team coaches and captains.

"For me it's a great honour to me to be here, because it has been an incredible season and one of great satisfaction," said the 33-year-old Neapolitan, who also won the "Golden Ball" award as European Player of the Year last month.

"The competition is scary, so strong. It's not usual for a defender to sit between Ronaldinho and Zidane," he added shortly before the award ceremony.

"Of course it must be a great compliment for the coaches I've had this year. It also underscores the way I am playing -- and look at the matches we are playing in the teams I've had, and at Real.

"I can't ask for anything else,

with the World Cup and Golden Ball award - you can't do any better than that," said Cannavaro, who moved from Juventus to the Spanish club this year.

The central defender dedicated his win to Italian football in the wake of the match-fixing scandal that saw his ex-club Juventus relegated.

"Everyone knows the problems that were around before the World Cup, but this is a sign of renaissance," Cannavaro said.

France's retired three-time World Player winner Zidane, who finished his career in controversy

after being sent off in the World Cup final against Italy, was second with 454 votes.

Zidane said the award to his rival on the field and successor in the Real number 5 shirt was merited.

"It's logical. I think things have gone well, it's normal that he should have won," he told journalists afterwards.

Zidane also hinted that his career in football was not over.

"I don't think this is the last

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4

LOWING ARE THE WINNERS OF FIFA

World Player of the Year award:		
1991	Lothar Matthaeus (Germany)	Inter Milan
1992	Marco van Basten (Netherlands)	AC Milan
1993	Roberto Baggio (Italy)	Juventus
1994	Romario (Brazil)	Barcelona
1995	George Weah (Liberia)	AC Milan
1996	Ronaldo (Brazil)	Barcelona
1997	Ronaldo	Inter Milan
1998	Zinedine Zidane (France)	Juventus
1999	Rivaldo (Brazil)	Barcelona
2000	Zidane	Juventus
2001	Luis Figo (Portugal)	Real Madrid
2002	Ronaldo	Real Madrid
2003	Zidane	Real Madrid
2004	Ronaldinho (Brazil)	Barcelona
2005	Ronaldinho	Barcelona
2006	Fabio Cannavaro (Italy)	Real Madrid

'Champagne comeback'



AFP, New Delhi

India rejoiced unashamedly at its first cricket Test win on South African soil, a success that prompted even parliament to pay a rousing tribute on Tuesday.

Rahul Dravid's men conjured a 123-run victory in the first Test at the Wanderers in Johannesburg on Monday, stunning both experts and fans, who had feared a one-sided contest in favour of the home team.

It was a remarkable turnaround by the Indians, who had been routed 4-0 in the preceding one-day series against the Proteas and failed to make the semifinals of the Champions Trophy last month.

"It was our best ever win abroad," said Kapil Dev, India's 1983 World Cup winning captain. "It is brilliant and stunning. Few of us expected such a result."

The Indian parliament took time off on its last day of the winter session to bow to Dravid's squad.

"We are very happy on India's

victory in South Africa and we congratulate our team." Lower House speaker Somnath Chatterjee said amid loud thumping

of desks by lawmakers. Newspapers gave the win front-

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1



SHANTAKUMARAN SREESANTH