

## Sidhu in jail

REUTERS, Chandigarh

Former Indian cricketer and politician Navjot Singh Sidhu was jailed on Thursday after he surrendered before a court following his conviction for a 1988 road-rage killing, his lawyer said.

Sidhu was sentenced to three years' jail in December by the Punjab and Haryana High Court after being found guilty of culpable homicide not amounting to murder.

His sentence was suspended to allow the popular TV host and commentator time to appeal to the Supreme Court.

After he surrendered to a lower court on Thursday, Sidhu was taken to jail in Patiala, his home town in the northern state of Punjab, where he will remain in judicial custody for 14 days.

His appeal against his conviction comes up for hearing in the Supreme Court on Friday.

"Sidhu has appealed his conviction before the Supreme Court, but Supreme Court rules require a convict to surrender before his appeal is heard, making it imperative for Sidhu to surrender," his lawyer, Satya Pal Jain, said.

Sidhu surrendered despite being on bail till January 31.

Before the court in Chandigarh, Punjab's capital, sent him to jail, the 43-year-old batsman told a crowd of reporters, onlookers and supporters he would accept whatever it decided.

"I surrender to the majesty of law, unconditionally."

Sidhu was involved in a car accident in Patiala in 1988. He got into a fight with the elderly occupant of the other vehicle, which led to the man's death.

He resigned as a federal law-maker following his conviction on December 1 last year. Sidhu, a Sikh, joined the Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party and was elected to the lower house of parliament in 2004.

He amused millions of Indian cricket fans with his witticisms and controversial comments as a commentator.

## Tendulkar peps up U-19 boys

PTI, Mumbai

Sachin Tendulkar on Thursday made an appearance at the Wankhede Stadium to interact with the India under-19 squad members who are set to embark on a tour of New Zealand on Friday.

"He told the players that the wickets in New Zealand would be different from what they have experienced in India. He said they would be more helpful to the bowlers," said under-19 coach Lalchand Rajput who had invited the master batsman to talk to the players.

"He also said that they need to work hard as this is a stepping stone for making it to the Indian team," Rajput added.

Tendulkar, who missed Mumbai's crucial and concluding Ranji Trophy league tie against Maharashtra which is in progress in Nashik because of a Gluteal muscle injury, also took the opportunity to do some jogging.

### 1st Div

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fate of last season's contentious issues regarding Mariners' Youngs Club and Baridhara (formerly known as Young Pegasus). CDDM have reportedly asked the two clubs to withdraw the court case so that the clubs can be officially allowed in the league this season, inflating the number of teams to 20 from 18.

Last year, Baridhara and Mariners contested their relegation after several controversial matches during the course of the league.

CDDM chairman Khondoker Jamiluiddin and other officials were present at yesterday's meeting.

### Sehwag

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The poor form of the batsmen would be a cause of worry for the selection panel, headed by former India captain Dilip Vengsarkar (West Zone) and comprising Bhopinder Singh Sr. (North), Ranjib Biswal (East), Sandip Jagdale (Central) and Venkatapathy Raju (South), most of whom according to official sources are expected to arrive here last night.

The meeting is expected to discuss in detail Sehwag's show in the one-day and Test series on the recently concluded tour of South Africa.

### Strauss fit

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Symonds, Michael Hussey, Cameron White, Nathan Bracken, Stuart Clark, Michael Johnson, Glenn McGrath.

ENGLAND (from): Michael Vaughan (captain), Andrew Strauss, Ed Joyce, Ian Bell, Kevin Pietersen, Andrew Flintoff, Phil Collingwood, Jamie Dalrymple, Paul Nixon, James Anderson, John Lewis, Monty Panesar, Chris Tremlett, Sajid Mahmood, Liam Plunkett, Chris Read.



PHOTO: INTERNET

England batsman Kevin Pietersen hits out during a net session in Melbourne on Thursday ahead of their opening one-day international against Australia today.

## Full circle for Sourav?



AFP, New Delhi

Sourav Ganguly is set to return to India's one-day squad after 15 months out as selectors move to infuse life into a battered team ahead of the World Cup.

Some former players such as Ajay Jadeja even want the left-hander to be reappointed captain for the showpiece event after Rahul Dravid's men lost both the Test and one-day series in South Africa.

"I have said it before and I will say it again, Sourav Ganguly should captain India at the World Cup," Jadeja said, even though Dravid has already been confirmed as skipper.

The five-man selection committee, headed by former captain Dilip Vengsarkar, meets on Friday to pick 30 probabilities for the World Cup, and the team for the upcoming home one-dayers against the West Indies and Sri Lanka.

Coach Greg Chappell has already warned that heads could roll as he joins the selectors in building a side capable of winning the March-April World Cup in the Caribbean.

"We're going to have to make

some decisions on which direction we go," said Chappell. "There will be a few guys under a bit of pressure."

Ganguly, 34, was India's leading scorer in the three South Africa Tests with 214 runs, but he has not played one-day cricket since September 2005.

He is the fourth-highest scorer in one-day cricket with 10,123 runs -- behind compatriot Sachin Tendulkar (14,537), Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq (11,591) and Sri Lankan veteran Sanath Jayasuriya (11,442).

His 22 centuries in 279 matches are bettered only by Tendulkar's 40 from 374 games and Jayasuriya's 23 from 375.

With India's one-day opening pair of Virender Sehwag and Tendulkar struggling for runs and a brittle middle-order failing to inspire confidence, Ganguly looks set for another comeback.

India's most successful Test captain was dumped after a bitter row with Chappell in September 2005 when the Australian legend accused Ganguly of being selfish and unworthy of leading the side.

Chappell concedes that Ganguly is a changed man and praised his performance in South Africa. "He has done what he was

chosen to do, which is to get in there and get runs," the coach said.

India's recent one-day failures -- two wins in last 10 matches -- can be attributed directly to the failure of top-order batsmen.

Tendulkar, the world's most successful one-day batsman, has managed just 248 runs in his last 10 games with two half-centuries.

The normally explosive Sehwag averages 14.80 in his last 10, David 26.00 and wicketkeeper Mahendra Singh Dhoni 29.55.

"The batsmen have really messed it up," said Vengsarkar of the South African tour. "They were once the team's strength but now nothing seems to be going right for them."

One-day cricket's unpredictable nature, however, keeps India's hopes of resurrecting their form alive -- as they did in the previous World Cup in South Africa in 2003.

The Indians, led by Ganguly then, bounced back after a stuttering start to win eight matches in a row and qualify for the final where they lost to Australia.

The four home games each against the West Indies (January 21-30) and Sri Lanka (February 8-17) will give the selectors an idea of the team they will field at the World Cup.

## Century at Centurion



CRICINFO, undated

Mark Boucher has no "Off" button. He is always on, always competitive, always staring a hole in his next challenge, always expecting to win, or to die trying.

"Hot in this town, isn't it?" he was asked after the fourth day's play in the Boxing Day Test against India in Durban.

"Yes, especially now that the sun is out," Boucher bristled with reference to the fact that bad light, allegedly, had hastened the close after India lurched to 38 for 2 in search of 354, a target that proved 174 runs too far away.

This view of life from the sharp end is not some facade Boucher has manufactured to help him deal with the world. This is just the way he is, always has been and will be until he fights his last battle. He really is what he seems to be as he struts onto the field: one hard BS.

At Centurion in the first Test against Pakistan, Boucher will become something else -- just the fourth South African to earn 100 Test caps.

The only other South Africans in this exclusive club are Shaun Pollock, Jacques Kallis and Gary Kirsten, all of them bona fide greats in this country's cricket history. To earn membership to

this pantheon will mean much to Boucher, who even after the thrills and spills of nine years as an international player retains a schoolboyish pride in the honours that come with excelling at his chosen profession.

And how he has excelled. Boucher's 3721 Test runs and his 380 dismissals do not tell a smidgeon of the story. The fact that he played his first 75 Tests consecutively -- a South African record -- takes us closer to the truth.

For an age his selection was a no-brainer, a fact waiting to happen. Then, three years ago, he was dropped. Perhaps he had begun to take his place for granted, which if that was true was an attitude as unhealthy as it would have been understandable due to the lack of a genuine rival.

But those dark days have passed and Boucher is once more a committed member of the side and an example to anyone for what it takes to turn talent, skill, determination and temperament into success.

In fact, the only 'keeper more deadly than Boucher in Test cricket is Ian Healy, who retired with 395 dismissals. In one-day cricket, Adam Gilchrist wears the crown with 406 victims while Boucher has 337. The thing is, Healy played 119 Tests, while Gilchrist has racked up 247 one-dayers to Boucher's 228.

Will Boucher become the most

successful stumper the game has yet seen? At 30 and still without a serious contender to replace him in the South African team, he surely has several years left to stake his claim.

To those who knew little of Boucher when Dave Richardson injured a finger in Pakistan in 1997, none of the above would have seemed likely.

Indeed, as Boucher stood in his typical teenager's bedroom in East London and packed furiously for Sheikhupura, even those he had already impressed must have wondered whether he would make the grade.

He was then, believe it or not, a quiet, shy, youngster who seemed more comfortable studying the ground in front of him than talking to the press. When he did look up to answer a question, he peered through a sheltering fringe and spoke as if he was afraid of waking a baby.

Boucher has come a long way since then. But even in those far off days he had the stare, the corrosive glare that told all who saw it that he knew he was bound for the top.

The shyness is long gone, as is the fringe. However, the glare has remained constant. It must: it is Boucher's 'On' button.

## Azhar upset at WC snub

BBC ONLINE, undated

All-rounder Azhar Mahmood has expressed frustration and confusion after being left out of Pakistan's World Cup plans.

Mahmood was listed in a provisional World Cup squad published in Pakistan newspapers but not in the official list.

"I'm very frustrated. I've played county cricket and every first-class game (in Pakistan) and they're playing with my career," he told BBC Sport.

"They (the selectors) never give me a straight answer. I think someone really has a problem with me."

Mahmood, 31, played the last of his 139 one-day internationals in February 2005. In all, he has 122 ODI wickets at an average of 38.86.

Playing alongside Shoaib Akhtar he took six wickets for Islamabad in the first-class Quaid-e-Azam Trophy this week.

In one-day county matches for Surrey last year he claimed 12 wickets at an average of 25.25 and hit 227 runs at 37.83.

There were four differences between the squad named in newspapers and the official version but chief of selectors Wasim Bari dismissed the former as "pure speculation".

Speaking to BBC Sport he denied that late changes had been made to the squad, which must be trimmed to 15 by 13 February.

"Azhar Mahmood has not been a regular in domestic cricket," he said.

"He went to the last World Cup (in 2003) and did not play. We want to move forward."

Seam-bowling all-rounders Abdul Razzaq, who has missed the South Africa tour with a calf injury, and Yasir Arafat were named ahead of Mahmood.

Batsman Asim Kamal was also named by in the newspapers' squads but not in the final version from the Pakistan Cricket Board.

"Asim Kamal is a pure Test player - we never considered him for one-dayers," Bari explained.

### Everton draft

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match against the Royals, who are punching above their weight at ninth in the Premiership table, one place below the Toffees.

"It is exciting news that Sylvester Stallone is coming to Goodison," said Everton chief executive Keith Wyness.

"I think of all the film stars around today, there are not many you can take on to the pitch at a sporting occasion and have some relevance."

"But Sylvester -- and his part as Rocky -- has a special place in the hearts of sports fans."

Stallone is no stranger to football: he starred in the well-loved 1981 film "Escape to Victory", a Second World War movie about a team of Allied prisoners of war who take on and beat Nazi Germany's finest.

He portrayed American captain Robert Hatch who knew precious little about the game but was good at catching so was put in goal.

Stallone starred alongside football legends Pele, Bobby Moore, Osvaldo Ardiles as well as a host of other European stars like Paul van Himst, Kazimierz Deyna and Mike Summerbee, plus the Ipswich Town squad.

The Allies were captained by British actor Michael Caine.

### Confusion

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Mijatovic later insisted that what he had actually said was: "Beckham's contract has not been renewed, yet."

Beckham's agent also later claimed that a deal was still on the table.

The 31-year-old former England captain, who'd previously spent the whole of his professional career with Manchester United, moved to Spain in 2003 after falling out with Old Trafford mentor Sir Alex Ferguson.

He was one of several high-profile signings, along with Zinedine Zidane, Ronaldo, Roberto Carlos and Luis Figo, who collectively became known as the "galaticos".

But Real haven't won a major trophy during Beckham's time in Spain and he himself has drifted out of the first team.

### Barca ride

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champions Espanyol in the previous round.

The league leaders came closest to scoring in the 14th minute when a long shot by striker Javier Chevanton hit the bar.

Six-time winner Zaragoza took a firm step toward the quarterfinals with an emphatic win at second-division Malaga.

Striker Sergio Garcia netted in the 13th and 49th minutes, with Oscar Gonzalez adding Zaragoza's third in the 76th.

On Tuesday, Osasuna drew Atletico Madrid 1-1.

### Wycombe hold

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trip to Liverpool on January 20th.

Mooney then went close with a header as Wycombe continued to refuse to lie down and their belief was rewarded when Mooney outjumped Paulo Ferreira to flick Russell Martin's long ball into the path of Easters.

## Clijsters to face Jankovic



AFP, Sydney

Jelena Jankovic, on a hot winning streak, will play Kim Clijsters in the women's final of the Sydney International after a gruelling three-set victory over Nicole Pietrangola here Thursday.

The rising Serbian 21-year-old player, unbeaten in nine matches this year, overcame two injury time-outs for back trouble in the second set to defeat the eighth-seeded Czech 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 in just over two hours.

It will be Jankovic's second final in as many weeks. She won in Auckland, New Zealand, last week-end and has now moved to a career-high ranking of 11.

Clijsters earlier had torrid three-set victory over China's Li Na, 6-1, 1-6, 7-5.

The Belgian world No.5 mastered the enervating court conditions to get past Li, ranked 21, in 95 minutes and reach her second Sydney final on Friday.

It has been an amazing week for Jankovic. She is 9-0 for the year and so far this week has taken the scalps of Grand Slam champions Martina Hingis and Amelie Mauresmo.

## Bye to brickie days



INTERNET, undated

Australia's cricketing ranks may soon see another retirement; Ben Hilfenhaus may have laid his last brick.

As recently as last March, the unpretentious blue-collar boy from the township of Ulverstone on Tasmania's north-west coast supplemented his modest cricket earnings by working as a brickie's labourer.

All that may be about to change as he has made steady progress up in the fast bowling ranks and made an eye-catching Australia debut in the Twenty20 international against England on Tuesday night, taking 2-16 off his four overs.

Touted as a bolter for Australia's Cricket World Cup squad, he is set to snare a Cricket Australia contract that will guarantee him around 200,000-dollar earnings next year.

Hilfenhaus, 23, is regarded as one of the fittest players in Australian cricket, and his effort to record 15 in the fitness beep test outshines some professional footballers.

He claims his stint as a labourer helped to toughen him up. When Victoria coach Greg Shipperd saw Hilfenhaus with his shirt off, he reportedly told his fast men "that's what you guys should look like".

"Some days it was hard to get out of bed when it was 10 degrees but it really did help my fitness because I was on the go all day," Hilfenhaus said of his stint on the

building sites.

When he attended the Centre of Excellence during the winter, Hilfenhaus was something of a favourite among the coaching staff for his willingness to commit to any task put in front of him in a "roll up the sleeves and get on with it" sort of way.

"He is a good country boy who was so fit that he could bowl 11-over spells without blowing out a candle," centre head coach Tim Nielsen said.

"He is physically hard and can bowl 140km/h and tail the ball away from the right-handers. Those sort of players don't fall out of trees."

Hilfenhaus is renowned for the quality of his stock ball -- the outswinger -- which has warmed the hearts of former swing bowlers such as Damien Fleming and former coaches such as Bob Simpson, who lament that swing bowling has become a vastly neglected trade.

"It has always been my natural delivery," Hilfenhaus said.

"I see myself as a swing bowler. "It was the delivery I was born with and if the selectors are looking for something different that might help me."

Hilfenhaus's cricketing hero is Glenn McGrath, though the two have never met and they are never likely to play together unless Hilfenhaus elbows his way into Australia's limited-overs squad either for the tri-series this summer or for the World Cup.

"I just like the way he goes about his cricket," Hilfenhaus said of McGrath.

year on the circuit before retiring, had to crank up her game after comfortable straight-sets wins in her earlier two matches.

She found Li a tenacious opponent on top of the sapping heat on the rubberised hardcourt.

"My first two matches here were pretty easy, and then winning this one in three sets, a close one, I really got tested," Clijsters said.

The players took an extreme heat time-out after the second set, but the 39-minute final set was the longest of the match before Clijsters prevailed when Li missed an overhead smash on match point.

"She's a very powerful girl and moves well, has a good serve, and she's a good player," Clijsters said of Li. "She's really improved a lot."

Li forced the Belgian to scramble around the court with her deep accurate groundstrokes but the third seed kept in the match with her tremendous defensive game and her trademark splits.

"It went a little too long maybe but it was fun," Clijsters said. "It's nice to be out on the court like this and be challenged, not just by your opponent but by the heat and everything."

It was Clijsters' third win over Li. Last year she knocked her out in the quarter-finals at Wimbledon in straight sets.

"Just his line and length and the way he doesn't release the pressure."

Hilfenhaus's progress has been big news in Ulverstone.

"The phone's been ringing all the time," Hilfenhaus's father, Hans, said.

"I was stopped by people in the street this morning who said they nearly cried when he took his two wickets."

Hilfenhaus is leading the list of Pura Cup wicket takers with 29 after five games, just a year after he had to get by on a rookie contract with Tasmania.

### Ys steady

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the first Test between South Africa and Pakistan at Centurion Park on Thursday:

<b>PAKISTAN:</b> First innings				
Hafeez c Boucher b Ntini	19			
Farhat c Amla b Ntini	26			
Hameed not out	53			
Younis not out	55			
Extras: (lb-3, nb-3, w-1)	7			
Total: (For 2 wickets in 56 overs)	160			
Fall of wickets: 1-48, 2-50				
To bat: Inzamam, Iqbal, Akmal, Nazir, Asif, Naved, Kaneria				
<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>
Ntini	13	2	39	2
Nel	14	3	43	0
Pollock	12	4	25	0
Kallis	9	2	35	0
Harris	8	0	15	0

**SOUTH AFRICA:** Smith, de Villiers, Amla, Kallis, Prince, Gibbs, Boucher, Pollock, Nel, Harris, Ntini  
**Umpires:** Steve Bucknor and Billy Doctrove.

## Mohameddhan, Abahani

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Pakistani Jahur Elahi (40 off 76 balls) and Mosharrarf Hossain (33 off 65 balls) who shared 71 runs for the fifth wicket after crashing to 27-4 by the 15th over.

Man-of-the-match Nazmus Sadat gave Abahani a solid start as they rattled 62 in 11 overs before Jahurul Islam was dismissed for 25.

Left-hander Sadat smashed eight boundaries in his 109-ball 68 but rest of his teammates including Pakistani import Amir Abbas failed to shine. Abahani lost three wickets in quick succession but Tushar Imran's unbeaten 20 off 29 balls cantered them to 148-5 with more than ten overs to spare.

**CITY-BROTHERS**

Pakistani batsman Wasim Nayeem hammered 70 off 89 balls to steer

City Club to an exciting victory at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

City were in a precarious position when they slumped to 76-5 but south-paw Nayeem, adjudged man-of-the-match, single-handedly guided City to 174-7 in 46.5 overs in reply to Brothers' 173-9. Tigers vice-captain Shahriar Nafees contributed 17 while Ishraq Sonnet's rearguard 33 proved crucial.

Earlier, Hannan Sarkar's decision to bat first backfired as the Brothers top-six failed to reach the double figure. Kamrul Islam grabbed 4-31 as Brothers were tottering at 34-6 before Anisur Rahman Sanchay and Labur Rahman each scored 42 to salvage the side to a fighting score.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**

## Roma grab slim

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Daniele De Rossi hit a screamer over the bar and Philippe Mexes was booked, so he will therefore miss the second leg at the Tardini.

Totti clattered into De Luca in the closing stages and was substituted as a precautionary measure with a bruised finger.

The game seemed to be trudging towards the final whistle when Parma gave themselves a shot at the final four of the Coppa Italia. Dedic got between defenders to sidefoot home Maurizio Ciaramitaro's cross from the right and score a precious away goal.

In the other quarter, Luigi Sala's goal handed nine-man Sampdoria victory over Chievo, but the 1-0 result gives Chievo a fighting chance.

Although Sala was credited with the goal, much of the work was done by in-form striker Fabio Quagliarella. Christian Maggio's cross was deflected into his path and Quagliarella's left-foot shot was redirected by Sala practically on the

line.