

Bob privately cremated

AFP, Cape Town

Slain Pakistani cricket team coach Bob Woolmer was on Friday cremated during a private family function in Cape Town, the family said.

"Yes, my father was cremated this morning (Friday). The service was held at Doves (parlour) in Salt River at 11am (0900 GMT)," Woolmer's son, Dale, told AFP.

"It was private and only family members attended," he said.

The body of Woolmer, who is believed to have been poisoned while at World Cup in Jamaica, arrived in South Africa last Sunday, six weeks after his corpse was discovered in a Jamaican hotel room.

A public memorial service for the 58-year-old former South African coach, whose widow Gill lives in Cape Town's Pinelands neighbourhood, was held in the city last month.

Woolmer, who was born in Kanpur, India, was found dead in his Kingston hotel room on March 18, the day after Pakistan crashed out of the cricket World Cup in an upset loss to Ireland.

Mourinho paints

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the England midfielder is determined to end the season with a flourish in a bid to say a heartfelt thanks to Mourinho.

Cole said: "Jose showed faith in me, even with players like Shaun Wright-Phillips and Salomon Kalou on the bench who had done well in recent matches, and now I just want to pay him back with my performances."

"One of the first steps on the ladder for me was making my first appearance back in the side but the hard work starts now.

"I am really excited about the end of the season. But for me the task is to get fully match fit and you only get that from playing matches. There is simply no substitute.

"You just want to show desire every day, even when you're injured. Many people didn't expect me to be playing again this season but I wanted to prove them wrong, to come back and help the lads.

"It's been a tough season but hopefully I can put it all behind me and get back to doing what I love."

Riyad keeps

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before decisions.

Right-handed batsman Nawela struck a patient 70 off 199 balls but the likes of Nisal Randika (34) and Prashantha De Silva (31) made sure the islanders had their lead.

Bangladesh Academy's left-handed opener Imrul Kayes (5) was the only man to fall as captain Mehrab Hossain was unbeaten on 18 while Nazimuddin partnered him with 11.

MU on the brink

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and Paul Dickov in a bid to give home fans a goal to cheer but it made no difference.

City's last chance came when Brown was penalised for a collision with Ball. Vassell drove his penalty down the middle but van der Sar, diving the wrong way, managed to save the shot with his legs.

That save surely means United's four year wait to regain the title is over.

Fergie wants

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Bridge on Wednesday - a prospect he would relish.

"We've got a great chance now obviously and I'm hopeful Arsenal will do us a favour," he said. "A draw would be fine. Hopefully we can get the result we want.

"I won't watch the match. I was supposed to go to Spain but that might be cancelled so if it's a good day I'll go for a game of golf.

"But if we have to go to Chelsea and do it, I will look forward to it."

Ferguson saluted his players' courage as they produced the perfect response to their Champions League exit against AC Milan in midweek.

"What you saw today was human courage," he said. "Coming back from Wednesday night and having to get through the travel and lack of rest, the players have shown fantastic courage.

"City never actually tried to beat us. They were happy at 1-0, but towards the end they got the penalty kick. We got through it. It wasn't a great performance but derby games are like that."

Barton reported

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newspaper on Thursday as saying he was upset by the cowardice shown by Barton, who has one England cap, having played against Spain in February.

"The fact that I look like the Elephant Man and will not be able to play again this season is bad enough but what I find most shocking is that he (Barton) struck me first from behind and then repeatedly when I was down on the ground," Dabo said.



Victoria Azarenka of Belarus prepares a forehand towards Argentine Gisela Dulko during their Estoril Open match in Lisbon on Saturday.

Djokovic into semis

Tennis

AFP, Estoril

Novak Djokovic will be fighting the fatigue factor after battling for more than two and a half hours on Friday to subdue Guillermo Garcia-Lopez 6-4, 1-6, 7-5 for a semifinals place at the Estoril Open.

The Serb third seed will face a Spanish clay craftsman in number two Tommy Robredo, who had his own troubles in overcoming Argentine Agustin Calleri 7-5, 6-7 (5/7), 6-3.

Richard Gasquet and Paul-Henri Mathieu set up a French showdown after both subdued stubborn opponents.

The young pair will meet for the second time this season following a January quarter-final in Sydney with the score standing at 2-0 in Gasquet's favour.

Gasquet overcame a slow start to advance past crafty American veteran Vince Spadea 6-3, 6-4.

Mathieu, ranked 42nd and winner of a title last week in Casablanca, had his own struggle before overcoming Argentine Juan Monaco 6-4, 4-6, 6-1.

But Mathieu admitted he's well worn down after stretching his current win streak to eight matches with his victory over Monaco.

"It won't be the best way to go into this match, especially against Richard," he said. I've played a lot of

matches. I have to somehow be at 100 percent to try and beat him."

Djokovic needed five match points to finally stake his claim on the semi-finals in his Estoril appearance.

The youngster says he will need all of his energies to push for the final.

"It was good to win a tough one, but it's a minus for tomorrow," said the world number five. "I hope to recover as much as possible.

"There was a lot of tension in the match and my movement was not so good, it led to unforced errors. Conditions are tough here and I need all of my strength when I play Tommy,"

Robredo avenged a loss to Calleri from last week in Barcelona as he won his 19th match of the season.

Gasquet improved to 21-8 on the season after reaching a Monte Carlo quarterfinal in his first clay outing of the pre-Roland Garros campaign.

"I didn't know his game, so it was difficult for me at the start," said the winner.

"He was in the Top 20 a few years ago and is a dangerous player.

"I began badly and was lucky to win this match in straight sets. It will be tough to play a countryman in the semifinals.

"We are good friends and know each other's games well. It will be anyone's match."

Among the women the number three Lucie Safarova was the last seed standing in the semifinals.

Spain's Nuria Llagostera Vives reached the last four as French top seed Marion Bartoli was forced to retire with a strained abdominal muscle, losing 6-2, 3-1.

The winner will face German Greta Arn, who beat Sweden's Sofia Arvidsson 6-2, 6-2.

In the bottom half, Czech Safarova advanced at the expense of Spaniard Lourdes Dominguez Lino 7-5, 6-3 and will next play Viktoria Azarenka of Belarus, who beat last weekend's Budapest champion Gisela Dulko of Argentina 6-1, 6-2.

"It was a tough match for me, she's a good player," said Safarova, 30th in the world and winner in Estoril in 2005. "She played a huge topspin to my backhand that was hard to return.

"I had to wait for my chance to hit winners. I'm just happy to win and reach the semifinals."

Hoaxer targets

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established that it was not harmful. Officers are continuing to investigate the origins of these packages. No-one has been injured during these incidents."

Specialist police and firefighters were called to the scene to deal with the packages, which are understood to have been addressed to Wayne Rooney and Cristiano Ronaldo.

The complex in Trafford, Greater Manchester, was immediately sealed off as officers investigated.

Staff at the training ground have been told to be vigilant following the security scares.

Hammers

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advice on it because it was a strange decision."

Given the devastating financial implications of sliding into the Championship, Ferguson has total sympathy with all his fellow managers who are scrapping for survival.

He may be embroiled in his own battle to win the title, but Ferguson feels the pressure on those at the bottom far outweighs that on himself.

And he feels particular sympathy for Wigan, who were the victim of several debatable decisions by referee Phil Dowd at Arsenal, which could have made all the difference in their fight for survival.

"I feel for the clubs at the bottom," he said.

"The pressure on teams like ourselves doesn't compare with the pressure those teams are under.

"Paul Jewell has done a fantastic job at Wigan but they have never recovered from the decision that went against them at Arsenal.

"You just hope they can get out of it. That is where the real pressure comes as opposed to teams like us trying to win the league."

Gough backs

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McAllister said: "It is just one of the options being considered, but it may or may not be beneficial in Michael's case.

"We're icing the finger to keep swelling to a minimum and concentrating on making sure it is immobile at all times.

"That combination of regular icing and immobility could well be the best route to follow but we're keeping an open mind right now."

Is tiredness

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Keithinho and Ze Nigel) work up a bit of a sweat now and then?

Maybe it's not the players who are tired but their managers. Mourinho, it has to be said, doesn't look tired so much as like the illustration in a medical dictionary definition of tiredness. Tiredness (n.) (see fig. a) The condition of having brittle, greying bouffant hair, sunken eyes, an increasingly skinny neck and a voice that sounds as if it might wind down and stop halfway through the phrase "the team has remarkable success in its work this season".

There may be another side to all this. "Tired" is often a euphemism. With small children the phrase "oh, he's just a bit tired" translates as "oh, he's just wired out of his mind on DairyLea Cheese Strings and about to remove your teeth using a plastic tractor as an improvised bludgeon". A "tired" toddler is understood to be on the verge of having its toys taken away and its pocket money cut off. A "tired" child is usually about to be dragged out of the room by the heels so that everyone else can play in peace.

Just substitute the naughty step for, say, the Camp Nou, and, yes, maybe it does sound as if Jose might be getting a bit tired.

Wenger calls

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"If a player is not happy with you then you can only let him go.

"And the best way to resolve our situation was to let him join Chelsea.

"We did make some mistakes but the real problem was not finances. It was the fact Arsenal and Chelsea exposed him to a Premier League injury.

"He felt we let him down."

But Wenger is not sure Cole will even be in the Chelsea starting line-up tomorrow.

He added: "They have alternated Ashley and Wayne Bridge in recent weeks.

"I've never seen him play two games in a row."

If Cole does play, he has a message for the hate mob: Don't be stupid.

He said: "At the Carling Cup final I was getting stick from the Arsenal fans.

"It's stupid that they're still going on about it. But there's nothing I can do.

"I'm over it now and it's down to other people to forget about it and move on."

Hannover

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interval as the Iranian missed two more chances to put the game beyond Cottbus.

Jiayi Shao was Cottbus' only threat with a free-kick which Robert Enke gathered easily.

With six minutes left, the home side finally got a second to expel any fears of a Cottbus revival.

Bruggink was put through, again by Huszti, and this time picked his spot in the far corner.

Tomislav Piplica got his fingertips to the shot, but could not divert it past the post.

Bruggink and Hashemian had chances to make the scoreline more convincing, but the three points were already in the bag.

Jose has Arsene's sympathy

AFP, London



If Chelsea lose their Premier-ship title at Arsenal on Sunday Jose Mourinho will be able to look to the opposing bench for an unlikely shoulder to cry on.

Mourinho might be in need of some sympathy if Chelsea's dismal week ends with Arsenal dealing a fatal blow to their slender hopes of overhauling leaders Manchester United.

United can extend their advantage over Chelsea to eight points by beating Manchester City on Saturday but, regardless of that result, Mourinho's side need to win against Arsenal to keep the title race alive.

There is no love lost between the two London clubs and, after being on the receiving end of Mourinho's acerbic tongue several times, it would be no surprise if Gunners manager Arsene Wenger was relishing the chance to kick Chelsea while they are down.

But Wenger insists he can relate to Mourinho's misery after a traumatic five days that saw Chelsea lose more ground to United and then suffer a heartbreaking Champions League semifinal exit against Liverpool.

After all, Wenger saw Arsenal's season disintegrate within two weeks as they lost the League Cup final to Chelsea and then crashed out of the FA Cup and Champions League.

"They are certainly disap-

pointed because it's a terrible blow to go out of the Champions League," Wenger said. "The feeling that you are on a high and living in a world with a lot of expectations suddenly goes and it's a very big blow.

"I do have sympathy for them. Players are players and you always understand how painful it is to go out of the competitions - that applies to players, coaches or whoever."

Wenger believes Mourinho will find it hard to lift his players after the massive blow of effectively conceding two trophies in such a short space of time.

"In the League Cup final we could have scored the second goal but we didn't," he said. "The effect of that was terrible. From that game, we lost Emmanuel Adebayor and Kolo Toure to suspension, we went out of the FA Cup three days later and then we were under tremendous pressure against PSV Eindhoven and in one minute it was over.

"We played our whole season in that one game and it was terrible for us. It is impossible to say how long it will take Chelsea to recover.

"I think it took us three weeks to recover. We played our games to win but there was something not there in our play. Many teams just collapse when they go out of the Champions League."

Ashley Cole's first return to Arsenal since his acrimonious departure in August will give this London derby an extra edge.

The England left-back can

expect a torrid reception from Arsenal fans angry at his departure to their bitter rivals. He was dubbed "Cashley" because his excessive wage demands were at the root of the move to Stamford Bridge, and Wenger admits he had no option but to sell him.

"We made some mistakes which were psychological," Wenger said. "At some stages, there was not enough desire on our part to bridge the gap between him and us.

"He felt that we let him down but that was not our view. Letting him go was the best way of dealing with that situation because if you have a player who does not want to play for you then you always give in."

While Chelsea are in danger of finishing the season on a low note, Joe Cole is just glad to be back after knee and foot injuries ruled him out for most of the campaign.

I am really excited about the end of the season," he said. "But for me the task is to get fully match fit and you only get that from playing matches. There is simply no substitute.

"You just want to show desire every day, even when you're injured. Many people didn't expect me to be playing against this season but I wanted to prove them wrong, to come back and help the lads.

"I hadn't played any football for five months when the manager told me at half-time against Valencia in the Champions League that I was going on. I can't tell you just how good that felt. It was a bit like making your debut for a new club."

Respecting the basics

Cricket

INTERNET, undated

By no means did Ricky Ponting have a bunch of supermen at his disposal in the Caribbean. Beforehand the Australians had looked vulnerable. Defeat in their home one-day trophy had been followed by defeat in New Zealand. The Aussies seemed to be slipping.

Instead they stormed to a third successive title. By the end it was clear that Australia was not merely the strongest side but also the best run cricket community. Most of the rest could not find a slab of cheese in a dairy.

Simplicity is the cornerstone of Australian cricket. To sit at a selection table at any club is to listen to a lot of common sense and precious little hocus pocus.

Batsmen scoring runs rise. Bowlers taking wickets are promoted. Not that places are easily surrendered. All twenty senior clubs in Sydney field five sides every Saturday, all trying to improve. At the end of the season the top six sides in each grade play in finals to

determine the 'major premier'. Practices are compulsory. It is a game for fit, hungry young men.

Ability is recognised. Ricky Ponting and Michael Clarke were elevated because their footwork and strokeplay excited experts. Performance is not ignored. Michael Hussey rose more slowly because he lacked that little touch of magic. But he was not forgotten. Elsewhere players tend to be categorised at an early age.

Aggression is another factor in the Australian domination. Another nation might not have gambled on erratic leather-fingers like Shaun Tait and Brad Hogg. As far as the Australians were concerned the greater risk lay with selecting predictable trundlers and flat spinners. Tait and Hogg had the raw materials and their coaches could provide the rest.

"Ave a go year mug!" the old familiar call, could serve as the battle-cry of the antipodean game. Moreover the team comes first. The whole is greater than its parts.

Australia also plays intelligent cricket. Ponting and pals understand the inner workings of the game much as a skilled mechanic

understands an engine.

Upon reaching his hundred in the final, Adam Gilchrist pointed towards a squash ball he had inserted in his batting glove. Shane Warne was always trying to improve. Glenn McGrath's final yorker was a fitting farewell from a master craftsman.

None of these players was born great, merely with a gift that was nurtured. Australian cricketers respect the basics of the game. They don't bother much with trickery or improvisation.

Power has also been a factor. Matthew Hayden and Andrew Symonds provided the brute force, Gilchrist the enterprise. None of them played foolish shots. None of them is a mere one-punch slugger. Luck has also played a part.

Whilst most rivals are undergoing various upheavals, the Australians can concentrate on fielding their best side. Everything is geared towards achieving the recognition relished by a remote country still finding its feet in a bemused world.

Altogether it was too much for the rest. Weaknesses have been exposed. It is a kindness disguised as a cruelty. Unless rivals respond strongly to this revelation, the Australians will win again in 2011.

BCCI exempts

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board secretary Niranjan Shah told PTI over phone.

Shah said Laxman, who has been selected only for the Test series, would join his teammates directly in Bangladesh.

Laxman had informed the BCCI and the team's cricket manager Ravi Shastri about his indisposition a day before the conditioning camp began on Wednesday.

Indians are scheduled to play three one-day international matches followed by two Tests in Bangladesh. The Indian ODI team will leave for the neighbouring country on Monday.

The first Test will be held in Chittagong from May 18.

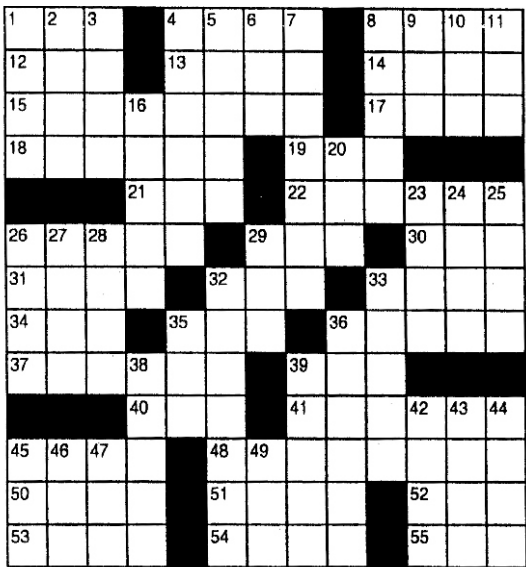
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Today's Cryptokuip Clue: O equals I



Players and officials of Dhanmondi Cricket Academy, who were promoted to the Second Division for next season, pose before their Third Division final against Rayer Bazar AC at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium on April 30.