



India captain Rahul Dravid (L) along with new face Manoj Tiwari (C) and Dinesh Karthik are doing some balancing exercise during their training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Fans missing

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Shamim: "Ganguly is our hero, not because he is a fellow Bengali, but because he is a great player."
"We would have thought India would field its best team against us. India need to be reminded that we won the World Cup match, not them."

Tendulkar is the world's leading one-day batsman with a record 14,847 runs and 41 centuries.
Ganguly, from the West Bengal capital Kolkata, is one of only seven batsmen with more than 10,000 runs, his 10,632 inclusive of 22 hundreds.

Bangladesh's maiden entry into the second round of the World Cup has caused a major change in the attitude of fans, who now hero-worship their own players more than those from abroad.
"We have our own heroes now," said journalist Abdul Halim. "Players like Mohammad Ashraful, Mashrafe Mortaza, Tamim Iqbal and Abdur Razzak became very popular during the World Cup."
Bangladesh have lost 13 of their 15 one-dayers against India, but their two victories came in the last four games.

India have won all the three Test matches against their neighbours, who gained Test status in 2000.

Valdano slams

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"Both of those things stem from one key factor: neither Mourinho nor Benitez made it as a player. That has made them channel all their vanity into coaching. Those who did not have the talent to make it as players do not believe in the talent of players, they do not believe in the ability to improvise in order to win football matches. In short, Benitez and Mourinho are exactly the kind of coaches that Benitez and Mourinho would have needed to have made it as players."

Oldham

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rushed out of his line to dispossess the striker.
Mohammedan regained control in the dying minutes and after a few long-range efforts went off target, Mithu caught substitute keeper Josh Bell napping with a 25-yard volley that came off the crossbar just before the final whistle.
"It was a good game and both sides wasted chances. Mohammedan played well and I have to admit that my boys were really down by the conditions," said coach Tony Philliskirk.
"It was too hot and humid and the players were tired after a long trip. We know what to do and hope to settle it by our next match, the Latics coach hoped.
The team will visit BKSP today for promotional works with local players and coaches before travelling to Sylhet where they play their second friendly, against Bangladesh Under-23s, on May 12. Oldham will return to Dhaka to round of their trip with a match against Abahani on May 12.

Cruciani leaves in good

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inaugural professional league. My target was to take this team to their goal. It would have helped me heal the pain of failure with the Bangladesh national team," said Cruciani who led Bangladesh to the final of the SAFF Championship in Pakistan in December 2005 but lost to India.
The BFF let him go after a poor campaign in the SA Games in Colombo last year but Abahani officials formed their team under his guidance and finally roped him along with three Argentine players.
"It's painful to leave like this but I want Abahani to succeed. They are still on top. It had been a wonderful time with them. The accommodation and facilities were superb and there has been no problem in payment," said Cruciani, who leaves Dhaka for home tomorrow.
"The problem I faced was with the fans. They not only disturbed during training but also looked threatening inside the club tent," he complained.
"I think their behaviour also made impact on the officials, who were otherwise nice. I felt insecure

Did U Know?

Trinidad and Tobago were the only team not to register a single goal in the 2006 FIFA World Cup.

Allardyce set for Newcastle

Football

THE GUARDIAN

Sam Allardyce is expected to be confirmed as the new manager of Newcastle United by the end of next week. It is understood the former Bolton Wanderers manager will be offered a three-year contract at St James' Park and, although there was no comment yesterday from either Newcastle or Allardyce, who is on holiday in Spain, the deal is effectively sealed.

It is not known whom Allardyce will bring with him as his assistants but it appears that Glenn Roeder's staff, Nigel Pearson, Terry McDermott and Lee Clark, will follow him out of St James'. The trio met the Newcastle chairman, Freddy Shepherd, yesterday and have agreed to take the team for Newcastle's final fixture of the season at Watford on Sunday. Newcastle are not expected to say anything officially until after that game.

What is expected, however, is

that Newcastle's backroom staff will soon mushroom. At Bolton Allardyce had 21 different figures behind the scenes. Mike Forde, "performance director" at Bolton, is highly regarded by Allardyce and is described as "the glue" behind Allardyce's ideas. Forde is a likely recruit, as is Mark Taylor, who is in charge of sports science and who has known Allardyce since their days together at Blackpool. Ricky Sbragia, coach at Bolton, is another close to Allardyce.

Bolton's reaction to any possible developments remains to be seen. Their chairman, Phil Gartside, was decisive nine days ago in enforcing Allardyce's resignation from the club and said Bolton would pursue compensation if Allardyce was to be appointed elsewhere. But Gartside had Manchester City in mind specifically when he was speaking then and the readiness of Newcastle and Allardyce to wait until after this season ends suggests that contractual clauses surrounding compensation may have elapsed by next week. Bolton

were unable to confirm any details yesterday.

Roeder's resignation on Sunday, after the 2-0 home defeat by Blackburn Rovers 24 hours earlier, meant that he became the third Newcastle manager to leave the club in the past three years, following Graeme Souness and Sir Bobby Robson. An advantage that Allardyce will have over those managers from the outset is that they were all appointed mid- or early-season, while he will have all summer to plan. Shepherd has been aware that, while the sackings of Souness and Robson barely caused a ripple of complaint, their timing was the subject of criticism locally.

Roeder, an admirer of Arsene Wenger, had been planning a European summer training camp akin to Arsenal's and Pearson had been to Germany to view facilities there, but it is believed that plan has been shelved and Newcastle will be involved in a foreign tour plus possibly a summer tournament. Presumably discussions with Allardyce will cover such topics.

Sydney press for Cocu decision

Football

AFP, Sydney

Sydney FC is pressing Dutch great Cocu for a decision on whether he will become the Australian A-League club's next marquee player, reports said Tuesday.

Sydney officials have not given up efforts to convince the 36-year-old former Dutch captain to accept their one-year, one million-dollar plus (830,000 USD) offer instead of rival bids from the United States and Qatar.

"We're still confident of getting him, but we'd like a decision sooner rather than later," Sydney FC chief executive George Perry told the Sydney Morning Herald.
"From our talks, he's still very keen, but he wants a few more weeks to consult friends and family."
"What we're going to do now is get back to him with a timeline

because ideally we'd like this wrapped up by mid-June, if not earlier.

"Phillip (Cocu) is definitely our first choice, but not by a long way. We've always had three or four options."

Nigerian playmaker Jay-Jay Okocha, Turkish striker Hakan Sukur and Socceros' Spanish-based striker John Aloisi are firming as the alternatives to Cocu, although rival A-League club Queensland Roar are also chasing Aloisi's signature.

"The good thing is the feedback we're getting from the players we've been speaking to has all been positive," Perry said.

"With the benefit of (Asian) Champions League, our profile has been raised worldwide. People are starting to realise the A-League is the real deal."

Sydney FC must beat China's Shanghai Shenhua here Wednesday to give them hope before the final match of the AFC

Asian Champions' League group phase against Japanese champions Urawa Red Diamonds in Tokyo on May 23.

Ctg MSC back

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The 11th and final round of the first leg will start on Thursday instead of Friday with the Rahmatganj-Brothers match in Dhaka, which was originally scheduled for Tuesday.

POINTS TABLE

Teams	M	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Muktijodha	10	5	3	2	16	7	18
Russel	9	5	3	1	12	4	18
Abahani	9	5	3	1	10	3	18
Mohammedan	9	5	2	2	16	6	17
Ctg MSC	9	4	2	3	6	14	14
Arambagh	9	4	1	4	9	13	13
Brothers	9	3	3	3	9	8	12
Khulna Abahani	9	3	1	5	10	13	10
Farashganj	9	2	4	3	8	10	10
Ctg Abahani	9	2	0	7	5	19	6
Rahmatganj	9	0	1	7	3	20	2

TOP SCORERS

9 goals: Paul (MSC)
5 goals: Nicodemus (Arambagh), Robin (Farashganj)
4 goals: Junior (Brothers), Moni, Alfaz (Muktijodha), Younes (Russel)
3 goals: Prashanta, Mamun (Khulna Abahani), Ighir (Russel), Ibrahim (Abahani)
2 goals: Yusuf (Ctg MSC), Enock (Brothers), Emily (Abahani), Ibrahim, Munna (Muktijodha), Ali Hossain (Farashganj), Khokon (Ctg Abahani)

Lara digs

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named after him in Mucurapo.
According to 'Trinidad Express' newspaper, Lara commended the persons and organisations involved in the construction and management of the centre for "their teamwork, integrity and use of technology" but said these had "missed the Cricket Board".
The 38-year-old Lara's retirement from international cricket at the recent World Cup had surprised his fans since he had previously indicated that he would continue to play Test cricket.
The Brian Lara Cancer Treatment Centre at Fitzblackman Drive is the first of its kind in Trinidad and Tobago and the Commonwealth Caribbean.

Woolmer probe still inconclusive

AFP, Lahore

A Pakistani investigator Tuesday said that a probe into the cause of death of national cricket coach Bob Woolmer was still inconclusive.

Woolmer, 58, was found dead in his Jamaican hotel room on March 18, the day after Pakistan crashed out of the World Cup by losing to minnows Ireland.

Pakistan sent two senior investigators to the West Indies to help investigations and one of them who returned last week said the cause of death of Woolmer was not yet confirmed. "The investigation is still inconclusive and it would not be fair to comment on it at this stage," police investigator Mir Zubair Mahmood told AFP.

"Police have looked into all the aspects of the case and it now depends on the test reports sent to Scotland Yard to know about the cause of the death," Mahmood said.

The official, who has probed the 2002 murder of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl, said that the pair had submitted a report to the interior ministry about their findings in Jamaica.

"Our scope was limited as it was Jamaica police which were conducting the investigation into the case," he said.

Woolmer was on Friday cremated during a private family function in Cape Town, South Africa, six weeks after his corpse was discovered in his hotel room.

Woolmer's death led to a fevered round of speculation. One theory is that his death was linked to match-fixing and illegal betting in cricket.

Some 30 police investigators are working full-time on the Woolmer case and more than 100 witness statements have already been taken.

Sheva

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Sidwell's arrival would raise questions about the futures of Claude Makelele and Michael Ballack, though Mourinho will need central midfield cover in the middle of next season because Mikel John Obi and Michael Essien are expected to go to the African Nations Cup in Ghana.

Lamps' point

FROM PAGE 20

things. Sometimes it's not as easy as other clubs, but the only way to deal with it is to come through it with a bit more knowledge and a bit more strength."

Alex Ferguson has no such worries after leading United to his ninth league title in 20 years at Old Trafford.

This success ranks as arguably his most impressive given Chelsea's resources and total dominance of the league for the last two seasons.

Ferguson and Mourinho have maintained a relatively cordial relationship despite the tense nature of the title race and the rivals will share a bottle of wine after the match.

"It was a difficult task given the amount of money Chelsea have," Ferguson said. "They were also the most resilient opponents we have ever come across."

"But I am sure Jose understands winning and losing are twins in a way. You have to deal with them in the same way. When you win, you don't need to gloat, when you have a defeat you don't go bananas, you accept it."

"He was very complimentary after the Arsenal match yesterday and I will bring him a decent bottle of wine to make sure his tastes are looked after."

Pardew offers

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a striker it may be hard to keep him at White Hart Lane.

Jol insists Berbatov is happy where he is and he said: "Berbatov is very happy at our club. I had a word with him yesterday and he said 'the supporters are always positive, so what more could I want?'. I told him he was right."

"Berbatov in training is capable of doing anything. For us he our bit of extra quality. He could be the signing of the season."

Charlton knew only two victories from their last two games would be enough to beat the drop. But with just 90 minutes to save their season, they inevitably looked nervous.

Spurs made them pay in the seventh minute. Berbatov's sublime flick wrong-footed Talal El Karkouri and he showed great strength to hold off the defender as he sprinted into the area before steering his shot into the far corner.

Charlton gradually began to find some momentum and Darren Bent jinked round Paul Robinson before crossing to Alexandre Song, but the on-loan Arsenal midfielder's diving header was wide of the target.

That was as close as they came and when former Addicks forward Defoe ran on to Berbatov's pass and beat Scott Carson with a clinical finish in stoppage time, Charlton's fate was sealed.

CA defends Gilly ploy

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Australian cricket officials Tuesday dismissed Sri Lankan claims that Adam Gilchrist's use of a squash ball as a batting aid in last month's World Cup final was unfair.

Team vice captain Gilchrist, whose record-breaking 149 led Australia to their fourth title in the Caribbean, said he used the squash ball in one of his gloves to give him a better grip.

"It's a storm in a teacup, or a batting glove," Cricket Australia spokesman Peter Young said Tuesday.

"To the best of our knowledge it's no different to, say, putting two or three grips on the bat handle, or batting with two pairs of gloves or having inserts sewn into the palm of gloves."

"All these are things which now happen. This is in the same cate-

gory."

The revelation caused uproar in Sri Lanka, with Sri Lanka Cricket secretary Kangadaran Mathivanan saying the matter could be taken up during next month's International Cricket Council (ICC) annual general meeting.

"We are of the opinion that it was unethical for Gilchrist to use a squash ball to give unfair advantage," Mathivanan told AFP Monday.

He said Sri Lanka could call on the ICC's cricket committee for stringent application of "Law 42" on fair and unfair play to ensure only the approved protection equipment was used.

Mathivanan said Sri Lanka Cricket would discuss the issue before deciding whether to raise it in London.

Young said there was no question of Gilchrist seeking to take an unfair advantage.
"He is a highly principled person. You're going to have to go a long way before you find a cricketer

who has higher moral standards than Adam Gilchrist," he said.

Batting coach Bob Meuleman, who introduced Gilchrist to the technique many years ago, said he laughed when he heard the Sri Lankans had raised objections.

"Actually, it's just a little bid said that some people think there's something sinister in it," he said. "There's not."

Gilchrist's former West Australian team coach Wayne Clark said it was rubbish to think it gave Gilchrist an unfair advantage.

"They're grasping at straws," he said.

Senior Australian umpire Bob Parry, who stood in a domestic one-day match in Perth last season in which Gilchrist had a squash ball in his glove while scoring a century against Queensland, said he had no problem with it.

"I don't see it being outside the spirit of the game. It's the same as wearing an extra inner inside a batting glove," he said.

Federer too strong for Almagro

Tennis

AFP, Rome

World number one Roger Federer encountered few problems in his 6-3, 6-4 second round victory over Nicolas Almagro at the Rome Masters on Tuesday.

Top seed Federer, who was given a first round bye, took 74 minutes to extend his flawless record against the 21-year-old Spaniard to 4-0 in blazing sunshine at the Foro Italic.

The only other second round match taking place on the second day sees Croatian eighth seed Ivan Ljubicic up against Jose Acasuso of Argentina.

Federer, who has never won here, admitted he wasn't at his best against Almagro.

"First round matches are always tricky and I'm just glad to get through to the next round as

Nicolas is a difficult opponent," said the 25-year-old Swiss who lost to Rafael Nadal in last year's final, and to Felix Mantilla in the 2003 final.

Federer said it was about time he added the Rome tournament to his 12 Masters Series titles.

"I've played here many times and I have been to the final twice, so I feel like I've almost won it," he said.

"I'm here again and I feel I have a chance. I would love to win it."

In first round matches, American ninth seed James Blake defeated Frenchman Gael Monfils 6-4, 6-4, while Russian Marat Safin, the 2000 US Open champion, battled back from a set down to beat American Amer Delic.

Safin, who has never gone beyond the third round here, will next face fourth seed Nikolay Davydenko in round two.

Cypriot Marco Baghdatis, runner-up at the Australian Open last year, defeated Spaniard Carlos Moya, Rome champion in 2004, in straight sets.

German 11th seed Tommy Haas was forced to retire with a right shoulder injury in his match against Czech Radek Stepanek, with Stepanek leading 6-3, 3-2. Stepanek will now meet Baghdatis in round two.

Spanish second seed Nadal, the world number two and Rome champion for the past two years, begins the defence of his title on Wednesday against Italy's Daniele Bracciali.

Nadal, who extended his record clay court winning streak to 72 matches when he won the Barcelona Open last month, is aiming to become the first player to win the Rome tournament - a warm-up for the French Open which starts on May 27 - three times in a row.



Pace spearhead Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (L) speaks to bowling consultant Imran Sarwar during a practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Fergie planning triple swoop

Football

AFP, Manchester

Sir Alex Ferguson quickly demonstrated he will not rest on his laurels despite his ninth Premiership title as Manchester United manager, claiming a triple transfer swoop was in the offing in the close season.

United claimed the Premiership title for the first time since 2003 as Chelsea failed to beat Arsenal at the Emirates Stadium on Sunday, drawing 1-1 and leaving them with an insurmountable seven-point deficit with just two games to play.

But Fergie knows that Chelsea will come back stronger than ever next season and after United's Champions League quest fell away courtesy of a lack of defensive cover when injuries reared their head, the Scot is planning on bolstering every area of the team.

He has told chief executive David Gill the trio of new faces he believes will give United their best chance of finishing top of the pile again next term.

"We have outlined three targets and David Gill is aware of them," said Ferguson.

"As everyone knows, there is competition for the best players

and when there is competition, it costs, so we will just have to wait and see."

Ferguson refused to go public with the names of the players United will go for but Bayern Munich's Owen Hargreaves will certainly be one, with Tottenham's Dimitar Berbatov also believed to be near the top of his list.

While Spurs boss Martin Jol may be unwilling to part with Berbatov 12 months after selling Michael Carrick to United, the blow may be softened by the arrival in return of Louis Saha, whose United days appear to be numbered.

If rumours of a Juventus move for Gabriel Heinze prove correct then young Southampton defender Gareth Bale, whom Ferguson targeted during the last transfer window, can also expect to be on the United manager's hit-list.

However, in the knowledge that Chelsea are bound to splash the cash this summer in a bid to overhaul his side, Ferguson is keen to do his business quickly.

"Manchester United has always been an attraction," he said. "We have 76,000 people watching us every week and have a celebrity status which means we are known throughout the

world.

"It is not a question of attracting players. The real competition comes when Chelsea pay 27 million pounds for someone like Michael Essien. They can outbid us all."

"We identify players as quietly as we can so we can do things quickly. It is not easy, but that is what we are trying to do."

Smart bat

FROM PAGE 17
Council, bat manufacturer Kookaburra Sport and sensor company Davidson Measurement.

The \$600,000 project uses electro-mechanical sensors and actuators, built into the bat's handle. The technology is used in collaboration with a vibration-absorbing polymeric-based synthetic material.

The materials convert shock waves into heat and dampen vibration by generating waves in the opposite direction.

RMIT project leader Sabu John said the technology had increased the "sweet spot" of the cricket bat - the area in which the batsman experiences least impact when hitting the ball hard - providing greater control. It may also reduce the injuries experienced by top-level batsmen.