

Jose has apologised: C'Ron

INTERNET, undated

Manchester United winger Cristiano Ronaldo has revealed Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho has personally apologised for reportedly criticising his upbringing.

Mourinho was quoted as describing the 22-year-old as 'ill-educated, disrespectful and immature' after the Portugal international claimed the Stamford Bridge boss could never admit he made a mistake.

However, the pair appear to have patched up their differences.

'Mourinho has apologised to me and now I have no problem with him,' Ronaldo told the Daily Mirror.

'I am pleased that this has happened. As far as I am concerned, the whole thing is now in the past.'

MCC stands

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the game".

But the Marylebone Cricket Club, which is responsible for cricket's rules, said Gilchrist had not contravened the game's laws or spirit.

The MCC said in a statement: "In this case, apparently the addendum to the inside of the batting gloves was not for protection from injury, but to improve the way the batsman gripped the bat handle.

"This should not be considered unfair. Similarly, it has never been considered unfair for batsmen to use two grips on the bat handle.

"The glove manufacturers might, for added protection against jarring, have put an extra pad of some cushioning material as an integral part of the inside of the palm.

"This would be entirely legal, but have the same effect on his grip for a batsman who wore such gloves.

"In conclusion, the incident could not be classed either as contravening the law or as breaching the spirit of the game."

Ballack settles

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Robben out of the Carling Cup final against Liverpool.

Mourinho is notoriously demanding of his medical team, though he has enjoyed a largely successful relationship with English after he joined from UK Athletics in 2005. English shares a philosophy of pushing players during their rehabilitation and has helped return Ashley Cole, Wayne Bridge and Terry to the first-team squad with remarkable speed this season, although he could be made the scapegoat for the row over Ballack, who retains an outside chance of returning for the FA Cup final against United.

Such a prospect would hardly alarm Ferguson given his dismissive assessment of Chelsea's two superstars. "I was quite happy that they were signing those type of players because I felt they were going to concentrate on Europe," he said. "When I see them I see European players. I thought it was designed to get them the European Cups so I wasn't too concerned.

"I thought, 'I hope they can concentrate on that and leave the league to us.' That would have been very nice of them, but they challenged us all the way." Didier Drogba, though, gave Ferguson plenty of cause for concern. "All season I will have been saying to myself: 'Will somebody please shoot Drog-ba?'" he joked.

The new

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the final amount was reached but the governing body appears to have taken into account Hearts' role in Webster's development during his five years at the club. "The compensation was far higher than we thought it would be," said Tony Higgins, a FIFA representative.

Webster did not attend a media conference called yesterday to discuss his case. It is believed Wigan's lawyers did not want the Scot, who has since been loaned to Rangers and is widely tipped to move to Ibrox on a permanent basis this summer, to speak about the case within the 21-day period set aside for appeals.

It is likely that Wigan and Webster will contest the level of compensation payable to Hearts. The Edinburgh club, who stand by their valuation of a player they signed for £70,000 from Arbroath, are sceptical of Webster's conduct. He could not have invoked Article 17 to move within Scotland yet swiftly returned to the SPL after an ill-fated time at the JJB Stadium. Hearts refused to sell Webster directly to Rangers in the summer of 2005.

Webster has been suspended for the opening two games of next season because, according to Fifa, he informed Hearts that he intended to cancel his contract outside a stipulated 15-day period after the conclusion of the season. That matter is likely to be contested by the player at the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Switzerland.

Malinga a misfit!

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Fast bowler Lasith Malinga, dubbed the World Cup's sexiest player, has sparked fierce debate in Sri Lanka where his body piercing, tattoos and bleached hair are not deemed "respectable."

The 23-year-old bleached-blond was named the tournament's sexiest cricketer by the Barbados Sunday Sun newspaper because of his "eye-catching, blonde-streaked curly hairdo, eyebrow ring and tattooed biceps."

But the accolade has not gone down well with everyone in his home country.

"Those in Barbados got their wires crossed," said a reader of the state-run Daily News, Ranjith Chandrasekera.

"He is a good cricketer, but not a decent-looking gentleman."

His presentation tarnished the "respectable outlook of the rest of the team," he said, adding that Malinga should uphold the traditions of a "country boy coming from a good cultural background."

Another reader of the Daily News did not like Malinga's appearance, but did not object too much.

"I myself was not impressed by Malinga's hairstyle etc," wrote Romaine L.

"However, he did bring a fresh and fun attitude to the field."

Malinga's stylist has told how he took two days to create the distinctive bleached-blond corkscrews which attracted headlines during the World Cup.

"Malinga likes to stand out, so he goes for unusual styles unlike the other well-known cricketers," said hairdresser Nishantha Jayasekera, who runs the Le Paris salon in Panadura, outside Colombo.

"Malinga has his own hair ideas and he is not afraid to try out anything new," he said. "It took me two days to get the look."

Many Sri Lankan men have already copied Malinga's unkempt style, with imitators springing up in

the island's towns and cities.

The bowler made history during the World Cup when he became the first man to take four wickets in four balls in the Super Eights match against South Africa.



LASITH MALINGA

Walcott & Hall inducted into Hall of Fame

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Two of greatest cricketers produced by Barbados and the West Indies were honoured for their outstanding contributions to the game on Sunday night.

Sir Clyde Walcott and Wes Hall, who were brilliant players and highly-respected administrators, were inducted into the Sticky Wicket West Indies Hall of Fame during a lavish ceremony in Antigua at the Stanford Cricket Ground.

Sir Clyde died last August at age 80. He was an outstanding batsman and member of the famous 3Ws. After his playing days he became chairman of West Indies selectors, manager of the team, president of the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) and the first non-Englishman to be appointed president of the ICC. He had a superb batting record, making 3 798 runs in 44 Tests with 15 centu-

ries, at an average of 56.68. He was represented at the ceremony by his wife Lady Walcott and son, Michael.

In his heyday Hall was a barrel-chested fast bowler and was the best in the game in the 1960s, and ended his career with 192 wickets in 48 matches. After hanging up his boots he too was chairman of selectors and manager of the Windies team, and was also president of the WICB. He was a minister of Government in the 1980s.

Fast bowling legend Michael Holding played in the West Indies with both Hall and Sir Clyde as manager. In his tribute to Sir Clyde, he outlined how he was instrumental in helping to develop his career especially when he had been struggling in the unfamiliar conditions on the 1976 tour of England. Holding said Sir Clyde genuinely cared about people and was an individual who instilled discipline.

Holding referred to Hall as "chief" and described the 69-year-old as a "great" manager and

stressed he was "still a great man". He pointed out that Hall, who also served as manager after retiring from international cricket, was very accommodating and had made time for players under his charge.

In his address, Hall said he was honoured to be inducted into the Hall of Fame, which was the brainchild of Texan billionaire Allen Stanford. Hall also noted that his aim was to continue to make a contribution to the game.

Lady Walcott spoke to the media and said she was thrilled by the tribute paid to Sir Clyde. She also noted that if he were still alive, Sir Clyde would have graciously accepted the honour.

The event was attended by several other outstanding cricketers including Barbados National Hero Sir Garfield Sobers, Sir Viv Richards, Sir Everton Weekes, Lance Gibbs, Joel Garner, Gordon Greenidge, Desmond Haynes, Richie Richardson, Curtly Ambrose, Courtney Walsh, Ian Bishop, and Colin Croft.

JCF insists Bob was murdered

CRICINFO, undated

Jamaican police are insisting that Bob Woolmer was murdered amid reports that Pakistani investigators have suggested otherwise due to lack of conclusive evidence.

Karl Angell, director of communication for the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF), said that the investigation was based on credible evidence.

"The pathologist did an autopsy. He said to us in a written report that the man died from asphyxiation occasioned by manual strangulation, based on that our investigation proceeded but we have always said that the investigation is an open investigation and all angles are being looked at," Angell told the Gleaner.

Mir Zubair Mahmood, one of the two investigators sent by the Pakistani government to assist with the police probe in Jamaica, told reporters that there is no evidence to suggest that the Pakistan coach was murdered. However, according to Angell, Mahmood denied speaking to any reporters with such claims.

"Mahmood has indicated to us that a report was submitted to his boss that he had no discussion with any journalists or with anybody else regarding the report," confirmed Angell. "In private conversation with the Constabulary Force, Mahmood said that he is pleased with the way the investigation was going and he made no such deductions."

The complete report from the pathology and toxicology results is being analysed with the help of the Scotland Yard and are yet to be released.

England in KP doubts

AFP, London

England's top batsman Kevin Pietersen has fitness doubts ahead of next week's first Test against the West Indies due to a calf muscle strain.

The 26-year-old Pietersen sustained the injury while fielding for his county in Monday's Provident Trophy match against Ireland, in which he scored a match-winning 66.

He was taken for a precautionary MRI scan and the results persuaded the England and Wales Cricket Board's medical team that he should not be risked in the County Championship match against Lancashire on Wednesday.

A further assessment of the injury will be made later in the week but it is not yet known if it could threaten his participation in the Test opener on May 17.

"It is extremely annoying. The muscle is torn and I'll have to see how it responds to treatment before I know if I'll be able to play in the Test," Pietersen told the Daily Mail.

"What I do know is that I'm desperate not to miss it and will do everything I can to get fit."

Dravid wants

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the camp. But what he had brought to the team is some of his experience and some of his knowledge of the game. He played for India and watched cricket around the world as a commentator for so many years. He talked to the boys a lot in the camp. There were many valuable comments and we enjoyed our moments there."

Time to prove

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who is not only going to be the youngest player to play his 100th ODI but will also monitor his first match as a vice-captain.

Can you rise on the occasion like Bangladesh team had on their 100th match to win against India at home in 2004? The answer was: "It's just another international match for me. Yes, I am fortunate that I can play 100 matches at my age but I have no special planning rather I want to play my own game to contribute highest for my side," he said.

"I don't feel any pressure as a vice-captain rather I believe that it can help my batting. I want to be positive about my job and no doubt it would be great if I play something special on this special day," said the right-hander who had a decent World Cup including a match-winning knock of 87 against South Africa.

But whatever the above fact there is another card up Bashir's sleeve as his left-arm trio-- Mohammad Rafique, Abdur Razzak and Shakib Al Hasan-- look set to give him another reason to smile. Most predict a favourable pitch for the trio to weave their magic but the real question is whether the batsmen can give them the chance?

First leg enters

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A win will take Shafiqul Islam Manik's black and whites two points clear of Muktiyoddha. They will maintain the top spot until the second leg begins in June if Abahani and Sheikh Russel, who are also level on 18 points but have inferior goal differences than Muktiyoddha, draw in the last match.

The winner between Abahani and Russel, however, will take pole position midway through the championship.

FIXTURES

May 10: Rahmatganj v Brothers (BNS)

May 11: Chittagong Abahani v Farashganj (MA Aziz Stadium, Chittagong)

May 13: Mohammedan v Khulna Abahani (BNS)

May 16: Chittagong Mohammedan v Arambagh (MA Aziz Stadium, Chittagong), Abahani v Russel (BNS).

Oldham visit

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were very impressed with two Narayanganj-based players, goalkeeper Jayanta and midfielder Alamgir Hossain.

The Latics youth squad also played a match with the juvenile booters and the visitors won 2-1. It was mostly a fun match as 21 locals were pitted against a dozen of the club from greater Manchester.

Oldham, who lost their opening exhibition match to Dhaka Mohammedan 2-1 on Tuesday, will leave for Sylhet this morning to play Bangladesh Under-23 national team in their second match, which kicks off at the Sylhet Stadium today at 4pm.

They will return to Dhaka tonight and round off their tour with the third friendly against Abahani in the capital on Saturday.

'A storm in a glove'

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 category."

The revelation caused uproar in Sri Lanka, with Sri Lanka Cricket secretary Kangadara 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 sad 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.

Caribbeans cautioned

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The riot act has been read to the West Indies cricketers, who have been warned that no form of indiscipline would be tolerated on the England tour.

New manager Mike Findlay said the players had been given a code of conduct handbook and anyone breaking the rules would be penalised. "They have a handbook with all the conditions that we are going to follow and all the rules and regulations," he said yesterday at Grantley Adams International Airport ahead of the team's departure for England.

During the recent World Cup, there were reports of indiscipline by members of the regional team and Findlay said he had already held discussions with the players about their conduct. He said his

relationship with the players would be like how a parent would treat a child.

"I think a manager has to be like a father to the guys, meaning that he has to be able to reach out to them but at the same time, he has to be able to discipline them if they need to be disciplined," he said.

But the 63-year-old former Test wicketkeeper and former chairman of selectors said he wouldn't be like a Peeping Tom, following the players around. "I have no time for that. They are big men. They know what they are expected to do. Their primary focus in England of course would be cricket. What we've done, we've put together a vision for the redevelopment of West Indies cricket and a mission for the tour of England. That mission being to win 100%. That's what we're aiming for." He said it was time to reach that objective but it called for training, resting and eating properly.

Vusi urges Australia to tour Zim

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Test cricketer Vusi Sibanda has urged Cricket Australia to honour its commitment to Zimbabwe and play its scheduled three-match tour of the troubled southern African nation in September.

The Australian government and Cricket Australia are set to meet on Thursday to discuss the limited-overs tour with Prime Minister John Howard, a strong critic of the regime of Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe.

Howard has said his government is prepared to pay fines of up to 1.6 million US dollars which could be imposed by the International Cricket Council if Australia should decide not to go ahead with its tour.

Zimbabwean players say they can ill afford the Australians to withdraw from their tour even though they appreciate the sensitive political situation CA is confronting.

Sydney-based Zimbabwean batsman Sibanda has implored Australia's cricketers to tour in order to assist the development of the game in his homeland, plagued by a dysfunctional management structure and a mass exodus of top players.

"The players obviously have no control, so it would be pretty sad if the Australians didn't come," Sibanda told the Sydney Morning Herald.

"I certainly hope that they do play. We need to challenge ourselves against the best in the world if we are to improve, and the Australians are the best there is."

Fergie certain

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"I said to Carlo at the end of our semi-final that there is no way he can now not win this competition ... Carlo gave me a magnificent bottle of wine," Ferguson said.

"But I immediately told him I would only drink his wine once I see him lifting the Champions Cup."

Manchester United won its ninth Premiership title with Ferguson as its manager, and its first since 2003 on Sunday.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Partex Beverage managing director Rubel Aziz (second left) exchanging an MOU with his elder brother and Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) vice-president Aziz Al Kaiser Tito at a local hotel yesterday. BCB CEO Mahmudur Rahman (L) is also seen. Partex will provide soft drinks and drinking water for all international series at home and major domestic competitions and programmes for the next two years.