

Ireland reach 222

CRICINFO, undated

Niall O'Brien's 72 helped Ireland to 222, which should be a competitive score on a slow wicket at Stormont. They need to win this match with a bonus point to share in the trophy.

John Blain and Paul Hoffman bowled tight first up for Scotland, prompting the dismissal of William Porterfield, attempting to pull, and opening the way for Gordon Drummond to strike to remove Eoin Morgan for 10 in his first over.

Ireland recovered from their early losses, though, through the combined forces of O'Brien and Andre Botha as they put on 46 for the third wicket. Botha finally came good with 42 following a promising 27 against Netherlands and a duck against West Indies.

Both played patiently at first, picking off the odd loose delivery, before opening up later. A change of ends finally worked for Majid Haq, who had Botha stumped.

Kevin O'Brien and Andrew Cusack moved the score along steadily, but it was the reliable Trent Johnston who boosted Ireland later, with a 57-run stand that brought Ireland near the 200-mark before he and O'Brien fell in the same Haq over.

The two sides have faced each other twice before at one-day level, with honours even.

PM salutes

FROM PAGE 17

"So many years at the top takes a lot out of you but I am still hungry for wickets and that is what matters."

It took him just 12 Tests to move from 600 to 700 wickets.

Sri Lanka are due to tour Australia for two Test matches in November, but Muralidaran was unsure of becoming the leading bowler in Warne's backyard.

"Wickets there usually help fast bowlers, but I am more concerned about winning the series, something we have not done in Australia," he said.

It will be fitting if Muralidaran gets crowned in Australia where he has endured the most humiliating moments of his otherwise glittering career.

The off-spinner was controversially called for throwing by Australian umpire Darrell Hair during Sri Lanka's tour Down Under in 1995.

Two years later, another Australian umpire, Ross Emerson, called Muralidaran during a one-day series there, prompting a biomechanical analysis of his bowling action at the University of Western Australia in Perth.

The International Cricket Council cleared Muralidaran and his bowling action has since not been questioned by umpires around the world.



PHOTO: STAR

Chittagong Mohammedan's Anthony (L) in a midfield tussle with Brothers Union's Monwar during their B. League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Broad wins call-up



AFP, London

Uncapped pace bowler Stuart Broad was called up Sunday into England's 13-man squad for the first Test against India starting at Lord's on Thursday.

Broad, 21, was included after fast bowler Stephen Harmison was graded "extremely doubtful" on Saturday for the opening match of a three-Test series after suffering a recurrence of his hernia injury.

Leicestershire's Broad, the son of former England opening batsman Chris, has played nine one-day internationals but has yet to play in a Test.

He was included along with Lancashire quick James Anderson, the pair set to compete for the final place in England's starting side if Harmison is unfit.

England's chairman of selectors, David Graveney, said: "Stephen Harmison's hernia problem will be reassessed by our medical team when the team reports for the first Test on Monday evening."

"At this stage his chances of playing are slim and the choice for the final pace bowling position will be between James Anderson and Stuart Broad."

"They are different types of bowlers and the final decision will depend on our assessment of the pitch and the weather conditions at Lord's."

"It will be very disappointing if we are without Stephen as he has been in excellent form for Durham recently and looked to be back to his best in the last Test against the West Indies at Chester-le-Street."

Graveney added: "It may mean that we have to go into this series with a relatively inexperienced attack, but I am sure all of the bowlers concerned will relish the opportunity to test themselves against a side which has one of the strongest batting line-ups in world cricket."

Broad currently playing against India for England Lions, the 'A' side, in a three-day match which concludes at Chelmsford on Sunday said: "Test cricket is the ultimate goal which every cricketer aspires to."

"I'm just looking forward to it and linking up with the squad," he also told Sky Sports having so far taken two wickets in a match where India batting star Sachin Tendulkar has scored 171.

Harmison bowled just five overs Friday in Durham's ongoing match away to county champions Sussex before being ruled out of the remainder of the game.

The 28-year-old originally sustained the injury at his Riverside

home ground nearly a month ago during England's fourth Test win over the West Indies which gave them a 3-0 series victory.

However, he opted against immediate surgery after being advised he could play in the India series.

Were either Broad or Anderson to play at Lord's, they would be the only change to the XI that beat West Indies by seven wickets at the Riverside in June with pace bowling all-rounder Andrew Flintoff still sidelined by a recurrence of a long-standing ankle injury.

England captain Michael Vaughan and experienced pace bowler Matthew Hoggard are the only two survivors from the team that won the corresponding fixture against India five years ago.

The Yorkshire pair helped England to a 170-run victory at Lord's with Vaughan scoring 100 in the second innings and Hoggard returning match figures of seven for 120.

SQUAD

Andrew Strauss, Alastair Cook, Michael Vaughan (capt), Kevin Pietersen, Paul Collingwood, Ian Bell, Matthew Prior (wk), Stephen Harmison, Ryan Sidebottom, Matthew Hoggard, Monty Panesar, James Anderson, Stuart Broad.

Army crush Air Force

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Army thrashed Bangladesh Air Force 13-3 in the opening match of the Inter-Services Swimming and Water Polo competition that began at the Bangladesh Navy Swimming Complex in Banani yesterday.

In the 100m backstroke, Rubel Rana of Navy won gold.

The Army team showed their dominance in the 100m breaststroke as Jahangir Alam and Kamal Hossain won gold and silver respectively.

Meanwhile, in the 4x200m freestyle, Navy grabbed gold, Army silver and Air Force took bronze.

Earlier, acting PSO of the Armed Forces Division Commodore Zarziul Islam inaugurated the meet as chief guest.

Some 157 competitors are taking part in the competition.

Afridi backs

FROM PAGE 17

Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif, who feel the new rule penalised a bowler harshly if he sent down a no-ball, but felt the two bowlers would not face any problem.

"In modern cricket, Shoaib and Asif are two of the most disciplined and accurate bowlers I have seen in one-day internationals. They bowl very few no-balls. So I don't see them facing any problems," he said.

"The new rule will in fact make the other bowlers also more accurate and disciplined to avoid giving away bonus runs and that is a good thing as less wides and no balls means less time lost in a match." Shoaib and Asif have expressed reservations over the rule, effective from October 1, which says on the very next delivery after a no-ball, the batsman can take a free hit without any danger of being dismissed unless he is run-out.

The pace duo has said the new rule would only add to the pressure on the bowlers in a game whose rules are increasingly a big advantage to the batsmen.

Sachin feeling

FROM PAGE 17

there is a Test call looming or trying to get in the Leicestershire side," said the 21-year-old son of former England opening batsman Chris Broad.

"I knew I just had to go out, bowl aggressively and take some wickets. I got two -- but it could have been more really."

Broad, reflecting on the privleges given to Tendulkar, added: "Chances go down in every innings -- you do extremely well if you hold every one."

"If they'd been taken, we would certainly have been in the lead position -- because Tendulkar was only on around 30."

"But then a player of his class goes on and gets 171 -- and it was pretty faultless really. He looked in great touch. Full credit to him -- he's played magnificently there."

Sampras

FROM PAGE 20

to be ranked No. 1 in the world in both singles and doubles at the same time, accomplishing the feat on February 13, 1995.

Inducted as a Masters player, Davidson was the prominent singles champion for Sweden prior to the reign of the legendary Bjorn Borg.

He reached the final of the French Open in three straight years starting in 1955. He also won a doubles crown at Wimbledon in 1958.

Ayala makes

FROM PAGE 20

Ayala's contract with the Yellow Submarine.

The veteran helped Los Che to the Champions League final in his first two seasons, but lost out in both. However he later won two Liga titles and the UEFA Cup during his seven-year spell.

"We have spent the last few days speaking to Zaragoza, but we didn't reach an agreement, so they have decided to buy him out of his contract," Villarreal chief executive Jose Manuel Llaneza told the Mundo Deportivo.

"I have nothing more to say. Am I surprised? No, I'm not."

Ayala is set to feature for Argentina against Brazil in the final of the Copa America on Sunday.

Mexico master

FROM PAGE 20

Uruguay goalkeeper Fabian Carini then produced a good save to keep out Jaime Lozano's shot from the edge of the area before Bravo gave Mexico the lead when he beat the Internazionale stopper from outside the box.

Oscar Tabarez immediately brought on Fabian Canobbio and Vicente Sanchez to give Uruguay more of an attacking threat. But Mexico put the result beyond doubt 15 minutes from the end as Guardado's long-range effort found the back of the net via the underside of the bar.

"We only did not reach the final by a small margin against Brazil," Tabarez said. "Today, we showed that we were still an attacking force despite losing."

The man behind Murali

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

What makes Muttiah Muralidaran such a great bowler? The answer to that question was found at the Asgiriya International Cricket Stadium where the third and final Test was played between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

Though Shane Warne's world record of 708 wickets is one good Test match away, Murali still believes in spot bowling and going back to his school coach Sunil Fernando for advice.

A day before the start of the third Test, Murali -- then 21 wickets short of the record -- was sending down over after over on a pitch parallel to that to be used for the match, watched intently by Fernando.

At the end of the training session Fernando was asked whether Muralidaran was perfecting a new delivery. Fernando said Murali had asked him to look out for any faults in his bowling.

"After watching him for some time I noticed that he had become a bit slower due to age and the result of bowling so many overs and suffering injuries during his career. He was not putting that extra bit of effort into his bowling like those days," said Fernando.

"I told him to start with the run up

and relax his body and bowl. After that he was bowling well. I also told him to put more weight on to his front foot," Fernando stated.

"After working with him for about 30 minutes he was getting more weight onto his front foot. He is a great bowler now. I don't like to interfere too much with him," he said.

Fernando said the greatness with Murali was that he wanted to learn all the time. "Murali, Ruwan Kalpage and Piyal Wijetunga were all great bowlers at the school where I was the coach. What made Murali different from the other two was that he had a vision to become great. He worked towards achieving that ambition," said Fernando.

All three of them played for St. Anthony's College, Kandy, where Murali was a fast bowler; it was Fernando who turned him into an off-spinner.

"I thought Murali would not stand a chance as a fast bowler. I asked him to bowl off-cutters. He had a long run-up then. That weekend we had an under-15 match against Maliyadeva and he picked up five wickets bowling off cutters for the first time," Fernando recalled.

"After that day he got to know that he could turn the ball a lot. He gradually worked to become a successful off-spinner. He took over a hundred wickets in one

season for two years. Most of the batsmen left his deliveries and got bowled," he said.

Murali's unique bowling action has been the subject of controversy since he started making the headlines in international cricket.

"Even when he was bowling fast he didn't have a problem with his action. If there was any doubt the umpires would have called him. He is a different type of bowler. When a person is doing well only others start talking about his action," said Fernando.

"A coach cannot change a bowler like Murali. If anyone tried to do that he will be lost. What made Murali so special was his off-spin. It was his main weapon. With his experience he added the doosra. But he got most of his wickets with off-spin," Fernando continued.

"As his coach I am very proud of what he's achieved. You'll never get another Murali. He is still like the boy I met at school. He always comes and addresses me 'Sir'. That's very great of him," he said.

"Murali talks to me often. If I see anything wrong with his action I call him and we discuss it. There was a time when he was bending a lot after delivery. I asked him to stand up and bowl. He likes to learn all the time. He has learnt a lot from spot bowling," Fernando concluded.

Dravid faces ultimate test



MIKE ATHERTON

If cricket teams adopt the characteristics of their leaders, then India's understated arrival on these shores was entirely in keeping. Ireland first, then Scotland for the inappropriately named Future and Friendship Cups is not exactly the kind of red-carpet treatment India's team of superstars have come to expect.

But in Rahul Dravid, India are captained by a man who has, throughout his long and distinguished career, avoided the glitz and glamour of Bombay and Bollywood in favour of a harder won but ultimately, one suspects, longer lasting kind of adulation.

In any assessment of the greatest batsmen of the last few years, Dravid must have strong claims alongside Brian Lara, Sachin Tendulkar, Ricky Ponting and Inzamam-ul-Haq. That he can be considered in such company is a triumph in itself, so apparently humdrum is his game in comparison to the others.

He doesn't have as many shots as Lara, the power of Tendulkar, the speed of footwork of Ponting or the languid ease of Inzamam, yet he has played as many significant (and I'm not talking statistically here) innings as any of them, all fashioned from a rigidly orthodox technique, a strong mind and an unbreakable spirit.

As usual he comes as one part of a mouth-watering middle-order that includes Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly and VVS Laxman. But this time around there are more question marks than usual against some of his colleagues.

Tendulkar has been bedevilled by injuries to his elbow and shoulder, three of his last four Test hundreds have come against Bangladesh and, more than that, he looks a little careworn and slower at the crease. The sparkle has not yet left him for good, as shown on Friday with his century, but its dimming is unmistakable. He is vulnerable.

Ganguly's return was remarkable considering the acrimony with which he departed during Greg Chappell's tenure as coach. But brave is the man who confronts Ganguly on home turf and, while Ganguly seems determined now to enjoy his Indian summer, Chappell is at home licking his wounds. Nevertheless, and despite the assertion by South Africa coach Mickey Arthur last week that Ganguly has stiffened the middle-order, the suspicion remains that he is past his

best. Like Tendulkar, he has become something of a bottom-feeder, scoring recent Test hundreds against Zimbabwe and Bangladesh.

Laxman has never scored a Test hundred against England, his average against them eight notches below his overall. Accordingly, English audiences have never been quite able to understand what all the fuss is about. They must hope it stays that way for at his best he is formidable.

Although Dravid believes him to be "hungry" and ready to put past disappointments against England behind him, his play against the type of niggardly seamer he might expect to face here is not quite as certain as against spin. He remains a little too static and stiff-legged at the crease and vulnerable to the moving ball.

Much, as ever, rests on Dravid. And what a record of achievement he brings with him. He averages over 70 against England in 12 matches (as opposed to 57 overall), increasing that to 87 in the half-dozen times he has played here. A dozen for English conditions was confirmed during the 1999 World Cup in which he was, by a comfortable margin, top scorer. If he has played a better innings than he did in scoring 148 at Headingley in 2002 to help India win the match and square the series, I haven't seen it. I haven't seen many better at all. Headingley, too, in wretched batting conditions.

But to watch Dravid is to watch a player who could have undergone coaching in Yorkshire circa 1960. It was Tendulkar, remember, who played for Yorkshire as an overseas player, but it is Dravid who plays as if he did, so far forward does he get, his head so low over the ball, his left elbow so high, acting as a perfect fulcrum for the stroke. His play doesn't have the elegance of Yorkshire's current best, Michael Vaughan, but somehow there is just a touch more steel. Occasionally Vaughan plays loosely, inviting the ball to pass; Dravid never does.

So how might England look to bring that average against them down? Dravid's eagerness to get forward is part of his strength in England, but early on he can move across his crease and "block" himself off. A short-leg is a must and a short mid-wicket or two can help prevent him keeping the runs ticking over, the clip to leg (playing around his front pad) being his bread-and-butter stroke. I'd advocate bowling straighter at Dravid early on than other top-class players, as long as there is enough cover on the leg-side.

If the pitch has pace then Dravid's

eagerness to get forward can cause him problems with the rising ball fired into the ribs. Steve Harmison might have some joy, if he plays and if his radar is working, and if Vaughan attacks with a short leg and fine leg-gully. Equally, Ryan Sidebottom's ability to swing the ball back into the right-hander should ask some questions. Statistically, Dravid has enjoyed success against Chaminda Vaas, but Vaas is not a prodigious swinger of the new ball. Against all that, Matthew Hoggard has dismissed him five times, three times more than any other English bowler.

Dravid's powers of concentration are magnificent. But since he treats every delivery as if it were his last, batting takes an enormous mental toll. If he doesn't quite make batting look like trench warfare (as someone once described my play), then he is not far short of it. How all this mental effort will sit with his captaincy, especially since India have decided against using the services of a coach, remains to be seen.

With the exception of the admirable Anil Kumble, India's other senior players give the impression of being a little too self-absorbed to help relieve Dravid's burden. Success here would strike a blow for those of us who believe that too much emphasis is placed on the modern coach, but a captain cannot do it all alone and Dravid will need help.

It was rumoured during the World Cup in the Caribbean that some Indian players had incentive clauses written into their sponsorship contracts based not on how many runs were scored but on the length of time spent at the crease -- not exactly a good thing if quick runs are needed. Nobody I spoke to could imagine that Dravid would have been a culprit, so selfless does he appear.

Somehow, he has always seemed the acceptable face of Indian cricket, prepared even to don the wicket-keeping gloves occasionally should conditions dictate.

He has given much to the Indian team, but I suspect that this England tour might be his biggest challenge yet. Given his team's modest preparation, the lack of backroom support, the potential for clashing egos and a team whose core is ageing, a successful tour would be a triumph to rank alongside any innings he has ever played.

(Michael Atherton, the former England captain, wrote this article for the Sunday Telegraph website).

Abahani back

FROM PAGE 17

6 goals: Nicodemus (Arambagh), Abraham (Ctg Abahani), Younes (Russel), Moni (Muktijoddha) 5 goals: Khokon (Ctg Abahani), Ibrahim (Abahani) 4 goals: Prashanta, Mamun (Khulna Abahani), Ighir (Russel), Abul (Abahani), Brahim (Muktijoddha), Iddi (Arambagh)

3 goals: Pikul, Tajul (Khulna Abahani), Nazrul (Abahani), Apu (Rahmatgani), Biketi (Arambagh), Asif, Dipu (Ctg Mohammedan), Francis (Rahmatgani), Santosh (Ctg Abahani)

Robben coming

FROM PAGE 20

Robben has been in long drawn-out negotiations with Chelsea over a contract extension until 2012 but has not always been in favour with the club's Portuguese coach Jose Mourinho.

With the Blues having Tuesday signed France international Florent Malouda from Lyon on a four-year contract for some 20 million euros Chelsea may opt to take Real's cash for Robben having covered their flank.

FIFA overturns

FROM PAGE 20

metre limit. World football's governing body decided to raise the maximum altitude to 3000 metres for the 2010 World Cup qualifiers.

Pedrosa bags

FROM PAGE 20

Dutch Moto GP two weeks ago. Stoner's championship lead has as a result increased from 21 points to 32.

Earlier Japanese rider Hiroshi Aoyama of KTM won the 250cc category ahead of Finland's Mika Kallio and Alex De Angelis of San Marino.

Aoyama achieved the fourth success of his career and first this year. Championship leader Jorge Lorenzo of Spain fought back from a bad start to finish fourth and hold a 20-point advantage on De Angelis.

In 125cc, Aprilia rider Gabor Talmacsi of Hungary grabbed the overall world championship lead after winning ahead of Japan's KTN rider Tomoyoshi Koyama with Aprilia's Hector Faubel of Spain finishing third.

Gooch backs old foe



CRICINFO, undated

Graham Gooch, the former England captain who played his last Test at the age of 42, has urged India's experienced middle-order batsmen to convert the final phase of their careers into a "golden one", and said they still had four or five years left in them. Having watched the Indians' tour game against England Lions at Chelmsford, Gooch gushed about Sachin Tendulkar's 171 on the second day and felt there was nothing to suggest that his powers were on the decline.

Gooch scored more than half his Test runs, including 12 hundreds, after he passed the age of 35, and was the top-scorer in the 1990 and 1991 seasons. "I think the likes of Sachin, (Rahul) Dravid, (Sourav) Ganguly are all 34-35 and for me that was the golden period of my cricket," he told Cricinfo at the County Ground in Chelmsford. "My batting got better in those four or five years, so there's no reason why they can't go on."

Tendulkar has occasionally

spoken of the demands that age imposes and even changed his game accordingly. While he used to attack more often in the early part of his career, he's off late preferred the more compact style, accumulating more often than blazing away. He spoke about this after his classy innings on Friday and indicated that his body dictated the way he approached an innings.

Gooch echoed the sentiment. "It (carrying on despite the growing years) depends on your desire, your fitness ... and if you haven't got the desire you aren't going to be able to remain fit. You need to work that much harder, naturally you're deteriorating and you're concentration and general sharpness disappears. There's no reason why they can't carry on for 4-5 years."

However, he was quick to point out that Tendulkar still possesses all the attributes. "He's still standing still, watching the ball and has the ability to counterattack. I didn't see anything on Friday to suggest his powers are on the decline. It's how much you want to keep going, whether you've got aspirations still. He'll hope he's got one last flurry over here to entertain people in

this country. If he and the rest of the batsmen can put up 500-plus in their matches they're definitely going to stand a chance."

India's senior-most cricketer, though, isn't a middle-order batsman but a legspinner who will be expected to carry the attack. Gooch, who faced a bespectacled 20-year-old Anil Kumble on the 1990 tour, believes he can pull it off. "He played the second Test at Old Trafford in 1990 (when Tendulkar got his first Test hundred) and what I liked about him was his desire to take wickets. I faced Derek Underwood early in my career and they were similar with regard to the pace they bowled with. Underwood wasn't a big spinner of the ball but relied on accuracy. Same with Kumble."

"He'll get bounce on English pitches and that's what he mainly relies on for those catches at silly point and bat-pad. He's not a big turner like conventional spinners but his record stands the test of time. The pitches in England don't deteriorate as much these days and are tough for spinners but he doesn't rely too much on a pitch that spins square, it's the bounce that gets him wickets usually."

WICB presidents.

The ICC's concerns are not the only ones being aired. Carib Beer, a regional cricket sponsor, has fired brazen and bizarre questions at the tournament. Colin Murray, sponsor and events manager, objected to the Stanford tournament's timing, in January-February 2008, as he felt it would take precedence over their four-day regional competition, usually scheduled then. Alleging that Stanford had his own agenda and was more interested in his tournament than the development of West Indies cricket, Murray asked: "How is Stanford investing this money to ensure the West Indies Board operations are stable and will continue to benefit from his involvement? What type of funding will the West Indies Cricket Board be getting out of this?"

Murray could well have asked the same questions of his own firm, which has made its Carib girls celebrities at cricket grounds. Has Carib Beer invested in developmental programmes in any sustained way, if at all? If those same questions were asked of his company, he would very likely be the spokesman coming out to say that the responsibility for the development of West Indies cricket lies with the WICB and not a sponsor,

and he might very well inflate a Carib bottle and have some Carib girls wine in front of it to emphasise his point.

The Trinidad Guardian, a paper belonging to the Ansa McAl Group which also owns Carib, wrote an editorial asking the same questions. "... Stanford must not be allowed to upstage an event that prepares the regional team for international cricket. Test cricket remains the real thing," it said. "Stanford must allow the four-day tournament its way, as soon after that, the Australians will be here. His tournament would hardly be what is needed to prepare."

It advises the WICB to let Stanford know that he is only welcome if what he is doing is not in conflict with what the WICB is doing. One could say that gives the type of practice the West Indies team had before its English tour -- none -- that there is no conflict here. But that would be facetious.

The editorial ends even more farcically. "And since he seems obsessed with only dealing with the cream of the crop, he owes it to the WICB to put something back into the other end of the scale, where the development is concerned."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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