



GETTING INTO THE BEAT: Dancers perform during the opening ceremony of the ICC World Twenty20 Championship, the first of its kind, at the Wanderers in Johannesburg yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Aussies sweep honours



AFP, Johannesburg

Ricky Ponting's Australia received a boost ahead of the Twenty20 world championships starting later on Tuesday when his team swept four of the five top ICC awards.

Ponting himself won two, the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for the cricketer of the year and the captain of the year award at a formal ceremony held at the Sandton Convention Centre here on Monday night.

Matthew Hayden was named the one-day player of the year and fast bowler Shaun Tait, who missed out on the Twenty20 event due to injury, won the emerging player's award.

Australia picked up a fifth award away from the players when Simon Taufel was declared the best umpire for the fourth year in a row.

Pakistan's prolific batsman Mohammad Yousuf prevented an Australian clean sweep by bagging the Test player of the year ward for scoring 944 runs in 10 innings at 94.40 during the voting period of August 2006-August 2007.

Ponting, who was voted player of the year for the second successive year, said he was honoured to be feted by the cricket world.

"It's more of an eventful night than I thought it would be and I am honoured," said Ponting. "It's a great achievement and something I will probably look back on this with a lot of pride."

Ponting led Australia to an

Ashes whitewash, Champions Trophy victory and a third consecutive World Cup title during the past year.

"I was happy with the way I have gone about things during the past year and I think we have lifted ourselves to a new level as a team," Ponting said.

"It has been an unbelievable 12

months of cricket and we should all be very proud with what we have achieved."

Ponting said he was looking forward to the Twenty20 tournament where Australia are placed in group B alongside England and Zimbabwe.

"It would be nice to add another one to the cupboard but it is going to be a very open competition," he said. Yousuf, who has been banned by Pakistan for joining the rebel Indian Cricket League, said he was delighted to be named the Test player of the year.

"This is the first time for a Pakistan player to win this award so I am particularly delighted with that," the 33-year-old said in a video message from Lahore.

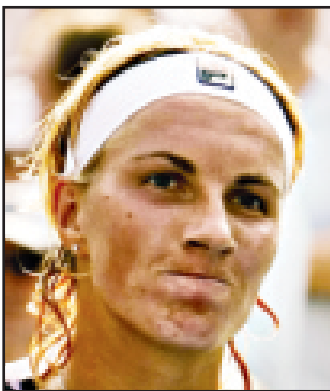
"I thank Allah and my Pakistan team-mates. I also want to thank the ICC panel for voting for me."

Mahela Jayawardene's Sri Lanka won the Spirit Of Cricket award, while Thomas Odoyo of Kenya was named the player of the year among non-Test nations.

Indian seamer Jhulan Goswami picked up the women's player of the year award, making up for the absence of any male compatriot among the nominees.

"It is special to win the award because none of our stars had been nominated," said Goswami. "I hope this award will give a fillip to the women's game in India."

The inaugural Twenty20 world championship opens later on Tuesday when hosts South Africa take on the West Indies at the Wanderers here.



Svetlana Kuznetsova
(Russian tennis star)

"To beat Justine, she is the number one, and when she plays her best game I have to play my best game and I did not play my best game and that is why I lost. She is number one and she deserves it."

While congratulating Justine Henin on winning the US Open ladies' singles title. Ironically Kuznetsova was at the receiving end.

Dhiman ton uplifts NCA hopes

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhiman Gosh scored his second hundred in the Australia tour as BCB National Cricket Academy (NCA) tightened their grip on the Crocodile Cup four-day match against Northern Territory Strike on the second day at the University ground yesterday.

The wicketkeeper-batsman, who slammed his first century down under against Tasmania in a three-day match, converted his overnight half-century to 151 in 195 balls.

Overnight 78, Dhiman got valiant support from Enamul Haque as the visiting side finished their first innings for 361 after resuming the day on 247-8 to post a 265-run first-innings lead.

Enamul, who resumed the day on five, remained unbeaten on 41 off 76 deliveries. Lawrence and

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LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

A brace by Mafiullah helped Gulistan Club come from a goal down to beat Shantinagar Club 3-1 in yesterday's Third Division Football League at the Bir Shreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

Shiplu put Shantinagar ahead after eight minutes but Sagar's 39th minute equaliser took the 1-1 at the break.

Mafiullah found the net in the 65 and 67 minutes to ensure three points for Gulistan.

In the other match at the same venue, Awal struck the match winner in the fourth minute of the second half to help Matuail Udayan Sangha edge PWD 1-0.

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Flemo losing captaincy



INTERNET, undated

Stephen Fleming has been told or is about to be told that his decade-long reign as New Zealand's most successful test captain is over.

The cloak-and-dagger struggle between the country's longest serving skipper who has been linked with the rebel Indian League and New Zealand Cricket looks likely to explode in acrimony.

The Sunday Star-Times believes Fleming has been informed of the selectors' desire for change, and that current Twenty20 skipper Daniel Vettori will be anointed as his replacement, either during the November tour to South Africa, or for the home series against Bangladesh and England.

However, nothing yet can be

officially confirmed because NZC are refusing to comment on the issue, and Fleming never a publicity-seeker at the best of times has maintained a stony silence over the past month.

The decision to demob Fleming who is also the Nottinghamshire captain comes only days after it was revealed he'd decided against returning to Trent Bridge for the 2008 season, and 24 hours after he struck a magnificent 243 at Derbyshire, the highest individual score at Chesterfield since World War II.

But while there's little doubt over his batting, there's still no word on whether his unavailability for Notts next year means that he intends to join the rebel league, or that he wants to represent his country on the winter tour of England.

It's thought the New Zealand selectors are anxious to continue with Fleming's services as a bats-

man, but are unwilling to retain him as captain, possibly because of his alleged links to the rebel league; possibly because they think the time is right for Vettori.

Whatever the motive, there must now be a strong chance that Fleming will feel slighted by the decision, and that he'll decide to turn his back on NZC in favour of signing on to the lucrative rebel circuit.

That, in turn, could cause another commotion, as Fleming is contracted to play for NZC and requires a release from them for the unsanctioned competition an unlikely scenario given his employer's staunch opposition to the concept.

The most capped one-day captain in the game, Fleming announced his decision to step down from the ODI job after the world cup semifinal loss in Jamaica

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Further trouble for Shoaib

CRICINFO, undated

Shoaib Akhtar seems to have slipped into further trouble with the Pakistan Cricket Board after Mohammad Asif, who was injured in a dressing-room altercation involving Shoaib, rejected his version of the story about the event being accidental. Shoaib, who was sent back from South Africa following the spat which left Asif with an injured thigh, had accused Shahid Afridi for provoking him.

"Afridi had nothing to do with the fight. The fact is that Shoaib did strike me with the bat over a little issue and got enraged for no valid reason," Asif told the Express, an Urdu daily. "He (Shoaib) has not apologised to me. In fact he should apologise first to the entire nation for what he has done."

Narrating his version of the events, Asif said: "Afridi was trying to make Shoaib understand that he needs to change his attitude towards junior players and communicate more with them. He told Shoaib that juniors were wary of him. At this point I also came out of the washroom and Shahid asked to me to tell Shoaib what the junior players feel about him. I just smiled and he then hit me with the bat. It was Shahid who intervened and separated us."

Shoaib, in a press conference organised after his arrival in Lahore, had apologised for his actions after claiming that Afridi's use of foul language against his family had led to him hitting Asif by accident. Afridi had denied Shoaib's claims.

The PCB, in its initial inquiry, held Shoaib responsible and decided to send him back to Pakistan as well as placing an indefinite ban on him until the team returned from South Africa and a proper inquiry took place.



PHOTO: AFP

Australia captain Ricky Ponting is all smiles after being named the Cricketer of the Year and Captain of the Year in the ICC Awards Night in Johannesburg on Monday.

 THE BROADBAND COMPANY www.accesstel.net		
TODAY'S MATCH		
Team	Time	Venue
New Zealand v Kenya	1:45 pm	Durban
Pakistan v Scotland	5:45 pm	Durban
Australia v Zimbabwe	9:45 pm	Cape Town



ESPN

ICC World Twenty20

New Zealand v Kenya

Live from 1:45 pm

Pakistan v Scotland

Live from 5:45 pm

Australia v Zimbabwe

Live from 9:45 pm

STAR Sports

Euro Qualifiers

England v Russia

Live from 12:50 am (Thursday)