

Sunny knows Dravid's pain

BBC ONLINE, undated

India batting legend Sunil Gavaskar says Rahul Dravid is opening the batting reluctantly against Australia.

Dravid faced 66 balls but scored just five runs and had two slices of luck as India struggled on day two at the MCG.

And Gavaskar said: "I think it was something that he wouldn't have been too happy about. It's something he would have taken on reluctantly."

"Opening in India is one thing, opening in Australia against Brett Lee and Stuart Clark is a difficult thing."

Lee and Clark each took four wickets as India, replying to Australia's 343, were shot out for 196.

Dravid, 34, is playing his 116th Test and is opening for the ninth time.

Although he has had two centuries opening in Pakistan, his next best score is 31 and his average as an opener, at 33.54, is far below his career average of nearly 60.

Since relinquishing the captaincy in September, however, Dravid no longer has such a major say in team strategy.

New skipper Anil Kumble was keen to find a place for Yuvraj Singh in the middle order, and it was felt the best way to accommodate Yuvraj was to promote Dravid.

But Gavaskar said despite his reluctance, Dravid was happy to help out his team if necessary.

"He's a team man, and he and Kumble are best mates and would have discussed this at length," he said, predicting that Dravid could remain as an opener for the whole series.

Brett reaches

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sidelined from Test cricket for 18 months because of an ankle injury through 2004-05, and missed this year's World Cup win with another ankle problem.

"When the times are going good, you have to look back and think: well, okay, I did spend 18 months away from the side, being 12th man," he said.

"I couldn't get a game, so you appreciate the hard times that you've been through and then you appreciate the good times as well."

"I'm happy with the way the ball is coming out currently, I'm being patient, and the body is feeling great."

"Missing the World Cup -- it was pretty painful. Mentally and physically I'm in a great state of mind."

Red is the colour

FROM PAGE 24
[Jewell] did not come across and tackle."

Pulham substitute Moritz Volz's dismissal for a second yellow card in his side's 5-1 capitulation at Tottenham had it five red cards in the Premier League.

The previous low for dismissals in a day was 17 on December 21, 2002.

Yesterday, the Coca-Cola Championship and League Two witnessed four sendings-off each but the busiest referees were in League One, with six red cards waved. Three came at Bristol Rovers, where Luton's Steve Robinson, Chris Coyne and Anthony Grant all walked in a 1-1 draw.

Keane stares

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mesmerizing half with a trademark free kick in the 45th minute, after Dwight Yorke fouled Darren Fletcher 22 yards from goal, and poor Keane appeared utterly perplexed.

Unsurprisingly United eased off after the break with Ronaldo making way for the South Korean Park Ji-Sung, who made his first appearance since suffering a serious knee injury in March, and Nemanja Vidic stepping aside for the Spanish under-21 international Gerard Pique.

Rooney spurned a glorious chance to extend the visitors' advantage when he fired Nani's 76th minute cross over the bar.

But there was still time for Saha to score his second goal of the game, the French striker stroking home a penalty four minutes from time after Danny Collins had brought down Nani.

"Ronaldo's free kick was the killer," added Keane.

"We might have felt we had a chance at 2-0 down but you don't come back to beat Man Utd 4-3. The fact is that they clearly have some quality players and there's no other way of dressing that up."

"After watching that display my money is still on Manchester United winning the title. They're a great attacking team and they have two decent centre halves too. That's what you need to win leagues."

As for Ferguson, he can look forward to a title battle in which he believes the form of Wayne Rooney may be critical.

"I think Wayne is getting back to what we would expect of him," the Scot said. "Forwards tend to go on runs and this might be the start for him."

Shiv ton lifts WI

AFP, Port Elizabeth

Shivnarine Chanderpaul ground out a century before the West Indies were bowled out for 408 on the second day of the first Test against South Africa at St George's Park Thursday.

Chanderpaul made 104 before he was ninth man out, bowled by Andre Nel after a patient vigil which lasted 398 minutes during which he faced 254 balls and hit 12 fours.

It was Chanderpaul's 17th Test century and his fourth against South Africa.



West Indies batsman Shivnarine Chanderpaul raises his bat to acknowledge the crowd's applause on reaching his century on the second day of the first Test against South Africa at St George's Park in Port Elizabeth on Thursday.

'Adam deserves it'

CRICINFO, undated

Ian Healy believes the man who takes over the gloves from Adam Gilchrist will need to be a man of dual talents. "Our next wicketkeeper will first have to be as good a keeper as him and then as good a batsman," Healy said soon after Gilchrist equalled his own Australian Test record for most career dismissals. Having caught Zaheer Khan off Brett Lee, Gilchrist's tally rose to 395, the number of dismissals his predecessor Healy ended his career with in 1999.

Healy said he knew his record would be broken but didn't know whether it would be Gilchrist or anyone else. In fact, Mark Boucher broke Healy's record during South Africa's tour of Pakistan earlier this year. Boucher has 404 victims so far and according to Healy, Gilchrist and Boucher share the top wicketkeeping spot on Thursday.

Gilchrist caught the eye first thing in the morning with his pink gloves and black armband -- the first in support of Glenn McGrath's breast cancer foundation, the second as a mark of respect to a close friend who'd been beaten to death

Four balls later Nel had Fidel Edwards caught at backward point and an early tea was taken, ending a long, frustrating time in the field for South Africa, who sent their opponents in to bat on what proved to be an easy-paced pitch.

Fast bowlers Makhaya Ntini and Nel took three wickets each but none of the South African bowlers found any of the help in the pitch that captain Graeme Smith expected when he won the toss Wednesday.

Ntini, armed with the second new ball, made two early strikes for South Africa on the second morning before Chanderpaul and Darren Sammy came together in a seventh wicket stand-off 71.

Ntini caught Dwayne Bravo for 12

off his own bowling when the all-rounder tried to work him to leg but the ball went high off a leading edge towards point. Ntini and gully fielder Herschelle Gibbs converged and almost collided before Ntini clutched the ball.

Ntini followed up by having Denesh Ramdin caught behind for one.

Chanderpaul made his seventh consecutive score of 50 or better, equalling a mark set by fellow West Indian Everton Weekes in 1948 and 1949 and repeated by Andy Flower of Zimbabwe in 2000 and 2001.

Chanderpaul's sequence started when he made 69 against Pakistan in Karachi in November 2006 and continued when he had scores of 74, 50, 116 not out, 136 not out and 70 in a series in England earlier this year.

He was finally bowled by an excellent delivery from Nel, bowling around the wicket. The ball angled in to the left-hander and straightened off the pitch.

Two balls later Edwards was bowled by Nel only for square leg umpire Aleem Dar to call no-ball because three fielders were behind square leg. It was only a brief reprieve for Edwards, however, as he was out two balls later.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at tea on the second day of the first Test between South Africa and the West Indies at St George's Park on Thursday:

WEST INDIES: First innings (over-night 281-4)				
Gayle c Kallis b Harris	66			
Ganga c Boucher b Nel	33			
Morton c Prince b Ntini	33			
Samuels c Kallis b Steyn	94			
Chanderpaul b Nel	104			
Bravo c and b Ntini	12			
Ramdin c Boucher b Ntini	1			
Sammy run out	38			
Taylor b Steyn	9			
Powell not out	1			
Edwards c Prince b Nel	0			
Extras: (b-2, lb-8, nb-4, w-3)	17			
Total: (All out in 133.4 overs)	408			
Fall of wickets: 1-98, 2-102, 3-116, 4-277, 5-296, 6-304, 7-361, 8-385, 9-407.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Steyn	31	4	121	2
Ntini	30	6	100	3
Nel	25.4	7	85	3
Harris	30	9	69	1
Kallis	17	8	23	0

with his own cricket bat in a gruesome encounter on Christmas Day. Equalling Healy's record, however, was the most memorable Gilchrist moment.

"He deserves it," Healy said. "He's played an important part in a very successful team and has done it spectacularly more than in a silent way."

"Gilchrist has had an extraordinary career, he hasn't missed a Test. To do what he's done in one-dayers and Tests with bat and with the gloves without getting injured is just amazing," said Healy, who was forced to retire after the selectors dropped him. At that time the decision to replace Healy with Gilchrist was seen as a knee-jerk move. But Healy is proud that his successor has consistently kept the critics at bay.

Talking on Gilchrist's evolution as a keeper, Healy said: "From the time he took over as a one-day wicketkeeper, he matured extremely well until he took gloves in the Tests. He's had no problems with (Shane) Warne and Brett Lee and he's taken some classic, as well as some extraordinary, catches."

Healy refuses to believe that Gilchrist is an old hand at 35 and feels he has a long way to go. "He's not that old. He could go on a lot longer if he wants to."

Gilchrist, who recently reached a

record 100 sixes in Tests and, with 401 catches and 53 stumpings, holds the record for the most ODI dismissals, has simultaneously carried out keeping and batting duties with ease. Healy said it took Gilchrist a while to grapple with the dual responsibility but he has shaped up well over the years to become one of the best. "He's become more a wicketkeeper now. In the early years he was finding himself coming in at No. 5 for not many (runs) so he was outstanding to get the team out of trouble."

Even though Gilchrist recently talked about reconsidering his decision to retire, Healy strongly believes it won't affect the side as Warne's departure did. "(Brad) Haddin is going to be a walking replacement for Gilly whenever he decides to go. There's a good group of young kids a yard behind Haddin, like Luke Ronchi (Western Australia), Mathew Wade (Victoria) and Chris Hartley (Queensland)."

For decades the wicketkeeper has been a symbolic presence in the victorious Australian teams and his longevity, Healy says, formed a catalyst in the team's success. "It's a very proud tradition. Australians have got that the wicketkeepers are there for long. It's the sign of the strength of Australian cricket and also the sign of the fitness levels and durability of their keepers."

Day Two Australia's

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Lee coaxed an edge off Jaffer (4) to Adam Gilchrist and Dravid's tortuous innings of five off 66 balls ended when Clark trapped him leg before wicket on the third-last ball of the morning session.

Dravid, known as 'The Wall', laboured for 41 balls to get off the mark after he was dropped at fourth slip by Phil Jaques off Johnson and was caught at first slip off a Johnson no-ball.

After lunch Lee blasted out VVS. Laxman, who averages almost 60 playing in Australia, for 26 when he gloved a catch to Ponting at second slip as he tried to avoid a vicious rearing delivery.

Lee also picked up Anil Kumble caught behind for 27 to take his 250th Test wicket to become the sixth all-time leading Australian wicket-taker overtaking Richie Benaud. He finished with the dismissal of Zaheer Khan (11).

Australia's last-wicket pair, Clark and Johnson, lasted 16 balls at the start of the day and added six runs before Clark was out for 21 hooking paceman Zaheer Khan.

Zaheer finished with 4-94 off 23.4 overs while Kumble took 5-84 off 25 overs.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the second day of the first Test between Australia and India at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Thursday:

AUSTRALIA: First innings (337 for 9 overnight)

Jaquest Dhone b Kumble	66			
Hayden c Dravid b Zaheer	124			
Ponting b Zaheer	4			
Hussey lbw b Kumble	2			
Clarke c Laxman b RP Singh	20			
Symonds c Karthik (sub) b Kumble	35			
Gilchrist c Tendulkar b Kumble	23			
Hogg c Dravid b Zaheer	17			
Lee lbw b Kumble	0			
Johnson not out	21			
Clark c Harbhajan b Zaheer	15			
Extras: (lb-5, w-2, nb-9)	16			
Total: (All out in 92.4 overs)	343			
Fall of wickets: 1-135, 2-162, 3-165, 4-225, 5-241, 6-281, 7-288, 8-294, 9-312, 10-343.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Zaheer	23.4	1	94	4
RP Singh	20	3	82	1
Harbhajan	20	3	61	0
Ganguly	3	1	15	0
Kumble	25	4	84	5
Tendulkar	1	0	2	0

INDIA: First innings				
Jaffer c Gilchrist b Lee	4			
Dravid lbw b Clark	5			
Laxman c Ponting b Lee	26			
Tendulkar c Clark	62			
Ganguly b Hogg	43			
Yuvraj c Gilchrist b Clark	0			
Dhone lbw b Clark	0			
Kumble c Gilchrist b Lee	27			
Harbhajan c Clarke b Hogg	2			
Zaheer c Gilchrist b Lee	11			
RP Singh not out	2			
Extras: (b-4, lb-3, nb-7)	14			
Total: (All out in 71.5 overs)	196			
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-31, 3-55, 4-120, 5-122, 6-122, 7-166, 8-173, 9-193, 10-196.				

Salma shapes Khulna win

SPORTS REPORTER

Salma Khatun claimed six wickets as Khulna defeated Rajshahi by five wickets in yesterday's opening match of the Meril Women's Divisional cricket tournament.

In a low scoring limited-overs match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, Salma took 6-8 from 5.3 overs to help Khulna bowl out Rajshahi to 61 runs. Sathira was the only Khulna batswoman to reach double figures with 13 while 28 extras topped the scorecard.

Khulna recovered from early hiccups to reach 62 for five in 22.2 overs with Rumana and Rifat both scoring ten runs.

Earlier, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Sina Ibne Jamali inaugurated the four-team event. Barisal and Sylhet are the two divisions not playing in the round robin league, which will end on December 30.

Meanwhile, the women's wing of BCB will organise a Women's Open cricket tournament (by invitation) from January 17 next year.

Teams willing to participate have been requested to send their entries by January 3, 2008.

Nat'l women's volleyball starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The 18th National Women's Volleyball Championship commences today at the Dhaka Volleyball Stadium with two matches on the opening day.

Rajshahi meet Gazipur while Bangladesh Ansar and VDP are pitted against Pabna in their respective groups.

Rangpur and Panchagarh are the remaining two teams in the fray where three teams compete in each group.

Khurshid Irfan Chowdhury, managing director of tournament sponsor Transcom Beverages Ltd, will declare the four-day meet open.

Siddons warns

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"We've got to be tough on ourselves because we know that we have to put in good performances here so they lead into the England series," he said after New Zealand weathered early pressure to beat Bangladesh with ease.

"There's always a few slip-ups but to come back from having a team 140-2 and to bowl them out for 200 is the most important bit."

Fog, bowlers

FROM PAGE 21

Skipper Ehsanul Haq top-scored with 36 with six boundaries.

In their reply, Dhaka moved to 88-2 in 41 overs with Arman Hossain losing his castle to Tariq Aziz after making 33 off 56 balls.

BRIEF SCORES

RAJSHAH: First innings 188 all out in 56.1 overs (Jahurul 3, Shakil 61, Farhad 1, Rafique 11, Naeem 0, Mashud 13, Mushfiqur 33, Delwar 4, Anisur 25, Shafiqul 13, Saqlain 0, Jamal 3-15, Robul 2-26, Ziaur 2-28, Aslam 2-44, Farid 1-15).

KHULNA: First innings 21-2 in 7 overs (Nazmus 11, Mostafiz 1, Imrul 5, Jamal 0, Delwar 2-11).

CHITTAGONG: First innings 98 all out in 46.3 overs (Salahuddin 11, Masum 5, Mahubul 2, Nazimuddin 0, Dhiman 10, Ehsanul 36, Mazhar 3, Kamrul 4, Yasir 20, Tareq 2, Saju 1, Sharif 3-11, Arafat 3-28, Mahubul 2-23, Mosharraf 2-31).

DHAKA: First innings 88-2 in 41 overs (Arman 33, Mehrib 2, Anwar 30, Shamsur 15, Yasin 1-12, Tareq 1-34).

SYLHET: First innings 149-8 in 60 overs (Imtiaz 25, Sadiqur 0, Rahman 45, Kapali 39, Sharifullah 12, Mahud 5, Ejaz 8, Nabil 5, Rashedur 0, Rezaul 9, Arafat 3-36, Monir 2-33, Sumon 2-43, Hannan 1-15).

Wenger left

FROM PAGE 24

For Redknapp's side it was a welcome point after two games against Tottenham and Liverpool in which they had been outplayed.

Their pursuit of European football had been marginally curtailed but Redknapp insisted confidence has never dropped.

"I never thought we put our heads down really. Sol was magnificent at the back and it was a very good point for us," said Redknapp who defended his team's conservative tactics.

"What are you supposed to do when you haven't got the ball, attack? What system did they play again? One up, we played one up."

"They are very good at keeping the ball - we know that and if you open up against them they will rip you to pieces."

"We stuck in there and ended up having the best chance of the game. I don't want to argue with Arsene, he has got his opinion but we are Portsmouth remember. What are we supposed to be doing against Arsenal?"



Khulna cricketers erupt in joy after their victory over Rajshahi in the opening match of the Meril Women's Divisional Cricket Tournament at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

India hesitate to score

CRICINFO, undated

Sixteen years ago Sanjay Manjrekar came to Australia as India's best batsman. He had enjoyed a wonderful series in Pakistan and possessed the technique to counter any kind of bowling. He ended the five Tests without a single half-century and was never the same force since.

India's top order learnt the harsh lesson Thursday. Rahul Dravid, opening in a Test for the first time in close to two years, was suffocated to such an extent that it was 40 balls before he scored his first run. His 66-ball 5 was a tedious effort, reminiscent of his painstaking 12 at the Oval earlier in the year. Mitchell Johnson bowled maiden after maiden, while Dravid blocked, missed and edged. Behind him was the Great Southern Stand. Neither would budge.

Conditions weren't easy. In the first 20 overs Brett Lee was hostile and Johnson was miserly. The first single was scored off the 19th over, for whatever came earlier was in twos. A slow start is understandable if the two batsmen are rotating the strike. But Dravid took 15 overs to get to the other end. He didn't face Lee for a single ball.

Before getting off the mark, he tried to force four shots through the offside. The fielders intercepted two while the others were edged. One of

those nicks, a tough chance, flew wide of Phil Jaques at fourth slip. The one-handed attempt was grassed. The other nestled into Matthew Hayden's hands at first slip but it didn't matter because Johnson had overstepped the popping crease.

His partners must cop some blame as well. Neither Wasim Jaffer nor VVS Laxman were swift enough to convert twos into threes and the much-needed energy was missing from the first ball. Just a few minutes later, Sachin Tendulkar showed the value of displaying some urgency, both with his shots and between the wickets. Hayden and Jaques were up against more challenging conditions yesterday (Wednesday) but didn't compromise on their positive approach. They ran hard, went for their shots and made the most of their luck. The 111 they added before lunch eventually made all the difference.

Dravid isn't new to this situation. Seven years earlier he endured a torrid time here with a 109-ball 14, choosing to withdraw into a shell. He struck three fours spread over three Tests and, despite spending time at the crease, was bogged down. He cleared the cobwebs, quite spectacularly, in the next two series against Australia, playing a vital part in all the victories.

He has been off colour for the last year and a half. Since his match-winning twin half-centuries in Jamaica, in a series-winning cause, he hasn't registered a century

against top-class opposition. He's looked comfortable enough but been out at the wrong times. He's had some poor umpiring decisions and fallen trap to both an attacking (Bangalore) and defensive mindset (The Oval and here). Just when he looked like turning a corner, he has turned back again. It's been a strange Dravid of late.

Were India justified in asking him to open the innings? It's a job he doesn't really enjoy and one that requires a completely different mindset to going in at No. 3. People might wonder what the fuss is all about, for he often comes in early anyway, but it requires a completely different kind of mental preparation. First he's under pressure to regain form, suddenly he's under pressure, however little, to retain his spot.

The other batting shift, VVS Laxman moving to No. 3, was looking good until Lee unleashed a brute of a bouncer. Laxman was positive from the moment he entered, clipped a few delectably off his pads, and eased the pressure by finding the gaps. It's his favourite position and India will take consolation from his confident stint. What will worry them is Yuvraj Singh's duck at No. 6. It was the one inclusion for which the rest of the furniture was rearranged. You don't want a new rocking chair to crack just when you have shifted other precious sofas around to accommodate it.

Clark silences cynics

CRICINFO, undated

Stuart Clark arrived at the MCG expecting nothing from the pitch, but with the assistance of reverse-swing he was able to overcome his pessimism and seriously damage India. The surface did not inspire him during a Pura Cup match for New South Wales at the