

## Amin, Parag winners

SPORTS REPORTER

Three Bangladeshi FIDE Masters Khondokar Aminul Islam, Abu Sufian Shakil and Mehdi Hasan Parag secured three points each after the end of the fifth round of the 83rd Hastings Chess Congress in England on Tuesday.

In the fifth round, Shakil lost to Grand Master Pert Nicholas of England, Amin beat George Dickson of England and Parag beat Antoine Canonne of France.

A total of 102 players are taking part in the competition.

## Ching crowned girls' champs

SPORTS REPORTER

Ma Hai Ching became champion in the girls' under-16 singles event of the Prestige Bengal Victory Day tennis competition with a 6-1, 6-1 victory over Sharda 6-1, 6-1 in the final at the National Tennis Complex yesterday.

Amal Roy, Prithul Mondal, Dipu Lal and Ranchan Ram moved to the semifinals of the men's singles.

On way to the semis, Amal beat Omar Faruque 6-2, 6-3, Prithul defeated Delwar Hossain 6-0, 6-1, Dipu Lal beat Tajmud 6-4, 6-3 and Ranchan Ram edged past Anwar Hossain 6-4, 6-4.

In the boy's singles under-16 event, Mofazzel Hossain, Hanif Munna, Raisul and Omar Faruque confirmed their semifinal while Biplob, Sajib and Hasibul reached into the semis in the boy's under-13 event.

Engineers Club move to the final beating Gulshan Club 2-1 in the team event.

## Gatlin receives four-year ban

AFP, Washington

Reigning 100-meter Olympic champion Justin Gatlin was suspended for four years for a 2006 doping violation and forfeits his former 100m world record run, the US Anti-Doping Agency announced Tuesday.

A three-member arbitration panel voted 2-1 to impose a four-year ban upon the 25-year-old American sprinter who captured gold at the 2004 Athens Games.

The punishment stems from a positive test for testosterone by Gatlin at the Kansas Relays on April 22, 2006. Gatlin tested positive for a stimulant at a college meet earlier in his career so was treated as a repeat offender.

Gatlin could extend his 20-month fight by appealing the verdict to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), the final legal recourse to overturn what would otherwise likely be a career-ending banishment.

In addition to a four-year ban set to end May 24, 2010, Gatlin must forfeit all results after the positive tests, including his 9.77-second victory in the 100m at the Qatar Super Grand Prix in Doha on May 12, 2006.

That effort matched the then-world record owned by Jamaica's Asafa Powell, who lowered the mark to 9.74 seconds last September in Italy.

Also lost in the doping punishment for elevated testosterone levels was Gatlin's 2006 US 100m crown.

The lengthy majority finding and a dissent from the third arbitrator were released by the panel Monday night.

## O'Donnell died

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The midfielder was set to be replaced on Saturday but fell to the ground as the change was taking place.

O'Donnell received some five minutes of treatment on the field before being carried off on a stretcher and was subsequently taken by ambulance to hospital.

His nephew, David Clarkson, who scored twice in the match, was substituted after being alarmed at the sight of his uncle's collapse.

## Trio start

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"No-one epitomises that better than Martin Laursen. He was incredible, absolutely incredible...his whole performance was top-drawer."

Newcastle will try to ease the pressure on manager Sam Allardyce at home to Manchester City on Wednesday when Derby are away to Bolton. County's fellow relegation candidates Sunderland travel to Blackburn Rovers.

## Tevez laid low

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When I said I wanted to sign players that I know, thinking that I just wanted to sign Scottish players.

"But I'm quite knowledgeable about Europe and my knowledge of players worldwide is also half-decent, so it doesn't necessarily mean that I will just sign Scottish or English players."



BCB women's wing chairperson Monowar Anis Khan (2nd from R) hands over cricket gears to the students of Motijheel Central Government Girl's High School and Siddeshwari Girl's High school at Motijheel Central Government Girl's High School ground yesterday.

## RP enjoys leading attack

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

RP Singh revelled in the chance of leading the Indian attack following the withdrawal of pace spearhead Zaheer Khan on the opening morning of the second cricket Test against Australia here on Wednesday.

The 22-year-old left-arm pacer from Uttar Pradesh finished as India's best bowler with 4-108 off 21 overs as Australia recovered to 376 for seven at the end of day one.

Singh used the pitch conditions to his advantage, grabbing the wickets of Phil Jaques (0), Matthew Hayden (13), Mike Hussey (41) and Adam Gilchrist (7) to have the home side reeling at 4-49 at one stage.

He was forced to lead the attack when the experienced Zaheer

succumbed to a bruised heel and was passed unfit to play, giving Ishant Sharma his chance to play his third Test.

"I was a bit disappointed when I got the news Zaheer was not playing because of his injury," Singh said.

"I was a bit nervous because Zaheer's a great player but then I talked to my coaches."

Singh, who has now taken 33 wickets in nine Tests, spent time at the Australian Cricket Academy in Brisbane a couple of years ago and used his experience of domestic conditions to his advantage on Wednesday.

"I went to the cricket academy when (now Australian coach) Tim Nielsen was the head coach and he told me about Australian conditions," he said.

"I learned a lot. I spent almost 45 days there."

Singh said despite Australia's recovery, led by Andrew Symonds with an unbeaten 137, he remained confident.

"There's still three more wickets to go, but I think the wicket's still pretty slow and we have a great batting lineup," he said.

"I think it's going to be a better batting wicket tomorrow (Thursday) because the wicket is now slow."

## Ramos wants

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and it's no drama," Poyet said.

"We want to improve and we want to go to a better level -- he has to stay."

Berbatov, who scored four goals in Tottenham's 6-4 Premier League win over Reading on Saturday, joined the north London club from Bayer Leverkusen in a 10.9 million-pound (\$21.86 million) deal.

## In search of inspiration

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draws and a solitary win in 49 appearances is reason enough for Ashraf's anxiety to get a move on.

Ashraf and his mates had their first look at the University Oval this afternoon. As far as scenic ambiences go this ground located at Logan Park should rank right up there among the top few. It is nothing like the contemporary cricket arenas that are being erected around the world and rather a throw back to the age of the game's romanticism, quite interesting considering the fact that it will hold its opening Test come Friday as New Zealand Cricket breaks away from the traditional venue Carisbrook which will be one of stadiums for the next Rugby World Cup.

With the historic grandstand at the southern end that has the members area, the Otago Cricket Association and the University of Otago Rugby Football Club offices, the players' changing rooms and a gallery for spectators it is a small, homely venue and two lush embankments shaded by tall trees lined up are a sight straight from the British village greens.

Owned by the Dunedin City Council the Oval was originally the University of Otago's but ownership was transferred to the Council when a redevelopment programme was completed in the early 2000s. Now it is the home of both the Otago Cricket Association

and the University of Otago Rugby Football Club and also used as a training base for the Highlanders Rugby Football team.

The facilities here conform to all international requirements. A media complex is situated at the northern end of the ground and it also has an electronic scoreboard, players' viewing areas, medical room, kitchens, umpires' rooms, canteen and shop, media rooms and storage rooms. The practice area, a full-fledged cricket ground itself, is adjacent to the main venue and well equipped to handle the necessities of international teams.

Recently however, the Oval made headlines for the wrong reasons. The ground hosted a State Championship first class match between Otago and Auckland that finished within two days as 34 wickets tumbled in no time with the pace bowlers having a ball. Naturally there will be concerns until the first day had passed about whether a suitable pitch had been prepared since based on a review by New Zealand Cricket and recommendations on how the curators could ensure the ground was ready for its first Test.

If the practice wickets offered any hints the pitch might aid the seam bowlers a little more than Hamilton, Auckland, Napier and Queenstown. The Bangladesh batsmen concentrated on getting

the balance between stroke-playing and leaving the balls and with the Mashrafe Mortaza and Sajidul Islam in particular swinging the ball both ways and the one-day habits popping out of the blue every now and then, the task wasn't easy.

"Today it was more a case of getting used to the wicket and playing out the deliveries. The ball tends to stop a little and doesn't come on to the bat at pace. Playing in the V is probably a better option on this wicket," said Shahriar Nafees Ahmed, one of the three players to have flown in as reinforcement for the Test side.

The tourists would surely be facing a barrage of short-pitched deliveries also and Habibul Bashar, with a reputation to uphold as an accomplished player of the short ball, knows that all too well.

"You can't help it if they keep bowling short. You smack it if you can or you leave it alone, that's my philosophy. But I guess the balls pitched up are more difficult to face than the short ones," said Bashar.

Bangladesh seek inspiration, especially after the dreadful capitulation at Queenstown and it is time for some people to stand up and be counted. The first Test just might be the most important examination of the Tigers' inner strength in a while.

## Symonds stops India

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cannonned into his backpad.

Harbhajan went on an victory jig, flapping his arms about in celebration of the major scalp.

Two balls later Mike Hussey was on his way for 41, edging to Sachin Tendulkar at first slip to give RP Singh his third wicket.

Michael Clarke became the third Australian out in 12 balls, lbw while not offering a shot, playing forward to an Harbhajan off-break. Singh captured his fourth wicket, Adam Gilchrist for seven, giving Tendulkar his third catch.

Umpire Benson earlier gave Ponting the benefit of the doubt for dabbling at one down the leg-side off Sourav Ganguly, cutting short India's jubilant celebrations.

Singh gave India a rousing start with two wickets in his opening five overs.

Phil Jaques, who went into the Test on the back of six consecutive Test half-centuries, chased a wide Singh delivery and was snapped up by Dhoni for a duck.

Matthew Hayden, man-of-the-match in the Melbourne Test with his first innings century, edged Singh and was well caught at first slip by Tendulkar for 13.

Zaheer's withdrawal gave an opportunity to 19-year-old

medium pacer Sharma to play in his third Test.

**SCOREBOARD**  
Scoreboard on the opening day of the second Test between Australia and India at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Wednesday:

**AUSTRALIA:** First innings  
Jaques c Dhoni b RP Singh 0  
Hayden c Tendulkar b RP Singh 13  
Ponting lbw b Harbhajan 55  
Hussey c Tendulkar b RP Singh 41  
Clarke lbw b Harbhajan 1  
Symonds not out 137  
Gilchrist c Tendulkar b RP Singh 7  
Hogg c Dravid b Kumble 79  
Lee not out 31  
Extras: (b-2, lb-4, w-3, nb-3) 12  
Total: (For 7 wks in 89 overs) 376  
To bat: Johnson, Clark

Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-27, 3-119, 4-119, 5-121, 6-134, 7-307.

**Bowler** O M R W  
RP Singh 21 3 108 4  
Sharma 17 2 65 0  
Ganguly 6 1 13 0  
Harbhajan 20 2 88 2  
Kumble 20 0 82 1  
Tendulkar 5 0 14 0  
**INDIA:** Jaffer, Dravid, Laxman, Tendulkar, Ganguly, Yuvraj, Dhoni, Kumble, Harbhajan, RP Singh, Sharma.  
Toss: Australia

**Umpires:** Mark Benson (ENG), Steve Bucknor (WIS)  
**Third umpire:** Bruce Oxenford (AUS)  
**Match referee:** Mike Procter (RSA)

## 'I was out

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"It'll mean more to me if we can have a good result in the Test and I can look back and I've contributed to a win."

Symonds said Australia's precarious position when he came into bat offered a perfect opportunity to create something special.

"Australian teams have always prided themselves to fight back and show a bit of mental toughness and heart and this team is no different," he said.

"When we lose wickets it's an opportunity for Brad and myself to do something a bit special. Today (Wednesday) we had a decent day. "Four hundred runs will be a very healthy first innings score. "I suppose it puts us in a position where we hope we wouldn't lose the game from there. "If we bowl well and bat well again then we can put ourselves in a very good position to win the game."

## Arjuna vows new era

BBC ONLINE, undated

Sri Lanka's new cricket chief Arjuna Ranatunga has vowed to start with a clean slate and to stamp out corruption within the sport on the island.

An independent audit will scrutinise the accounts of Sri Lanka Cricket before he takes over its finances.

"My hands are clean. I will never try to make money out of the game's administration," said Ranatunga, 44, who is also a government legislator.

The outspoken former skipper also said cricket needed to be professionalised.

The game in Sri Lanka is still based on an amateur system; meaning players cannot earn a living from the game unless they are picked to play for their country.

Ranatunga became a national hero after leading his side to World Cup glory in 1996, when he scored the winning run in the final against Australia.

He made his debut in Sri Lanka's inaugural Test at the age of 18, and scored his country's first Test half-century.

A dominant figure in the game, he fiercely defended his players' rights, famously leading his players off the field when Muttiah Muralidaran was called for "chucking" in Australia, also in 1996.

Ranatunga has succeeded Jayantha Dhamadasa, who had headed a politically-appointed "interim committee" of Sri Lanka Cricket since 2005.

Since the late 1990s, Sri Lankan governments have, on at least three occasions, dismissed democratically elected cricket bodies on grounds of financial impropriety and replaced them with interim committees.

Ranatunga has been critical of a system which has allowed businessmen to head the cricket board to the detriment of nurturing grass-roots cricket on the islands.

"I will focus on schools and under-19 cricket," he said, adding that several former Sri Lankan international players would form the nucleus of his administration.

## Koeman stands

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Soler however has said that Koeman had "temporarily" decided not to call up the trio who he stresses have not been sacked by the club.

Koeman, 44, took over at Valencia in October after Quique Flores was sacked.

Valencia were eliminated from the Champions League and are in seventh place in the 20-team Spanish league with 26 points, 15 fewer than leaders and defending champions Real Madrid.

## Malik eyes

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They also lost the one-day series against South Africa and India and were relegated to sixth in both one-day and Test rankings.

"It's not that we lost one-sided contests, but the notable thing was that we made minor mistakes and if we have learnt from those mistakes, which I am confident we have, then we can do well in this New Year," said Malik.

Pakistan face Zimbabwe in a five-match one-day home series later this month before their real test comes against world champions Australia -- a series which Malik hopes will raise his team's confidence.

"Whenever you play against Australia your confidence rises because they are a world class team and I hope that if we do well it will help us in the ICC (International Cricket Council) Champions Trophy later this year," he said.

Malik also played down fears that Australia could pull out of the tour after last week's assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and the ensuing unrest in the country.

"I don't see the series being disturbed over security fears because things will settle down and the Pakistan Cricket Board and players like me will do our best to have this series on our grounds," said Malik.

## WI defy

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The West Indies brought in leg-spinner Ravi Rampaul in place of all-rounder Darren Sammy.

## SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at tea on the first day of the second Test between South Africa and the West Indies at Newlands on Wednesday:

**WEST INDIES:** First innings  
Gayle c McKenzie b Nel 46  
Ganga c Boucher b Steyn 3  
Morton c Ntini b Kallis 23  
Samuels not out 37  
Chanderpaul not out 34  
Extras: (b-4, lb-9, nb-3, w-1) 17  
Total: (For 3 wks in 54 overs) 160  
Fall of wickets: 1-12, 2-71, 3-77.  
**Bowler** O M R W  
Steyn 12 3 32 1  
Ntini 13 4 43 0  
Nel 14 4 43 1  
Kallis 9 1 11 1  
Harris 6 2 18 0  
To bat: Bravo, Ramdin, Lewis, Powell, Taylor, Edwards.  
**SOUTH AFRICA:** Smith, McKenzie, Amla, Kallis, Prince, De Villiers, Boucher, Nel, Harris, Steyn, Ntini.  
**Umpires:** S Tafel (AUS), R Tiffin (ZIM).  
**TV umpire:** M Erasmus (RSA).  
**Match referee:** R Mahanama (SRI).

## New year, old habits

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Too much happened on the first day at the SCG. Close to 30,000 people got to see a fine spell of left-arm seam, a tantalising display of off spin and a counterattacking partnership straight out of a classic western flick. Six wickets fell before the clock tower showed two; all hell broke loose thereafter.

The Roads and Traffic Authority of New South Wales are doing their every bit to discourage speeding but nobody seems to have briefed the Australian lower order about speed limits. This was a notorious case of hit-and-run; a great robbery in broad daylight. Hardly had India begun to smile when Brad Hogg and Andrew Symonds, almost like a couple of gangsters, began to loot. Only once have more runs been scored on the first day at the SCG and that was nearly 100 years ago.

Like at the MCG, India's opening day was one of two halves. But unlike at the MCG, where they had a poor morning and a good afternoon, the trend was reversed. And unlike at the MCG, the umpires had a blackout. Anil Kumble might have taken 376 for 7 at the start of the day - he had lost his spearhead to injury after all -- but he wouldn't be smiling at the end of it. While a set of officials spoilt a fine day, a couple of batsmen weren't going to miss out.

Symonds walks in to a loud ovation and manufactures shots that get everyone to raise the decibel levels. Until he entered there was hardly a cut shot played, but soon they were being struck with anger. And when Hogg began to cut at the other end India were made to run ragged. India must be made to take a new-year resolution: we will not leave the third-man region vacant.

A new year brings a lot of promises but some things don't change. For every talented seamer India unearths, there will be another nursing an injury; for every top

order they dismiss quickly, there will be a tail waiting to spoil the good work; for every fine batsman emerging from the gullies, there will be a poor fielder letting the ball slip through. India dropped two catches -- one a tough skier at mid-on, the other a simpler one that dipped towards short leg -- and could have had one more chance if someone more athletic than Rahul Dravid was placed at fine leg. Yuvraj Singh, supposedly their best fielder, embarrassed himself too often.

But a couple of Singhs brought plenty of cheer. Both hadn't done too much at the MCG but came into their own here. RP, 22 years and eight Tests old, led the attack manfully before Harbhajan rediscovered his mojo. Until Hogg walked in, RP had the measure of every left-hander by getting the ball to straighten after hitting the right length. Phil Jaques misread the bounce, Matthew Hayden was squared up, Michael Hussey prodded tentatively, and Adam Gilchrist followed him. Three of them, seemingly impressed with Sachin Tendulkar sporting a floppy hat after suffering an allergic reaction, edged to first slip.

Ishant Sharma, just 19, made an early impression and could have easily had his first wicket when Symonds was on 30. A whole stadium might have heard the edge but that's not what matters. Some teams think Steve Bucknor needs a hearing-aid; India might be more intent on a hearing.

It's rumoured (wrongly) that the 555-run stand between Herbert Sutcliffe and Percy Holmes prompted a businessman to start the cigarette company. Someone here would be tempted to start Benson and Edges. Ponting edged twice but Mark Benson heard neither. Where is the technology, screamed a billion people. But that also didn't make a difference for the third umpire, with all the assistance he receives, managed to get one wrong again. Symonds was on 48. The rest, as they say, was savagery.

## Duo walk tall

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Brad Hogg is the most unfashionable player on Australia's 25-man contract list and admits to underestimating his own capabilities at times. A 36-year-old employing a bowling style few have persevered with, he has remained in the national consciousness due to his one-day expertise. Now he is a cult hero at the SCG after scoring 79 in an innings-saving stand of 173 with Andrew Symonds.

Australia, who won the toss, were in severe trouble at 6 for 134, but two players who bat on instinct dug them out of danger. Hogg performed like he had been in the team for years -- it was his sixth Test -- and attacked freely while Symonds waited a couple of hours to understand a two-paced pitch before relaxing.

Driving strongly through cover off both feet, Hogg beat Symonds to a half-century before slowing down when reaching three figures became a serious possibility. "It was exciting to be in front of Andrew for a while, but he showed who was boss and got to 100 before I got to 70 and put me back in my place," he said. "It was just exciting to be there."

Stepping back to cut at Anil Kumble, Hogg was caught by Rahul Dravid at slip and as he left the field he was cheered like one of the locals. Michael Clarke and Phil Jaques had failed and the spectators were desperate for someone to adopt. The players in the dressing room were also ecstatic and not just because the score had developed into a comfortable 7 for 307.

"It's fantastic to have a good partnership with my good mate Andrew and to knock a couple of records off," Hogg said of the seventh-wicket stand, which was the highest against India and the largest at the ground. "It's a fantastic feeling to have a good innings for Australia."

Hogg is an ideal team man who has waited four years for another Test chance, which arrived when Stuart MacGill underwent wrist surgery. Until Shane Warne exited a year ago Hogg was closer to retirement than a five-day recall and despite his strong batting performance, which lasted 102 balls and included ten fours, he knows he needs wickets to be sure of his place.

The runs have provided a huge dose of confidence and Hogg is hoping it remains when he bowls. "It just makes you feel a bigger part of the team, knowing you're contributing," he said. "It's good to get runs on the board, but I'm here for my bowling and hopefully I can get the wickets required."

Symonds was proud of his friend's sensible batting and together they deflated an attack that was bouncing for the first half of the day. While Hogg missed three figures, Symonds brought up his second Test century with a single to mid-on. Both have come at critical stages.

Australia were 5 for 84 when he reached 156 against England in 2006-07 and here he doused the early concerns of India getting back into the series following the heavy defeat in Melbourne. He was unbeaten on 137 at stumps after facing 173 balls and hitting 17 fours and two sixes.

## India confirm SA schedule

REUTERS, Mumbai

South Africa will play their three Tests in Ahmedabad, Kanpur and Chennai on their India tour in March and April, the Indian cricket board said in a statement on Wednesday.

Top-ranked Australia tour in October and November for four Tests to be played in Bangalore, Nagpur, New Delhi and Mohali.

"The exact schedule will be finalised based on the logistics," the statement added.

## Don't play with Dravid's career: Kirmani

PTI, Jamshedpur

Former wicketkeeper Syed Kirmani Wednesday lashed out at the Indian team management in Australia for "playing with the career" of Rahul Dravid by pushing him to the opener's slot.

Kirmani felt Dravid has established himself as a dependable number three in the batting order and the team management's decision to send him as opener was not justified.

"Dravid has been consistently performing at no. 3 slot and he should have continued at it." "It was not a right decision particularly when specialist opener Sehwaag was in the squad," he said.

He said he had been taken aback by Sehwaag's exclusion from the final eleven despite the right-hander having an impressive record in Australia.

Kirmani said he did not see any reason for having two spinners in the playing eleven on bouncy Australian pitches.

Questioning the commitment of current players, Kirmani said, "During our time, we used to play for the country and its pride. But, now the people are more inclined towards the game because of the money and glamour it involved."

## Sharapova

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was playing her second game of the season.

"I was able to hit some good shots and to serve my way out of trouble," she added to reporters.

In the 38-minute first set, Wozniack