

Basten wants success

AP, Amsterdam
Marco van Basten is ready to consider anything to bring success back to Ajax and that could include a whole lot of new players and artificial grass at the ailing powerhouse's stadium.

Van Basten is set to take over at Ajax when his four-year stint in charge of the Netherlands national team ends after the June 7-29 European Championship in Austria and Switzerland.

He has agreed to a four-year contract with the four-time European champion, but doesn't want to wait around for an improvement.

"We have a contract for four seasons," Van Basten said Wednesday when presented to the press. "That gives us time, but we also want results immediately."

Ajax have not won a European title since the 1995 Champions League and, currently six points behind defending champion PSV Eindhoven in the Dutch league, look like missing out on their national championship for a fourth straight year.

This season they also crashed out of the Champions League in the qualifying round and then lost to Dinamo Zagreb in the UEFA Cup.

"Winning prizes, competing for the league title, those sort of goals belong at Ajax," Van Basten said.

Van Basten added that he is already preparing for next season.

"Important decisions need to be made about the composition of the team," he said. "We have an agreement with Ajax's management that we can add some reinforcements and we are definitely going to do that."

Van Basten intends to extend contracts for league-leading striker Klaas Jan Huntelaar and international defender John Heitinga, even though he had said while Netherlands coach that Huntelaar would likely benefit from playing at a big overseas club.

Langer bids bye to state cricket

AFP, Perth
Former Australian opener Justin Langer announced his retirement from state cricket here Wednesday.

Langer, who will play county cricket for English side Somerset later this year, will play his last domestic first-class game for Western Australia against Tasmania, starting on Friday.

The 37-year-old played 105 Tests for his country before retiring from Test cricket early in 2007.

Langer has played 117 first-class matches for WA since his 1991 debut and is the state's highest ever run-scorer.

"It is a really sad thing for me to say, and probably a tougher decision than retiring from Test cricket, because that is the end of my career," he said. "Physically and technically I could probably keep doing it, but the fire has gone out."

"The game of cricket has meant absolutely everything to me since I was a little kid... scoring a hundred used to mean I was happy for a couple of weeks."

"So because it does not mean everything to me, it is time to walk away."

Gilchrist goes out quietly

CRICINFO, Brisbane

Adam Gilchrist's final international batting performance was so short, the supporters who were a minute late returning from dinner missed it. Instead of going out with a bang, Gilchrist disappeared in three balls and the closest he got to an explosion was when he was crowded by photographers as he tried to exit the field.

Australia's nine-run loss in the second CB Series final marked Gilchrist's retirement at the age of 36. He contributed 2 before playing back and edging Praveen Kumar, finishing with 9619 runs in 287 one-day internationals. During a quiet game by his ultra-high standards, he did not add to his 472 dismissals.

As the Indians celebrated their 2-0 success, Gilchrist hosted a party in the dressing room for family and friends to mark the end. "To the team and all the support staff, it's been a magic ride," he said. "It's not a fairytale ending tonight, but it's been a fairytale career. To be involved with you guys is something I'll hold dear in my heart for the rest of my life."

Sachin back

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9	Herschelle Gibbs	731
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ICC ODI CHAMPIONSHIPS

Rank	Name	Rating
1	Australia	127
2	South Africa	127
3	New Zealand	113
4	India	113
5	Pakistan	109
6	Sri Lanka	107
7	England	105
8	West Indies	96
9	Bangladesh	47
10	Ireland	28
11	Zimbabwe	18



New Ajax coach Marco van Basten (R) and technical director Martin van Geel (2nd R) speak at a press conference at the Ajax stadium in Amsterdam on Wednesday. Basten will take over after the European Championships.

'Aussie media spurred us'

Cricket

AFP, Brisbane

Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni said here Tuesday the Australian media's fascination with the behaviour of controversial spinner Harbhajan Singh inspired his team during their tour.

After an unlucky 2-1 loss in the four Test series against the Australians, the young Indian one-day side gained revenge with a 2-0 win in the tri-nation CB Series finals.

Dhoni rated the triumph as greater than winning the inaugural Twenty20 World Cup last year and said criticism of Harbhajan had "galvanised" the Indians.

Harbhajan was a key figure throughout the tour as he clashed repeatedly with the Australians.

The feisty bowler escaped a three-match suspension for allegedly calling Andrew Symonds a monkey in the second Test in Sydney when the decision was overturned on appeal.

He was also involved in a war of

words with Matthew Hayden during the one-dayers and was cleared of allegations he made monkey gestures and spat towards the crowd during the first final.

Speaking after Tuesday's win here to secure the tri-series title, Dhoni said the Indians rallied behind the besieged spinner.

"There was a time when it seemed like he was like Michael Jackson, the way the media were following him," Dhoni said.

"I think it would have been better if they stuck to cricket."

"He (Harbhajan) was harassed but after a while you get used to it—it backlashed... it galvanised our team."

"It became part of life, for close to three months every day there was something."

"I don't know what will happen to the Aussie media."

"Harbhajan is going back home, so they will need someone to replace him."

Dhoni said the controversies masked the good cricket his side was generally playing.

He stood by Harbhajan, saying he had been unfairly maligned.

"People might say he might have crossed the barrier but nothing was proved against him," he said.

"From outside he looks a bit rash but you have to respect individuals."

"The more he was taken into these controversies, the more determined he was to perform."

"As skipper it's difficult to calm him down, he's an aggressive player and quite expressive on the field."

"But he's the kind of player who fights hard—that's a quality and that's what character is all about."

While all the external focus was on Harbhajan, Dhoni was pleased that young players like Ishant Sharma, Rohit Sharma, Robin Uthappa, Piyush Chawla and Praveen Kumar were important performers in the tri-series.

He said they were the future of Indian cricket.

"This series win will give them the confidence, security and assurance that they need that they are part of the team," Dhoni said.

"Ultimately, this will be the core of the team."

'Triumph against all Oz'

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

Indian media on Wednesday rewarded the cricket team's conquest of world champions Australia with front page banner headlines, celebrating a victorious end to an acrimonious tour.

"Triumph against all Oz" screamed the mass-selling Hindustan Times a day after Mahendra Dhoni's young Indian team completed a 2-0 whitewash of Australia in the one-day finals.

"The Men in Blue overcame insult and injury, hostility on and off the field from players, spectators and media, on the world's toughest tour against the world's best side," the paper said.

"Australian captain Ricky Ponting admitted India outplayed them in the one-day finals. A more graceful captain would also have admitted that India had out-behaved Australia all summer."

The one-day win followed an ill-tempered Test series that Australia won 2-1, but the tour may be best remembered for India's stunning victory in Perth, regarded as a graveyard for visiting teams because of its bouncy

wicket.

Most Indians are convinced the Test series scoreline would have been reversed had umpiring blunders not gone against the tourists in the second Test in Sydney.

Lavish praise was showered on Dhoni's one-day team, whose average age of 22 was bolstered only by the towering presence of 34-year-old Sachin Tendulkar, who hit match-winning 117 not out and 91 in the two finals.

"We are the champs," said a front page headline in the Times of India, which added that India's win signalled an impending change in the cricketing world order while wrecking the aura of Australian invincibility.

The tour, marred by controversy and bad blood, looked in danger of collapsing after the Sydney Test when Harbhajan Singh copped a three-match suspension for allegedly racially abusing Andrew Symonds.

The International Cricket Council not only overturned the suspension following an appeal hearing, but ensured the tour went ahead by accepting India's demand that West Indian umpire Steve Bucknor be sacked.

Controversy, however, refused to fade away.

During a one-day match, promising Indian seamer Ishant Sharma was fined for a verbal exchange with Symonds and the Indians countered with a complaint about provocative behaviour by the Australians.

Matthew Hayden then called Harbhajan an "obnoxious weed" on radio and the Indian spinner responded by saying the opener was one of the least liked players in world cricket.

The Australian media also accused Harbhajan of spitting at fans and making monkey gestures, which was again thrown out by the ICC due to lack of evidence.

Few failed to notice that Harbhajan dismissed his tormentors, Hayden and Symonds, in both finals in Sydney and Brisbane.

"One Sikh is enough for 125,000 people," the turbaned Harbhajan told the Indian media, quoting the revered Sikh saint Guru Gobind Singh.

"It's not like all Australians were against me," the spinner said.

"When I went out to eat or something, people met me nicely. But, yes, on the field there were a lot of unnecessary things spoken. I tried to ignore all of it, and it just made me stronger."

Honours even on Day 1

FROM PAGE 17
slashing at a wide delivery from Sidebottom and being caught behind to give debutant gloveman Tim Ambrose his first Test dismissal.

Sidebottom, with two for 39 from 21 overs, was the pick of the England bowlers in which all took a wicket, while at the other end of the scale Matthew Hoggard finished the day with one for 95.

Monty Panesar claimed one for 66 after initially having the New Zealand batsmen under control until McCullum forced him off line with a destructive attack.

Panesar's performance on a wicket which started to show turn before the second new ball was taken would have heartened New Zealand who included off-spinner Jeetan Patel in their playing line up to partner Vettori.

It is the first time in two years that New Zealand have used two spinners in a Test. Patel's inclusion was at the expense of seam bowlers Mark Gillespie and Grant Elliot. England wicketkeeper Ambrose is the only debutant in the Test. The first casualty of the match was England's Ian Bell, fielding at silly mid on, who was struck on the arm by a pull shot from his New

Zealand namesake and taken to hospital.

It was initially feared Bell had fractured his wrist but x-rays revealed he had only suffered severe bruising.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the first day of the first Test between New Zealand and England at Seddon Park in Hamilton on Wednesday:

NEW ZEALAND: First innings

Howc	Collingwood	b Panesar	92
Bell	c Cook	b Harbison	19
Fleming	c Cook	b Sidebottom	41
Sinclair	c & b Collingwood		8
Taylor	not out		54
Oram	c Cook	b Hoggard	10
McCullum	c Ambrose	b Sidebottom	51
Vettori	not out		4
Extras	(lb-2, nb-1)		3
Total	(For 6 wickets in 90 overs)		282
To bat	Mills, Patel, Martin.		
Fall of wickets:	1-44, 2-108, 3-129, 4-176, 5-191, 6-277.		

Bowler

	O	M	R	W
Sidebottom	21	8	39	2
Hoggard	21	1	95	1
Harmison	15	2	64	1
Panesar	26	7	66	1
Collingwood	7	2	16	1

ENGLAND: Cook, Vaughan, Strauss, Pietersen, Bell, Collingwood, Ambrose,

Champs

FROM PAGE 17
Barcelona's expected progress through to the next stage was overshadowed by another injury to Argentinian star Lionel Messi which looks like him missing a month and the likelihood of the first leg of the quarterfinals.

All of which left Barca coach Frank Rijkaard looking more like the losing coach.

"Messi's injury has overshadowed the night. It has affected everybody," said Rijkaard.

The last word, though, belongs to Wenger—who knows how injuries to players can affect a club after Eduardo's awful injury over a week ago—and what lies ahead for future rivals.

"My players are hungry." The club next on Arsenal's menu has been warned.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Japanese player Ayami lifted the women's singles title in the Jabbar Memorial tennis tournament yesterday, outplaying local girl Ishrat Sultana 6-4, 6-1 in the final.

Omar Faruk Sunny and Sheikh Hasibul Haque of BKSP won the boys' Under-16 and 14 singles titles respectively also yesterday.

Top seed Amol Roy set a men's singles final clash today against second seed Ranjan Ram. The two, however, will be on the same side when they play Dipu and Niranjana in the doubles final.

MINI HANDBALL

The KFC-Pizza Hut girls' mini handball tournament will commence today at the Dhanmondi Women's Sports Complex.

Sponsors Transcom Foods will provide Tk one lakh out of the total 1.43,000 budget for the 12-team event, informed organisers at a press conference.

Former national footballer and deputy secretary-general of Bangladesh Olympic Association Ashrafuddin Ahmed Chumnu will declare the meet open this morning.

UNB adds:

PREMIER KABADDI

Bangladesh Rifles earned an emphatic 50-17 victory over Sonali Bank in the 11th Pran Juice Metropolis Premier Division Kabaddi League at the Outer Stadium kabaddi court.

In the day's other matches, Azad SC beat Fire Service 27-9 and Bangladesh Navy defeated Dikusha SC 39-19.

'You only live once'

AFP, Brisbane

A streaker left seeing stars when Andrew Symonds flattened him during Australia's one-day cricket final against India was unrepentant Wednesday after being fined over his antics.

Robert Ogilvie insisted he had no regrets about his on-field romp Tuesday night, saying it was "great" when burly all-rounder Symonds smashed him to the turf of Brisbane's Gabba ground with a shoulder charge.

After receiving summary justice from Symonds on the field, Ogilvie faced an official dressing down Wednesday at the Brisbane Magistrates Court.

The 26-year-old was handed a 1,500 dollars (1,395 US) fine but escaped having a conviction recorded against him after pleading guilty to wilful exposure.

The court heard Ogilvie had been drinking with his brother and friends when he decided to strip and run on to the field.

He dodged security guards and police but made the mistake of running too close to Symonds, who used his pre-season training with the Brisbane Broncos rugby league team to fell the intruder with a powerful shoulder charge.

Prosecutors said Ogilvie told police after the incident that "it was just something he had to do", although his defence lawyer insisted he was sorry for his actions.

He showed no sign of regret outside the court when asked how it felt to be on the wrong end of a Symonds' tackle.

"It was great actually... just like playing football," he told reporters.

He said he would never streak again but was not sorry about his naked run, saying: "You only live once, don't you?"

Lawyers quoted in Australian newspapers said Symonds could potentially face assault charges over the incident but Ogilvie said he was not considering legal action against the player.

Cricket Australia official Michael Brown said Symonds had his organisation's full support and would not face any action over the shoulder charge.

"He was dealing with self-preservation which we support 100 per cent," Brown told reporters in Canberra.

"Andrew was in the zone and was severely threatened."

"No person has the right to impinge upon another person's space, particularly a sportsman playing his trade."

Queensland state Premier Anna Bligh said the streaker had posed a danger to players.

"It might seem funny at the time but it can be quite dangerous," she said.

The eye-watering incident has been posted more than 30 times on video sharing website YouTube, attracting more than 80,000 hits by mid-afternoon Wednesday.

It is not the first time an Australian cricketer has retaliated against a streaker.

Bowler Terry Alderman tackled one in Perth in the early 1980s, injuring his shoulder in the process, and Greg Chappell was so angered when approached by a nude man at Auckland's Eden Park in 1976 that he smacked him on the bottom with his bat.

IN MEMORY OF NANNU

The Football Legend

SHAFIUL ALAM ZAHID

For those of us who were fortunate enough to be part of the national football team of the seventies, Nannu Bhai (Monower Hosain Nannu) was one of the star football players of that time. It was in 1968 that I saw him for the first time when he used to live at the BG Press Colony in the Teigoan Industrial Area while I used to reside in Maghbazar.

Between BG Press and Maghbazar, there was an empty field, which was logged with water in monsoon but substituted as our playing field during the winter months. Every evening we used to play football there.

Nannu Bhai was eight years older than me and his younger brother Monju is a close friend of mine while his nephew Sajju is my class-friend. We were all students of BAF Shaheen School and after school, the every other day, we went to Nannu Bhai's grandfather's house. Every evening we used to play at Maghbazar Jheel (an empty land beside Begun Bari). Nannu Bhai used to play in the Second Division League at that time and started his career with BG Press Club.

When I started my football career in 1970, I participated in the Pakistan Youth Championship and then joined Wari Club. Nannu Bhai was already at Wari and helped teach me football tactics. His affection and care towards younger players was second to none and he was very protective about us. After the Liberation War, Nannu Bhai joined Mohammedan Sporting Club and was one of the gentle and polite booters on the field. During the years of heat and excitement of post-independence football years, encompassing mostly Abahani and Mohammedan, Nannu Bhai was an icon of civility, grace, and compassion that made him a role model for the rest of us.

Now talking about the game, when Abahani started adopting 4-2-4/4-3-3 system, Nannu Bhai was the key architect of the team. I saw his best game against Kolkata's Mohun Bagan in Dhaka. He was playing for the Bangladesh Football Federation Eleven and gave one of his best performances on field. Another superstar of that era, Kazi Salahuddin, scored the winning goal and the BFF XI won.

However, Nannu Bhai was the key player of that match. In the VIP Gallery, some Indian star footballers and sport journalists were asking about Nannu Bhai, "Who is this player?" They said that they had seen a lot of footballers but never saw such a skilled one like Nannu in this region. His tackling ability in the defence amazed everyone. Particularly, he was the pioneer in introducing what is popularly known as 'sliding tackle' in football.

When Nannu Bhai retired from football, many of us insisted that he starts coaching. We used to tell him that youngsters of this country needed to have the opportunity to learn from a gifted and talented player like him. For some untold and unexpressed 'obhiman', he would remain silent and only give a gentle smile and change the topic.

Given the decent man he was, quite rare in our sports arena, he never told anyone why he so silently withdrew from the world of Bangladeshi football which could have benefited so much had he been active in his post-retirement years either as a coach or as an organiser. Now seeing the plight of some of our much revered players (like Salahuddin Bhai) who tried to help Bangladeshi football, I guess Nannu Bhai was wise enough not to step into this world which has become so politicised, unprofessional, and petty.

I now live in the USA and came to Bangladesh a couple of days before Nannu Bhai's death and I came to know of the sad news of Nannu Bhai's demise. When I heard the news, I was in shock and was reflecting on the past 38 years of memory with him. For those of us who were fortunate enough to see the golden age of football in Bangladesh, Nannu Bhai was one of the most shining stars in a galaxy that had celebrities like Salahuddin, Enayet, Shantu, Tipu, Protap and many other legends. Unfortunately, the current generation did not have the chance to see the magic they possessed in their feet.

May God grant Nannu Bhai the peace and serenity that he so easily generated wherever he went and may He give his family the strength to overcome this irreparable loss.

The writer is a former national youth footballer and freedom fighter

The shift of tide

Cricket

AFP, Brisbane

The fireworks exploding behind the presentation stage after India beat Australia in the tri-series final were not the only ones to add spark to an overheated summer.

As India's young team celebrated wildly, many observers wondered if they were witnessing a changing of the guard of world cricket, and whether India's aggressive approach was a reflection of a country growing in self-belief.

The four-Test and one-day series, which ended on Tuesday, provided some of the most scintillating cricket ever seen in Australia.

Yet the Indian tour will be remembered more for what happened off the field than on it.

Umpiring controversies, accusations of racism against spinner Harbhajan Singh, perceived power plays by the Indian cricket board and bitter animosity between a number of opposing players soured the summer.

When combined with moments of high farce, such as Andrew Symonds' crash tackle of a streaker in the second one-day final, it was sometimes hard to remember that the two best teams in world cricket were fighting for supremacy.

"I guess with this summer, it's been a pretty constant stream of things that you're hearing or reading about or seeing that I've had to answer," admitted Australian skipper Ricky Ponting.

"It's been more constant this year than it probably has in the past. But I'm not making any excuses for me or the team why we haven't played well."

India arrived in Australia at the end of December for the traditional Boxing Day Test in Melbourne, but when they surrendered meekly to suffer a massive 337-run loss there

was no indication of the drama to come.

Just three days later they were in Sydney for a Test match that will be remembered for all the wrong reasons.

India were on the receiving end of a number of poor umpiring decisions which they feel cost them the match—they lost by 122 runs.

And to add insult to injury abrasive spinner Harbhajan Singh was reported by the Australians for racially abusing Symonds and subsequently suspended for three matches.

The Indians responded by threatening to call the tour off and refused to travel to Canberra for a practice match.

After umpire Steve Bucknor—blamed for most of the poor decisions—was stood down for the third Test in Perth and Harbhajan's ban was lifted until a hearing following the fourth Test in Adelaide, the Indians agreed to continue.

They then surprised everyone by storming to a 72-run victory in Perth and subsequently drawing in Adelaide.

India surprised again by sending veterans Rahul Dravid, VVS Laxman and Sourav Ganguly home and bringing out a raft of young players for the triangular one-day series.

This decision looked flawed as the rampant Australians stormed through the preliminary games against India and Sri Lanka, but as the series wore on players like Gautam Gambhir, Rohit Sharma, and Ishant Sharma began to flourish.

The series provided a stark contrast of age verses experience, and the first real indication that other teams no longer fear Australia in the post-Glenn McGrath/Shane Warne era.

The sight of a retiring Adam Gilchrist trudging off for the last time on Tuesday was a reminder that Australia is struggling after almost two decades at the top, just