

Harbhajan lets BCCI down

REUTERS, Mumbai

Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) felt "let down" by Harbhajan Singh after a slapping incident involving compatriot Shanthakumaran Sreesanth.

Harbhajan was suspended on Saturday pending a disciplinary hearing and the incident, which happened in an IPL game on Friday, dominated the front pages of newspapers in the cricket-mad country at the weekend.

"I feel let down," the board's chief administrative officer Ratnakar Shetty told Sunday's Hindustan Times newspaper. "This type of behaviour is unheard of, shameful."

The board had stood up for Harbhajan in an ugly row in Australia this year. He was initially banned for three Tests after being found guilty of making racist remarks against all-rounder Andrew Symonds, but was subsequently let off with a fine on a lesser charge following an appeal.

"If the players are taking this tournament lightly, it's time they realised it is serious cricket... when the board stands behind its players, it doesn't mean it will tolerate any nonsense," Shetty said.

Harbhajan is one of his country's most successful spin bowlers, but his disciplinary record has been poor. He was even ejected from the Indian board's National Cricket Academy early in his career.

"We are not going to sweep things under the carpet," IPL match referee and adjudicator Farokh Engineer told Indian media.

Black Caps offer winter contract

CRICINFO, undated

New Zealand have announced winter contracts for the first time with seven players, including Grant Elliott, on the list. The deals run from May to September and cover the Emerging Players Tournament in Queensland in July and the New Zealand A tour of India in September.

"All players contracted will be under consideration for winter tours by the New Zealand A or Emerging Players Tournament sides, or even the Blackcaps," a New Zealand spokesman confirmed to Cricinfo.

"These contracts have been awarded in recognition of their performance in the last domestic season," Glenn Turner, one of New Zealand's selectors, said. "We have identified them as possible future Blackcaps, or as players who we expect to build on existing international experience. There is an expectation that they will keep working on their game during the winter."

The all-rounder Elliott, 29, made his Test debut against England last month but was overlooked for a full contract two weeks ago. However, the winter deal gives him hope his international career will not stall at one match.

Nathan McCullum is one step closer to joining his brother Brendon in the national set-up again after receiving one of the seven contracts. His only match in New Zealand colours came at the World Twenty20 last year, when he made 1 and was not required to bowl against South Africa.

Abahani-Wari

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umpires and the problem will not be solved unless the number of umpires increases," he added.

Bangladesh Hockey Federation general secretary Sajad A Adel said that they were going to set a code of conduct for the players away from misbehaviour during matches.

Adel informed that there would be no relegation this season as the governing body of the federation had earlier decided not to demote any team considering the financial problems.

The league committee has decided that each club will be allowed to register three foreign players and field all three in a match. Green Delta Insurance Company general manager Nazim Tazik Chowdhury was also present during the briefing.

The sponsoring company has given the federation Tk. 20 lakh to conduct the Premier, the First and Second Division Leagues for three seasons, and this will be the second season as the 2007 season saw no league held.



Did U Know?

Michael Laudrup of Denmark appeared for Real Madrid in a 5-0 win over Barcelona and also Barcelona when they beat Real Madrid 5-0.



Sajad A Adel (2nd from L), Bangladesh Hockey Federation general secretary, speaks at a press briefing in connection with the Green Delta Premier Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani Stadium yesterday.

Gilchrist mauls Mumbai



CRICINFO, undated

Adam Gilchrist ignited the DY Patil Stadium with the fastest century of the tournament as the Deccan Chargers raced to their first win in the Indian Premier League on Sunday. The battle between the two bottom-ranked teams teed off, and Gilchrist made use of short deliveries in the first over from Ashish Nehra, dispatching one over square leg and the other through cover point.

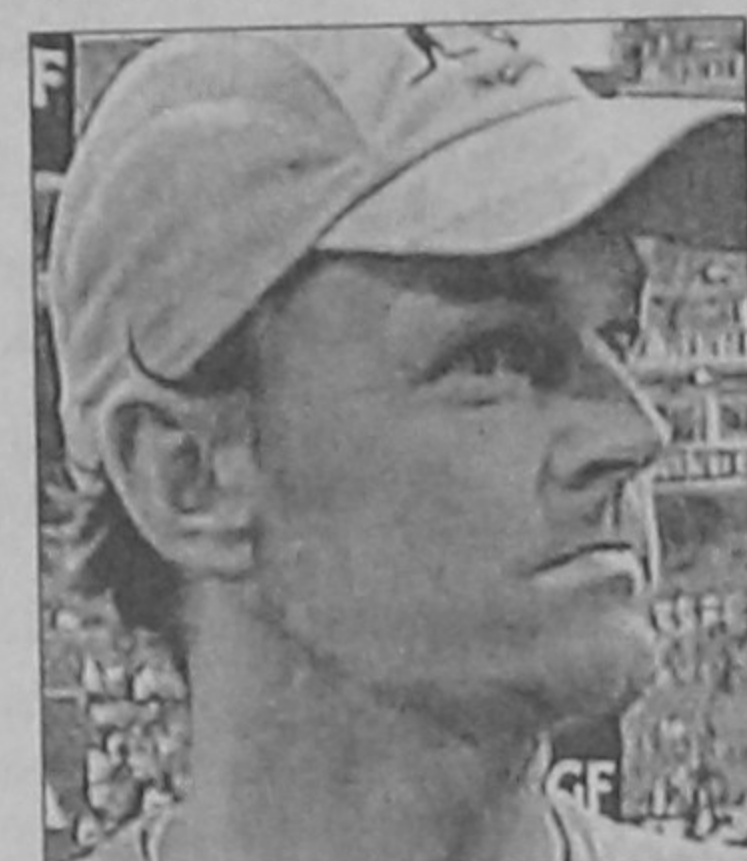
Andrew Symonds had got a century off 47 deliveries the previous game but Gilchrist needed only 42 as he decimated the weak Mumbai Indians' attack on the small ground. The intent was aggressive right from the word go, and Gilchrist made use of short deliveries in the first over from Ashish Nehra, dispatching one over square leg and the other through cover point.

Pulls and cuts were played with ease as Mumbai's quicker bowlers erred in their length, and after six fours, Gilchrist hit his first six, lofting Sanath Jayasuriya over deep midwicket. Siddharth Chitnis, the off-break bowler making his Twenty20 debut, was spared by going only for 12 in the last Powerplay over, but Shaun Pollock, leading Mumbai in Harbhajan Singh's absence, was taken apart once the field restrictions were off.

Gilchrist savagely pulled Pollock over the deep backward square-leg boundary for consecutive sixes, the first bringing up his first Twenty20 fifty. The shot that followed pierced the off-side boundary, and Gilchrist then nonchalantly moved across the stumps to launch one over long leg, making it 23 for the over.

Abhishek Nayar's arrival was greeted with three sixes, the third over midwicket brought up the hundred, and more astonishing was the fact that he had reached the mark as early as on the stroke of the

tenth over. From then on, victory was just a formality, and Deccan, reached their target with 48 balls to spare, both indication of the fury that had been unleashed. At the other end, VVS Laxman scored just 37 in a stand of 155, easily the highest of the tournament. Mumbai might have been at the receiving end, but the home crowd too cheered what had been an enthralling innings. Ninety-six of Gilchrist's 109 came through boundaries, making it a busy day for the Deccan cheerleaders, who



ADAM GILCHRIST

was sporting a new outfit. A new home ground and a new captain surely didn't bring about a turn of fortunes for Mumbai, and Deccan justified Laxman's decision to field first by restricting them to 154. Laxman's captaincy had come under the hammer after three consecutive losses, but on Sunday he was right on the ball. He was quick to shuffle around his bowlers, who to their credit, backed up their captain's decision with some good bowling.

It was only the string of 30s from the middle order that helped Mumbai reach 154. Pollock made a run-a-ball 31 to revive the innings, but it was the quickfire 34s from Nayar and Dwayne Bravo that ensured the Mumbai bowlers had a decent total to defend.

Jayasuriya and Luke Ronchi had failed to make an impression in earlier games, and they were kept quiet once again, despite the short

boundaries, by RP Singh and Nuwan Zoysa. Ronchi hit three fours, but fell attempting to slash a wide delivery angled across from RP, edging straight to Laxman at slip.

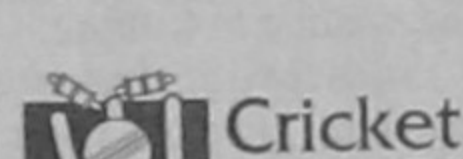
Sanjay Bangar was brought on in the fourth over, perhaps to help Zoysa change ends, and Ajinkya Rahane, another Twenty20 debutant, pulled straight into the hands of Pragyan Ojha at deep square leg. The next move from Laxman though was a masterstroke. Shahid Afridi was brought on in the final over of the Powerplay, and he had Robin Uthappa caught behind. At the end of six overs, Mumbai were tottering at 27 for 3.

Jayasuriya had made only 4 off his first ten deliveries, and one pitched short from Zoysa fetched him his first boundary, which came off his 14th. But, once again Afridi did the damage, Jayasuriya got a top edge as he tried to power a goosy through the leg side. The onus was then on Pollock to hold the innings together, but he too couldn't stay till the end.

Nayar smashed three sixes in his 19-ball innings, as 45 runs came in the overs 14 to 16. But the top-edged Gilchrist while trying to hook Zoysa. Bravo too managed to find the gaps, and was out for 34 off the last ball of the innings as Mumbai finished on 154. However, with the form Gilchrist was in, even 254 would have been tough to defend for Mumbai, who now have four losses after four games, and sorely need Sachin Tendulkar to return.

SCORES IN BRIEF
MUMBAI INDIANS: 154 for 7 in 20 overs (Ronchi 13, Jayasuriya 18, Uthappa 6, Pollock 31, Nayar 34, Bravo 34, Khote 7 not out; RP Singh 2-15, Zoysa 1-30, Bangar 2-34, Afridi 2-32)
DECCAN CHARGERS: 155 for no loss in 12 overs (Gilchrist 109 not out, Laxman 37 not out)
Result: Deccan Chargers won by 10 wickets.
Man-of-the-match: Adam Gilchrist
Toss: Deccan Chargers
Umpires: Asad Rauf (Pakistan) and SL Shastri

Mani also disappointed



REUTERS, London

Former International Cricket Council (ICC) president Ehsan Mani said on Monday the governing body could lose credibility after the "disgraceful" treatment of outgoing chief executive Malcolm Speed.

Mani became the latest critic of the ICC board, which has come under fire after Speed was placed on paid leave from Friday until the end of his contract in July after falling out with president Ray Mali and other board members.

"I'm very disappointed with the way Malcolm has been treated," Mani told Reuters.

"He has served the ICC with loyalty and a huge amount of distinction and I would have expected that if there were differences they could have been handled privately. The way the board has handled this has been disgraceful."

"If they do not pull their act together they will lose credibility." His comments came a day after Cricket Australia also expressed

regret at the manner in which Speed's tenure had ended.

"Having known Malcolm personally I know how he has taken the ICC to a much higher level (compared to when he joined)," said Mani.

"It's a great shame he has left in this way -- things seem to have got out of control. There will always be differences but they should be handled better."

Mani, a London-based Pakistani expatriate, was chairman of the ICC's finance and marketing committee before his term as president from 2003 to 2006.

He and Speed shared a productive relationship that built on the ICC's image after times as recent as the early 1990s when it had little authority over the world game and no major income.

Recent problems have centred around the ICC's handling of an audit into Zimbabwe Cricket's finances, which found serious financial irregularities in the Zimbabwe board accounts.

The ICC did not call for any sanctions, with the audit deciding there had been no evidence of criminality and no individuals had

gained financially.

The ICC board's decision not to go public with the findings upset Speed and that, among other issues, ultimately led to his early departure.

"The ICC must always be transparent," said Mani. "Ideally the report should have been made public. Nothing ever stays private."

Mani, who said Speed had been let down by the ICC executive board, agreed with president-elect David Morgan's comment at the weekend that Speed's case was one of a number of issues that had damaged the ICC's image.

"But I am hopeful that with David Morgan taking over (in July) the ICC will come through this," Mani said.

South African Haroon Lorgat, appointed as Speed's successor on April 4, starts in July.

The board's hard line approach will continue as Ashraf said that they would not be happy with the same explanation when they meet with the players in the next time.

"We are not ready to hear the same old explanations any more," he warned.

Then is it financial punishment that awaits Mohammad Ashraf's men in near future? "It's still an idea but if someone gets bonus for good performance then why the same will not face pay cut because of his bad performance. It's a simple logic," was the response of Ashraf.

Hair set for Test return

AFP, London

Controversial Australian cricket umpire Darrell Hair is set to return to international cricket after being appointed to stand in the second Test between England and New Zealand which will be his first taste of international action since 2006.

The 55-year-old was recalled to the elite panel of umpires last month after the International Cricket Council (ICC) decided to reinstate him.

Hair was dumped from the panel following an abandoned match between England and Pakistan at The Oval in 2006, which ended with the tourists conceding the first Test forfeit in the game's history.

His reinstatement after a "rehabilitation" course, has been heavily criticised by Pakistan.

Former Pakistan captain Inzamam-ul-Haq -- who led his team off the pitch in the Test where Hair ruled against them -- said he was "shocked and disgusted" by Hair's reinstatement.

Hair -- who has said he is prepared to officiate in Test matches in Pakistan if called upon to do so -- will stand with Simon Taufel in Manchester between May 23-27 and will also officiate in the third Test, with West Indian Steve Bucknor.

Taufel and Bucknor will umpire in the first Test at Lord's, which starts on 15 May.

CA regrets Speed exit

AFP, Melbourne

Cricket Australia (CA) expressed regret on Sunday at the premature end of Malcolm Speed's spell as chief executive of the International Cricket Council (ICC).

Speed, a former chief executive of CA, was placed on paid leave by the ICC on Friday after falling out with several board members over various issues within Zimbabwe Cricket.

He was scheduled to step down when his contract expired in July. "I note with regret that Malcolm Speed's distinguished career as an international cricket administrator has ended in the manner in which it has," CA chairman Creagh O'Connor said in a statement.

"I know first-hand of the passionate, professional and diligent manner in which he has sought for cricket to achieve high standards of administrative excellence."

Speed's departure came in the wake of an independent audit finding serious financial irregularities in the Zimbabwe board accounts, though the ICC did not call for any sanctions.

It also decided there had been no evidence of criminality and no individuals had gained financially. O'Connor said the ICC had a difficult job managing the global game but its primary focus should be on the sport.

"As many have noted in the last few days, administering the ICC, which features a diverse global constituency, is a challenging task," O'Connor added.

"Cricket is becoming a genuinely global sport and sustainably have a long-term, winnable future if the diverse interests within the game can put the game's interests ahead of any other interests."

Check sequence of events: Dhoni

CRICINFO, undated

Mahendra Singh Dhoni, India's captain in the shorter versions of the game, hopes the authorities will check the sequence of events rather than go by what television footage in the Harbhajan Singh-Sreesanth controversy.

Comparing the row to the one between footballers Zinedine Zidane and Marco Materazzi at the last World Cup final, Dhoni felt that the act of provocation needed to be checked too.

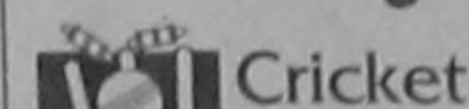
In the World Cup final, Zidane was sent off the field for head-butting Materazzi after the latter allegedly provoked him with personal remarks.

"What Zidane did was wrong, but Materazzi also was not completely in the right," Dhoni wrote in his column for the Hindustan Times. "Harbhajan is a very aggressive cricketer who plays hard and is there for his teammates whenever they need him. Even Sreesanth has seen this supportive side of Harbhajan in the Indian dressing room. Sreesanth is also a very aggressive cricketer who likes to express his highs and lows very passionately on the cricket field. Off the field, you will not meet a more soft-spoken guy than Sree."

Dhoni was happy to know the two players had sorted things out between themselves and said the incident was unlikely to have any effect on the Indian dressing room.

"The incident... was unfortunate because I know both of them, and they are not bad guys at all. Everybody is passing judgment based on what is reported in the newspapers, and I am too far from the scene to actually comment on it."

Gray finds it disgraceful



AFP, Sydney

Former International Cricket Council (ICC) chairman Malcolm Gray has condemned as "disgraceful" Malcolm Speed's removal as head of cricket's world governing body, reports said Monday.

Gray said the chief executive's premature departure from the ICC in a row over Zimbabwe was a sign that power, money and race are interfering with the sport's administration.

"I think it's disgraceful. To me it smacks of mismanagement of a man leaving his position. By doing this it just shows there are problems," Gray told Melbourne's The Age newspaper.

"Whether it's a cricket body or a corporation you don't bare your dirty washing in public if you can help it."

The International Cricket Council announced on Friday that Speed is to step down early over Zimbabwe.

The announcement was seen as further proof of the problems posed to world cricket by the troubled African state, now dealing with the fall-out from a disputed

presidential election. The extraordinary development was reportedly prompted by Speed's unhappiness at the board's failure to take any significant action against Zimbabwe Cricket after an independent forensic audit raised questions about its



MALCOLM GRAY

finances. Gray, who recruited fellow Australian Speed into the ICC job, said Speed's dismissal two months before his retirement showed there was something wrong at the administration's highest level.

"In this case I'd have thought it

would be completely avoidable," he said.

"I suspect parts of the problems have been brought about by the use of power, with the money flowing in, underlying a lot of decisions in international bodies. Regrettably, there are racial connotations."

Cricket Australia chairman Creagh O'Connor also said he regretted the manner of Speed's departure.

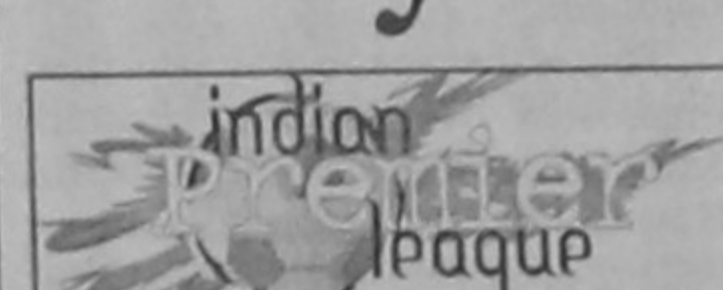
"As chairman of Cricket Australia, I note with regret that Malcolm Speed's distinguished career as an international cricket administrator has ended in the manner in which it has," Creagh said in a CA statement released late Sunday.

"Cricket is becoming a genuinely global sport and will only have a long-term, sustainable future if the diverse interests within the game can put the game's interests ahead of any other interests," he added.

Speed will go on paid leave from April 30 until the end of his contract term on July 4.

David Richardson, the ICC's general manager, will serve as interim chief executive until fellow South African Haroon Lorgat takes over as planned as chief executive at the ICC's annual conference in July.

Gilly leaves his mark



CRICINFO, undated

Had Adam Gilchrist been allowed to bat longer, he would almost certainly have broken Brendon McCullum's record of 13 sixes in the opening game of the Indian Premier League. So breathtaking was Gilchrist's assault that he smashed ten sixes during his 48-ball innings and achieved the Deccan Chargers' maiden victory of the tournament with 44 balls to spare. His 109 not out was his first Twenty20 score above 50, the IPL's fastest in the leg side and the third-fastest in all Twenty20 matches.

It shouldn't surprise many, for Gilchrist had nearly broken Viv Richards' record for the fastest Test century against England in Perth in 2006. Richards did it in 57. He later broke the record for the highest score in a World Cup final when he ransacked Sri Lanka for 149 off 104 balls. And today, in front of a full house at the DY Patil Stadium, Gilchrist left his ominous mark on the Twenty20 format, smashing his previous highest score of 48.

He took full advantage of a bowling attack that was low on confidence after three successive

losses and perhaps tired, having played their third game this week inside five days. The suspension of Harbhajan Singh and the continued absence of Sachin Tendulkar heightened their problems even though Shaun Pollock, the stand-in captain, refused to single out the pair's absence as an "excuse".

Gilchrist, however, wasn't about to sympathise. He had to inspire his own team who, despite a formidable batting line-up, had endured three straight defeats. His job was made easier by the Deccan bowlers who restricted Mumbai to a below-par 154. And once Mumbai's bowlers began to feed him short deliveries, Gilchrist feasted.

Even Pollock, the former South Africa captain, buckled and made seven bowling changes inside the first ten overs. It didn't matter for Gilchrist treated everyone the same way. Pollock was smashed for 23 in an over. Abhishek Nayar for 22, young off-spinner Siddharth Chitnis for 12, and Dwayne Bravo got hit for over ten twice.

Gilchrist traumatised the Mumbai bowlers and carted them over the leg side even if the length was only a fraction short. He scored 77 runs on the leg side and nine of his ten sixes came between long leg and long-on, courtesy a shuffle towards the off side and a full and fast swing of his bat.

Unlike McCullum, whose 158 against Bangalore Royal

Challengers had some streaky shots, Gilchrist's strokes were extremely well hit. Like a good writer, who banks on brevity, Gilchrist's batting is minimalist. He judges the length quickly and then needs to decide where to dispatch the ball.

Gilchrist's dominance was total. Within an hour, Deccan had scored 100, 77 of which had come from Gilchrist. VVS Laxman, the Deccan captain, was a happy spectator at the other end and said later that Gilchrist was "unstoppable" and he was lucky not having to worry setting fields for him.

Each time the IPL has had uncertainty hanging over it, a brilliant performance by a player has overshadowed the questions. When people wondered whether the tournament would be a success, McCullum provided a pyrotechnic start. And now when the Harbhajan Singh-Sreesanth controversy was taking centre stage, Gilchrist has shifted the focus back to cricket in the best way possible.

Mumbai's back against the wall

PTI, Kolkata

After a nightmarish start to their Indian Premier League campaign, Mumbai Indians have an uphill climb with injured skipper Sachin Tendulkar still doubtful for the game against Kolkata Knight Riders at the Eden Gardens here today.

The Mumbai franchise, the most expensive in the eight-team league, is in dire straits after losing the four matches they have played so far. The only team yet to open their points kitty, the Reliance Industries-owned side brings up the rear of the table.

Their stand-in skipper Harbhajan Singh slapping Shanthakumaran Sreesanth after going down to the latter's Kings XI Punjab has given the side additional negative publicity, and the visitors badly need a win to leave behind the unsavoury episode.

While the subsequent 11-match ban on Harbhajan has taken the sting out of their spin bowling arsenal, the unavailability of icon Tendulkar is posing a lot of problems in the batting department.

None of the willowers have cracked a half-century, and the form of Sri Lankan veteran Sanath Jayasuriya and fellow opener Luke Ronchi is a major cause for concern, though young gun Robin Uthappa and Mumbai left-hander Abhishek Nayar have played a couple of decent knocks.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	37 Aquarius	61 Cowboy	16 Burst
1 Across	37 favorite	61 nickname	20 Upper
2 Across	39 Pinch		21 Group of
3 Across	41 Siesta	DOWN	21 Group of
4 Across	42 Literary	1 With	22 Pinnacle
5 Across	43 collection	57-	23 Abrade
6 Across	44 Nonflying	Arctic	27 Card-
7 Across	45 flock	partner of	table
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16 Across	54 Work-a	creator	stand
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18 Across	56 1-Down	7 Consume	40 Molly-
19 Across	57 Man-	fully	codile
20 Across	58 Mouse	8 Pastoral	43 Super-
21 Across	59 Old	9 Librine	market
22 Across	60 Porcino	10 Earthen-	section
23 Across	61 accessory	11 -- do-	45 Joe's
24 Across	62 Canny	comptrols?	comptrols?
25 Across	63 expletive	46 Skate-	boarder's
26 Across	64 Bad	protection	
27 Across	65 hairpiece	47 Campus	
28 Across	66 sample	48 Rever-	
29 Across	67 EPA	berate	
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CRYPTOQUIP

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VGNPV JDP MCHWRC HGWFQCP,
VWRWCSC QDMCQCP LJCR
"GWLWLVCV DN TWLLCS."
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN AN EIGHT-
PRODUCING MOLLUSK HAS STOCKINGS ON ITS
ARMS, WOULD YOU SAY IT'S A SOCKTOPUS?
Today's Cryptoquip: A equals F