

## BFF's body to probe SAFF failure

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has named a three-member probe committee to investigate the reasons behind the national team's failure in the just concluded fifth SAFF Championship.

BFF vice-president Badal Roy confirmed yesterday that a meeting of the emergency committee decided to form the probe committee headed by BFF member Harunur Rashid. The other members are Anwarul Hoque Helal and Sirajul Islam Bachchu.

The committee has already received reports of national team leader Shafiquzzaman, manager Sheikh Mohammed Aslam and national coach Abu Yusuf, who has stepped down also as BFF coach two days earlier.

The committee will have its first meeting today, informed Badal Roy, who feels that the national team desperately need a foreign coach to rise from their present woeful condition.

"I have seen the team before and during our last game in the SAFF against Sri Lanka. I feel we have no other option but to appoint a foreign coach," said Badal, also the chairman of the National Team Management Committee (NTMC).

BFF president Kazi Salahuddin, however, has said that it would be difficult for the federation to rope in a foreign coach at the moment due to various problems including lackoffund.

Yusuf has complained that he did not have the freedom while running the team but Badal denies the allegations.

"The allegations of the coach are not true. The team manager (Aslam) may have given some suggestions as a former national player but he never tried to put Yusuf under pressure. The coach selected the team."

Dismissing Yusuf's complaints about the NTMC to interfere in the team selection, Badal said whatever his committee had done was for the sake of the team. "I know my committee's limit and we have never crossed the line," he said referring to the NTMC's move to include senior players Joy and Nazrul in a bid to strengthen the team although Yusuf was against it. He also regarded Yusuf's comment that the present management, like the past, do not provide a good environment for even a foreign coach unjustified.

"I think he is saying this under pressure from some quarters. There is no truth in it," said the former national captain.

## Abahani leave

FROM PAGE 17

"We started preparation in April when the tournament was supposed to be held in Dhaka but it was delayed. We restarted in May but after that, I lost nine players for the national team camp for the SAFF Championship."

"I trained with just ten players and got the rest only after the SAFF. I had my full team for just two days. So, it is difficult to say how they would gel in the opening match. Nepal are a strong and fast side with many national players," added the former national midfielder, who will take 19 footballers.

"Moreover, my midfield could be depleted as Joy and Abul are doubtful starters due to injuries. I didn't pick them for our preparation match in Narayanganj on Tuesday. If they do not get fully fit, it would be a problem for us."

"The only advantage I have is that all my players have been with us for two years and they have nice understanding," said the coach who prefers a 4-4-2 formation.

Abahani are defence-heavy with as many as eight defenders in the side.

"Sujan played on Tuesday but he also picked up a minor injury. Still, I have many central-defenders to choose from."

Abahani have two foreigners -- Ghanaian striker Ibrahim and defender Yousof -- for the tour.

"Our target is to win the group and I hope that the weather in Kuala Lumpur would suite us at this time."

Abahani will face Regar-TadAZ on June 24 and WAPDA on June 26.

Apart from coach Amalesh, manager Satyajit Das Rupu, the assistant coach and a physician, a number of officials will make the trip.

## SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Biplab, Tarek; defenders: Siraji, Obaidur, Sujan, Pradeep, Nazrul, Sony, Waly, Yousof; midfielders: Joy, Pranotosh, Abul, Zahed Parvez, Ujjal, Mamun; forwards: Emly, Tipu and Ibrahim.



A JOB WELL DONE: Dutch defender John Heitinga kisses his girlfriend after his side's 2-0 win against Romania in the Euro 2008 at Stade de Suisse Wankdorf in Bern on Tuesday.

## Federer on the wane?

AFP, London



Club dogfight as Rafael Nadal plots to shatter the world number one's dream of a record sixth successive title.

The Spaniard, fresh from his French Open humiliation of Federer which delivered him a fourth Roland Garros crown, has been further buoyed by a first career grasscourt title at Queen's.

He is also bidding to become the first Spaniard since Manolo Santana in 1966 to win the men's title and the first man since Bjorn Borg in 1980 to win the French Open and Wimbledon back-to-back.

In any other year, Nadal's task would have been deemed impossible, but 2008 has not been an average year with Federer having lost his Australian Open title and then slumping to the worst defeat of his career in Paris.

Federer, who is just two Wimbledon titles shy of Pete Sampras's record of seven, stopped the rot by winning a fifth title in Halle, his 59th successive grasscourt victory, while Nadal was seeing off Novak Djokovic in

London.

"For sure he (Federer) will have noticed," said Nadal. "I think I'm playing well. And if I continue playing like this, I'm going to have chances for a good result."

"Why can't I win it?" Nadal had never played on grass until two years ago, but has reached the last two Wimbledon finals and, twelve months ago, the 22-year-old came agonisingly close to upsetting Federer in an epic five-set title match.

Federer has not lost a match on grass since a first round exit at Wimbledon at the hands of Croatia's Mario Ancic in 2002 and, despite his French Open final trauma where he won just four games, he insists he's not a spent force.

"Many have been a little bewildered that I judge my performance in Paris as a success, but I see it like this and I will not give up my opinion," said the 12-time Grand Slam title winner.

"If you consider that I had a bad start in 2008 (because of glandular fever), I don't think you can call being in a Grand Slam final a failure."

Federer, 26, claims he has never underestimated Nadal's abilities on the faster surfaces and expects another hurricane-strength challenge when Wimbledon gets underway on Monday.

"I don't think Rafa really has to prove himself much more to show that he's a good grasscourt player," said Federer who has won only six

of his 17 matches with the left-handed Spaniard.

As at Roland Garros, only Serbian world number three Djokovic looks capable of mounting a serious challenge to the top two.

The Australian Open winner will be weary of facing Nadal having lost to the Spaniard in the last three tournaments in which they have competed including a disappointing one-sided semifinal defeat at Roland Garros.

Djokovic was also beaten by Nadal in the Wimbledon semifinals last year although his defeat was an injury-enforced retirement in the third set.

If rankings were a true guide, then world number four Nikolay Davydenko and David Ferrer, the number five, should also be serious contenders but neither has got beyond the fourth round.

That leaves America's Andy Roddick, the runner-up in 2004 and 2005, as probably the only serious challenger to the top three but he is still feeling his way from a back injury which sidelined him from Roland Garros.

Roddick also saw his bid for a fifth Queen's title ended by Nadal in the semifinals last week.

With Tim Henman now in retirement, desperate British fans have transferred their affections to fiery Andy Murray but the Scot, who missed Wimbledon in 2007 with a wrist injury, has seen his preparations hampered by a thumb problem.

## Roger, Ana top seeds

AFP, London

Roger Federer was confirmed as the top seed at Wimbledon on Wednesday as the defending champion aims for a sixth successive singles title at the All-England Club.

Federer's bid to surpass Bjorn Borg's five straight Wimbledon titles begins on Monday and Rafael Nadal, his main rival and newly crowned Queen's champion, will be the second seed.

Novak Djokovic, the Australian Open champion, is seeded third, while Andy Murray, Britain's only realistic hope of success in the singles has been seeded 12th.

French Open champion Ana Ivanovic, the new world number one, has been handed the top seeding in the women's singles.

The Serb's compatriot Jelena Jankovic is the second seed followed by former champion Maria Sharapova.

Serena Williams is seeded sixth with sister Venus, the reigning women's champion, seeded seventh.

## C'Ron mum on future

AFP, Neuchatel

Portugal striker Cristiano Ronaldo on Tuesday insisted he would not address whether his future lies away from Manchester United before the end of Euro 2008 as he prepares for Thursday's quarterfinal against Germany.

"I don't want to talk about my future," said the 23-year-old who has yet to commit himself to the club with which he won the Premiership and Champions League this season amid persistent rumours he wants to join Real Madrid.

Reporters bombarded the star with questions at the Portuguese camp at Neuchatel at a press conference but to no avail.

"I have already said several times that I would not discuss my club future during the Euro," he insisted.

"At the moment I am only concentrating on the match against Germany," he added.

And when an English reporter persisted by asking if he could not reassure United supporters, Ronaldo said pithily: "I think my English is not so bad. I just said I wouldn't speak about my future."

Another journalist tried a different, culinary tack, wondering if Ronaldo preferred "paella or chips?"

The player's response was "bacalhau", a staple cod-based dish in Portugal.

Although Ronaldo is under contract with United for another four years the Spanish media insist Real will break the bank and pay more than 80 million euros to land him.

He has intimated he would like to sign for the Spanish champions if they meet his wage demands, but United are determined to keep the Portugal winger.

United boss Sir Alex Ferguson claimed earlier this month that he would let Ronaldo rot in the reserves rather than be bullied into selling him.

## End result

FROM PAGE 17

Before the game there had been talk about whether Pietersen would repeat Sunday's 'switch-hitting' exploits which saw him twice strike medium-pace Styris for six while effectively batting left-handed.

But there were no 'reverse slog sweeps' before Pietersen, on 13, drove Michael Mason's fourth ball straight to Vettori at mid-off.

Wright though launched Mason over extra-cover for four, drove him next ball for six and then, off the third ball of the over, hoisted the seamer for six over square leg after going down on one knee.

The Sussex batsman then completed his fifty when he hammered Mason, whose two overs cost 24 runs, through mid-off for four.

That shot saw the 23-year-old, in his seventh one-day international, surpass his previous best of 50 against India at The Oval in September.

But going for another big hit, Wright gave Elliott his first wicket at this level when he holed out to Styris at long-off.

No sooner was Wright out then rain stopped play with England 77 for three in the 13th over.

When play resumed Elliott captured the key wickets of Owais Shah, lbw for 18, and England captain Paul Collingwood, caught by Daniel Flynn for 37.

## SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: 162 all out in 24 overs (Wright 52, Collingwood 37, Mascarenhas 23; Elliott 3-23, Mills 2-24, Southey 2-35)

NEW ZEALAND: 127 for 2 in 19 overs (McCullum 60 not out, Taylor 25; Collingwood 1-23, Broad 1-28)

Result: Match ended as no result and England lead the five-match series 1-0.

Toss: New Zealand.

Umpires: Steve Davis and Ian Gould.

Third ODI: Jun 21, Bristol.

## Wimbledon awaits 'em

AFP, London



multi-million dollar battle of the babes at Wimbledon.

Ivanovic, who deposed Sharapova as world number one after her breakthrough French Open triumph, has earned just over five million dollars in her career so far, a figure dwarfed by the Russian's 12 million.

But a victory here on July 5 will surely boost the army of corporate callers desperate for an endorsement from the 20-year-old Serbian with the girl-next-door charm.

When Sharapova won Wimbledon as a 17-year-old in 2004, her bank account swelled virtually overnight and, with an estimated 23 million dollars in off-court earnings alone, she is comfortably the world's richest sportswoman.

A Sharapova-Ivanovic final would be a heaven-sent opportunity for the women's tour to step out of the shadow of a men's circuit driven at breakneck speed by the rivalry of Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal.

Such a final would also provide a fascinating contrast in personali-

ties between Ivanovic, with her permanently sunny optimism, and Sharapova's steely determination.

Both have an ingrained competitive streak forged from the harshness of their childhoods.

Sharapova famously left her mother behind in Russia to make the grade in Florida while Ivanovic practised tennis in an abandoned swimming pool during lulls in the NATO bombing of Belgrade before leaving for Germany.

"It makes you stronger," said the Serbian who was a semifinalist here last year.

Sharapova, who beat Ivanovic in the Australian Open final in January for her third Grand Slam title, has not returned to a Wimbledon final since her 2004 triumph over Serena Williams.

She was a semifinalist in 2005 and 2006 and a fourth round loser to eventual champion Venus Williams last year.

The Russian comes into Wimbledon on the back of another French Open disappointment where she squandered a match point before losing to compatriot Dinara Safina in the fourth round.

"The great thing about being a tennis player is that there are some opportunities that you're going to get during the year, and it's really up to you to take those opportunities," said Sharapova who had been hoping to fill the void left by the shock retirement of Justine Henin.

"But don't get me wrong, I'm going to work hard and it will eventually pay off."

Ivanovic's fellow Serbian, Jelena Jankovic, is now the world number two but has never got beyond the fourth round at Wimbledon while Russia's Svetlana Kuznetsova, a former US Open champion, can only boast a quarter-final place.

That leaves the intimidating presence of the Williams sisters one of whom at least has featured in seven of the last eight finals.

In 2007, Venus surprised many observers, and probably herself, by winning a fourth singles title and making history as the lowest seeded player (23) to take the trophy.

Little sister Serena has won the title twice although the most recent was 2003.

Three of Venus Williams's four Wimbledon wins have been achieved in the immediate aftermath of a demoralising first week setback at the French Open.

After losing in third round in Paris to Italy's Flavia Pennetta this season, the 27-year-old believes she can again turn the disappointment to her advantage at the All England Club.

"I get extremely upset about the result, and then I work even harder," said Williams.

"Whenever I lose a match, I definitely think about what I need to do better. I think if my opponent can make a shot I can make a shot too."

## Domenech admits errors

AFP, Chatel Saint Denis



2008 following defeat to Italy and admitted in hindsight he might have done some things differently.

Asked how he felt after a night to reflect on the French failure Domenech said: "You can't say it was a restful night. It was a night of exchanging views. I should have stuck to my plan of insisting on this generation which is coming through in preparation for 2010."

"But in wishing to shield that initial message and shroud it in the Euro I made an error of communication," said Domenech, who was hamstrung between giving a new crop of youngsters their head or relying on a golden but ageing crop of players whose star has been on the wane since the 2006 World Cup.

In the end, he tried to do both with calamitous results.

Another error was the handling

of the left thigh injury which Patrick Vieira brought into the tournament and which ultimately proved too serious for him to take part amid hints of confusion in the medical camp as "the picture that was coming back to me about the extent of my injury wasn't very clear."

On the subject of Vieira, Domenech insisted: "We managed things as well as we could, together. Pat is an important element of the group and we did all we could to keep him around as long as possible."

"We regret he couldn't get three more matches," said Domenech in a comment which heavily implied the Inter Milan midfielder would join Lilian Thuram in retiring along with Claude Makelele while 35-year-old goalkeeper Gregory Coupet is believed to be considering his future.

"We thought throughout he (Vieira) could play the following (final) match," against Italy, Domenech continued. "We had to take into account his medical and physical state with matches coming thick and fast. It was difficult to take a risk."

Domenech, who stunned many by instead replying to a question about his future on television after the match proposed to his girl-

friend, had pledged that his regime would not take the same risks by keeping on an injured, if talismanic, figure as Vieira in the squad as Roger Lemerre did at the 2002 World Cup with the similarly incapacitated Zinedine Zidane.

Zidane was finally thrown into the fray in a desperate and ultimately fruitless measure in the last group game against Denmark as the French defending champions crashed out.

After French media openly called for his resignation with France coming bottom of their group with one draw against Romania and losses to the Italians and the Dutch Domenech insisted that "the important thing is not the fate of the coach."

Having dropped old stalwarts such as David Trezeguet for the likes of young bloods Karim Benzema and Batembi Gomis the French coach insisted that he was trying to bring along a new generation of stars and it could not be done to order for a specific event but was an ongoing process.

"The French team is not about meeting an appointment every two years. The Euro has to serve as a field on which to gain experience for the 2010 World Cup."

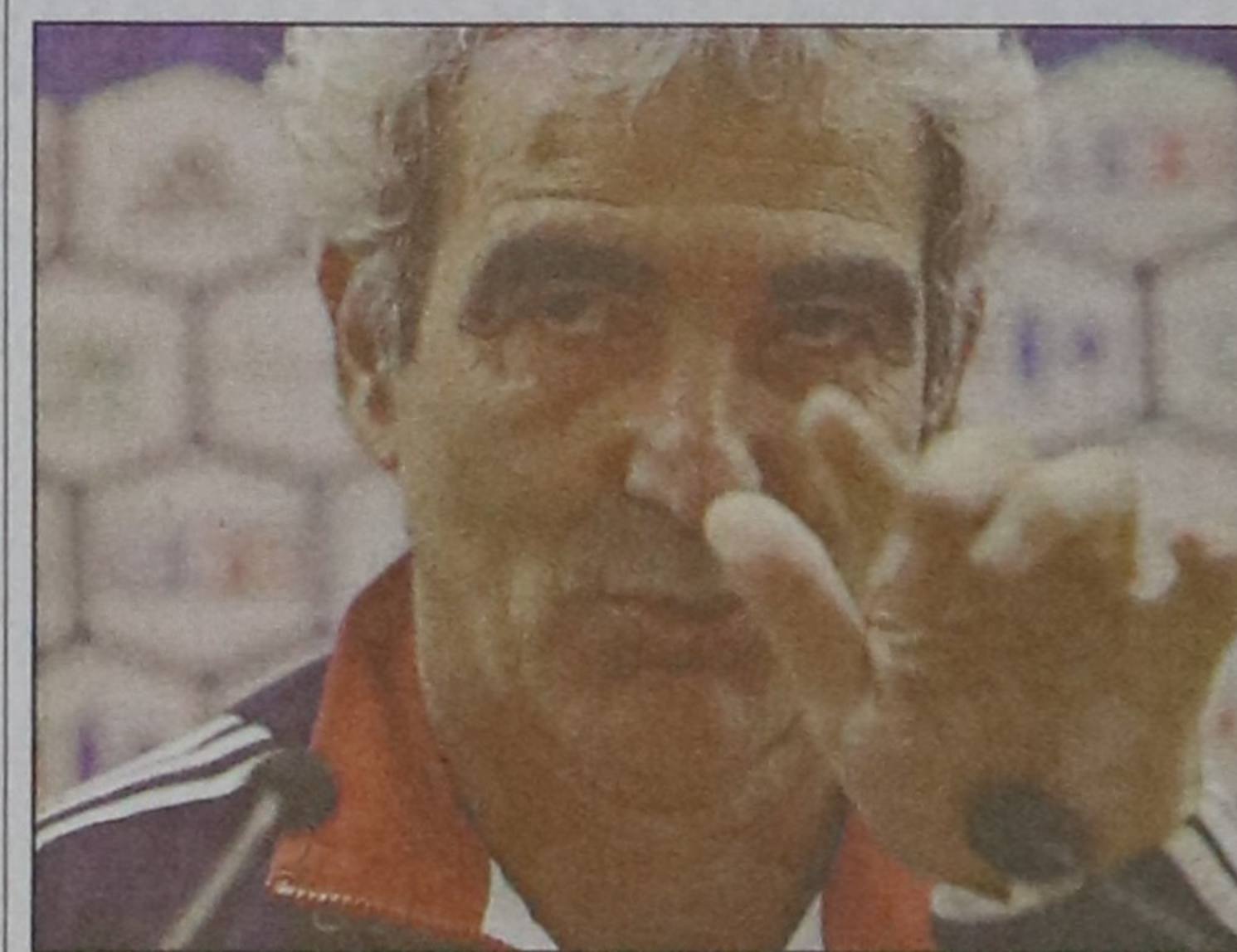
Responding again to Vieira's charge that there had been "incoherence" regarding the extent of his injury Domenech said: "I understand when players say things are not progressing quickly enough. The (medical) staff did the best they could."

"You have to transfer the group the spirit of the older heads who have this maturity and this experience. That was one of his functions, but there was a lack of homogeneity (between the older and younger players)."

Admitting to "disappointment" at his team's elimination Domenech, who said that "this team has a future" but would not be drawn on his own, said that renewing the squad could not be carried out too precipitously.

"If you set out with 23 inexperienced players you'll take some beatings."

In the event, with their mixture of old, young, disaffected and unfit, they did anyway.



HIS LAST FOR LES BLUES! French coach Raymond Domenech speaks at a press briefing in Chatel-Saint-Denis on Tuesday after his team's exit from the Euro 2008 following a 2-0 defeat against Italy.

## BCCI probes Sree case

PTI, Mumbai

Board of Cricket Control in India (BCCI) has sought details about the unsavoury happenings involving temperamental pacer Shanthakumaran Sreesanth two days ago at a Bangalore hotel where he's staying while taking part in the BCCI's camp at the National Cricket Academy.

"We have written letters to the hotel management and Sreesanth asking for details about what exactly happened there. He's staying there while attending the camp and his room has been booked by us. We would like to know what has happened after reading about the incident in the newspapers," said BCCI CAO Ratnakar Shetty yesterday.

According to hotel sources, Sreesanth, who was involved in 'slapgate' with India mate Harbhajan Singh during the Indian Premier League, got into an argument with the staff of the hotel and created a 'scene' after complaining of 'too much noise' from an air conditioner in his room.

The sources alleged that the Kerala speedster lashed out at the hotel staff after they requested him to bear with them for half an hour to carry out repairs.

## More changes

FROM PAGE 17

to see how a batsman or bowler improve his individual performance in the tour," he added.

After playing the Asia Cup in Pakistan, Tigers Tamim Iqbal, Nazimuddin, Rokibul Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Alok Kapali, Mosharraf Hossain and Dollar Mahmud will join the team in England. On the other hand, it would be a great opportunity for all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who will join the team from Dhaka after completion of HSC examination, to get back his rhythm after a long break from cricket.

The only players in the England-bound A team who have not appeared for Bangladesh national side are promising batsman Nayeem Islam and Rubel Hossain, who bowls with a slinging action. Many however were surprised by the selection of left-handed opener Zunaed as captain for the tour but Rafiq believed that the tall opener has the quality to lead the team.

"Zunaed already got the international exposure and played domestic cricket for quite a long time. His educational background is also encouraging for us," explained Rafiq.

## TEAMS

Tour to Ireland: Zunaed Siddiqui,

Imrul Kayes, Sahagor Hossain, Rajin Saleh, Farhad Hossain, Nadif Chowdhury, Nayeem Islam, Dhiman Ghosh, Rubel Hossain, Syed Rasel, Suhawardi Shuvo, Mahbubul Alam, Arafat Sunny and Nazmul Hossain.

Tour to England: Zunaed Siddiqui, Tamim Iqbal, Nazimuddin, Rokibul Hasan, Nayeem Islam, Mushfiqur Rahim, Dhiman Ghosh, Rajin Saleh, Mosharraf Hossain, Sajidul Islam, Dollar Mahmud, Nazmul Hossain, Rubel Hossain, Syed Rasel, Shakib Al Hasan.

## LOCAL SNIPPETS

FROM PAGE 17 to the medical committee at the same place at 2:30pm.

## NATIONAL DEAF CHESS

The 15th National Chess for the Deaf, organised by Bangladesh Deaf Sports Federation, will start today from 3pm at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall-room in the city.

The tournament will be held in the six-round Swiss League format.

As many as 28 participants from different districts will compete in the tournament.

## CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	DOWN
1 Dine	27 List-
4 Flow	28 ending
7 Bart's	29 Revert
8 Delight	30 Mauna
10 Grains	31 Capsule-
11 Wears	32 shaped
13 Tally,	33 Candy
16 Recipe	34 Sully
17 School-	35 Excavat-
18 Pair	36 ing
19 Timely	37 Bag
20 "Am	38 Credit-
21 Actress	39 Card
23 Big	40 name
	41 Curva-
	42 ceous
	43 Dazes
	44 Philly
	45 Biblical
	46 or
	47 D'back
	48 Thither
	49 Stuffed,
	50 baked
	51 dough
	52 Sicilian
	53 spouter
	54 cancel
	55 Chip's
	56 pal
	57 Sand
	58 forth

Solution time: 21 mins.

ACROSS	DOWN
1 Dine	27 List-
4 Flow	28 ending
7 Bart's	29 Revert
8 Delight	30 Mauna
10 Grains	31 Capsule-
11 Wears	32 shaped
13 Tally,	33 Candy
16 Recipe	34 Sully
17 School-	35 Excavat-
18 Pair	36 ing
19 Timely	37 Bag
20 "Am	38 Credit-
21 Actress	39 Card
23 Big	40 name
	41 Curva-
	42 ceous
	43 Dazes
	44 Philly
	45 Biblical
	46 or
	47 D'back</