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Chinese undecided on Speedo switch

AFP, Beijing

China's elite swimmers are undecided about whether to switch to a new high-tech swimsuit after the team bosses gave the go-ahead to use the record-smashing Speedo suit, state press reported Monday.

Speedo's new LZR Racer has taken swimming by storm, playing a role in 44 of the 48 short- and long-course records set this year.

"Swimmers will wear the suits that they feel most comfortable with in the Olympics. It's hard to say whether it is Speedo LZR Racer or not," said Zhang Yadong, head coach of the Chinese national swimming team.

"It is not that we are switching suits. We just agreed to allow swimmers to choose their own suits," Zhang said, according to the official Xinhua news agency.

The Chinese team, which ended their deal with Speedo after the 2004 Athens Games and switched to current sponsor Nike, were supposed to wear the Nike Swift suits at the Olympics, the report said.

Nike has since announced that it will allow its sponsored swimmers to don their favourite suits, but it is unclear if the Chinese team will all choose to do so, the report said.

"We appreciate Nike's support," Zhang said, adding that Chinese swimmers wearing the

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Did U Know?

Only four athletes have ever won medals at both the Winter and Summer Olympic Games: Eddie Eagan (United States), Jacob Tullin Thams (Norway), Christa Clara Hughes (Canada) and Clara Hughes (Canada).



Dunga

(Brazil football coach)

"To win (an) Olympic medal is a bit harder because we don't have much time to prepare. With respect to the World Cup, we have four years to prepare for it... In Olympic Games normally we have 15 days and players are coming back from holidays, from other competition."

Haan calls smog 'awful'

AFP, Hong Kong

Netherlands' Olympic football coach on Monday described the smog in Beijing as "awful" as his team prepared in Hong Kong for the Games next month.

Coach Foppe de Haan said his side had trained in a special gym back home to prepare them for the hot and humid conditions in Hong Kong and mainland China, but he admitted there was no way of replicating the smog.

"That's a problem," de Haan said at a press conference ahead of the ING Cup here, a four-team pre-Olympic tournament where the Dutch are expected to prove they are one of the favourites for gold in Beijing.

"I heard today if you are trying to look at the Olympic stadium (in Beijing), you can't see it from 500 metres (1,600 feet). It's awful, I think."

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Indian fast bowler Ishant Sharma (L) walks back to the pavilion after a practice session at the Galle International Cricket Stadium yesterday. In the background is the famed Galle Fort.

Sunrise march past Army

SPORTS REPORTER

Sunrise Sporting Club secured a 2-1 victory over Bangladesh Army in the Citycell Federation Cup Football Tournament qualifying round match at the Gazipur Stadium yesterday.

Liton and Babu scored for the senior division runners-up Sunrise while Delwar netted the lone goal for Bangladesh Army.

In front of 6,000 spectators, both sides played unimpressive football and failed to produce any goals in the first half.

After the breather, Liton drew first blood to put Sunrise ahead in the 59th minute as he produced a groundswell on Raju's cross to kiss the net while Babu made no mistake to convert a penalty kick to double the margin in the 74th minute.

Referee Azad Rahman awarded the spot kick when the Army goalkeeper fouled Babu dangerously inside the box in a one-on-one situation.

Army bounced back when Delwar headed a corner home in the 78th minute but it was not good enough to salvage from the defeat in their Group C opener.

In the day's other match at the Army Stadium, Bangladesh Navy held Dhaka Wanderers Club to a goalless draw in a group B match.

Victoria Sporting Club face Bangladesh Air Force at the Army Stadium while BKSP meet Diganta Prasari Rajshahi at the Gazipur Stadium.

'All is not lost'

Cricket

AFP, Galle

Opening batsman Gautam Gambhir has said India are confident of overcoming Sri Lanka's spin challenge in the second Test starting here on Thursday.

Sri Lankan spinners Muttiah Muralidaran and Ajantha Mendis shared 19 wickets in the opening Test of the three-match series to help their side win by an innings and 239 runs in Colombo on Saturday.

"The guys have enough talent and they have played enough Tests. Everyone must have analysed his game and learned from mistakes. We are going to put up a much better show and try to win the Test," Gambhir told reporters on Monday.

"It was just one of those bad Test matches for us. There are two more matches to go and the guys are really positive. What has happened is history. You cannot do anything about it and we need to think we can beat Sri Lanka."

"With the kind of batting and bowling we have, we can win the series."

Gambhir said the batsmen needed to be more positive against

the Sri Lankan spin duo, who looked virtually unplayable in Colombo. India managed just 223 in the first innings and 138 in the second.

"Murali is a legend," said Gambhir, who has scored 774 runs in 15 Tests.

"Both are quality spinners and we need to bat more patiently. They were hardly giving you loose deliveries. It is a great challenge for us, but as we all know, Indians play spin bowling very well."

"I think he (Mendis) bowled pretty well, but it's not that he is unplayable. It's about what you want to do rather than what the opposition is doing. We will look to be more positive against Mendis and Murali."

Mendis troubled India in the two matches he played so far against them, having taken six wickets in his team's victory in the Asia Cup final in Karachi early this month before his debut Test in Colombo.

Gambhir said he was looking forward to playing a long innings after failing to capitalise on starts in the Colombo Test.

"In Tests, if you get starts you have to make it count. I will try to score big and help the team put pressure on the opposition," he said.

Gambhir scored 39 in the first innings and 43 in the second.

Canada T20s uncertain

SPORTS REPORTER

Next month's four-nation Twenty20 tournament in Canada is uncertain as West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) expressed their unwillingness to play in the meet during this time.

The Twenty20 tournament, featuring Bangladesh, hosts Canada, Pakistan and West Indies, was scheduled to be held from August 14 to 17.

"This tournament may be rescheduled because West Indies expressed their unavailability in August," informed Gazi Ashraf Hossain, chairman of the cricket operations committee of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday.

It would however be difficult to get all the teams in a particular time because of different international commitments.

It is scheduled that after the tournament Bangladesh would be off to Darwin for a three-match ODI series against Australia from August 31.

Bangladesh A salvage draw

CRICINFO, undated

The South Africans opted for extended batting practice on the final day against Bangladesh A at New Road, continuing their second innings well into the second session before setting a notional target of 637. AB de Villiers and Robin Peterson cashed in on the easy runs available with centuries, while Bangladesh batted out the final 27 overs of the match.

With the third Test starting on Wednesday, Mickey Arthur and Graeme Smith clearly didn't want to over-exert the bowlers with an extended spell in the middle. Andre Nel sent down an extra five overs, following his three-wicket haul in the first innings, as he prepares for a likely call-up in place of the injured Dale Steyn.

However, most of the day wasn't a great advert for first-class cricket. Jacques Kallis didn't resume his overnight 55, but is expected to be fully fit for the Test after a minor injury scare with a finger problem on the second day, de Villiers, who made 174 at Headingley, reached an even 100 before also retiring as the bowlers were given a chance to find some batting form.

Peterson, the reserve left-arm spinner in the squad behind Paul Harris, milked the bowling with ease while Nel made 56. Peterson's fifth first-class century came off 153 balls as Bangladesh used nine bowlers, as they had in the first innings. Mushfiqur Rahim had to leave the field after injuring his shoulder trying to catch Peterson.

When Smith eventually declared before tea Nel and Makhaya Ntini opened with five and four-over spells respectively. The spinners then took over, with Peterson continuing his good day as he removed Bangladesh captain Junaid Siddique with the last ball before tea. Tamim Iqbal responded with a positive 65 off 86 balls, comfortably the highest individual score for Bangladesh in the match. He became Peterson's wicket second before the match was called off at the start of the final hour.

Vaughan's lucky ground

Cricket

AFP, Birmingham

England captain Michael Vaughan returns to the scene of one of the most significant events of his cricket career as his team seek to turn around their fortunes in the second Test against South Africa at Edgbaston starting on Wednesday.

Vaughan is under pressure, with his team trailing 1-0 in the four-match series and his own batting form under scrutiny after he scored only 23 runs in three innings in the first two Tests.

But it was at the same ground against the same opponents five years ago that Vaughan hit a masterly 156 and soon afterwards became England's Test captain when Nasser Hussain resigned after the match.

The first Test of 2003 is remembered chiefly for a powerful batting performance by South African captain Graeme Smith, who made a South African record score of 277

after sharing a 338-run opening stand with Herschelle Gibbs.

After South Africa's massive 594 for five declared, England needed at least one batsman to play a major innings to insure them



MICHAEL VAUGHAN

against defeat in a rain-hit match. Vaughan provided it.

It was also at Edgbaston that England snatched a two-run win over Australia in 2005, after losing

the first Test, on the way to winning the Ashes.

Further encouragement for Vaughan is that South African fast bowler Dale Steyn, who dismissed him for two in the first Test at Lord's and two in the second match at Headingley, has been ruled out because of a broken left thumb.

Vaughan was held at least partly responsible for the selection debacle at Headingley where England opted for a five-man bowling attack which included the almost unknown England-born but Australian-raised Darren Pattinson, a move which Vaughan admitted had unsettled his team.

Pattinson was not included when England named a 13-man squad for Edgbaston but England still face a selection dilemma.

Left-arm swing bowler Ryan Sidebottom, whose injury-enforced absence led to Pattinson's call-up, is expected to return to the side but England have to decide whether to go in with four or five bowlers. If they opt for the latter it

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The 'don't ask' policy

AFP, Beijing



Olympics about their sex life.

These are just some of the conversational faux pas that a central Beijing district is warning against in a list of "Eight don't asks" aimed at deterring the most probing questions by the capital's often forward citizens.

"Don't ask about personal details or family background, don't ask about income or expenditures, don't ask about family assets," read posters put up by the government

of the city's Dongcheng district, according to the Beijing News.

"Don't ask about age or marital status, don't ask about health problems, don't ask about where their family lives, don't ask about politics or religion and don't ask about their love life."

The "Eight don't asks" appear to be part of a wide-ranging makeover of the ancient capital aimed at presenting the best possible face to the world for the August 8-24 Olympics.

The campaign has included efforts to discourage crude behaviour, such as spitting and queue-jumping, as well as measures to improve the city's notoriously polluted air and a clean-up of its ubiquitous sex industry.

Foreigners in China are often taken aback by questions that curious Chinese themselves

appear to view as harmless chitchat.

One of the most common is when overseas visitors are asked how much money they make, a question that typically makes foreigners squirm, partly because their salaries often dwarf those of most Chinese.

Chinese also show little shame in asking a person's age and will tell someone they look "fat," which is meant as a compliment indicating that the person is leading a prosperous life.

Dongcheng district is home to the Forbidden City and other sites popular with foreigners, and is near to some key Olympic venues.

Around 500,000 foreign tourists, athletes, dignitaries and others visitors are expected to descend on Beijing for the Games.

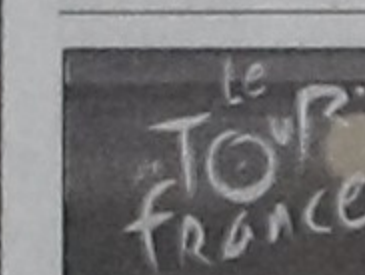


A cyclist passes by an Olympic float on the Olympic Green in Beijing on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

Sastre thrives on audacity

INTERNET, undated



Out of 3,500 kilometers and three weeks of racing, the 2008 Tour de France was won in a split second at the foot of the race's most prestigious climb. Near the end of the 17th stage, 33-year-old Carlos Sastre boldly took off on his own up the 13.8-km climb to Alpe d'Huez, leaving in his wake Cadel Evans of Australia, Austria's Bernhard Kohl and the Russian Denis Menchov.

It was an audacious attack that might have ended badly, because it is a gruelling climb, with an average slope of 7.9 per cent and covering 21 hairpin curves, and is therefore difficult to carry out alone, especially if you start at the foot of the mountain, as Sastre did.

Sastre later said he had to attack early on the climb because of Evans' superiority in the time trial that was to be run three days later.

"At the beginning of the Alpe d'Huez, I decided on my own to attack. I had to take a big risk," he said.

But the risk paid off by giving Sastre the race leader's yellow jersey, and he defended it all the way to Paris.

Evans, who also finished second

to a Spaniard in last year's Tour, was expected to make up a gap of 1 minute 34 seconds in Saturday's long race against the clock, but he fell badly short and managed to make up only 29 seconds on the highly motivated Sastre.

Even Evans, who claimed Saturday not to be too disappointed, saluted the Spaniard's attack on the Alpe d'Huez. "He had the legs," he said.

But the 31-year-old Australian also noted, with regret and perhaps envy, that Sastre possessed another advantage over him: his team.

"What made the difference was also that (Team) CSC had a very strong team. For three weeks, every time I turned around I had one of them next to me," he said.

By contrast, Evans' Silence-Lotto team was little in evidence, especially in the mountains, where it pays to have a friend's slipstream in front of you. Evans admitted as much: "Maybe I should have had another teammate in the mountains."

Team CSC, which was put together and managed by the Dane Bjarne Riis - who is still listed as the 1996 Tour winner although he admitted to doping - was by far the strongest and most influential team in the Tour.

If Evans lacked "legs" in

Saturday's time trial, it was primarily because the pace was always pushed by Team CSC, whether it was being led by two-time world time trial champion Fabian Cancellara, the impressive Australian and 2007 Paris-Roubaix winner Stuart O'Grady or the brothers Schleck, Andy and Frank, of Luxembourg.

It was a performance reminiscent of the teams that supported seven-time Tour winner Lance Armstrong, who took over a race and shaped it to their leader's needs.

Sastre was appreciative. "The most important thing was the confidence that Bjarne Riis and my other team managers and the other members of my team gave me," he said. "They always believed in me. Every decision was taken together. My teammates gave 1,000 percent for me."

The teamwork paid off for other members of the team, with Team CSC winning three of the race's five titles. In addition to Sastre's overall championship, Andy Schleck captured the white jersey for the Tour's best under-25 rider and Team CSC won the team championship.

In addition, Frank Schleck wore the yellow jersey for two stages, until Sastre captured it for good - with a bold individual move.



2008 Tour de France winner Carlos Sastre waves the Spanish flag as he rides down the Champs-Elysees following the conclusion of the final stage in Paris on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP