



Thorpe to sue L'Equipe

AFP, Sydney

Australia's five-time Olympic gold medalist Ian Thorpe will sue the French newspaper L'Equipe and one of its journalists for defamation over a drugs controversy, his spokesman said Monday.

The French sports newspaper in March last year published details of a urine sample Thorpe returned in May 2006 that showed abnormal levels of testosterone and leuteinising hormone.

The Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority subsequently found Thorpe had no case to answer and international swimming body FINA said there was insufficient evidence he took performance-enhancing drugs.

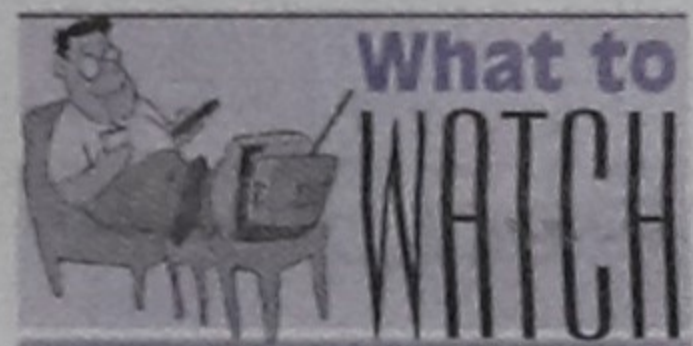
But despite being cleared, Thorpe is still being harassed by L'Equipe.

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Did U Know?

The first Winter Olympic Games were held in Chamonix, France in 1924. Norway won the most medals (263).



ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm



Didier Drogba
(Star Ivory Coast striker)
"Chelsea want to speak and I am open to talk. Things have not changed but I am a Blues player. Money is not the main factor and if Chelsea show they want me it is possible to accept a proposition." Who is ready to sign a new contract at Chelsea.

Where's Phelps?

AFP, Beijing

The US swimming team arrived here on Monday afternoon, but with a large crowd waiting to catch a first glimpse of Michael Phelps' arrival in China, the swim sensation slipped out a side door.

The 23-year-old, who is aiming for an unprecedented eight gold medals in Beijing, is the hottest ticket in town as fans and the media jostled for the best position at Beijing airport to catch sight of Phelps.

A crowd of more than 300, held back by Chinese police and airport security guards, formed a 100 metres-long corridor as Phelps fans - mainly Chinese - sought autographs, while the media waited to capture his entrance.

All were to be disappointed as the US team - which won 12 gold medals four years ago - passed through the arrival hall of Beijing's Terminal 3, but Phelps was nowhere to be seen.

"He left through a side exit, he did not come through with the rest of the team," the US squad's spokesperson told AFP.

After a week of training at the National Aquatics Centre in Beijing yesterday.

A team lose final match

Rafiqul happy with performances in England

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh A cricket team completed their England trip with a two-wicket defeat against Durham in a low-scoring affair at the Riverside ground in Chester-le-Street on Sunday.

A three-wicket burst from pacer Rubel Hossain momentarily revived the hopes of the touring side after a pathetic batting display, but Gordon Mutchall saw Durham home as the home side made 121 for 8 in 31 overs in reply to 117 runs.

Number four Mutchall was not out on 54 off 85 balls that featured ten boundaries.

During the month-long England tour, the strong second string Bangladesh side, where 13 players out of 15 already played for the senior team, played five three-day matches including one against South Africans and three one-day games.

Bangladesh A secured an exciting one-wicket victory against

Derbyshire and the remaining longer-version matches ended in draws as Graeme Smith-led South Africans opted for batting practice in the last game.

On the other hand, the visitors lost two limited-overs matches and won one against Marylebone Cricket Club by 80 runs.

The team return home today morning and the national selectors are likely to announce the Australia-bound team within a week. The Rafiqul Alam-led selection panel is waiting for full fitness report on Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Alok Kapali.

It was told before the A team's tour that the main focus would be how a batsman or bowler improved his individual performance on the tour, especially ahead of the tough one-day series in Australia.

"I think it was a long and tough tour. It's always a challenge to perform well in English conditions. I am not unhappy with the overall performance of the boys. Some of

our guys played very well," said the chief selector yesterday.

"It was nice to see that our two wicketkeepers Mushfiqur Rahim and Dhiman Ghosh played well on the trip and we hope that their healthy competition will continue. On the other hand, Nazmul Hossain bowled brilliantly although he missed the last two games due to illness while Dollar Mahmud also got back his rhythm there," he observed.

All-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who returned to action after four months' gap due to HSC examinations, failed to get back his rhythm as the left-hander scored 90 runs in three first-class matches and made 53 runs in as many limited-overs games.

On the other hand, it was a challenging tour for captain Zunaed Siddiqui to impress the selectors for a national recall, but the left-handed opener made only 141 runs in four 3-dayers with an average of 20.14 while scored five runs in two limited-overs matches.

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Kevin given the reins

'Captaincy won't change my style'

Cricket

AFP, London

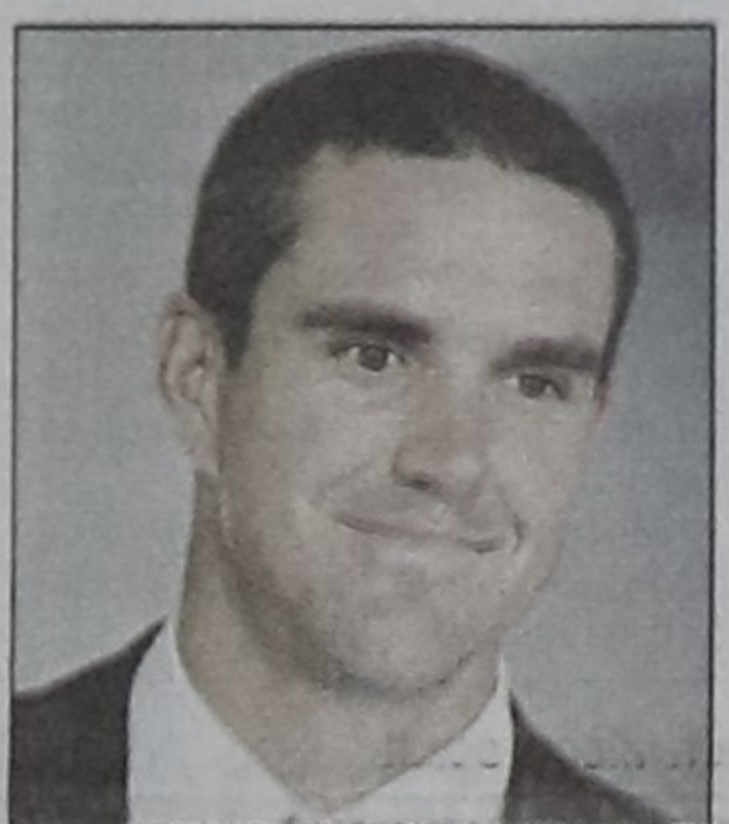
New England captain Kevin Pietersen said Monday that he wanted to take his "instinct" approach as a batsman into his new role as leader of the team.

Pietersen, 28, was announced as England's Test and one-day captain, starting with the fourth and final Test against South Africa at The Oval on Thursday.

He said he did not believe the captaincy would affect the way he played.

"Time will tell. I hope it won't. It's a way I've been successful with so far in my career and something I want to try and keep at a real high level."

Asked what style he would bring to the captaincy, Pietersen said: "The way I play is very gut instinct orientated and I like to do things



KEVIN PIETERSEN

spontaneously. I like to do what I feel is right in a situation.

"I think over the years I've played cricket I've gained a good cricket brain. My gut instinct when I've been batting for England has assisted me tremendously. It's a brand new challenge for me and I

love challenges."

He said he would captain England "with a smile on my face".

Pietersen paid tribute to Michael Vaughan, who resigned Sunday, and said he had "huge boots to try and fill. Michael was a great leader and a great friend."

He believed that Vaughan remained a great batsman and that after he had taken some time off he would go back to county cricket for Yorkshire and win back a place in the England team.

He said the invitation to captain England had turned his life around. He said he accepted the job after speaking to his wife Jessica and his parents in South Africa.

"You could see how emotional Michael was when he spoke about his family and it's an emotional decision," said Pietersen, who said he had a good meeting with coach Peter Moores on Sunday.

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Aussies caught up in scam

AFP, Sydney



Scores of Australians have been caught in an alleged global scam believed to have conned people worldwide into buying non-existent tickets to the Beijing Olympics, reports said Monday.

The Sydney Morning Herald said one Brisbane man had spent 46,000 dollars (42,876 US) for tickets which never arrived while a Sydney man had lost 10,000 dollars the same way.

Just days ahead of the opening ceremony for the Beijing Games, officials conceded that it appeared many Australians were victims of an elaborate global scam.

"This appears to be a worldwide scam," Consumer Affairs Minister

for the southern state of Victoria, Tony Robinson, said.

"We're very concerned that a lot of people, it would appear, have been taken in by a very professional scam and there's a lot of money that appears to have gone under."

A hotline was established by the New South Wales government Monday to deal with complaints about tickets purchased via websites including the US-based beijingticketing.com, which was still operating Monday.

Within hours of opening, the hotline had received 22 complaints from people who had spent a combined 60,000 dollars (55,927 US) buying tickets which had not been delivered, a state government spokeswoman told AFP.

New South Wales Fair Trading Minister Linda Burney said information taken from the hotline would be provided to Australian and international authorities.

"We'll collect as much information as possible for the ACCC (the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission) as well as international law enforcement agencies," she said.

Australian Olympic Committee boss John Coates said the families of Olympic athletes and even Olympic officials were caught up in the scam.

"Our sympathy goes out to them," he told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

"We certainly aren't in a position to step in, compensate, find substitute tickets or whatever."

The Sydney Morning Herald reported that Olympic officials would ask a judge in San Francisco to shut down www.beijingticketing.com later Monday after the International Olympic Committee had been flooded with complaints about it from around the world.



PHOTO: STAR

Group 4S managing director Selim Chowdhury (R) presents Bangladeshi Olympian Sharmin Akhter (C) as their brand ambassador as Youth and Sports Secretary Dr. M. Golam Mustafa Talukder looks on during a press conference at a city hotel yesterday.

Sharmin G4S's ambassador

UNB, Dhaka

G4S, a global security solutions group, has selected Sharmin Akhter, a top ranking Bangladeshi shooter, as the company's brand ambassador in the coming Beijing Olympic Games.

G4S has taken the initiative as part of its six-year innovative global sports programme to support the next generation of sports stars.

G4S formally presented Sharmin as their brand ambassador at a press conference yesterday at a city hotel in the morning.

Youth and Sports Secretary Dr. M. Golam Mustafa Talukder attended the function as the chief guest. Selim Chowdhury, managing director of G4S, Bangladesh, and its director of operations Brig. Gen. (ret'd) Salim Akhtar, among others, were present on the occasion.

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Manik could be made coach today

SPORTS REPORTER

The appointment of Shafiqul Islam Manik as national football team coach may be finalised today when Bangladesh Football Federation's national team management committee (NTMC) meets at the BFF Bhaban.

Manik met NTMC chairman and BFF vice-president Badal Roy yesterday.

"We will sit tomorrow to discuss the matter," said Roy.

Manik is likely to get a six-month term initially and the contract will come into effect from this month so that he can choose players by watching their performances in the Citycell Federation Cup.

Bangladesh will participate in Malaysia's Merdeka Cup, the oldest football tournament in Asia held annually in Kuala Lumpur since 1957.

The NTMC meeting will also discuss the players' selection

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Kumble hails heroes

Cricket

AFP, Galle

Skipper Anil Kumble on Sunday lauded opener Virender Sehwag and teenage paceman Ishant Sharma for playing key roles in India's series-levelling victory against Sri Lanka here.

India, who lost the opening match of the three-Test series by an innings and 239 runs in Colombo, came back strongly to win the second game by 170 runs with a day to spare. The final Test starts in Colombo on August 8.

Sri Lanka were shot out for 136 chasing a 307-run target, with Sharma doing the early damage to finish with 3-20 off 15 overs.

"I think the opening partnerships in both the innings was a turning point of the match. Sehwag getting a double-hundred and giving fantastic starts with Gautam Gambhir was very important."

Kumble said.

Sehwag and Gambhir put on 167 for the opening wicket in the first innings and 90 in the second. Sehwag made an unbeaten 201 and 50, while Gambhir scored successive half-centuries.

"He (Sehwag) is a very good player and the way he scored runs in both the innings was great. Getting 201 in a total of 329 is something amazing," said the Indian captain.

"It was also amazing the way Harbhajan Singh bowled in both the innings and then Ishant and Zaheer Khan today."

"It was something special from the 19-year-old (Sharma). Everybody saw what he is capable of. It augurs really well going into the last Test."

Off-spinner Harbhajan grabbed 10 wickets in the match, his fifth haul of 10 or more wickets in a Test.

Kumble said he was confident his bowlers were capable of defending the target.

"I was never worried. You can-

not say 300-350 is enough, but on this wicket if you have 300 and the way our new-ball bowlers bowled was amazing," he said.

"Getting three wickets (for 10 runs) within 40 minutes was crucial and that put Sri Lanka on the backfoot."

The Indian captain said he was confident his team would put in yet another impressive performance in the final Test, where Sri Lanka are expected to again rely on their spinners Muttiah Muralidaran and Ajantha Mendis.

"I am really proud of the way we played in this Test. We are confident of putting up a good show and if we repeat this performance we will get a good result," said Kumble.

"As the series goes on, you try and figure out the best possible ways to handle the spinners. They are quality spinners. Mendis is a mystery to some of us, but Sehwag has shown that you can get runs against the spinners."

Mendis and Muralidaran have

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Gilly for T20 at Olympics

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

Former Australian star Adam Gilchrist has called for the inclusion of cricket's Twenty20 format at the 2020 Olympics, saying it will help secure the global future of the game.

The wicketkeeper-batsman, who retired from international cricket this year but played in the Indian Premier League (IPL), said the International Cricket Council (ICC) must push for Twenty20 to become an Olympic sport.

"It doesn't matter where the 2020 Olympic Games are held," he wrote in a column for Indian daily the Deccan Chronicle on Monday.

"But many of us who've experienced international Twenty20 cricket and the IPL are convinced that cricket should bid to become an Olympic sport in time for the

Games," he wrote.

Gilchrist, 36, said re-introducing cricket as an Olympic sport would help the sport grow internationally and also boost the Olympic movement in the subcontinent.

"We have a responsibility to grow our game in new territories and

amongst the women of the world."

"I believe the Olympic Games is the vehicle the sport should use to aggressively sell the message of our sport to all 202 competing Olympic nations."

"So that our sport is strong and robust in countries where it is currently played, and exciting and ground-breaking in countries who haven't yet caught the 'cricket-bug'," he said.

Cricket was part of the Olympics just once, in 1900, but last year it was recognised as an Olympic sport -- the first step towards full admission to the Games.

"With Twenty20 cricket here to stay, now is the time for the 10 full-member nations of the ICC to plan for the development of the sport over the next 100 years," Gilchrist said.

Gilchrist said winning an Olympic medal would be the ultimate for any cricketer.

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PHOTO: AFP

American swimming sensation Michael Phelps swims during a training session in preparation for the Olympic Games at the National Aquatics Centre in Beijing yesterday.

'Games will be a milestone'

AFP, Beijing



International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Jacques Rogge said Monday that he believed the Beijing Olympics, which get underway on Friday, would prove to be a milestone in China's transformation.

The Belgian, who, along with the IOC has come under fire from human rights groups ever since electing Beijing as hosts in 2001, said that it was already evident that changes had occurred for the better for China.

"I am equally confident that the Games will leave a great legacy for China," said Rogge, who was elected at the same IOC meeting in 2001 to succeed Juan Antonio Samaranch.

"China is a nation in transition, with a great future, tremendous potential and some challenges. I believe history will view the 2008 Olympics as a significant milestone in China's remarkable transformation."

"Some of the changes are easy to

see. The Bird's Nest (the main stadium) and the Water Cube (the swimming complex) are already architectural landmarks."

"Long after the Games end, these and other Olympic venues will encourage the youth of China to participate in sport. Spectators will be inspired to become athletes, and athletes will be inspired to achieve their best in world-class venues."

Rogge added that there were other benefits from the Games.

"The venues are just a small part of the construction legacy that will benefit China after the Games," he said.

"New airport terminals, new roads and highways, new parks, and a host of other projects that were initiated or accelerated because of the Games will improve the quality of life and contribute to China's economic development over the long term."

"Many of the infrastructure investments and other steps taken as a result of the Olympics will help China deal with environmental challenges."

Rogge, who will step down next year at the IOC session in Copenhagen, said he also hoped

that the Games would help the Chinese come to terms with the devastating earthquake earlier this year which left close to 90,000 people dead.

"China's role as our Olympic host has opened a window to the world's most populous nation," said Rogge.

"We have already seen the courage and determination of the Chinese people in another context. The world mourned the staggering loss of life from the earthquake in Sichuan province and marveled at the courageous response by the Chinese people."

"Starting this weekend and over the next 16 days, the world will have another reason to come together to share common emotions."

"All of us in the Olympic Family hope that the Beijing Games will help the healing process in China and deepen the world's knowledge of this remarkable country."

Rogge, who last year won a personal crusade for the creation of a Youth Games which will be hosted by Singapore, said that these Games would be a landmark in many respects.

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