

Debate on Dhoni on

PTI, New Delhi

Former selectors differed in their views on rushing Mahendra Singh Dhoni into Test captaincy after coach Gary Kirsten sparked the debate by saying that the India ODI skipper was ready for the job.

Anshuman Gaekwad, former chief selector, believes Dhoni has the aptitude to excel as Test captain but he should not be overburdened but groomed for at least another year for the tough job.

"Dhoni has done well not only as a captain but as a batsman as well. Under his captaincy India has done considerably well. But as you saw he himself withdrew from the Test series in Sri Lanka citing fatigue," Gaekwad said.

"We should not overburden him. In any case, Anil (Kumble) is doing well as a Test captain. He has always been a fighter and an unsung hero. We should keep faith in him for another one year," Gaekwad, who also coached Indian team, told PTI.

Kiran More, another former chief selector, however is of the view that BCCI should adopt futuristic approach in five-day cricket and hand over the charge to Dhoni without any delay.

"I am a firm believer of having one captain for Test and ODI teams. If Dhoni is doing well in ODI and T20, why not try him in five-day version of the game. He does not need to prove himself after winning the T20 World Cup and a series in Australia," More, the former stumper, said.

Beginning of the end for Ganguly?

CRICINFO, undated

Sourav Ganguly has been left out of the Rest of India squad for the Irani Trophy match in what Cricinfo has learnt is a signal from the national selectors that it is time to start phasing out India's veteran middle-order.

Other notable exclusions for the season-opener are Yuvraj Singh, Rohit Sharma and S Badrinath -- but Mohammad Kaif has returned to the reckoning after his 94 for India A against Australia A.

The Rest team for the match against Delhi, which starts in Vadodra on September 24, is meant to feature probables for the Australia Test series in October. Ganguly's exclusion raises once again a question mark over his

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Did U Know?

Christine Truman was the youngest French Open singles champion. She won this title at the age of 18 years 139 days in 1959.



Talk Turkey



Andrew Flintoff

(England cricket superstar) "I think I'm a better cricketer for those dark times and a better person. When you experience tough times, the better times are that much sweeter."



What to Watch

ESPN Sportscentre India Sports News Live from 8:30pm



PHOTO: AFP

USA's Serena Williams is over the moon after winning the championship point against Serbia's Jelena Jankovic during the US Open women's singles final at the Flushing Meadows on Sunday. The win was Serena's ninth career Grand Slam title and saw her catapulted back into the top of the world rankings for the first time in five years.

Serena blows to top

AP, New York



On the very first point of the match, Serena Williams hit a backhand

so hard that her earring flew off. Turns out she was just getting warmed up.

Williams kept pounding away, her shots and shouts getting louder with every stroke. And when she finished off Jelena Jankovic 6-4, 7-5 Sunday night for the U.S. Open championship and a ninth Grand Slam title, Williams really went wild.

She flung her racket high into the sky, hollering and hopping in a celebration that even she thought might've been over the top.

"I'm sorry I got so excited," she told Jankovic when they met at the net.

Williams' father, Richard, jumped to his feet after the final point. He didn't seem to expect his daughter to do the same.

"I never knew Serena to be very, very excited. I knew Serena to be

very, very mean," he said after it was over. "I describe her as being a combination of a pit bull dog, a young Mike Tyson and an alligator."

The fourth-seeded Williams beat sister Venus in the quarterfinals and barreled through this tournament without losing a set. This win did more than earn Serena her third silver trophy at Flushing Meadows; it assured she will return to No. 1 in the rankings for the time since August 2003, the longest gap at the top for a woman.

Pretty good for someone whose ranking once plummeted to No. 139.

"It's been so long," she said. The American recovered from a poor day on break point conversions, missing on nine of her first 10 in the up-and-down second set with the Serb second seed, who will stand second behind Williams in next week's rankings.

But Williams found her big game when she needed it, breaking twice in the concluding six games and going through on her second match point as she tossed her racket into the air after producing a

winner. Williams calmed down in time for the on-court trophy presentation, and smiled when she received the winner's check for \$1.5 million. Still full of personality, Jankovic wondered aloud, "How much did I get?"

Jankovic earned \$750,000 for her first showing in a Grand Slam final.

This was the 13th straight time that the women's championship at the U.S. Open was decided in straight sets. The second-seeded Jankovic certainly had her chances up 5-3 in the second set, she led 40-0 with Williams serving.

"I felt I had her. I had her, because she was really tired at the end of the second set," Jankovic said. "Who knows what would have happened if I had got into a third set? I probably would have had the upper hand. But who knows?"

Jankovic won over fans with more than her determined play and her penchant for doing the splits to reach shots. She's a crowd favourite, often talking to people in the stands and frequently watching

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Five year wait comes true

AFP, Paris

Serena Williams has moved back to the top of the WTA world rankings for the first time in five years following her straight sets win over Jelena Jankovic in the US Open final in New York on Sunday.

She takes over from Serbia's Ana Ivanovic who slips down to third place behind the two finalists.

WTA RANKINGS

1. Serena Williams (USA) 4091 (+3)
2. Jelena Jankovic (SRB) 3965
3. Ana Ivanovic (SRB) 3532 (-2)
4. Elena Dementieva (RUS) 3430 (+2)
5. Dinara Safina (RUS) 3357 (+2)
6. Maria Sharapova (RUS) 3041 (-1)
7. Svetlana Kuznetsova (RUS) 2571 (-3)
8. Venus Williams (USA) 2386
9. Vera Zvonareva (RUS) 2087 (+1)
10. Agnieszka Radwanska (POL) 2076 (+1)

Black, Huber lift doubles crown

AFP, New York

Zimbabwe's Cara Black completed a US Open doubles double title run here Sunday, joining South African-born American Liezel Huber in winning the women's doubles final.

Top seeds Black and Huber defeated American Lisa Raymond and Australian Samantha Stosur 6-3, 7-6 in the championship match for their eighth doubles title of the year and first US Open crown.

"It's unbelievable. It's hard to find words to describe it," Black said.

Black teamed with India's Leander Paes to win the US Open mixed doubles crown with a 7-6, 6-4 triumph over Huber and Britain's Jamie Murray in Thursday's final.

"Playing that match against her was one of the toughest matches I've ever had to play," Black said. "I really wanted to win this one for her."

Huber and Black won the final four points of the match, saving two set points to level the tie-breaker before Huber hit a forehand winner and Raymond send a forehand long to give Huber and Black the 420,000-dollar top prize.

Huber became a US citizen last year and said winning the title rivaled the day she became an American as the most special of her life.

"I'm proud to be an American," she said. "This is the second-proudest day for me."

Raymond and Stosur won the 2005 US Open doubles crown. Raymond also won the title in 2001 with Aussie Rennae Stubbs.

Pistorius set to debut

AFP, Beijing

China climbed to the top of the Paralympics medals table Monday as "Blade Runner" Oscar Pistorius prepared to make his debut and high-profile Olympian Natalie du Toit aimed for her second gold.

Pistorius, South Africa's double amputee track sensation who is chasing a sprint treble in Beijing, was due to run in the 100m heats at the "Bird's Nest" National Stadium in the evening.

Nicknamed after the specially adapted carbon fibre blades he wears, the 21-year-old won a court battle to compete at last month's Olympics but failed to qualify.

Now he has set his sights on a clean sweep in the sprints in his category at the Beijing Paralympics, before setting himself for another shot at competing with able-bodied athletes in the London 2012 Olympics.

Ahead of his Beijing debut, Pistorius admitted to being on edge.

"I think nerves and pressure are good things, but I'm very excited as well," he said.

Meanwhile, compatriot du Toit was eyeing the 100m freestyle gold after winning the 100m butterfly in her category on day one in a world-record time of 1min 6.74sec.

The 24-year-old, who finished 16th in 10km marathon swim in the Olympics, is aiming for four more wins to match her gold tally at the Athens Paralympics, but admitted it would be tough.

"I am not used to sprinting. I need to work on my streamlines, my start and my tumble turn -- it was a bit short this time," she said after finishing first in the 100m freestyle heats on Monday morning.

"The last race, the 50m freestyle, will be the toughest one. It is just one length. Hopefully I will have enough sprint for that."

Du Toit won five golds and a silver at the Athens Paralympics. She lost her left leg in a road accident in 2001, after narrowly missing qualification for the Sydney Olympics a year earlier.

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Ash in no mood to give in

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Ashraf said that the time has not come yet for him to relinquish the captaincy despite his side's appalling performance in the one-day series against Australia in Darwin.

The Bangladesh cricket team returned home early Monday night after a crushing 3-0 defeat to the world's number one team. Vice-captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, coach Jamie Siddons and physio Darryn Lison didn't accompany the team.

"It's not actually the captaincy rather the main concern is my batting. I don't think the additional job has put any pressure on my batting. There are however every reason to raise questions about my place in the team, but personally I still don't think the time has come for me to take a break right now," said the under pressure Bangladesh skipper.

"I am working really hard to be

consistent with my batting and I believe the results will come soon. I am looking forward to the next home series against New Zealand. Everything however will depend on whether I am selected in the team or not," said a confident Ashraf with a smile.

The 24-year-old batsman however has decided to go abroad for a break which he believes would be helpful for him.

"I will fly to England on September 10 and I think it would be helpful for me. I am really tired of answering the same old questions over and over again," said Ashraf.

He however was not ready to say anything about his coach's comments on the captaincy.

"There are a lot of talking about captaincy but everybody should understand that we are struggling as a team. Yes, my performance added more woes to the team's miserable showings, but if my removal solves the problem then I am ready to accept it. What I believe is that I have to keep my place in the team as a batsman

first," a frustrated Ashraf quipped.

"We actually have psychological problem. Look at Michael Hussey, Australia's one of the best batsmen, who was as cautious as he could be in his batting during the series but we played senseless shots every time. We hardly had any individual game plan," he admitted.

"We can't offer any excuse for the way we wasted the opportunity in the last match," he said. The Tigers restricted the hosts to 198 for five, only to be let down by their batsmen, who were shot out for 125 in 29.5 overs.

Like the captain, new Bangladesh coach Siddons is also all set to face tough questions this time by the country's cricket authorities when he returns to his job after a ten-day break back in Australia.

On the other hand pace spearhead Mashrafe will return home tomorrow. The right-arm paceman didn't accompany the team as he stayed back for check-up of his knees in Melbourne with Dr. David

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PHOTO: STAR

DUMPED AND DUMFOUNDED: The dejected Bangladesh cricketers pose for photographs on their arrival at the Zia International Airport in the early hours on Monday.

Brothers futsal champs

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Two-goal Abdullah Parvez turned on the style in a memorable performance as the Abahani-discard took sweet revenge against his former club, helping Brothers Union to become the first futsal champions in the country yesterday.

Brothers, who played just two matches in the first ever competition of football's indoor version -- Citycell Futsal competition -- before the final, defeated Abahani 4-3 in a pulsating finale at the Woodenfloor Gymnasium.

Having played some exhilarating football in the five-day competition since their loss in the Federation Cup final last week, Abahani once again choked in the final barrier as they went 3-0 down by 16 minutes.

Parvez, who joined the

Gopibagh outfit from Abahani this season, opened the account with his favourite left foot after eight minutes and added his second two minutes later. Ariful then found the net in the 16th minute as the Oranges -- pressing hard with a starting line-up of Shakil, Zahid, Munna, Shuvra and Parvez -- reaped rich harvest.

The Sky-blues, however, did not give without a fight and showed some character with two goals inside the next two minutes from Zayed Hasan Emily and Mamunul Islam, who had scored hattricks in the side's first two games.

In the second half, Abahani substitutes Abul and Zahed Parvez, who replaced Siraji and Tipu respectively, put on a great show.

Abul finally restored parity for in the 31st minute and Abahani could have sealed the final six minutes later but for Emily's missed penalty. The full 40 minutes looked set to

end in the 3-3 scoreline but Mattur Munna rocketed in a winner two minutes from time when the veteran capitalised on hesitations by Abahani goalkeeper Tariq and defender Siraji.

Abdullah Parvez, adjudged man of the tournament, said after the final that he liked the competition very much.

"It's new to us but I think if we continue to play futsal, we will learn the different tactics of this game and be a very good team," told Parvez, whose skill and control were treat to watch.

"I feel proud to win this award as well as for my team to win this. I think futsal should be played regularly at the start of a season to enhance the players' skill and fitness."

Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin distributed trophies and prize money after the final.

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PHOTO: AFP

US actor Charlize Theron (R) shares a light moment with partner Stuart Townsead while fellow actor Natalie Portman enjoys the action during the women's singles final at the Flushing Meadows in New York on Sunday. The trio was part of a star cast of Hollywood including Will Ferrell and Alec Baldwin who turned up to watch Serena Williams beat Jelena Jankovic for the title.

ICC shortlists awardees

BD named in Spirit of Cricket Award category

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

West Indian Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene and South African Dale Steyn are set to dominate the fifth ICC awards night on Wednesday.

The three were nominated for both the cricketer of the year and the Test player of the year awards that will be announced at a gala dinner in Dubai, the headquarters of the International Cricket Council (ICC).

South African captain Graeme Smith was the fourth nominee for the cricketer of the year, while teammate Jacques Kallis completed the list for the Test player of the year.

None of the four nominees for the cricketer of the year have won the award before, meaning a new name will be inscribed on the prestigious Garfield Sobers Trophy.

Past winners include India's Rahul Dravid (2004), England's Andrew Flintoff and Kallis (joint

winners in 2005), and Australia captain Ricky Ponting (2006 and 2007).

Bangladesh also found its name on the shortlist as it was placed in the Spirit of Cricket Award category along with New Zealand, Sri Lanka and the West Indies.

The nominees were announced by ICC chief executive Haroon Lorgat here on Monday.

India's Mahendra Singh Dhoni has been nominated for two prizes, the one-day player of the year and the Twenty20 international performance of the year after leading India to victory in the inaugural T20 World Cup in South Africa.

Indian paceman Ishant Sharma will compete with Sri Lanka's mystery spinner Ajantha Mendis, England all-rounder Stuart Broad and South African fast bowler Morne Morkel for the Emerging Player award.

Simon Taufel of Australia could win a fifth successive umpire of the year award after being nominated alongside Mark Benson of England, Aleem Dar of Pakistan, Steve Davis

of Australia and South African Rudi Koertzen.

NOMINEES

CRICKETER OF THE YEAR: Shivnarine Chanderpaul (WIS) Mahela Jayawardene (SRI) Graeme Smith (RSA) Dale Steyn (RSA)

TEST PLAYER OF THE YEAR: Shivnarine Chanderpaul (WIS) Mahela Jayawardene (SRI) Jacques Kallis (RSA) Dale Steyn (RSA)

ONE-DAY PLAYER OF THE YEAR: Nathan Bracken (AUS) Mahendra Singh Dhoni (IND) Sachin Tendulkar (IND) Mohammad Yousuf (PAK)

EMERGING PLAYER OF THE YEAR: Stuart Broad (ENG) Ajantha Mendis (SRI) Morne Morkel (RSA) Ishant Sharma (IND)

ASSOCIATE PLAYER OF THE YEAR: Ryan ten Doeschate (NED) Alex Obanda (KEN) Niall O'Brien (IRL) Thomas Odoyo (KEN)

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