

Federer richest in history

AFP, Paris Roger Federer has become the world's richest tennis player...

Federer's passage into the third round of the ATP Madrid Masters event on Wednesday saw the Swiss player edge past former number one Pete Sampras...

Federer will take his earnings to 43.5 million dollars should he win in Spain. Sampras earned 43.27 million dollars in his career.

Federer and Sampras, with 13 and 14 Grand Slams win each, stand almost 12 million dollars clear of third-placed Andre Agassi.

Current world number one Rafael Nadal stands eighth in the list with 20.5 million dollars in earnings, while legends Bjorn Borg, John McEnroe and Jimmy Connors do not even make it into the top 10.

Benaud pleads for patience

AFP, Sydney

Cricket doyen Richie Benaud has urged Australian fans to keep the faith with the country's band of emerging leg-spinners...

Australian sports fans are coming to grips with life without 708-Test wicket great Shane Warne, who retired from international cricket almost two years ago.

Benaud, 78, one of Australia's greatest leg-spin bowlers with 248 wickets in 63 Tests before retiring to become a television cricket commentator, says it is vital for slow bowlers to be given sufficient time to master their craft.

Cameron White is the latest leg-spinner Australia is trying at Test level in the current series in India.

Benaud rates the 25-year-old Victorian highly and thinks he will only develop further if afforded continuing Test match experience.

White took 1-88 from 31 overs while making his Test debut in the drawn series-opener in Bangalore after being a late call-up to the Indian tour.

"I think Cameron White's a good cricketer. I'm very keen on him doing well and people expect young cricketers suddenly to be stars overnight," Benaud told Australian Associated Press on Thursday.

"It's important to persevere with all young players. It's no good putting them in for a match or two."

"He's captained Victoria for a few years and he's got lots of experience. He's a good batsman, a brilliant fielder and I'm hoping his bowling will continue to improve."

Benaud said he needed years to mature as a top-line bowler. He says the search to unearth the next Shane Warne could be a lengthy one.

"Warne's been the best leg-spinner that I've ever seen," Benaud said.

"There's not an obsession there (to find the next Warne), but everyone would like someone to come up as Warne did virtually from nowhere."

On-field umpires

FROM PAGE 17 the focus [of everyone] on the game."

Used for the first time in England in 2007, the umpire review system received mixed reactions on its international debut. However, the ICC, at its board meeting in Dubai on Tuesday, decided on the extension to provide greater exposure to the system before permanently implementing it.

Richardson said a 100 per cent fool-proof system was not yet possible in the absence of similar technological help. "I know some Indian players were not happy with the system, with Sri Lanka slightly holding an upper hand. But we were satisfied with the referral system and found out that it led to 98 per cent correct decisions being given," he said.

Beginning with New Zealand's two-Test series at home against West Indies in December, the system will also be tried out in the three-Test series between Pakistan and India the following month, the four Tests between West Indies and England beginning February and the three-Test series between South Africa and Australia starting at the same time.

CHITS FROM CHITTAGONG

FROM PAGE 17 his height made sure his wrist action got more purchase.

Moniruzzaman, a member of Chittagong's National Cricket League squad, struck Mushfiqur Rahim on the hand with a rising delivery and beat skipper Mohammad Ashraf several times outside the off-stump.

A few encouraging words later, he made his presence felt with another peach of an outswinger.

While everyone searched for a similarity with a top international bowler, a cameraman suggested that he was a bit like Mohammad Asif, the embattled but talented Pakistani pacer.



Dhaka Warriors batsman Alok Kapali whacks one over covers during his scintillating 100 against Hyderabad Heroes in the Indian Cricket League on Wednesday.

Kapali ton goes awry

Cricket

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, Hyderabad

Former New Zealand all-rounder Chris Harris called up all his experience to hold the nerves and lead Hyderabad Heroes to a four-wicket victory over Dhaka Warriors in their second Indian Cricket League T20 match at the Lal Bahadur Shastri Stadium here on Wednesday night.

Chasing 169 to win and with 13 runs required off the last over bowled by Forhad Reza, Harris struck a boundary, a six and again a four to wrap up the match, much to the disappointment of many spectators who thought a victory for the Dhaka side would have been the most appropriate reward for the stupendous effort by Alok Kapali earlier in the evening when he hammered the competition's first century in such a glorious fashion.

In the final analysis, it is the experience of the Heroes which made the difference. Unlike the disastrous start by Dhaka Warriors who lost five wickets for just 68 runs on the board, the home team began on a confident note largely due to the experience of Pakistani all-rounder Abdul Razzaq who struck two sixes and as many fours on a pitch favouring the batsmen. Razzaq made 27 before Reza uprooted his middle stump.

Then it was left to Stuart Binny, son of former of Indian Test all-rounder Roger Binny, to cut loose and he was accompanied by South African Nicky Boje, another seasoned campaigner. Stuart displayed some fine strokes to bring the Heroes back into the hunt before he was run out while returning for a second run.

The exit of Razzaq and Stuart appeared to make the Hyderabad Heroes innings wobbly but Harris and Boje held the things together before the South African was also run out for 31 made in 32 balls. The South African survived a confident leg before appeal, courtesy the umpire referral.

Harris ensured his team overcame the hiccup of Boje's departure

Pakistan chief delighted

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan's new cricket chief on Thursday expressed his delight over the rescheduling of the Champions Trophy.

"Pakistan government is taking care of improving security and every step will be taken to hold the India series in a peaceful manner because that will allay fears of other countries," said Butt.

Pakistan hosts India for three Tests, five one-day internationals and a Twenty-20 match from January to February next year. The ICC was forced to postpone the Trophy, scheduled for last month, after South Africa pulled out of the event.

Australia, England and New Zealand had also raised concerns. Australia postponed a full tour of Pakistan in March this year but agreed to reschedule the visit into two trips, and now will play five one-dayers in March 2009 and three Tests in 2010.

Pakistan has struggled to attract foreign teams since the 9/11 attacks on the United States in 2001. They had to relocate two home series -- against Australia and the West Indies -- to neutral venues.

New Zealand cut short a 2002 tour after a suicide bomb blast outside their Karachi hotel killed 14 people.

and provided the finishing touches with two balls to spare. That Harris reserved his heroics in the final over also reflected his steely nerve.

The difference between experience and youth came to the fore again as the match was heading for a tight finish. With Heroes closing in on the target, the nerves clearly showed on the Dhaka Warriors as Reza fumbled with a straight catch from Harris and allowed it to cross the boundary.

However, the big consolation for the Dhaka Warriors was the jury's decision to pick Kapali as the man-of-the-match.

There were many among the spectators who felt sad that Kapali's splendid effort went down the drain as other Dhaka Warriors batsmen failed miserably. When Kapali showed scant regard for pacers and spinners clobbering them all over the ground, the other batsmen of his side were falling like ninespins.

This is the second successive defeat for the Dhaka team and second consecutive win for the Heroes.

It's going

FROM PAGE 17 remain almost unchanged with dry weather tomorrow," the forecaster said.

Moreover, the locals observed that more heat at the beachside area, where the stadium is situated, is uncomfortable than other areas as salinity accompany the wave there.

The temperature is a vital factor for both teams. But, the situation may bring some blessing for the Tigers as the visitors are not habituated to such an adverse weather.

Bangladesh go

FROM PAGE 17 sere sitters to deny Shafiqul Islam Manik's side a certain victory.

"It was painful to concede a goal so late after being the dominating force throughout the game," team leader Badal Roy told the Daily Star over phone.

Mozambique only got two chances in the last five minutes, forcing goalkeeper Aminul to make fine saves before the pressure told.

Skipper Matiu Munnna, Sharif and Sujon, who made his return to the national team after more than a year, were the leading performers of the team, who will take on Myanmar national team tomorrow at the same venue.

Meanwhile, in the opening match on Wednesday, hosts Malaysia thrashed Nepal 4-0 in Group A with a brace from Saee and one goal apiece from Indra Putra and Khyril.

Bangladesh team (5-3-2): Aminul, Hassan Al Mamun, Ariful (Zahid), Rajani, Sujon, Waly, Sharif, Arman Aziz, Matiu Munnna, Emily and Robin (Enamul).

India's unanswered questions

Cricket

CricketInfo, undated

The biggest question India grappled with a day before the start of the second Test was the fitness of Anil Kumble, their captain and an integral part of a two-spin, two-pace attack. The answer, about 21 hours before the captains walked out for the toss, was the same as it was in Kanpur earlier this year. He was troubled by a bad shoulder then, as he is now.

"If I can bowl, I will play... So I will assess how I feel in the morning," Kumble had said a day before the Kanpur Test. "It's 24 hours before the match, so we'll just wait and see how it responds," he said on Thursday. He didn't play in Kanpur, and we'll know only at the toss today if he does here.

"It's a lot better than what it was yesterday," he said. Yesterday he hadn't even bowled at the nets. Thursday he said he did, in the privacy of the indoor nets.

India go into an important Test match with more questions than answers, in contrast to their opponents. Stuart Clark, one of Australia's main bowlers, was injured during the

Bangalore Test. He didn't bowl on Wednesday, took a fitness test yesterday, during which he bowled around 30 deliveries, and didn't look fit enough to play a Test. As a result the man who will take his place, Peter Siddie, knows a day in advance, and has time to settle his nerves before his Test debut.

The replacement for Kumble, if needed, both as player and captain, will get to know about an hour before the match. It's an academic thought but India don't have a designated vice-captain either. Going by the Kanpur precedent, Mahendra Singh Dhoni should lead the side if Kumble is not fit to play. Australia have always gone after the opposition captain; here, the captain has left himself open to being a target.

The weather, and its effects on the pitch, could also have a bearing on the combination. The rains have meant the pitch has stayed under the covers for too long, and hasn't had the desired amount of sunlight. As a result, it is expected to retain some of the moisture underneath the top surface, which looks pretty dry. The curator expects the pitch to be sluggish until, as he hopes, the sun beats down on it consistently.

Again, there are two ways of

looking at the sluggish pitch. The spinners might not get the kind of bounce they enjoy in Mohali -- as Kumble has done here, with two man-of-the-match performances. The pace bowlers might not get the kind of carry. In such a scenario, Munaf Patel sounds a better option than Amit Mishra, going by recent form and experience. This is also the venue where Munaf made his promising debut two years ago. He has gone through a long since then, and is back with the same promise, perhaps more.

Kumble's fitness and the ideal combination in his absence has left a lot of doubt. But there is a larger question India need to come face to face with, sooner or later and regardless of Kumble's fitness. Are they ready to -- and it's not as bold a move as it sounds -- play three fast bowlers in home Tests? Especially when there are three pace bowlers close to pretty much the best they have been?

And if they choose to go with five bowlers, it will involve another emotionally detached decision, the kind India are not known for. Playing five batsmen would mean dropping either Sourav Ganguly or VVS Laxman. One of them is in his last series, the other is three Tests

short of 100. Even though the batsmen did enough in Bangalore to save the Test and their places in the side, the bowling attack didn't look potent enough to force the issue. This pitch here is expected to be better for batting.

The last time India went with three fast bowlers, when not playing five bowlers, in a home Test, was against Pakistan in 2004-05 -- incidentally, at the same venue. Laxminipathy Balaji, Irfan Pathan and Zaheer Khan had done well then to bowl Pakistan out on the first day but in the second innings, when the pitch became easier to bat on, India couldn't bowl Pakistan out. Pakistan started the fifth day 53 runs ahead with four wickets in hand. Kumble managed two wickets on the fifth day, but the match was saved by Abdul Razzaq and Kamran Akmal.

The pitches in India have, however, changed since. It's hard to find a track -- Kanpur was an under-prepared exception -- that of late has been a typical Indian minefield. Are India looking more at the past -- at Kumble's great record, at the old two-spinner theory -- than looking to play the four best bowlers available?

Morgan expects SL to tour Eng

CricketInfo, undated

David Morgan, the International Cricket Council (ICC) president, has expressed his confidence that Sri Lanka's tour of England next May would go ahead as planned, despite fears that a number of their leading players will instead opt for the financial lure of the Indian Premier League (IPL).

"In respect of the FTP [Future Tours Programme] tour of Sri Lanka to England in 2009, I believe that the chairman of Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chairman, along with other board chairmen have had meaningful discussions such that the event will take place on the scheduled dates in England next year," Morgan said at the conclusion of the ICC's two-day board meeting in Dubai.

"Very good progress has been made in the discussions that Arjuna Ranatunga (SLC chairman), Giles Clarke and other board chairmen have had. I would like to say that in our deliberations these past two days, there has been a good recognition of the primacy of ICC and FTP events."

Ranatunga, Sri Lanka's former captain in the 1990s, has been unequivocal in his support for Test cricket. Understandably, he is aware of the financial benefits the IPL can provide to his players and happy for them to participate, but only "subject to them being available for any commitments with Sri Lanka Cricket at a given time."

However, SLC -- a body whose finances aren't as healthy as some -- are in negotiations to seal a 70-million-dollar bailout deal with the Indian board. Many fear that the financial clout will sway players to opt for cash over country.

"As far as we are concerned, the tour is part of the FTP and there is no reason why it won't go ahead," an ICC spokesman told Crickinfo.

Injuries worry

FROM PAGE 17 Hussey, Michael Clarke, Shane Watson, Brad Haddin, Cameron White, Brett Lee, Mitchell Johnson, Peter Siddie.

INDIA (from): Anil Kumble (captain), Virender Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir, Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly, Venkatesai Laxman, Mahendra Dhoni, Harbhajan Singh, Zaheer Khan, Ishant Sharma, Amit Mishra, Munaf Patel.

Umpires: Rudi Koertzen and Asad Rauf.

Vettori warns

FROM PAGE 17 turn all that much. From the third day I expect that the spinners will come into play."

Vettori took a look at today's playing surface on Tuesday during the third ODI and believed that it will break up from the third day.

"It was next to the one we played in the third ODI so I think it'll be almost similar. It looks like it will start to get dusty by the third day so then the spinners can come into play," said Vettori.

But he is among just three players who have played Test matches in Bangladesh and that is another area of concern for the 29-year-old. "I think we have the talent but we need to get these guys to play more and more Test matches," said Vettori of the relatively inexperienced players in the side.

"I think experience does go against us. We should allow them to play in different conditions and hopefully build on that experience. If you look at our top six, the inexperience is primarily in our batting lineup. I think we have a talented group and it is now up to them to prove themselves under any condition," said Vettori.

Although Jamie How, Jesse Ryder, Daniel Flynn and Ross Taylor played in the one-dayers, they are light on experience with Ryder playing his debut Test. Aaron Brumby and Iain O'Brien are also included with both players having made their debut last season.

Kirsten backs Kumble

Cricket

AFP, Mohali

Embattled India skipper Anil Kumble has received a ringing endorsement from coach Gary Kirsten as he struggles with his form and fitness ahead of the second Test against Australia.

Nursing a sore shoulder, the 37-year-old leg-spinner failed to bag a single wicket in the drawn first Test at Bangalore.

It was only the third time in his career and the first time ever in front of a home crowd he has walked away empty-handed.

He also dropped two catches off his own bowling to cap a miserable outing and trigger a debate as to whether he was fit enough to lead the Indian side.

However, Kirsten reaffirmed his faith in Kumble and warned Australians of a comeback from the stalwart in the second Test, which begins here on Friday.

"Kumble is a warrior," Kirsten said here late on Wednesday. "He is alright at the moment. He

has a little bit of pain but he is very keen to play. I am sure that regardless of how he is physically, he would be ready to represent his country."

"We don't look at form in one Test but over a long period of time. He is one of the greatest Indian players ever. Any champion player who struggles comes back stronger."

"He is going to come back more determined than before to put in a match-winning performance. He has been doing this for the last 17 years."

The former South African opener also spoke about the upbeat mood in the Indian camp following their match-saving heroics in Bangalore.

"As a coach or even when I was playing against them, I have never seen such strong team unity and togetherness. They are very eager to win this Test series. They have the belief that they can beat Australia."

"The greatest catalyst has been the fact that we are up against the number one team in the world. No one is talking about individual records but what we can do as a team."

Anil form a problem for India: Ricky

Cricket

CricketInfo, undated

Ricky Ponting has said that the disappointing form of his opposing captain Anil Kumble could turn into an issue for India at the selection table in the lead-up to the second Test. Kumble, who turns 38 on Friday, failed to collect a wicket in the first Test and has faced intense media scrutiny about retirement plans.

Kumble was also battling a shoulder injury in Bangalore, although he is confident he will be fit for the second Test in Mohali, which starts on Friday. But Ponting said with wet weather a concern and the Mohali pitch renowned for offering assistance to seamers, India would need to think long and hard about including two spinners.

"They're in a bit of a predicament I think with Anil being their captain," Ponting told the Australian. "If you had to look at someone who was going to go out

to make way for a quick, it would probably have to be him."

"Harbhajan [Singh] has a great record against Australia and is probably bowling better than Kumble at the moment so that's where the difficulty comes. If they happen to drop Kumble it would probably be a long way back for him so it will be interesting to see what they do."

The rematch after the five-day draw in Bangalore will be revealing following the after-match niggles, in which Zaheer Khan said Australia had played overly defensively. But Ponting said Zaheer, who was the Man of the Match for his six wickets and first-innings half-century, should worry about his own performance.

"He's just happened to have a good game as well, which is pretty unusual for him," Ponting said. "He's had a good game. It's up to him to back it up again. I think a lot of his comments might have been to try and get us to play a different style and different brand of cricket."

Oval interested in IPL matches

CricketInfo, undated

Paul Sheldon, the Surrey chief executive, has confirmed for the first time that the club are interested in hosting Indian Premier League (IPL) matches at The Oval.

"It is true we have spoken to certain IPL franchises about staging games here," Sheldon said. "If it was possible within the calendar and with the blessing of the ECB, we would certainly look at it." Earlier this year Keith Bradshaw, the Marylebone Cricket Club chief executive, visited the tournament's chairman, Lalit Modi, about the possibility of bringing IPL "exhibition" games to Lord's. At the time, Sheldon was rumoured to have also shown interest for The Oval, though he denied any talks had been made.

Now, however -- thanks to the agent of Surrey's off-spinner, Saqlain Mushtaq, who revealed Surrey's plans to PakPassion.net -- Sheldon has confirmed that the IPL might one day be coming to England.

"Looking forward to 2009, the domestic and international calendar is very tight -- so it will probably be difficult to find time for it," he said. "If it were possible we would be very keen to do it, but we would always work closely with the ECB."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptogram puzzle with a grid and a key for deciphering the message.

DBIJBWB KFB KTU UGQ ZMBIBW UE DSBJQ TBSB ESMBVQW, ZBUZGB FJQ DBNHV IJGGMVN KFBY WKJGBYJKBW. Yesterday's Cryptogram: STATEMENT YOU MIGHT HEAR IF A DEVICE SUDDENLY STOPS OPERATING: "DEFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY." Today's Cryptogram Clue: Z equals P