

Seniors under no pressure, says Kumble

PTI, Bangalore

A day after announcing his retirement, Anil Kumble on Monday refused suggestions that he had been under pressure from the cricket establishment to quit and made it clear that there was no "retirement scheme" under which senior Indian stars were calling it a day.

"There was no talk of BCCI [Board of Control for Cricket in India] telling any player to retire. I don't think any player needs to be told about when to retire. It [the reported retirement plan] is all false," Kumble told a press conference here.

"Nobody told me when to retire. Sourav [Ganguly] took his decision, I took my own decision, there was no pressure. Let's leave it to the individuals. Criticism is fine but don't do it without reason. Don't start questioning the ability of the players. There is no retirement scheme, that's rubbish," he retorted when pressed on the issue.

Kumble's comments came in the wake of speculation that he was under pressure to announce his retirement and Ganguly, who is to retire at the end of the Nagpur Test this week, Rahul Dravid and VVS Laxman had all been given a deadline by the BCCI to hang up their boots by the end of India-England series this year.

Kumble said his successor Mahendra Singh Dhoni would prove to be a successful captain and Indian cricket was safe under his leadership.

"This is the right decision and now I hand over this role to Dhoni. We have a very able leader in him. Team is also looking very nice. I am sure it will continue to move forward. Indian cricket is in safe hands," he said.

Shishu Kishore beat Uttara

UNB, Dhaka

Shishu Kishore Sangha came from a goal down to beat Uttara Hockey Club 3-1 in the only match of the Green Delta Metropolitan First Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Masud Rana put Uttara ahead in the seventh minute but Nahidul Hasan restored parity for Shishu Kishore two minutes later before goals by Omar Faruk and Nahidul sealed three points for them.

Aussie media pay tribute to Anil

PTI, Melbourne

The "ultimate dusty-deck destroyer and one of the true gentlemen of the game" was how the media down under paid tribute to Anil Kumble, but insisted that the Indian spin legend went out as a "spent force" in the face of injury breakdowns and a dip in form.

"He leaves as the ultimate dusty-deck destroyer, Test cricket's third-highest wicket-taker and a reputation as one of the true gentlemen of the game," wrote 'The Daily Telegraph' paying tribute to the 38-year-old's 18-year career, which ended with a draw against Australia in New Delhi yesterday.

Dhaka

FROM PAGE 17

The first innings lead. Resuming the day on 97-3, Sylhet were bundled out for 172 runs to take a 55-run lead.

Tsonga Paris master

Tennis

AFP, Paris

Jo-Wilfried Tsonga provided a first home win in seven years at the Paris Masters on Sunday and in the process gatreashed the prestigious Masters Cup in Shanghai.

The 23-year-old from Le Mans, who burst onto the world stage in January by reaching the Australian Open final, defeated defending champion David Nalbandian of Argentina 6-3, 4-6, 6-4 on the back of an outstanding service game that produced 25 aces.

The win ensured Tsonga grabbed the last of the eight slots for the season-closing Masters Cup and left Nalbandian to concentrate on the Davis Cup final against Spain in Madrid on Saturday.

"This comes at the end of a season that has been so full of good things for me and the cherry on the cake is that I am going to Shanghai instead of just watching it on television," he said.

Tsonga reached the final by defeating three top tenners in Novak Djokovic, to whom he lost in the Australian Open final, Andy Roddick, in a three-set thriller, and James Blake in a semi-final blowout.

He immediately took command in front of a packed and partisan Bercy Sports Hall winning his opening serve to love and then grabbing a break when Nalbandian twice double-faulted.

Nalbandian did manage a break-point at 2-5 down, but another big serve from Tsonga foiled him and two games later Tsonga took the first set with a service winner on his third set point.

Tsonga had a break point in the first game of the second set but Nalbandian held him off and the contest levelled out with Tsonga imperial behind his huge serve and Nalbandian dominating the rallies when he could set them up.

The muscular Argentinian finally had a chance at 4-3 up when he reached 0-40 on Tsonga's serve,

but a succession of piledrivers frustrated him as the home fans roared with delight.

Two games later, however, he found himself in an identical situation after some sloppy play from Tsonga and this time the Frenchman's serve did not come to his rescue as Nalbandian drew level on sets.

The tide appeared to be turning, but Nalbandian inexplicably produced a series of groundstroke errors in the third game of the deciding set to gift a vital service break to Tsonga.

Needing just to hold on to his formidable serve, the Frenchman looked a safe bet but signs that a troublesome left thigh was starting to cause him pain gave Nalbandian



France's Jo-Wilfried Tsonga holds the winner's trophy after beating Argentina's David Nalbandian at the Paris Masters final on Sunday.

some room for hope.

The South American grafted out a break point to get back on level terms at 3-3, but once again Tsonga thwarted him with two aces and a service winner.

Four games later it was three break points for Nalbandian but he let them all slip by and a gleeful Tsonga pounced to clinch the biggest win of his career to date.

Tsonga is the first Frenchman to win here since Sebastian Grosjean in 2001 and in Shanghai from November 9-16 he will join defending champion Roger Federer, world No.1 Rafael Nadal, Djokovic, Andy Murray, Nikolay Davydenko, Andy Roddick and Juan Martin del Potro. It will be his first appearance in the Masters Cup.

PCB shocked

PTI, Karachi

Pakistan cricket authorities were shocked as prolific batsman Mohammad Yousuf yesterday left for New Delhi to play in the Indian Cricket League (ICL), jeopardising his international career even as he was named in the national squad for series against the West Indies.

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) officials confirmed they have learnt from Yousuf's wife that he would be playing in the ICL, dealing a severe blow to the national team which has witnessed a series of defections to ICL in the recent years.

"He didn't tell us anything about his plans. His leaving like this for India and confirmation he is going to play in the ICL has come as a shock to us," PCB's director cricket operations Zakir Khan said in a hastily arranged press conference.

Newly appointed Pakistan coach Intikhab Alam said Yousuf's sudden departure was hard to explain as he never got a chance to interact with him on his future with the national team.

"Until we get an official confirmation from Yousuf himself we can't say much right now. But if he has joined the ICL then he would be banned from all cricket in Pakistan," Zakir said.

Travelling to India on the same flight with Yousuf was PCB director general Saleem Altaf, but even he had no inkling to the batsman's plans.

"I asked him where he is going. He just told me he is going to India on a private visit and would return after two days," said Altaf, who was travelling to New Delhi to attend a World Cup meeting.

BCCI to honour four greats

PTI, Nagpur

Anil Kumble, who has announced his retirement from international cricket on Sunday, will be felicitated by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) along with Sachin Tendulkar, VVS Laxman and Sourav Ganguly here on November 6, the first day of the fourth and final India-Australia Test.

"Kumble will also be honoured along with Tendulkar, Laxman and Ganguly," BCCI and Vidarbha Cricket Association (VCA) president Shashank Manohar told this news agency at the VCA's newly built state-of-the-art 45,000-capacity stadium at Jamtha on the busy Nagpur-Hyderabad highway.

Manohar, himself overseeing the last-minute preparations at the new stadium located 16 kilometres from the heart of the city, said that the players would be handed over mementos prepared by the BCCI's headquarters in Mumbai.

On the retirement of Kumble and the forthcoming farewell by former captain Sourav Ganguly, who is to quit after the five-day encounter here, Manohar said replacement for greats was not easy to find.

"Greats are not born everyday, otherwise they are not greats. The onus is on the selectors to find the replacements," he added.

Manohar did not subscribe to the view expressed in some quarters recently that crowds stayed away from the Test series because of lack of proper facilities at Indian venues and pointed out that fans thronged the same venues during the Indian Premier League ties in April-May this year.

Steyn returns

FROM PAGE 17

South Africa showed reasonable form in easily winning both matches against Kenya but coach Mickey Arthur said the team were looking to lift their standard against Bangladesh.

"I was very pleased with the work the team put in over the past week both in the practice nets and in the matches," said Arthur.

"There were a lot of positives to take forward. At the same time each and every one of us has plenty of room for further improvement."

Bangladesh arrived in Johannesburg on Sunday and had their first net practice on Monday.

Despite losing some players to the unsanctioned Indian Cricket League, Bangladesh won the first one-day international at home against New Zealand last month before losing the series 2-1.

They stretched New Zealand before losing the first of two Tests by three wickets. The second Test was a rain-affected draw.

Imrul Kayes and Mahbubul Alam, who made their international debuts against New Zealand, return to South Africa after shining on a Bangladesh Academy tour of the country in August.

Yousuf with ICL again

Named in Pakistan side for WI ODIs

Cricket

AGENCIES, undated

Mohammad Yousuf has signed up again with the Indian Cricket League (ICL), in what represents undoubtedly one of the unauthorised Twenty20 League's biggest coups. The news comes on a day that he was named in a 15-man squad to take on the West Indies in three one-day internationals later this month in Abu Dhabi.

Though an official announcement will not be made by the ICL till Tuesday, Cricinfo has learnt that the Pakistani batsman has arrived in Delhi ahead of the unveiling on Tuesday. And ICL sources confirmed to Cricinfo that Yousuf had signed up to play in the ongoing second season. It is not yet known which team he will play for.

When contacted, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said it was trying to confirm whether Yousuf has joined the ICL before taking any action. "We called his family home after hearing of these reports. They told us he has gone to India to play cricket," Zakir Khan, the PCB's director of cricket operations, told Cricinfo.

"We want to get in touch with him, as we have not been told anything, to see what the facts of the situation are before we take any further steps."

Some important legal questions remain unanswered at the moment, for the ICL's latest acquisition is a long-running saga. Yousuf had initially signed up with the league in September 2007, in protest at being axed from Pakistan's squad for the Twenty20 World Cup in South Africa.

He was later lured out of playing

in the ICL by the PCB, with the promise of a lucrative contract in the Indian Premier League (IPL). But the ICL took the matter to an arbitration court in Mumbai, arguing that as Yousuf had signed up with them, he was ineligible to play for any other league.

A stay order was passed against Yousuf's participation in the IPL, though an appeal was later filed by the PCB on Yousuf's behalf in the Bombay High Court. There the matter has so far remained.

Also in the spotlight will come Yousuf's international future with Pakistan. All boards around the world have taken their cue from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) in barring ICL-contracted players from playing for the national team, or in some cases, even domestic sides. The PCB was no different under the previous chairman Nasim Ashraf, all of Pakistan's ICL players have been barred from representing Pakistan or playing domestic cricket. As per that policy, Yousuf will not represent Pakistan again which will put their selectors in a fix, having just announced the squad.

But the present administration - not available for comment currently - has hinted at a different, though not yet fully-formed, stance. At his first press conference after taking over as chairman, Ijaz Butt said the bans on ICL players would have to be looked at again as he didn't see a difference between the ICL and the IPL. Inzamam-ul-Haq, currently leading the Lahore Badshahs in the ICL, has been in touch with Butt directly about the issue and is likely to pursue it in an effort to allow players back into the national fold.

Yousuf's limited-overs future

has been the subject of increasing debate in Pakistan, despite a stellar record in recent years. His relatively poor fielding skills have been held against him regularly, as are his advancing years now. He has been open to his criticisms of this view, recently hitting out at the previous selection committee for continuing to ignore him from the Twenty20 side. That attack prompted the committee to select him for the Twenty20 tournament in Canada in August, though ultimately Yousuf couldn't go because of problems with his visa.

Troubled fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar was also retained in the 15-man squad after erasing doubts about his form and fitness, while top batsman Younis Khan will join the trip from his club team South Australia.

Pakistan play West Indies on November 12, 14 and 16 in Abu Dhabi in the first matches under new coach Intikhab Alam after Geoff Lawson was sacked last month.

Opening batsman Nasir Jamshed, not selected for Canada, will undergo a fitness test after recovering from malaria with another opener, Khalid Latif, lined up as his replacement.

Fast bowlers Rao Iftikhar and Abdur Rauf also return after missing the Canada trip.

The series is in Abu Dhabi after West Indies refused to tour Pakistan over security fears.

Pak greats hail Kumble

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Former Pakistan greats on Monday paid tribute to Indian leg-spinner Anil Kumble after one of the world's finest ever bowlers announced his retirement from Test cricket.

The 38-year-old Indian ace, the third highest wicket-taker in Test cricket with 619 from 132 matches, announced his retirement after the drawn third Test against Australia in New Delhi on Sunday.

Former Pakistan captain Wasim Akram said Kumble was a role model. "On and off the field Kumble proved a quality cricketer," Wasim told AFP. "He was a fierce competitor on the field and a gentleman off it," said Wasim, who played against

the Indian spinner until his retirement in 2003.

Wasim said Kumble's 10-wicket haul in an innings against Pakistan at New Delhi in 1999 was particularly memorable.

"It is still at the back of my mind because I was the last victim. Waqar [Younis] and I were at the crease and Kumble had taken nine wickets so my partner told me that he will hit out so that Kumble doesn't get the last wicket."

"I assured him that I will handle Kumble and he won't get the 10th wicket but in the very next over Kumble spun a sharp delivery and I was out. It proved he was one of the greatest spinners."

Former Pakistan leg-spinner Abdul Qadir said Kumble was different from celebrated Aussie Shane Warne, who retired last year with 708 wickets in 145 matches.

"For me he was less artistic than Warne but the confidence Kumble exuded is an example for future cricketers. He had a fantastic art and a fantastic career," said Qadir, who took 236 wickets in 67 Tests.

"Kumble's art was not obvious, Warne's was. Warne had perfect leg-spin, Kumble's was a bit, yet with the God-gifted confidence Kumble had he played cricket with pomp and pride."

Another former leg-spinner, Intikhab Alam, said Kumble's contribution to Indian cricket was "phenomenal".

"The world will always pay tribute to Kumble. His services for Indian cricket were phenomenal and it was sensible of him to retire at an appropriate time because Amit Mishra has almost taken his place," said Alam, who is now Pakistan team coach.

England have learned 'very expensive lesson': Moores

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

As England lick their wounds and cut back on their Christmas spending after being humiliated in Saturday's Stanford 20/20 for 20, coach Peter Moores said that his players had "learned a very expensive lesson".

"The players were trying to get in their heads what the game was all about," he said after the match. "I think that until the game had actually been played, the guys didn't get into their heads exactly what the tournament has been about. I don't know if we were absolutely as clear as we could have been."

The players, Moores said, were in doubt over the purpose of the match. "Is it for England? Is it for

money? In international top-flight sport you can't afford to have any grey areas. You've got to be very clear as a team and as an individual, and I think we weren't as clear as we could have been."

"Was it okay to say the match was about money or not about money? Every time you play for England it is about playing for England, but those questions were in people's minds during the week. They had to square it off in their heads. All credit to the lads for that, what they wanted to do was keep their integrity. They didn't want to be portrayed as not playing for their country but for the cash."

He was also concerned about how the result might affect England's assignments during winter. "We were playing against a very hungry, disciplined side. And we got nailed. That's what hurts, we

got nailed in an international match. What we didn't want to compromise at all was our preparation for the winter. It's been a bit of both, because we're going to India for a massive series and we've been concentrating on getting right for that as well."

However, Moores was optimistic about the chances next time around at the Stanford Super Series. "I think we will be stronger and wiser for it. Yeah, honestly I think we will. I think we will know what this is about."

But he acknowledged there would be a rethink about whether it would be an England team that took the field for the next Stanford outing or, as mooted, and ECB XI. "It's going to be reviewed," he said. "If a change helps people get their heads around why we're here, fine."

Hamilton made it at final corner

FROM PAGE 17

Judgement, Hamilton avoided the early problems that wrecked his bid to become the first rookie champion last year as he steered his McLaren Mercedes to glory after a tense contest and an extraordinary final lap.

Only on that final lap did Hamilton regain a place when Glock lost 18 seconds in his Toyota and slipped behind Hamilton.

As well as being the youngest champion, Hamilton also became the first black Formula One title holder on a stirring afternoon in front of an impassioned 100,000 crowd at the Interlagos circuit.

The race, run in unpredictable

wet and dry conditions, was won comprehensively by his nearest rival and local hero Massa.

Hamilton allowed Massa in his Ferrari to run away at the front and the claim his sixth win this year and the 11th victory of his career.

Massa was followed home by two times champion Fernando Alonso of Renault and third placed Ferrari team mate and outgoing champion Kimi Raikkonen.

German youngster Sebastian Vettel was fourth for Toro Rosso after passing Hamilton in the final laps and Hamilton fifth, just after his late recovery when Glock slowed down and finished sixth.

Hamilton's McLaren teammate

Heikki Kovalainen of Finland came home seventh.

Hamilton's triumph made him first Briton to take the world title since Damon Hill in 1996 and the first McLaren champion since Finn Mika Hakkinen in 1999. He is Britain's ninth champion.

The previous youngest champion was Alonso who was 24 years, one month and 27 days old when he won the title in 2005.

Hamilton was 23 years, nine months and 26 days old as he drove to glory on Sunday.

Massa had been hoping to be the first Brazilian champion since Ayrton Senna in 1991.

While Hamilton and Massa will be back next season for Scot David Coulthard this was the last race before retirement but the veteran winner of 13 grand prix did not make it to the first bend after slipping off when his Red Bull was hit by Nico Rosberg's Williams.

Glock denies

FROM PAGE 17

about the tyre situation, and about the weather conditions, and I said every time 'I'll stay out, one more lap, one more lap' and at the end I stayed out for the whole race.

Abahani climb to top

FROM PAGE 17

Abraham finally broke the season's duck with a simple tap in on handshaking distance after going round Piru.

The indefatigable Ibrahim, who spoiled numerous chances this season but has been setting up one goal after another for his teammates, sealed the victory shortly before the break with one of his typical dashing runs.

Overlapping left-fullback Wally Faisal picked up the Ghanaian with a cross field pass and Ibrahim, who had two defenders in front of him, sped past both to finish the move with a clinical effort just inside from the box.

With three points all but secured, the Sky-blues hardly showed any intention to increase the margin in the rest of the game.

goal cushion.

Zahed, who scored coming in as a substitute in their 3-0 win over Chittagong Abahani in the previous match, was close to repeat the feat but he drove a long-range angled shot just wide of the near post after getting the ball from Emeka midway through the rather relaxing second half.

Abahani did not have Arif Khan Joy in their 18-member list and it was confirmed that the former club and national captain, whose first league appearance was in the last game, would not be available till December for commitments in the coming national election.

TEAMS
ABAHANI: Biplab, Nazrul, Sujon, Samad, Waly, Abul, Mamun (Zahed), Pranotosh, Emeka, Emily (Tipu) and Ibrahim.
ARAMBAGH: Piru, Monu, Shahjada, Kaba, Akram, Moudud, Tutul (Surat), Imrul, Nicodemus, Anwar and Tabith (Weich).
Referee: Abdul Hannan.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS: 36 Chic no longer; 5 The air up course; 8 Improvise; 12 Birthright; 13 Neckwear; 14 Satan's specialty; 15 Archie's brunette girlfriend; 17 Puerto Rico; 18 Tibetan; 19 Moose's cousin; 20 Blase measures; 21 Animal treat; 22 Happy companion; 23 Enclose lightly; 26 Gestures; 30 Ogler's look; 31 Moonshine; 32 Sandwich cookie; 33 Overwhelmed; 35 Spouse.

A crossword puzzle grid with numbers 1 through 51 indicating starting positions for the clues. The grid is partially filled with letters.

CRYPTOQUIP

EDMK Q CQXTVS'F EVSJ XF KVSQBQTP VKTP BMOXVYSM, X SMYJVK PVI YVITO FQP CDQC XC'F FME - FME. Yesterday's Cryptoquip: UNABLE TO DECIDE WHICH FISHING BAIT I WANTED TO USE. I'D SAY I WAS REALLY FLOUNDERING AROUND. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: F equals S