



Did U Know?

The first man to swim the English Channel without a life jacket was Captain Matthew Webb, who died trying to swim the rapids above Niagara Falls.



What to Watch

STAR Cricket

Australia v South Africa
 First Twenty20 Int'l
 Live from 2:35pm

ESPN

English Premier League
 Wigan v Tottenham
 Live from 6:25pm
 Man United v Chelsea
 Live from 9:55pm

STAR Sports

Primera Liga
 Osasuna v Barcelona
 Live from 2:00am (Monday)



Talk Turkey



Ian Bell
 (England cricketer)
 "He is the best player in the world -- that is something you want in your dressing room. He is a match-winner who can turn things on their head -- and he plays well under pressure."
 On Kevin Pietersen.



Day's Event

National Cricket League
 (One-day match)
 Sylhet v Khulna
 Venue: BKSP
 Barisal v Rajshahi
 Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium
 Chittagong v Dhaka
 Venue: Dhanmordi Cricket Stadium
 Citycell B. League
 Khulna Abahani v Rahmatganj
 Venue: Khulna Divisional Stadium
 Time: 2:30pm
 Ctg Mohammedan v Farashganj
 Venue: MA Aziz Stadium,
 Chittagong
 Time: 2:30pm

'Pietersen let Eng down'

PTI, Melbourne
 Kevin Pietersen let England down as he failed to act responsibly but coach Peter Moores was no better and lacked the spark to excel, feels noted Australian cricket columnist Peter Roebuck.
 "Kevin Pietersen has let down his adopted country. Given the honour of captaining the England cricket team, he failed to act responsibly," he said.
 "Instead, he tried to impose himself, using his power as a match-winning batsman and appointed leader to remove a lacklustre coach and install his own staff," he wrote in his 'Sydney Morning Herald' column Saturday.
 Roebuck felt Pietersen was impressed by Shane Warne's approach with the under-dogs Rajasthan Royals in the Indian Premier League "yearned to instil the same free-wheeling yet competitive outlook in his players and knew his sincere but unimpressive coach blocked his path."
 "None of these ideas was

Tigers in shambles

BISHWAJIT ROY

All credit must go to the Zimbabwe side who were regimented in their efforts, to systematically eke out a 38-run victory against Bangladesh in the tri-nation opener at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.
 But what of their opponents, the Tigers?
 'Simply terrible' would be an apt way to describe them.
 It's not so uncommon for a bottom-ranked side to win against higher-ranked opponents but the way Mohammad Ashraful's men surrendered left numerous questions to be answered.
 It was hard for most to digest that the home side are now almost surely out of the running for the final. After yesterday's result, beating Sri Lanka now seems an entirely unlikely prospect.
 But why is it so upsetting?
 Because in spite of everything, the fact remains that the opponents were not outstanding. It was a case of the home side's performance bordering on the ridiculous that bothered everyone who had turned up or tuned in to watch the game.
 There was no way that a 206-run winning target was a hard task considering this bowling attack of Zimbabwe and an otherwise good surface. But the home batsmen managed to bundle themselves out for 167, through a mixture of rash strokes and suicidal running between the wickets.
 One can't however expect much from a team whose captain has hardly any idea about what should be a leader's role during crisis. There was required a calm effort from Mohammad Ashraful

when he came to bat with the scoreboard on 10 for 2 but what transpired gave rise to the same old question: when will he learn from his mistakes?
 Tamim Iqbal got off to a bright start by executing two boundaries in the very first over against Edward Rainsford but he walked back to the dressing room with an unfortunate run-out dismissal.
 Ashraful was the guilty party as he failed to notice that his partner was already half way down the pitch for a realistic second run. A perfect throw from long-on served to end the innings of the left-hander.
 But if that was unfortunate, what Ashraful did two balls later bordered on the criminal. The right-hander charged the Zimbabwe skipper and off-spinner Prosper Utseya to clear long-on but only managed to reach the hands of Sibanda.
 The question was all around? How it was possible for a team captain to take such an attempt when there was a need to keep cool.
 Jamie Siddons' desire to see his top order batsmen clicking in the match evaporated because none could apply their common sense in the chase of a moderate target. Shakib Al Hasan came up with some resistance but failed to bat through out the innings to rescue his side and that was the reason his 66-ball 52 went in vain.
 If the batting of the Tigers was ridiculous then the explanation of Bangladesh captain behind the defeat was even more frustrating.
 "What I think is that there was pressure and we were dismissed because of this pressure of a 'must win situation'," said the Bangladesh skipper in a post-match briefing.
 "Our batting was really poor and we conceded too many runs (200 runs) in the last over."
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Man-of-the-match Elton Chigumbura and Zimbabwe wicketkeeper Tatenda Taibu (R) rejoice at the crucial dismissal of Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan during the tri-nation series opener at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Teams shift focus
 First Aus-SA T20 match today

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Can anything really live up to the Test series we've just witnessed between these two teams -- Australia and South Africa? Probably not.
 But the world's two top-ranked limited-overs sides going head to head in a Twenty20 match in front of a likely crowd of more than 75,000 at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) today should be a terrific spectacle in any case.
 Australia will be desperate for some strong performances to ease the pressure after losing their first home Test series in 16 years. South Africa have declared that they are treating this portion of their trip as a separate tour. Both teams are taking the opportunity to trial some fresh talent.
 Australia have rested Brad Haddin due to his heavy workload in the past month and Luke Ronchi will take up the position behind the stumps. Ronchi was excellent with both bat and gloves in the West Indies this year but his domestic batting form has been down this summer and a lower-order position is likely.
 Michael Clarke and Mitchell Johnson have also

been given time off. Australia's major decision is which bowlers to include. They will be keen to get some overs into Shaun Tait, while Nathan Hauritz might miss out on the spin position due to Cameron White's batting ability.
 South Africa have named their starting line-up and there is no Hashim Amla, Neil McKenzie or Morne Morkel. Lonwabo Tsotsobe and Vaughn van Jaarsveld are set to make their international debuts, while all eyes will also be on Herschelle Gibbs in his return to the national side.
 David Warner was the bolter in Australia's squad. At 22 and having not yet made his first-class debut, Warner was picked on the strength of a couple of brilliant limited-overs performances for New South Wales. He made a state record unbeaten 165 in from 112 balls against Tasmania and followed it a week later with 97 from 54 balls -- narrowly missing the fastest one-day hundred in Australian domestic history -- against the same opponents in Hobart. He will be especially fascinating to watch if he uses the double-sided bat he has trialled this season; it allows him to play the reverse-sweep without changing his grip.
 Herschelle Gibbs turns 35

next month but South Africa view him as an important part of their campaign for the 2011 World Cup. Those plans were derailed slightly in November when Gibbs was demoted from the national set-up after breaking a team curfew. A month-long alcohol rehabilitation programme was the result and this will be Gibbs' first appearance since the incident. Coach Mickey Arthur has told Gibbs he expects him to lead from the front as the senior man in the top-order; it will be interesting to see how he responds.
 MCG's drop-in pitches have not been easy to score on in recent years. The surfaces are often two-paced and in limited-overs formats bowlers have had more reason to cheer than usual.

TEAMS

AUSTRALIA (possible): Shaun Marsh, David Warner, Ricky Ponting (captain), Michael Hussey, David Hussey, Cameron White, James Hopes, Luke Ronchi, Ryan Harris/Ben Hilfenhaus, Nathan Bracken, Shaun Tait.
SOUTH AFRICA: Herschelle Gibbs, Jacques Kallis, AB de Villiers, JP Duminy, Vaughn van Jaarsveld, Mark Boucher, Albie Morkel, Johan Botha (captain), Dale Steyn, Makhaya Ntini, Lonwabo Tsotsobe.

Women's NCL to start Jan 13

SPORTS REPORTER

The Women's National Cricket League will start with the match between hosts Chittagong and Rajshahi at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium on January 13.
 Six divisional teams will take part in the second version of the competition as Sylhet and Barisal were registered in this year.
 "We have decided to arrange the tournament in Chittagong to inspire the women all over the country. Plus there is also problems with the ground in Dhaka," said Abdullah Al Fud Redwan, chairman of the BCB's women's wing, at a press conference yesterday.
 He also informed that the board is planning to arrange a national championship across the country.
 "We are trying our best to make the game popular and you know Pakistan and Sri Lanka will arrive in a capital in next month to play a triangular series," Redwan informed.

Shakib, Shahadat to play for Biman

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Tigers all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan was brave enough to travel all the way to the Bangabandhu National Stadium to sign up for Bangladesh Biman yesterday. It was the first day of the inter-club players' transfers and it was not a surprise that very few of the pool players turned up at the bourse.
 But Biman guaranteed Shakib and pacesman Shahadat Hossain in their books apart from batsmen Tushar Imran, Jahurul Islam and Nazmus Sadat and pacesman Mohammad Shahjada and the suspended Abdur Razzak, who also became Biman players for the 2008-09 season.
 Forty-seven players changed allegiances in all, with giants Mohammedan Sporting Club also bringing some talent to their tent. Batsmen Marshall Ayub, Shamsur Rahman, Farhad Hossain, Nasiruddin Faruque, pacer Sajidul Islam and wicketkeeper Shahin Hossain will all play for the Motijheel club.
 Apart from the two big clubs, Surjo Tarun, Partex, Old DOHS, Young Pegasus and CCS were the other Premier clubs busy during the opening day of transfers.
 Surjo Tarun roped in Saqlain Sajib, Mahbub Alam, Delwar Hossain, Sabbir Rahman, Shaiful Islam and Sanjamul Islam

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Afridi in trouble

CRICINFO, undated

Shahid Afridi, the Pakistan batsman, was involved in an altercation with spectators during a domestic match in Karachi on Friday. Afridi was accused of slapping a fan in the face while turning out for Habib Bank Limited against Pakistan International Airlines in a domestic tournament, though he denied the speculation.
 "I didn't slap anyone," Afridi told Reuters. "There was this guy who was chasing and pushing me for an autograph. I just pushed him away."
 A local reporter and television cameraman claimed they had seen Afridi slap the autograph hunter after play finished for the day.
 This isn't the first time Afridi has been involved in an incident with a spectator. He had been banned from four ODIs in 2007 after brandishing his bat at a spectator during a one-day in Pakistan's tour of South Africa.

Strauss skipper for WI

Cricket

AFP, London

Andrew Strauss will captain England for their entire tour of the West Indies, including one-day internationals and the lone Twenty20, it was announced here Friday.
 Strauss, who hasn't played a one-day international since the 2007 World Cup in the Caribbean and wasn't originally in the limited overs squad for this tour, was confirmed Thursday by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) as England's new Test captain in a year when they face Australia for the Ashes.
 He replaced Kevin Pietersen, who had been captain in all forms of cricket, after the star batsman's fall-out with coach Peter Moores led to both men losing their posts.
 However, Strauss's position as one-day captain will be reviewed at the end of the Caribbean tour.
 England national selector Geoff Miller, who met with Strauss on Friday, said in an ECB statement: "The selectors feel that it is important to

have stability and continuity on the Caribbean tour given the events of the last few days.
 "Andrew and I have also agreed that we will review the one-day captaincy at the end of the tour. Andrew is extremely comfortable with that."
 Opening batsman Strauss, 31, said: "I am delighted to lead the team in the one-day internationals and Twenty20."
 "I know I haven't played an ODI since the end of the World Cup in 2007 but I do feel that I have something to offer in that form of the game."
 "Now this situation has been resolved we can now all unite and get about the business of winning cricket matches for England and winning them consistently," the Middlesex left-hander insisted.
 But while the issue of the limited overs captaincy has been settled, for the time being at least, the question of who will be the new England head coach is still to be resolved.
 England will not be appointing a new head coach for the West Indies tour, which features four Tests and five ODIs.
 Instead current assistant coach Andy

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ICC general manager Dave Richardson (C) interacts with children during the innings break of the Bangladesh-Zimbabwe match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, as part of ICC's centenary year celebrations in the country.

Tendulkar no fan of neutral venue

PTI, Mumbai

India's batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar said he was not in favour of playing matches at neutral venues since it takes away much of the charm.
 "I don't agree with the neutral venue. Whenever a team plays it should play in front of the crowd which is against them or behind them... Even at the international level," Tendulkar said when asked about his feelings before playing the Ranji Trophy final against Uttar Pradesh in Hyderabad from Monday.
 "We get very few matches to play at neutral venues such as World Cup or Champions Trophy, otherwise through most part of our careers we play in the opponent's country or at home," he said.
 The 35-year-old Tendulkar, who was felicitated today by the Mumbai Cricket Association for being the first cricketer to cross the 12,000-run mark, said his visit to Australia last year was the most memorable in his career.
 "Last year when I played in Australia, I got a standing ovation everywhere, which had never happened in my life. So that is the most memorable part of my career," he said.
 Asked about his dreams, the Mumbai batsman said he had dream as anyone would have but what was important was he made efforts to chase them.
 "It's extremely important to chase your dreams. It is said that you dream while you are asleep but you can realise only when you are awake so one must be awake and chase their dreams," he said.

Smith calls for calm

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Graeme Smith, the South Africa captain, has asked supporters to be patient if the team does not perform to expectations in the upcoming ODI series against Australia. Smith, who led South Africa to a historic win in the Test series, won't be part of the contest, having returned home in order to recuperate from a persistent elbow problem and the fracture he picked up in his left hand during the recent Sydney Test.
 Off-spinner Johan Botha will lead the team, but Smith said he would be keeping track of the team's progress, especially the youngsters in the side. "We view the series as good preparation for the next World Cup. As captain I actually can't wait for the series to start," Smith told news24.co.za. "I'm really excited to see how our young players will perform. They can play their way into permanent positions in the team with good performances."
 Besides regular Test players such as Hashim

Amla and Morne Morkel, the ODI squad also includes the likes of JP Duminy, who made a sensational start to his Test career in Australia, allrounder Albie Morkel, and uncapped players Vaughn van Jaarsveld, Wayne Parnell and Lonwabo Tsotsobe.
 "It's important that we start identifying the next generation of cricketers for South Africa and ensure that they can give a good account of themselves when it matters," Smith said. "Nobody knows when one of our regular players will be injured."
 Last year, South Africa had performed poorly in the ODI series after winning the Test series in England. Smith's elbow injury plagued him then as well, and he played only the first two games of a series they lost 4-0. The poor form of Herschelle Gibbs, Makhaya Ntini and Jacques Kallis -- all part of the present squad -- led to doubts over their limited-overs future, with coach Mickey Arthur suggesting at building a young side with the 2011 World Cup in mind. Smith admitted the bowlers were inexperienced, and said the team had been unable to fill the void created by Shaun Pollock's retirement.