

Sachin, Sourav could've been kidnapped!

CRICINFO, Undated

The Delhi police have revealed that three Pakistan-based terrorists confessed to conspiring to kidnap Sachin Tendulkar and Sourav Ganguly in 2002.

The news comes in the backdrop of heightened fears surrounding cricketers' security after the attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore earlier this month, and the uncertainty over this season's Indian Premier League (IPL), which overlaps with general elections in India.

The police told a Delhi court on Tuesday that the terrorists, belonging to the Harkat-ul-Jehadi Islami (HUJI), had wanted to kidnap the cricketers in a bid to secure the release of two HUJI members who were imprisoned in India.

The development comes after nearly a fortnight of talks between the IPL and the government regarding the tournament's itinerary. The home ministry had initially asked for a postponement of the IPL but the event's organising committee has been re-jigging the schedule in an attempt to ensure that the government's security forces aren't overstressed.

Blame it on

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"Abahani played well in the end but we will return for the second leg match," he added.

Referee Tayeb Hasan defended his decision.

"The ball hit the hand but it was unintentional. I stuck to the rules," the FIFA referee told.

Veteran Abahani coach Amalash Sen also pointed out that the referee ignored Brothers defender Ariful's foul on Emily inside the penalty area.

"How could he miss that foul?" Amalash questioned. "We won the match because we never lost hopes and I told my players to keep attacking after going 2-1 down."

"When we got the freekick, I told Waly to lob the ball to Emily because he has been showing great form recently. The boys did what I said and I believe going 3-2 ahead in the second leg will give us the advantage."

Zahid Hassan Emily has now won two matches for Abahani, scoring winners in two come-from-behind victories against Chittagong Mohammedan and Brothers.

"I believe I had a hand in our B. League turning point. When the team needed me most, I hit form," said two-goal Emily.

"I have a knack to improve my performance in these situations and I am doing just that now. But it's not me alone, it was team work that won us the match," the number one striker of the country added.

IPL not a

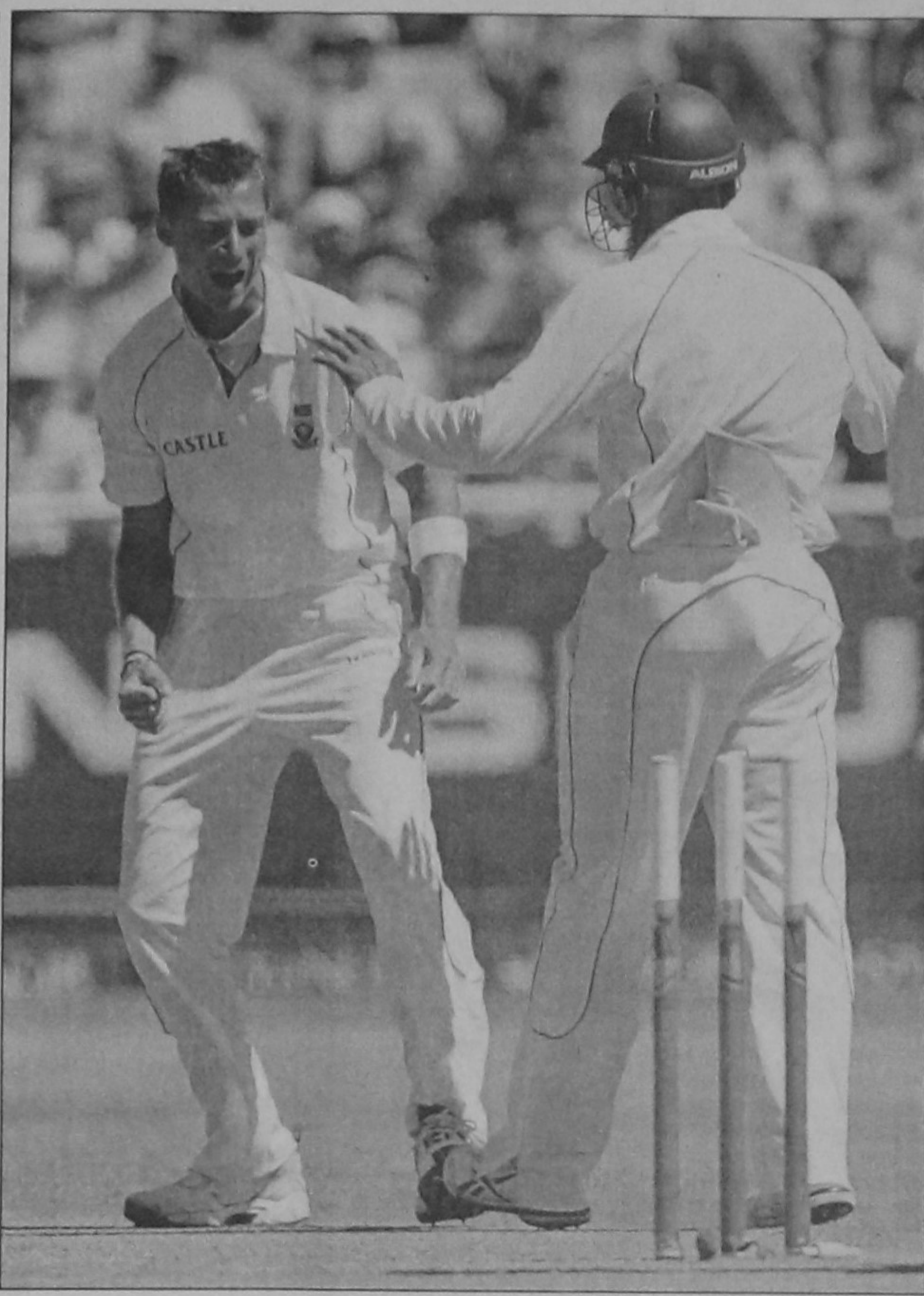
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the Kolkata Knight Riders while national skipper Mohammad Ashraful will play for the Mumbai Indians.

"I know that the organisers have submitted a revised schedule to the Indian government and things might work out, but to be honest none of us have any control over it so we will just have to wait and see. I am not thinking about it actually, if the IPL doesn't happen its ok but if it does take place then I personally would get some quality match practice ahead of the Twenty20 World Cup in June," said Mashrafe to The Daily Star yesterday.

Mashrafe, who is also the captain of Premier Cricket League's top club Abahani, is happy with his team's performance in the first phase of the league despite some nagging injury problems in his camp.

"We still haven't managed to get over with injury problems and our team physio is still working on me and the other players. My back problem hasn't healed yet but hopefully we can continue our winning run throughout to the super league. We have won two big matches without our injured players and without me bowling my usual, so we just need to continue doing that and four wins in the super league will see us defend our title," quoted the 0.6 million-dollar paceman.



Fiery South Africa paceman Dale Steyn (L) is ecstatic after dismissing Australia's Mike Hussey (unseen) on the opening day of the third Test at Newlands in Cape Town yesterday.

Ignominy for City

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first and their decision was justified when they posted a healthy total of 282-3 in the allotted 50 overs.

Dashing left-handed batsman Amit Mojumder scored a blistering 104 off 85 balls, hitting 13 boundaries and three sixes. Shakil Haider (72) and Sharifullah (63) also joined the party.

In reply, City Club got off to the perfect start as openers Raseel Al Mamun (89) and Mayshukur Rahim (58) put up 162 runs for the opening stand in 38 overs. But they lost the race against a soaring run-rate and eventually fell 50 runs shy of the winning target.

OLDDOHS-CCS

Although a truly consolation match in nature, both teams went hard about their business at Fatullah. Old DOHS batted after winning the toss and stacked a competitive total of 227-7 on the board.

Tigers batsman Mahmudullah Riyad shone with the bat scoring a forbearing and unbeaten 101 off 153 balls, hitting five boundaries and a six. Old DOHS's Pakistani recruit Wasim Nayeem and Golam Rahman provided a satisfying support with 33 and 42 respectively.

National pacer Syed Raseel ran into form picking up 3-40 in his ten overs for CCS.

Chasing the challenging total, CCS lost opener Uttam Sarker early at 30-1 but Pakistani import Shahbaz Butt and left-handed Elias Sunny steadied the ship with a 49 run partnership for the second wicket. Sunny finally perished with the score on 79-2 making only 17 but he aptly held one end up while Butt played his natural game for a 112-ball 69, hitting eight boundaries. However when Mahmudullah picked up Butt in the 30th over, Old DOHS started looking a

little threatening.

But it was second down Nizamuddin Ripon (57) and Suvagata Hom (55) who took CCS home with 21 balls to spare and six wickets standing.

DOHS opening bowler Rashedur Rahman picked up two wickets for 49 runs in 9.3 overs.

BRIEF SCORES

VICTORIA: 282-3 in 50 overs (Amit Mojumder 104, Shakil Haider 72, Sharifullah 63*, extras 12)

CITY CLUB: 232-5 in 50 overs (Raseel Al Mamun 89, Mayshukur Rashim 58, extras 33; Akl Arshad 3-39)

Result: Victoria won by 50 runs. OLD DOHS: 227-7 in 50 overs (Mahmudullah Riyad 101*, Golam Rahman 42, extras 12; Syed Raseel 3-40)

CCS: 228-4 in 46.3 overs (Shahbaz Butt 69, Nizamuddin Ripon 57, Suvagata Hom 55*, extras 8; Rashedur Rahman 2-49)

Slow going at Hamilton

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pressure on them.

But Martin felt conditions would favour the bowlers, with Hamilton traditionally offering moisture and movement in the air in the morning.

"With the new ball and a little bit of swing tomorrow I think we can at least claw back a couple of early wickets and get ourselves right back in the game again," he said.

There was no urgency about the Indian innings, in part because of the defensive fields set by New Zealand skipper Daniel Vettori in an attempt to force the visitors into taking the initiative if they wanted to keep the scoreboard ticking over.

Instead, Gambhir, Dravid, Laxman and Tendulkar were prepared to bide their time and wait for the loose deliveries. New Zealand sent down 21 maidens.

Tendulkar, who faced 135 balls for his 70, was fortunate to survive when on 13 when Daniel Flynn was able to get his fingertips to a top edge but could not hold the ball.

Gambhir, who was trapped lbw off a no-ball from Kyle Mills's first delivery of the day when on six, went on to make 72 off 135 deliveries.

But he fell to reverse swing from Martin, edging to wicketkeeper Brendon McCullum, which ended a 105-run partnership with Dravid for the second wicket.

Dravid went soon after for 66, bowled by Iain O'Brien with a ball that nipped back between bat and pad.

Tendulkar and Laxman added 61 in 28 overs for the fourth wicket before Martin dismissed Laxman with the second new ball, caught by Ross Taylor at first slip for 30.

But while Martin was frugal at one end, Tendulkar was particularly harsh on Mills, who proved the most expensive of the bowlers with no wicket for 70 off his 15 overs.

The first Indian wicket to fall was Sehwa, who had tormented New Zealand with his explosive hitting in the recent one-day series and looked equally comfortable in the longer form of the game.

He was run out after James Franklin hit the stumps from 40 yards in the third over of the day.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the second day of the first Test between New Zealand and India at Seddon Park in Hamilton on Thursday:

NEW ZEALAND: First innings 279 (Vettori 118, Ryder 102; Sharma 4-73, Patel 3-60)

INDIA: First innings (overnight 29-0)

Table with columns: Player, O, M, R, W. Includes Gambhir, Mills, Dravid, Tendulkar, Laxman, Vettori, Sharma, Patel, O'Brien, Martin, Ross Taylor, Flynn, Mills, Haddin, McDonald, Kallis, Ntini, Johnson, Prince, Steyn, Siddle, De Villiers, Bt Ntini, McGain, De Villiers, Bt Steyn, Hilfenhaus, Extras, Fall of wickets.

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Abahani clinch a classic

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was kept away by Biplab's one-handed save in the 43rd minute.

Biplab held onto a close-range header by Tapu after resumption but Abahani skipper Nazrul's delay in clearing a long pass by Brothers midfielder Rikto allowed Shakil to get inside the box and drill a left-footer into the back of the net on the hour, giving Abahani's national custodian no chance to react.

Even during corners, Brothers had two men up front

and Abahani regrouped with three quick changes by Amalash to break through the rival defensive shell.

Waly Faisal floated a long freekick from the left over the rival backline and Emily, unmarked at the far post, nodded home to make it 2-2.

Two minutes later, the impressive striker latched onto an overhead pass by Ibrahim Hilfenhaus to set up a left-footer into the far corner to spark wild celebrations at the Abahani stands. It was Emily's third goal in the meet after scoring the

winner in yet another comeback behind 2-1 win over Chittagong Mohammedan in the group stage.

Yellow Cards: Ibrahim, Emeka, Emily (Abahani) and Shuvra (Brothers)

TEAMS ABAHANI: Biplab, Nazrul (Siraji 68th), Sujun, Samad, Waly, Abul (Zahed, 55th), Joy (Pranotosh, 57th), Emeka, Mamun, Ibrahim and Emily.

BROTHERS: Zia, Ariful, Shuvra, Mishu, Liton (Rony, 72nd), Zahid, Matiu Manna, Rikto, Shakil, Henry and Tapu.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Ideal School edged Government Muslim High School by four runs at the East End Club ground in the Standard Chartered Young Tigers U-16 National School Cricket Tournament yesterday.

In another match, Nawabpur Government High School beat Paramout High School by six wickets at the Uttara Friends Ground.

PREMIER VOLLEYBALL Titas Club brushed Wari Club 3-1 in the National Bank Premier Volleyball League at the Dhaka Volleyball Stadium.

In the First Division, Bhai Bhai Sangha blanked Azad SC 3-0.

No Premier League matches are scheduled for today. However Swabalmi Society meet Nabajagrani Sangha and Madartek Mitali Sangha will play Uttara SC in two First Division matches at the same venue.

NAT'L HANDBALL

The first phase of the Exim Bank 20th National Women's Handball Championship begins on Saturday with the Zone-B matches in Madaripur.

The Zone-A matches will begin on April 9 in Rangpur while the Zone-C on April 25 in Rangamati. A total of 31 district teams are taking part in the first phase.

Six teams -- two each from three zones -- will qualify for the nine-team final round to be held in Faridpur from May 10.

Holdes Bangladesh Ansars & VDP, runners-up Dhaka and hosts Faridpur will directly play in the finals.

DIV-II HOCKEY

Rayer Bazar AC thrashed Dhaka Young Star 9-0 in the Green Delta 2nd Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

Shahidul Islam scored a hat-trick scoring the first three goals, Shahid Hasan and Ashique Mahmud scored two goals each while Abdul Khaleque and Hasan Ali netted one goal each for the winners who dominated the first half 6-0.

In the day's other match, Uity Club beat PWD Sporting Club 2-0 after leading the first half 1-0. Mohammad Naeem and Mohammad Arshad scored one goal each for the winners.

Proteas

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New cap Albie Morkel, brother of the dropped Morne, picked up the key wicket of Ponting, having the Australian captain caught behind for a duck.

South Africa's new opening pair of Ashwell Prince and Khan had no real problems on a good batting pitch, putting on 57 runs in even time.

Prince was in particularly good form, striking an unbeaten 37 off 36 balls with five fours. He also hit a six over long-on off the second ball bowled in Test cricket by leg-spinner McGain.

McGain played in place of Marcus North, who was in hospital with food poisoning.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at the end of Australia's first innings of the third Test between South Africa and Australia at Newlands in Cape Town on Thursday:

Table with columns: Player, O, M, R, W. Includes Hughes, Harris, Katich, Khan, Ponting, Boucher, Morkel, Hussey, Steyn, Clarke, Haddin, McDonald, Kallis, Ntini, Johnson, Prince, Steyn, Siddle, De Villiers, Bt Ntini, McGain, De Villiers, Bt Steyn, Hilfenhaus, Extras, Fall of wickets.

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First WI-Eng ODI today

Cricket

AFP, Providence

England are keeping a close eye on the fitness of their captain Andrew Strauss ahead of Friday's opening one-day international against West Indies at the Guyana National Stadium.

The tourists are hoping that Strauss recovers from a hamstring problem he sustained during the Twenty20 International on Sunday in Trinidad.

England will be keen for Strauss to prove his fitness not only to lead the side, but to add greater substance to their batting.

Strauss himself will be eager to take his rightful place in the side to mark his return to this form of the game for the first time in two years.

Ironically, his last ODI was against West Indies at Kensington Oval in the World Cup staged in the Caribbean.

Paul Collingwood has been placed on standby and will lead the side should Strauss be unfit to do so.

Collingwood resigned from post of England ODI captain last August, on the same day Michael Vaughan relinquished the Test role, to concentrate on his batting, after leading the side to 10 wins in 24 ODIs.

England will be looking for some inspiration from either Strauss or Collingwood in their pursuit of a first international victory on their winter travels.

After a confident 4-0 series victory over South Africa at home late last summer, England were mauled 5-0 in India in the autumn.

England's batting on the trip to the Caribbean has been quite sound, but it is their bowling that has been the weak link, and it will be interesting to see what combination they choose for the match in typically flat conditions.

Andrew Flintoff would definitely give the bowling an edge, but he is not expected to take the field until the third ODI, following his hip injury.

Steve Harmison could be another option, although England may toy with the idea of using medium-paced bowlers like Ravi Bopara and Dimitri Mascarenhas to make run-scoring difficult.

The West Indies too, have had concerns about their captain, but Chris Gayle has recovered from the strained right hamstring he sustained in the final Test in Trinidad and was named in the 13-member squad.

Gayle was sidelined for Sunday's Twenty20 International which the West Indies won by six wickets at Queen's Park Oval.

He is one of three changes to the West Indies' squad with Nikita Miller replacing fellow left-arm spinner Suleiman Benn, and Daren Powell coming in for fellow Jamaican Jerome Taylor, who was not considered for selection because of a left calf strain that forced him to miss the fifth Test and the Twenty20 International.

A place has also been found for Dwayne Bravo, after he played Sunday's Twenty20 International with little complaint. It was his first international match for the West Indies, since an operation on his right ankle last November.

SQUADS

WEST INDIES (from): Chris Gayle (captain), Lionel Baker, Dwayne Bravo, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Fidel Edwards, Nikita Miller, Kieron Pollard, Daren Powell, Denesh Ramdin, Darren Sammy, Ramnaresh Sarwan, Lendl Simmons, Devon Smith.

ENGLAND (from): Andrew Strauss (captain), James Anderson, Gareth Batty, Ian Bell, Ravi Bopara, Stuart Broad, Paul Collingwood, Steve Davies, Andrew Flintoff, Steve Harmison, Amjad Khan, Dimitri Mascarenhas, Kevin Pietersen, Matt Prior, Adil Rashid, Owais Shah.

New rules irk drivers

INTERNET, Jerez



The new rules for deciding this season's Formula One drivers' title ratified by FIA earlier this week have been met with criticism by some of the sport's top names, including defending world champion Lewis Hamilton. "I don't really like it," the McLaren-Mercedes driver was quoted by Thursday's Bild newspaper as saying while two-time world champion Fernando Alonso also expressed his unease at the new points system where the driver with the most wins takes the title.

"I don't understand why the rules have to be constantly changed," said the Spaniard, who demanded a return to the old system whereby the drivers' champion was decided by the number of points accumulated in a season.

F1 supremo Bernie

Ecclestone on the other hand said the new modus would lead to more action on the track, starting with the season-opening Australian Grand Prix on March 29.

"The boys should start having real races again," said the 78-year-old Briton.

However, Jensen Button of the new Brawn GP team, said the new system had its pitfalls.

"Of course, it's a draw to have to drive for victory all the time but it seems a little risky to me," said Button.

"We could have a situation after nine races where the title is already decided and the driver can then sit back and relax."

The new system could hit Hamilton harder than others as McLaren expect to be strongest in the final third of the season, by which time it could be too late for the 24-year-old.

"It should be about the team and driver as a unit that is best over a whole year, not who wins the most races," said Hamilton.

Mohammedans

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gap with Dami Emmanuelle, Pappu or Manuf.

"I know both sides will have a second chance but the first-leg is more important."

Nazrul Islam said his boys from Chittagong were the favourites for the second semifinal.

"We are favourites because we have the capability to beat Dhaka Mohammedan," Chittagong Mohammedan coach Nazrul told.

"They will be without two key players, so it would be a plus point for us. Our initial target was to reach the semifinals. We have already done that, so there is no pressure," said Nazrul, whose side finished fifth in the B. League and lost only one match at home.

"I have told the boys to play their normal game so that we can

put on our best effort tomorrow. (Dhaka) Mohammedan are a very good team and our motivation is to take a team from Chittagong to the final."

Chittagong Mohammedan's Guinean trio Raphael, Camara and Mousa and Liberian Anthony Doe make the core of the team that dumped out Sheikh Russel from the tournament with a 2-0 win before sealing a place in the last four by beating Rahmatganj by the same margin. They conceded a late goal to lose to Abahani in the group stage to earn respect from all opponents.

The relation between players and the management and their hard work is the secret of our success. We have the foreigners for three years with us and the bondages is very strong," said Nazrul, who is more familiar by his nickname Ledu.

WOMEN'S WC CRICKET India to fight for 3rd spot

CRICINFO, undated

India made it to the third-place playoff after an eight-wicket win over West Indies in the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup at the Bankstown Oval on Thursday. The Indian spinners, led by Priyanka Roy's career-best 4 for 14, did well again, taking six wickets between them as West Indies were bowled out for 84. It took India only 17.5 overs to chase down the paltry total.

Five West Indies batsmen were dismissed for ducks, starting with captain Merissa Aguilera, who was caught off Rumeli Dhar in the fourth over. Opener Stefanie Taylor (29) and Pamela Lavine (20) made up for the early loss by adding 45 for the second wicket but the rest of the batting order just crumbled after Lavine's fall in the 15th over. The last six wickets fell for 12 runs -- Roy took two in an over -- though India will worry since West Indies hung on for 44.4 overs. No. 9 Shanell Daley batted 33 balls for her 4.

Sulakhana Naik, who opened India's innings instead of Anagha Deshpande, started off positively but her partner Anjum Chopra struggled and eventually edged Debbie-Ann Lewis to the keeper for an 18-ball 3. Lewis got her second wicket three balls later when Poonam Raut, pushed up the order, was trapped leg before for a duck. But Naik and Mithali Raj ensured there were no more hiccups in the chase as they added 61 to finish off the proceedings.

India will now meet Australia on Saturday to determine the third and fourth places but both teams will automatically qualify for the next World Cup. West Indies and Pakistan, who will play the fifth-place playoff, will need to qualify for the 2013 edition and the World Cup qualifiers will be their next big tournament.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptogram puzzle with a grid and a key: FW XPO GDPLKQJ KDC VCJNKD

Yesterday's Cryptogram: IN AN ATTEMPT TO REPAIR THE CORROSION ON ALL ITS METAL PRODUCTS, THE FIRM SET UP A RUST FUND. Today's Cryptogram Clue: X equals Y