#### Macau blank Mongolia

THE-AFC.COM, Macau

Macau put a foot in the AFC Challenge Cup 2010 qualifiers after defeating Mongolia 2-0 in the first leg of the play-offs here at the Macau Stadium on Tuesday.

First-half goals from Man Ho Hou and Chong In Leong were enough for Leung Sui Wing's team to notch up the win in the keenly contested encounter.

The second leg takes place on April 14 in Ulan Bator, the capital of Mongolia.

If Macau win, they join Myanmar, Cambodia and Bangladesh in Group A of the qualifiers, which kick off on April 26.

Kyrgyzstan have already qualified for the AFC Challenge Cup by topping Group C, while the action is ongoing in Group D comprising Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Chinese Taipei and Brunei Darussalam.

#### Cricket a dying sport: Lara

CRICINFO, undated

Brian Lara believes Twenty20 can help revive what he has called the "dying sport" of cricket and he hopes classical batsmanship can find a place in the shortest format. Lara's experience of playing Twenty20 was limited to handful of appearances for the Mumbai Champs in the Indian Cricket League in 2007.

He wasn't successful in that competition and finished with a highest score of 15 and an average of 6.20 in a league where big hitters thrived. However, players like Shaun Marsh have shown there is a place for regulation strokeplay in Twenty20 and Lara hopes the format doesn't become over-run by sloggers.

"I believe that at some point in time people are going to understand that they are tactical ways of playing it and then you are going to see the true talent come out." Lara left Test cricket in late 2006 as the record-holder for most runs, although his mark has now been overtaken by Sachin Tendulkar.

Only Courtney Walsh wore the West Indies cap more times in Test than Lara, who said cricket would struggle to draw big crowds in the future without Twenty20.

"Cricket is a dying sport and I believe that Twenty20 is going to be beneficial for many reasons," Lara said. "This new game has brought a different spectator. Not necessarily the right ones I think; the ones that just want to go to the game and don't even know what happens. But at the end of the day, spectators and television is what make sport and I'm very happy and very welcoming of the Twenty 20 game."

#### Homeboys

FROM PAGE 17

Former national captain Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu indicated towards the higher wages for first-class players in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka for the declining of the standard of local players being brought into club cricket here.

"One of the reasons is that there's a lot of money in firstclass cricket in foreign countries so it is hard to bring players with the amount offered by clubs," said Lipu, who is also the head of BCB's tournament committee. "But the ones who came are pretty good and performed and there was a big name like Sanath Jayasuriya, added Lipu.

So is that why the young batsmen take up responsibility? Lipu thinks it has more to do with their preparation than anything else.

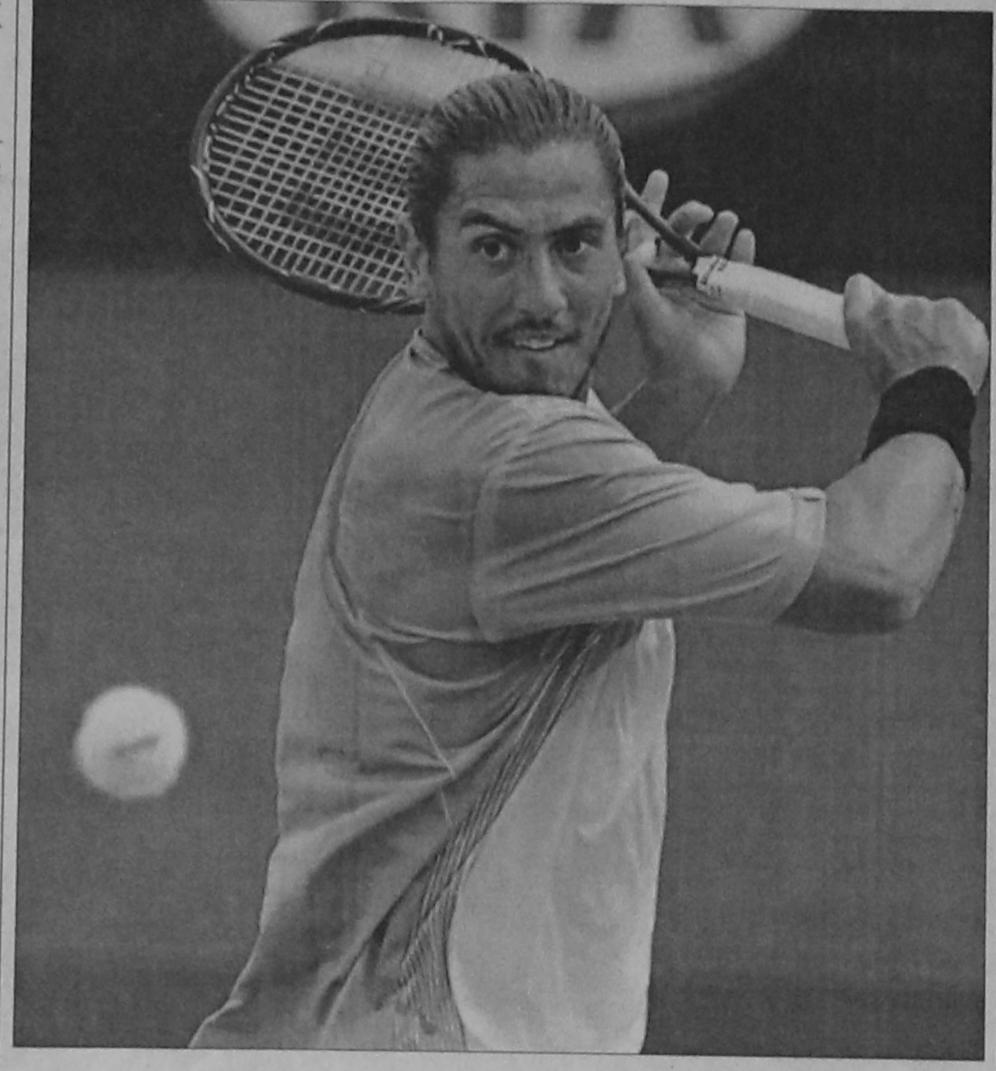
"These batsmen have been seasoned while playing in the National Cricket League before Premier League. There they face tough conditions with grassy wickets. When they play in batting-friendly Dhaka wickets, it is much easier for them to bat. Also remember that they have played a lot of matches this season and definitely their performances are very encouraging," said Lipu.

captain pointed out that the clubs also have to be profes-

sional in their approach. "The local players will get even better if the club management become more professional. They should be handling injuries in the modern (BCCI) or the ICC. way, keeping a role for the captain, and many other things that can be handled well by the club officials. For example, icebaths have not been intro-

duced in the club-level. "I also think BCB should also help these clubs to become more professional,"

added Lipu.



Guillermo Canas plays a backhand against James Blake at the US Men's Clay Court Championship on Tuesday.

# Bravo jets off to IPL

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Dwayne Bravo's surgically-repaired ankle has been deemed too fragile for West Indies' Test series in England, but strong enough to withstand the rigours of Twenty20 cricket. Bravo, speaking prior to boarding a Durban-bound flight on Tuesday, confirmed he will represent the Mumbai Indians in the IPL while his West Indian team-mates play two Tests against England.

"This is a situation forced on me," Bravo told Cricinfo. "It is not a decision I made. It was made by the [West Indies] team medical staff and the selectors. The situation is that I have been advised by doctors to get my ankle stronger before I can play five-day cricket. The plan is to join the [West Indian] team in England when the one-day series begins."

Bravo, who played all five one-day internationals against England in the recentlycompleted series in the Caribbean, insists his appearance in the IPL is not related to the simmering feud between the West Indies board and its players. "I think everyone knows that Test cricket is the most important," he said. "Everyone wants to play it."

That, though, contrasts with the views expressed by the all-rounder in an interview published last week, during which he spoke of the conflict experienced by West Indian players in deciding whether to tour England or play in the IPL. Speaking a day after his captain, Chris Gayle, hinted at a possible player boycott of the fifth one-day international in St Lucia, Bravo expressed dissatisfaction with the WICB for organising the tour of England, which overlaps with the IPL, without consulting players. The tour was arranged at short notice after the withdrawal of Sri Lanka - whose hand was forced when 13 players demanded they be allowed to play in the IPL - and falls outside the Future Tours Programme.

"[The] England tour came up, where the WICB went on and signed that tour without letting WIPA know anything about the tour," Bravo told Caribbeancricket.Com. "We signed our contract to go and represent our IPL team, now we are in a position where we have to choose whether to go and play IPL for the first six weeks or go to England.

"It is a tricky situation. If we choose to go and play IPL, they will say why the players, they want their money. We will be going to play in England so I don't know where it came about

from, but it is something we need to look at in the near future and see how the board do things. They have to understand that the Sri Lanka players pull out [of the England tour] because their board are aware that the key players have IPL contracts and therefore they allow the players to get income another way."

In the same interview, Bravo revealed he had not been paid by the WICB during his enforced eight-month lay-off after undergoing surgery to his damaged left ankle. "It is just upsetting, he said. "The little bit that I've made representing the West Indies for the last four years, I have to live offit.'

Bravo was in a more conciliatory mood this week when discussing the circumstances under which he will be allowed to play for the Mumbai Indians while his West Indian teammates are engaged in a Test series in England.

"The tour is going on and the West Indies will take part in that series [in England]," he said. "I am excluded because of my situation with the injury. I have played five one-day games for the West Indies but I am yet to play in any longer forms of the game. I still am experiencing side effects [with the ankle]. I am trying to monitor it as best I can and work with the physio and the team doctor to get myself 100 percent fit. I will look to play in the Test series against Bangladesh later in the year and the one-day series in England before that."

Bravo, rated one of international cricket's premier all-rounders, was reported last year to have signed a contract worth between \$200,000 and \$250,000 with the Mukesh Ambani-owned Mumbai franchise, and rewarded them with 11 wickets at 21.09 and 178 runs at 29.66. So desperate were they for him to play a ninth and final game in 2008 - against Deccan Chargers on May 18 - the Indians agreed to fly Bravo to Jamaica via private jet to allow him to play the first Test against Australia beginning at Sabina Park four days later.

Mumbai might opt for a similar course of action in 2009, should Bravo prove similarly valuable in South Africa. The first match of the one-day series between the West Indies and England will be played at Headingley on May 21; the same day the Indians are due to play Delhi in their final home-and-away match of the IPL season.

Meanwhile, Kolkata coach John Buchanan has been informed Gayle, the West Indies captain, will be available for the first seven games of this year's IPL. Should that eventuate, Gayle will remain in South Africa until May 1, and join the West Indies ahead of the first Test at Lord's, which begins on May 6.

# Rebels left out

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan will not field rebel cricketers until it receives clarification on the status of their contracts in India and a decision by the sport's governing body, an official said Tuesday.

National selectors had included three players from the unrecognised Indian Cricket League (ICL) in the preliminary 30-man squad for the World Twenty20 championships, subject to clearance from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and the International Cricket Council.

All-rounders Abdul Razzaq and Rana Navedul Hasan and opener Imran Nazir were included in the initial squad for the event to be held in England in June.

PCB chief operating officer Salim Altaf said they had written to the ICL for clarification regarding the trio.

"We have written a letter to the ICL to get But the former Abahani status of their contracts, whether these (contracts) have been rescinded permanently or rescinded temporarily, but we have yet to get any reply on that," Altaftold AFP.

The three were among the Pakistani players who featured in the ICL, which is bankrolled by India's largest media group but not recognised by the Board of Control for Cricket in India

As a result, the PCB barred the rebel players from playing in domestic and international cricket.

The high court in Pakistan's southern province of Sindh, however, suspended the ban last February, allowing the players to take part in assurances before leaving the ICL. domestic matches.

The PCB said last week that if ICL players be given central contracts before we leave the broke ties with the rebel league they would consider their inclusion in the national team.

For this to happen, however, the PCB needs clearance from the ICC.

The ICC is due to discuss the ICL in Dubai on April 17 and 18. Altaf said Pakistan would have to trim the

squad to 15 before May 5. "We will wait and see what the ICL's response is and what the ICC decides," said Altaf, a former Pakistan fast bowler.

Altaf said the ICC had also formulated strict guidelines on unauthorised leagues effective from June 1 this year.

In a late U-turn Tuesday, the PCB said the list of 30-probables sent to the ICC did not include the names of the ICL trio.

"The list of 30 names sent to the ICC includes the names of Sarfraz Ahmed, Zulfiqar Jan and Saeed Ajmal instead of Razzaq, Nazir and Hasan. If ICC approves the inclusion of ICL players then the players will be replaced," it said in a statement.

Former captain Moin Khan -- who coaches Pakistan's Lahore Badshahs' side in the ICL -hailed the inclusion of the rebels.

"I appreciate PCB's move to select these players because the team needs these players as their strength is not ideal these days and now I hope that the PCB weathers opposition from various quarters," Khan told AFP.

"If the BCCI gets angry on this let it be. Have they supported Pakistan in troubled times? The ICL never stopped players from playing for their countries so why not include them in the national team?" he said.

Razzaq, who joined the league after being axed from the national side for the inaugural T20 World Cup in 2007, said he was seeking

"I am ready to play for Pakistan but we must ICL," said Razzaq. "We need clarification and assurances.'

#### LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

The 'Ka' zone matches of the Exim Bank 20th National Women's Handball Championship will start today at the Rangpur Stadium.

Hosts Rangpur take on Joypurhat in the opening match.

Divisional Commissioner of Rajshahi M Hafizur Rahman Bhuiyan will inaugurate the zonal phase of the national women's handball meet in the afternoon.

#### **DIVII HOCKEY**

A brilliant hattrick by Syed Jami Hossain guided Dilkusha rode on Syed Jami Hossain's hattrick to secure a comfortable 4-0 victory against Shantinagar Club in the Green Delta Metropolis Second Division Hockey Super League at the Maulana Bhashani National Hockey Stadium.

It was the second win for Dilkusha in four games.

Mohammad Faruq put Dilkusha ahead in the fifth minute and then Jami made | fallingill. the hattrick scoring in the 21st, 37th and 68th minutes.

Dilkusha improved their tally to six points while Shantinagar remained at one point.

Rayer Bazar are leading the table with maximum 12 points from four matches while Combined SC has nine points from three matches.

#### Blake, Fish ousted

AFP, Houston

Top-seeded James Blake and second-seeded Mardy Fish tumbled out of the first round of the 500,000-dollar US Men's Clay Court Championship here Tuesday.

Guillermo Canas of Argentina, ranked 113th in the world, ousted Blake 6-4, 6-4, while Germany's Bjorn Phau, ranked 77th, defeated Fish 6-3, 5-7, 6-3.

It marked the first time since 2000 that the top two seeds failed to get out of the first round of the event.

Canas led 5-4 in the second when Blake tried to make a stand, but the American failed to convert four break chances.

Lleyton Hewitt of Australia, needed just 62 minutes to beat Argentina's Diego Junqueira 6-0, 6-2.

### Rameez happy with rebel ban

PTI, Karachi

Former captain Rameez Raja opposed the inclusion of Indian Cricket League players in the Pakistan national team, saying such a move would set a wrong example.

"What sort of message will we send out to those who didn't go and play in the unauthorised league? That they can also go play in an illegal event and then come back and play for their country?" Rameez asked.

The former captain said he didn't have much sympathy for the players who aligned with the rebel Indian league. Rameez said they knew what they were doing when they decided to sacrifice their Pakistan careers and play in a tournament not recognised by the ICC or its

member countries. "I don't sympathise with them. If we allow the ICL players to play again for Pakistan then we are telling everyone go and play in illegal tournaments for money and you can always come back we will take you back," the cricketer-turned-commentator

told the Express daily. The Pakistan Cricket Board on Tuesday dropped three ICL players - Abdul Razzaq, Rana Naved and Imran Nazir - from their provisional squad of 30 players for the Twenty20 World Cup in England after surprisingly naming them for the tournament.

The board has said it is waiting for clearance from the ICC and ICL before reconsidering these players for selection.

Rameez was also of the view that the selectors took a risk by including controversial pacer Shoaib Akhtar in the series against Australia. "I don't know but last year

also he went to Abu Dhabi and got unfit and he has already said the heavy ground conditions there are not ideal for fast bowlers," Rameez said.

"I think his fitness is still not 100 per cent perfect and it is a bigrisk selecting him," he said. He said the team would

have to play with lot of passion and aggression to beat the Australians in what is going to be a very tough and hard series in demanding conditions.

# Azzu's big test

### Cricketers in Indian polls

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

Soft-spoken, laid back and a reluctant orator, former Test captain Mohammad Azharuddin hardly fits the image of the archetypal boisterous Indian politician.

Yet Azharuddin is the latest entrant in a growing list of former cricketers sucked into the election whirlpool by political parties hoping their star status in cricket-mad India will translate into votes.

Other cricketers testing their luck at the upcoming parliamentary polls include hardhitting batsman Navjot Sidhu, dour opener Chetan Chauhan, and Kirti Azad, a member of India's 1983 World Cup winning team. Even Chetan Sharma, the fast bowler who

one after being hit for a match-winning last ball six by Pakistan's Javed Miandad in a one-day final in 1986, is a contender. Azad's World Cup teammate Madan Lal was throws up a one-liner to stress his point. "Faith

became the country's public enemy number

the hill state of Himachal Pradesh, but was withdrawn by the party at the last minute after Azharuddin, 46, who joined the ruling

Congress party in February, has been nominated to stand from the dusty north Indian town of Moradabad where he is drawing huge crowds. "I have faced bigger challenges in life," said the 99-Test veteran, who was banned from

cricket for life in 2000 after being accused of match-fixing by India's Central Bureau of Investigation. Indian cricket authorities to court for imposing

the life ban, a case that is still being heard by a judge in the cricketer's home town of Hyderabad. "People still love me, it shows in the big crowds that come to my rallies," Azharuddin told AFP. "I am not the captain here, just an ordinary

player. I want a chance to serve my people."

The task ahead for Azharuddin is formidable. The Congress has not won the Muslimdominated Moradabad seat since 1984, and chose not to field a candidate in 2004, fearing a

complete rout. Sidhu, a popular TV commentator known for witty one-liners known as 'Sidhuisms', is seeking a hattrick of wins from the Sikh holy city of Amritsar on the Bharatiya Janata Party

(BJP) ticket. Sidhu, 45, won the general election in 2004 but was forced to resign two years later after a court convicted him of culpable homicide following a road rage incident a number of

years before. The Supreme Court, however, stayed Sidhu's conviction and allowed him to win

back the seat in a 2007 by-election. Media reports suggest a tougher period for Sidhu amid criticism that he devotes more time to appearing in comedy talk shows on television than to looking after his constituency.

Sidhu, however, remains confident and even

also due to campaign on a Congress ticket from in your abilities will help you face the music, even if you don't like the tune," he said. Chauhan, a Test opener alongside Sunil-Gavaskar in the 1980s and now a top Delhi cricket official, abandoned his earlier constitu-

ency of Amroha after losing in 2004 to become the BJP nominee from East Delhi. Azad, who hopes to win back the Darbhanga seat in Bihar which he lost in the previous election, said his cricketing experience helps him in

"After all, both are games of glorious uncertainties," he said. "The difference is you face Azharuddin denied the charges and took one bouncer at a time in cricket but in politics they come from all directions at once."

Success is not guaranteed even for the popular cricketer. Suave Oxford-educated Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi was an election loser in 1971 and 1991 despite being regarded as one of India's finest ever captains.

seek counselling after a series

of alcohol-related incidents,

had a chance to redeem him-

batsman rather than an all-

rounder because a bad back

will prevent him bowling,

Hilditch said Lee, a surprise

"His return to bowling at full

the date of the commencement

not make the squad but

Fast bowler Peter Siddle did

Watson was selected as a

self and revive his career.

ankle and foot surgery.

of the tour," he said.

### Trio rested, Lee back

Cricket

AFP, Melbourne

Australia omitted a trio of star players from its squad to face Pakistan this month, preferring to rest them ahead of the Ashes campaign in England.

Selectors told skipper Ricky Ponting, batsman Michael Hussey and bowler Mitchell Johnson to sit out the limited overs series against Pakistan, which will be played in Dubai and Abu Dhabi for security

Instead they brought troubled all-rounder Andrew Symonds in from the cold and welcomed back injury-prone Queenslander Shane Watson and veteran quick Brett Lee,

subject to fitness. Michael Clarke was named captain of the touring party, who was dropped and told to

scheduled for three to four

got into tactical sessions in the

second week with Dido start-

ing to put his own thoughts

national coach who is working

as Dido's assistant, thinks that

this part of the preparation is

them his manual. As far as I

have seen, Dido looks to be

practically a very top-class

on top of their physical condi-

tion -- it means totally fit -- to

do what the coach wants. May

be the four week's time we have

is not enough for the players to

fully realise the coach's

demands. It is also good to see

the rapport between Dido and

Ariel, both can speak Spanish,

which is very important to

achieve our goals.

chuckling

22 Suitable

minster

for one

26 Michigan

city

30 Tavern

31 Carton

provider

33 Louisiana

perhaps

tribe

38 Glutton

36 Cell.

32 Wool

23 West-

arrows,

etc.

2 Suitor

modem

network

train

42 Spirited

SIVE

aggres-

23 "Lost"

Solution time: 21 mins.

"But the players have to be

coach," Manik opined.

"This is when Dido teaches

Shafiqul Islam Manik, the

The players, meanwhile,

FROM PAGE 17

sessions per week.

into their minds.

very crucial.

'On the right track'

replacing him as vice-captain. Chairman of selectors

with wicketkeeper Brad Haddin

Andrew Hilditch said Australia was "managing the workload" of Ponting, Hussey and Johnson ahead of the World Twenty20 and the Ashes.

"Having Ricky Ponting and although Hilditch was hopeful Michael Hussey in prime form he may be able to send down a mentally and physically for few balls late in the series. the Ashes is critical, and the series against Pakistan is the inclusion, was selected subject to fitness after undergoing only opportunity to give them an appropriate break prior to the start of a very important pace will be monitored carefully period," he said. and will be reviewed closer to

"Mitchell Johnson is now a key bowler in all three forms of the game for Australia, and we've also taken this opportunity to provide him with a break before he commences preparation for the World Twenty20 and Ashes."

Hilditch said Symonds,

tion but whether he uses two

holding midfielders or less, will

depend on players' quality. To

find the right combination, he

needs to play two international

friendlies but has yet to get any

Nepal to play two matches in

Dhaka did not get any answer

from the All Nepal Football

cessful in the short time to

bring discipline in the camp

and change the booters' food

habit. The players' area has

already been restricted to

media and other people as

after two sessions daily, they

games in short breaks and with

the team staff working as a unit,

we have managed to create a

good environment surround-

ing them," said Manik. "The

facilities are satisfactory and

we are on the right track. If we

get the right assistance and

"They are playing indoor

Dido has also been suc-

The BFF has already invited

confirmation.

Association so far.

need the break.

Like all Brazilian coaches, time for preparation, we hope

Dido will go for a 4-4-2 forma- to get where we want to go."

#### Hilditch said the selectors still believed he could play an important role in the Ashes. The series, which includes five one-dayers and a single

Twenty20 match, begins on April 22. The 14-man squad named Wednesday to play Pakistan in a one-day series in the United

Arab Emirates beginning this month: SQUAD

Michael Clarke (captain), Brad Haddin (vice-captain), Nathan Bracken, Callum Ferguson, Brett Geeves, Nathan Hauritz, Ben Hilfenhaus, James Hopes, David Hussey, Ben Laughlin, Brett Lee, Shaun Marsh, Andrew Symonds, Shane Watson.

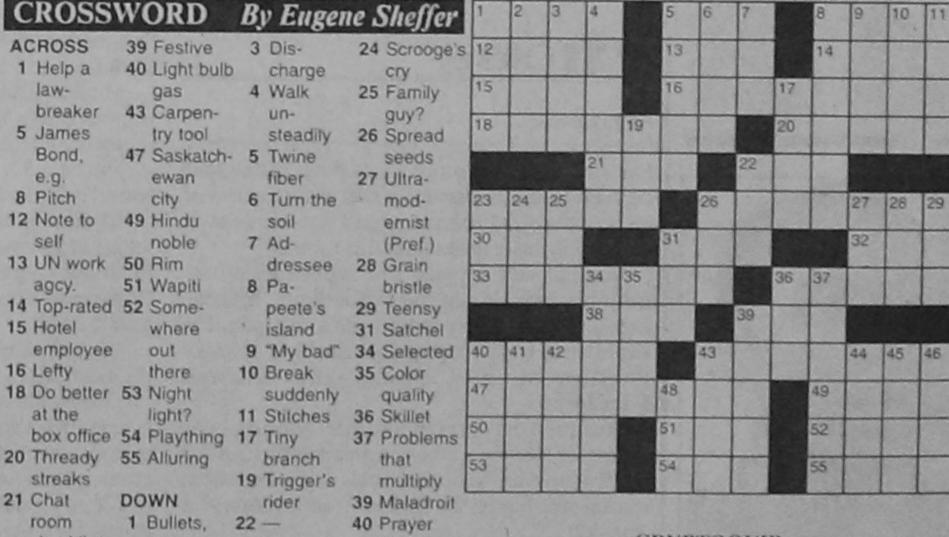
### Wisden keeps

FROM PAGE 17

seamer Mitchell Johnson and South Africa fast bowler Dale Steyn, with India's Zaheer Khan at number 11.

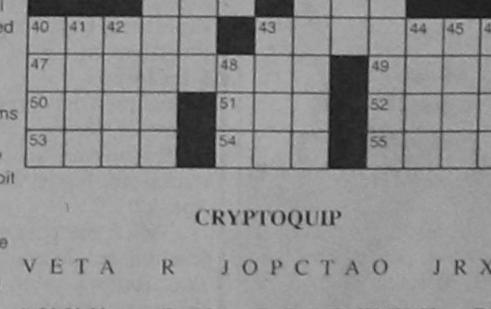
Sehwag is not only number one by virtue of his position in the batting order but for good measure is identified as the sixth player to be recognised as the Leading Cricketer in the World.

It is an annual accolade previously bestowed on the likes of Shane Warne, Andrew Flintoff and Muttiah Muralitharan.



43 Head light?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: EVERYBODY STARTED 46 Cautious TO CALL THE CITY'S BRAVEST ICE CREAM



PARLOR EMPLOYEE A SCOOPER HERO. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: O equals T

end 41 Took the