

Safina clinches Madrid crown

Women's world number one Dinara Safina claimed her second major clay title in a row here on Sunday as she outclassed Danish teenager Caroline Wozniacki 6-2, 6-4 to win the Madrid Masters.

The 23-year-old Russian - who lost the 2008 Roland Garros final to Ana Ivanovic - showed she is on track as a serious title contender when the French Open gets underway in a week.

Safina has figured in WTA finals over the last three weeks in the grand slam buildup, losing Stuttgart to compatriot Svetlana Kuznetsova but turning the tables to beat her in Rome a week ago.

Despite the humbling defeat in 1hr,48 min, Wozniacki, 19, will still make her career Top ten breakthrough in Monday's final pre-French Open rankings.

The youngster playing her fourth final of the season, won a minor Florida title in February.

Safina has quickly become a force in the game after shaking off a crisis of confidence. She emerged victorious with three breaks of serve, going through her second match point.

The younger sister who has lived and played in the shadow of her flamboyant 29-year-old brother Marat Safin, has become a force in her own right in recent seasons. Madrid marked her fifth final in eight tournaments in 2009.

She was runner-up at Sydney and the Australian Open in addition to Stuttgart.

Wolves nearly

direction for the Bundesliga," said Wolfsburg coach Felix Magath, who will leave the club at the end of the season for Schalke 04.

"It is too early for speeches, but it is clear that we have made our life easier by winning. We now have a huge chance to bring the title to Wolfsburg."

Wolfsburg's 20th win of the season came largely courtesy of hot-shot strikers Edin Dzeko and Grafite, who between them have now racked up 51 league goals this season.

Having bagged 26 in 24 games as the league's top scorer, Grafite struck twice in three first-half minutes after forward partner Dzeko had laid the foundations for his later hat-trick with an opener in the 14th minute.

Dzeko headed Wolfsburg's fourth on 54 minutes and then completed his second hat-trick of the season in the 79th minute to take his tally to 25 goals for the season in 31 games.

Milan lose

The first half was a drab affair with few notable scoring chances until Udinese opened their account from the penalty spot.

Antonio Floro Flores burst into the Milan box behind the backline to latch on to Geatano D'Agostino's through ball, but veteran defender Paolo Maldini leaned on him just enough to knock him off balance as he tried to take the ball around goalkeeper Dida.

Maldini, who will play only two more games for Milan this season before retiring, was perhaps lucky to escape with only a booking.

However, the visitors were punished when D'Agostino fired the ball into the net from the spot-kick, high to Dida's right.

Ancelotti reacted quickly by throwing on striker Filippo Inzaghi for defensive midfielder Mathieu Flamini at the break, but four minutes later Udinese had doubled their advantage.

Milan's defence went to sleep at a corner and Christian Zapata was left alone at the back post to fire home a dropping ball from barely two yards out.

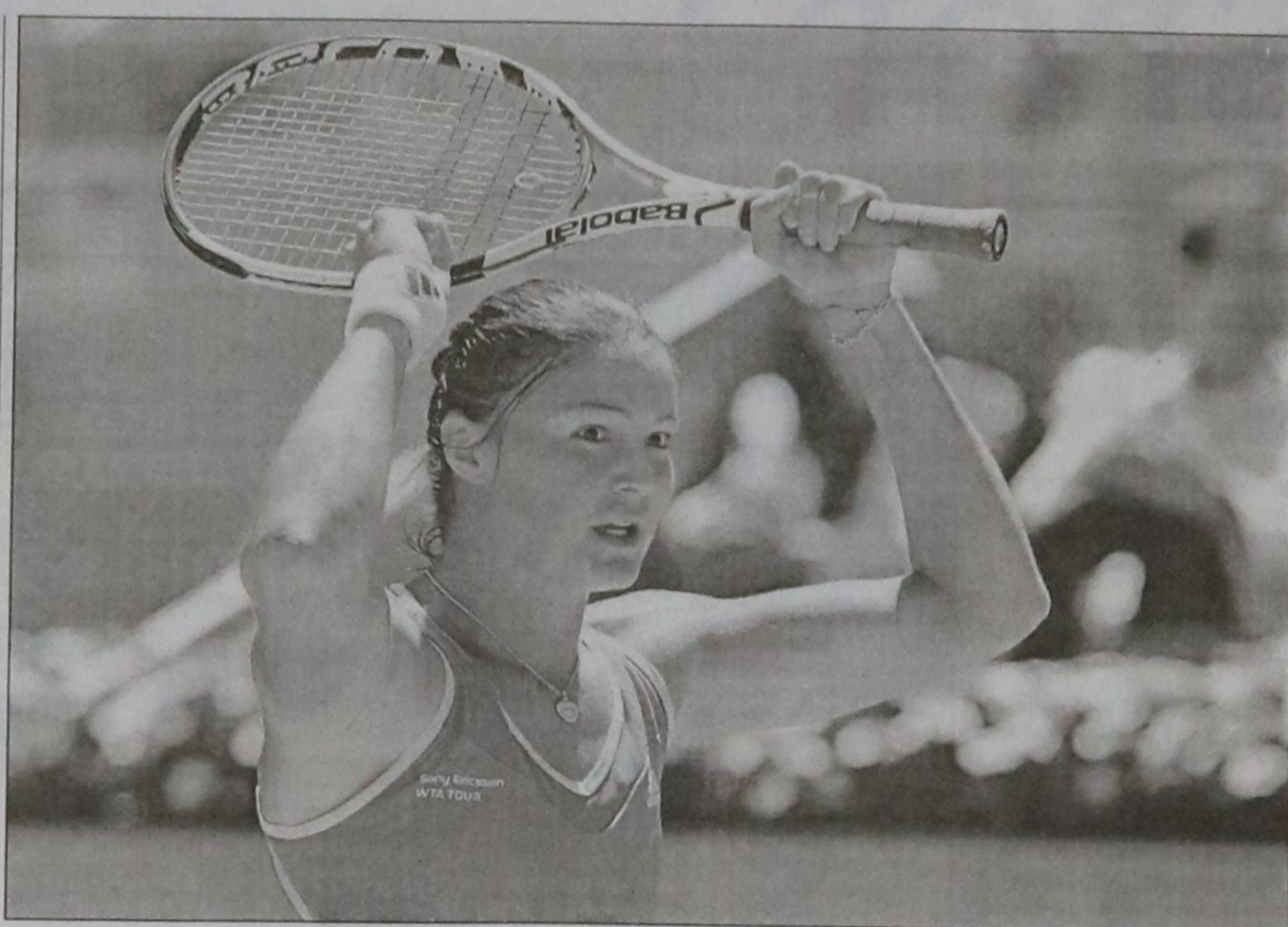
Ancelotti threw on Ronaldinho and Andrei Shevchenko but it wasn't until injury time that Milan came alive.

Inzaghi hit the outside of the post before Massimo Ambrosini headed home a consolation but things could have been worse as Fabio Quagliarella crashed a shot against the upright for the hosts with virtually the last kick of the match.

In Rome's Stadio Olimpico, Christian Panucci scored an injury time winner as AS Roma beat Catania 4-3 to close in on a Europa League place next season.

The hosts had looked likely to be frustrated by their mid-table opponents, who had battled back from a 3-1 half-time deficit to level at 3-3 with 17 minutes to play after Japanese striker Takayuki Morimoto's equaliser.

But Roma kept pushing and Panucci headed home a David Pizarro cross from close range to snatch the three points.



Russian world number one Dinara Safina celebrates after beating Danish Caroline Wozniacki in the Madrid Open final yesterday.

Federer stuns Nadal

Tennis

AFP, Madrid

Roger Federer defeated world number one Rafael Nadal 6-4, 6-4 to win the Madrid Masters on Sunday to strike a timely early blow in his campaign to lift an elusive French Open.

His win ended a five-match losing streak against the Spaniard, a run which included three Grand Slam finals and ended Nadal's 33-match winning streak on clay, a run stretching back over a year to the Rome second round in 2008.

Federer fired two aces, his fifth and sixth of the afternoon to wrap up the victory and lift his record in finals against his Spanish rival to 5-11.

Federer heads into the French Open starting in a week with a huge confidence boost after finally defeating the rival who stripped him of his Wimbledon title last summer.

Nadal, who had won claycourt titles in Monte Carlo, Barcelona and Rome this spring, was visibly jaded from his semifinal on Saturday when he needed over four hours to defeat Novak Djokovic 3-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (11/9).

The epic clash, which stretched deep into the evening, preceded Federer's silky smooth 6-3, 6-4 win over Argentine Juan Martin Del Potro, which finished in less time than one of Nadal's sets.

World number one Nadal, the winner of his last 33 claycourt contests, stretching back a year, confessed that his troublesome knees are a concern as he bids for his fourth straight clay title this spring.

Nadal stands a formidable 13-6 over Federer, winning five of their last six meetings including the Grand Slam finals in Paris, Wimbledon and Melbourne.

Federer dominated Del Potro in a tidy win in stark contrast to the Nadal-Djokovic rollercoaster.

The 13-time Grand Slam winner is still seeking his first title of the season, but is looking forward to the final.

"Playing Nadal anywhere is a challenge, especially on clay. The extra factor here is that

this is in Spain," said the Swiss.

"This has never happened before. I'm excited to play him. We've not played so often (this year), the Australian Open was the last time. Now we are on clay, his surface. We'll see what happens."

Nadal came through on his second match point to claim his third win in a month over the third-seeded Djokovic at the Masters level after the Monte Carlo and Rome finals.

Nadal, who has not been beaten on clay since May, 2008, in Rome, wrapped up the semi-final on his second match point to leave Djokovic physically and mentally shattered.

"It's happened too often," said the Serbian world number four of his recent record against the Spaniard.

"It's very disappointing to play as well as I have and still lose the match. I played one of my best matches ever," added Djokovic after striking 37 winners in the enthralling struggle.

"I was a couple of points from the victory. I even played a few points above my limits and I still didn't win."

Djokovic, who would have reclaimed his world number three spot from Andy Murray, which he lost only last week, had he reached the final added: "I hope I'll be ready for the French Open."

Djokovic showed he meant business after his recent losses to Nadal, earning the first break of the match in the second game off a double-fault.

The Serbian third seed kept up the attack on the world number one, reaching 4-1 on his way to the early lead.

But after losing his first set of the tournament, Nadal was in no mood for more home disappointment, saving two break points in the ninth game of the second for a 5-4 lead, eventually squaring the match with a tiebreaker.

The third set only lifted the tension as Djokovic broke in the fourth game only to hand the advantage straight back in the fifth.

The final-set tiebreaker provided all the drama possible for the sellout crowd of 15,000 as both men grappled for the win in the last tune-up before Roland Garros which starts on May 24.

Nurul Alam

FROM PAGE 17 use of having a committee. There is a school of thought, which explains that the coach should be made fully responsible over team selection, as he is held accountable with regards to team performance.

"But that is just one way for a committee or a panel to stay safe and put all the blame on the coach and I disagree with that," said Alam.

But the BFF has denied receiving any letter from Alam.

PCB pitches

FROM PAGE 17 suggested, mean shifting Pakistan's matches to Dubai and Abu Dhabi. The ICC has not ruled out the option, saying only that Pakistan had yet to make such a proposal.

Butt also argued that Pakistan should be allowed to retain the right to have the central secretariat of the World Cup because it was on this premise that the PCB agreed to host a lesser number of matches than it did in the 1996 World Cup.

BCB XI's huge

FROM PAGE 17 not out, Mushfiqur 1, Nayeem 19, Shahadat 5, extras 10; Samad 1-27, Ranjit 2-17, Srikrant 2-31, Kiran 1-30, Azhar 1-26, Ganesh 1-15)

MAHARASHTRA CA: 87 all out in 17.1 overs (Harshad 19, Kedar 6, Ranjit 5, Sangram 8, Rohit 0, Ganesh 13, Azhar 10, Srikrant 19, Digambar 3, Kiran 0, Samad 1 not out, extras 3; Raseel 1-24, Shahadat 1-9, Shakib 3-17, Riyad 1-11, Nayeem 3-20) Result: BCB XI won by 63 runs.

Zia continues

FROM PAGE 17 GM Surya Shekhar Ganguly and GM Sandipan Chanda of India, GM Le Quang Liem of Vietnam and GM Elshan Moradiabadi of Iran after securing four points from five rounds.

He drew with GM Dao Thien Hai of Vietnam. GM Enamul Hossain Rajib and GM Niaz Murshed earned three points each and FM Abu Sufian Shakil earned two points after the fifth round of matches ended.

Kolkata's sad saga

CRICINFO, undated



Poor Brendon McCullum. What do you do when you have 21 runs to defend in the last over? Have three men inside the circle to concede a no-ball, argue with the umpires, watch your bowler hurl wildes and full tosses and lose the game. Can he ever snap the losing streak?

Whenever Kolkata have run that last lap, they have stumbled and fallen just before the line. If they believe in destiny and fate, McCullum could head to Durban to find an Indian astrologer to have his palm read. Every time he has conceded victory, his team-mates have discovered new botch-up artists. Ajit Agarkar has been a guilty couple of times, Ishant Sharma too and today the villain was Mashrafe Mortaza, playing his first game in Kolkata colours. There will also be questions about why he was given the final over but he bowled a wonderful 18th over and there were few others available who hadn't choked at the end, so the choice was quite justified.

Poor Agarkar. That description is almost an oxymoron, considering he is easily the most mocked among modern India bowlers. He has been the villain in previous games but today with 27 runs needed in two overs, he bowled a tight over, that included two yorkers, giving away just six runs. Yet incredibly it wasn't enough. Fans have wondered about his numerous comebacks, have talked about his tendency to lose a close game with full tosses and in-the-slot bowling.

One of the most enduring images of his career has been Agarkar standing in the middle of the pitch after being hit for a boundary in the end overs. His right hand is on his hip, his left ruffling the back of his hair. It's as if he is wondering, How did I do that? Again? But he is an amiable, likeable sort with a sense of humour. Returning to

Australia after a series where he was nicknamed the Bombay Duck, he raised his bat after scoring a single. He would need that sense of humour to survive today - and, indeed, through the rest of Kolkata's sorry season.

Poor Murali Kartik. Once again he was Kolkata's best bowler and once again he had to end up on the losing side. And in this year's IPL, he has bowled really well without much luck in pressure situations. Against Punjab, he nearly won the game but a plausible lbw appeal against Mahela Jayawardene was turned down at the end overs and Jayawardene went on to win the game. Today, he gave away just 12 runs in his four overs and would have been hoping that his seamers didn't screw it up. If Agarkar has had many a comeback, Kartik has been dropped many a time in his career. He has been perennially the bench-warmer or the man who just missed the selection.

His attitude is modern Indian, confident and aggressive, but his art has something that is reminiscent of an earlier era. With his trademark rudraksha mala woven tight around his neck, he jogs gently diagonally across past the stumps, the pivity is even more gentler, and it appears as if he doesn't rip the ball enough. But he is a very clever bowler, one in control of his art. Today, as he has done through the tournament, he hit the right lengths and varied his pace and always, found spin to keep the batsmen in check. But not every day can one man win a game alone.

Poor Mashrafe Bin Mortaza. Bought for a bunch of dollars that surprised even him, he was benched through the tournament, to the consternation and anger of his millions of fans back home in Bangladesh. He got his chance today but was laid low by a mixture of nerves and the Kolkata virus. He is actually a decent bowler in the death as he showed in his penultimate over. Yorkers, slower ones and even a dot ball. But it all turned downhill in the last over.

WI sinking fast

FROM PAGE 17 second highest scorer in Tests behind Brian Lara (11,912).

Lendl Simmons was unbeaten on three.

Paul Collingwood, England's best outfielder, deputised as wicket-keeper for the final session Sunday after Matt Prior left the field with a finger injury.

However, X-rays showed no break and Prior was expected back behind the stumps on Monday.

James Anderson, now England's senior pace bowler, had earlier taken five wickets in an innings for the sixth time in his 37 Tests.

The 26-year-old Lancashire quick, who routed the Windies top-order on Saturday, finished with figures of five for 87 in 26.3 overs as the visitors were bowled out

for 310.

Anderson, who'd reduced the West Indies to 94 for three overnight, wrapped up the innings when he had Denesh Ramdin caught in the slips by Graeme Swann for 55.

Ramdin, together with Suleiman Benn, who made a Test-best 35, shared an eighth-wicket partnership of 70 which only ended when the 6ft 7in spinner was run-out by Kevin Pietersen's direct hit from mid-on.

Fidel Edwards had peppered Anderson when the latter batted as a nightwatchman in England's innings.

Anderson tried to return the favour but became distracted in the process and it was left to Stuart Broad (three for 62) to have Edwards caught by Strauss.

West Indies were 188 for five at lunch after Broad had dismissed Chanderpaul and Sarwan and by the time Benn came in they were 216 for seven.

Sarwan made exactly 100 before he gloved a well-directed Broad bouncer to Tim Bresnan, running round from gully, shortly before lunch.

Chanderpaul had been his usual patient self while batting for more than two hours after being dismissed for a golden duck and four by Swann at Lord's.

But Broad, bowling from around the wicket, dismissed him for 23 when the left-hander prodded at a full-length ball that cut away and was caught behind.

England's total owed much to an eight-hour Test-best 160 from opener Alastair Cook, who with Ravi Bopara (108) put on 213 for the second wicket.

Bashar first

FROM PAGE 17 playing in the ICL to participate in domestic cricket subject to their termination of the contract with the unapproved competition by June 15 this year.

It also warned that the earlier ten-year ban imposed by the board was still in place on the ICL contracted players who failed to terminate their agreement by the timeframe.

BCB imposed 10-year ban on 13 rebel cricketers in September last year including six centrally contracted players who signed for the ICL under the banner "Dhaka Warriors". The ban effectively closed the domestic and international doors on players like former national skipper Bashar, Shahriar Nafees, Aftab, Dhiman Ghosh and Alok Kapali.

Greatest

FROM PAGE 20 best season ever if we win the Champions League too.

"It is the fifth double in the history of the club and it is a fabulous achievement for the fans to celebrate."

It is Barcelona's first league and Kings Cup double since way back in 1998 - a fantastic achievement for Guardiola in his maiden season.

"Pep (Guardiola) has surpassed all expectations," admitted Laporta. "When you make a decision (on the coach) you hope it goes well and it did practically from the beginning of the season."

All that is left for Barcelona in the league is chasing more records and they are hunting Real's all-time goals record of 107 set back in the 1990 season.

"I am sure the players will continue beating records like the 107 goal tally," added Laporta. Barcelona have scored 103 goals and have three games left to try and beat Real's landmark.

Yuvraj leads

FROM PAGE 17 India paceman Rudra Pratap Singh earlier played a key role in restricting Punjab, finishing with 3-26 off four overs to become the tournament's leading wicket-taker with 19 in 13 matches.

Singh also got the prize wicket of Sri Lankan Kumar Sangakkara (56) just when the batsman looked like boosting the innings in the closing overs.

SCORES IN BRIEF KINGS XI PUNJAB: 134-7 in 20 overs (Sangakkara 56, Yuvraj 20; RP Singh 3-26). DECCAN CHARGERS: 133-8 in 20 overs (Sharma 42, Gibbs 26, Symonds 25, Gilchrist 23; Yuvraj 3-13, Powar 2-11). Result: Kings XI Punjab won by one run. Man-of-the-match: Yuvraj Singh.

Gamble pays off

FROM PAGE 20 Barcelona were under some pressure but they responded with their best display of the season to win 6-2.

"It is not easy to win at the Bernabeu and winning by this margin against a team of Real's calibre is incredible," said Guardiola at the time.

"It is a memorable night. It is one of the happiest days of my footballing life. I am so happy because we have made a lot of people happy."

Guardiola had completed a league double over Real and then watched his side edge past Chelsea in the Champions League semifinals with Andres Iniesta's dramatic stoppage time goal in London.

The Barca coach had been cool for most of the season but showed his fiery side in Europe,

Xavi's best

FROM PAGE 20 reflects the daily work and the best team wins.

Iniesta came through the youth system at Barcelona and said it was nice to see so many local players coming good.

"It is great to see so many home-grown players in the team and that is how Barcelona should be: with a spine of local players surrounded by great players from outside," explained Iniesta.

Spaniards Xavi, Carles Puyol, Iniesta, Victor Valdes, Sergi Busquets, Bojan Krkic and Gerard Pique all came through the Barca youth ranks while Argentine prodigy Lionel Messi was nurtured there from 2000 onwards.

Boro in deep

FROM PAGE 20 goal." Newcastle manager Alan Shearer said.

"I have seen it and I can't see anything that's wrong with it. Probably what has happened is the goal on Monday night from Steven Taylor (against Middlesbrough) has been highlighted that much this week that one or two people have thought, 'We might try to clamp down on that this weekend.'"

Middlesbrough are in even greater trouble, three points away from safety, but with a goal difference four inferior to that of Hull.

Tuncay fired them ahead with a brilliant overhead kick but John Carew equalized and left Middlesbrough staring relegation in the face.

Bottom side West Bromwich Albion are a point adrift at the bottom with two games to go - the first of which is at home to Liverpool on Sunday.

In the day's other games, Everton beat West Ham United 3-1, Tottenham Hotspur edged out Manchester City 2-1 and Stoke City saw off Wigan Athletic 2-0.

Inter's fourth

FROM PAGE 20 Mourinho himself has been up to all his old tricks, grating on opposition coaches, winding up the media and doing things 'his way'.

Early on he enraged the country's football writers by sending his assistant coach Giuseppe Baresi to the post-match press conferences, an action that saw him accused of lacking respect.

In typically Mourinho style he stretched the patience of the media at every possible turn, telling them he preferred their English counterparts while also claiming football and refereeing in England were superior.

It was all part of the Mourinho siege tactic, provoking animosity from without to foster greater togetherness within.

He didn't just challenge the media, he also picked fights with his fellow coaches, most notably Juventus boss Claudio Ranieri, with whom he sustained a running battle in which Ranieri usually appeared to be

an unwilling combatant. Mourinho used the pair's history - Ranieri was Mourinho's predecessor at Chelsea - to stoke up ill-feeling, regularly comparing Ranieri's record as a coach and a linguist unfavourably to his own prowess.

When he couldn't think of anything to throw at Ranieri, he generally bragged about his superiority to Mancini.

But for him to prove that, he will have to take Inter to the business end in Europe next season.

However, with a fifth league title in a third different country over seven years, he can justifiably feel proud of himself.

Titles with Porto in Portugal in 2003 and 2004, with Chelsea in England in 2005 and 2006 and now Inter in Italy in 2009 is a record that would compare favourably to any coach. But it is his Champions League victory with Porto in 2004 that he needs to repeat or Mourinho's spell in Milan could quickly turn sour.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes a solution time of 21 mins and a list of words like GETH, SHY, SHED, ARIA, LEA, LUTE, LIPSTICK, AGUE, ENSE, EEK, APHID, CAR, ADS, SOPH, SUE, BLOTTER, AREA, SUE, TOWA, MUPPETS, SCREW, SKY, WOR, MOT, RIG, GIG, LOG, OIP, BTH, K, EPIC, APE, ARNE, WEEK, YES, BLEW.

Cryptogram puzzle grid with letters and numbers. The clue is: YESTERDAY'S CRYPTOQUIP: SINCE THAT DOCTOR IS REALLY GOOD AT TREATING LARYNGITIS, PEOPLE SAY HE HAS HOARSE SENSE.

CRYPTOQUIP A Z D G H K Q V K P E J D J Z D B D G I D I Z W Q T T D W H Y W K A J Z H K Q ' W D I D D L X G Y, H K Q P K Q V B P W H ' J Z E J ' I J Z D J Z X P L D J ' ! Yesterday's Cryptogram: SINCE THAT DOCTOR IS REALLY GOOD AT TREATING LARYNGITIS, PEOPLE SAY HE HAS HOARSE SENSE. Today's Cryptogram Clue: J equals T