



Serb tennis star Novak Djokovic (L) meets (from L-R) Red Bull's German driver Sebastian Vettel, Ferrari's Brazilian driver Felipe Massa and Toro Rosso's French driver Sebastien Bourdais in the paddock of the Monaco racetrack in Monte Carlo on Wednesday. The Monaco Grand Prix is on May 24. Djokovic is also in France to in the French Open that too begins on May 24.

Footballer Hafiz passes away

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Faridpur



General Hospital in the capital. He was 33.

He left behind his wife and a host of relatives to mourn his death. He has been suffering from blood cancer for the last four months.

Hafiz was a player of Bangladesh Under-16 football team and later played for Agrani Bank, Bangladesh Police, Dhaka Wanderers and Badda Jagarani.

After his Namaz-e-janaza at Faridpur Stadium, he was laid to rest at the Alipur graveyard in the town.

Confusion over Afro-Asia Cup

CRICINFO, undated

Confusion continues over the next staging of the Afro-Asia Cup after it emerged that it was being touted it would be held in Nairobi between July 19 and 25.

Little had been heard about the far-from-popular tournament after discussions earlier this year failed to resolve its future. The increasingly packed international schedule, allied to the IPL, meant that no suitable date could be found in the calendar.

But Nimbus, who have the rights to broadcast the event, have indicated to potential partners that it will take place in Kenya in July. However, at that time Bangladesh are finishing their series in the Caribbean, while Pakistan are meant to be touring Sri Lanka. That would leave India to make up almost all the side, possibly supplemented by a few players from the leading Asian Associates.

Furthermore, hosts Kenya have not officially been notified that the competition will happen. While all the games could take place at Nairobi Gymkhana, Cricket Kenya officials said that while they had been provisionally given notice July was an option, no formal approach had been made.

The proposed format has switched from three ODIs to five Twenty20 internationals.

Warne eyes spin job

CRICINFO, undated

Shane Warne has expressed his interest in coaching Indian spinners if the BCCI offered him the job.

"If there is any offer or something like that I will seriously consider," Warne told Indian news channel CNN-IBN. "I love Indian culture. It took a long time to embrace the culture and get to appreciate India and probably took me a couple of tours to understand."

Warne wasn't at his best in India during his Test career, averaging 47.17 in 14 Tests compared to his career figures of 25.41 in 145 matches, but was in great form in last year's IPL leading the unfancied Rajasthan Royals to victory. Wednesday's defeat to Kolkata Knight Riders ended Rajasthan's hopes of making the semifinals this season.

Shah hurt by snub

CRICINFO, undated

Owais Shah still doesn't believe he has had a fair chance to prove himself at Test level after losing his place following the tour of West Indies. With the success of Ravi Bopara at No.3 the chances of a recall look extremely slim, but Shah is determined to use the upcoming one-day cricket to make a statement to the selectors.

He was finally given his long-awaited chance of a spell in the Test team after Ian Bell was dropped following the defeat at Sabina Park in February. He hit a half century on his recall in Antigua, but failed to make the most of his opportunity in the rest of the series as he twice ran himself out in ideal batting conditions.

"I still believe I haven't had a proper shot at Test cricket," he said ahead of the first ODI against West Indies. "I've had one Test match, a year out, another Test match, a year out and then I've had three in a row. I'd like to have a proper run but again I've got to earn that run, which I believe I will."

"Perhaps I didn't quite set the world on fire," he added about the West Indies tour. "A lot was expected, especially batting at No. 3, the media loves talking about that position, perhaps because we've had a lot of problems in that position over the years. I was kind of hoping I would get at least five or six Test matches in a row to say 'here's your chance, let's see what you can do'."

"Unfortunately, it didn't quite work out that way but I am as determined as ever and I think I will force my way back into that team."

However, he has all but given up on a place in the Ashes side, well aware that England aren't going to be making changes to the batting line-up for the

first Test in Cardiff. "What I've got to do is perform against West Indies in this one-day series, the Twenty20 World Cup and then I go back to county cricket to try to churn out the runs," he said. "I have done it for years and I will carry on doing it because I believe I am still good enough to play Test cricket and I'd like to get a proper shot at it."

Shah found out about his Test omission while he was with the Delhi Daredevils at the IPL. He didn't manage to get a game during his four-week stint but has no regrets about the decision to join, despite it meaning that he couldn't play any early-season county cricket. He doesn't feel that turning out for Middlesex in April would have made any difference to the selectors' decision.

"I don't think me coming back and scoring a load of runs would have got me the nod ahead of Ravi. The England selectors, they know what I can do. I've been doing it for years. I don't think getting runs in a four-day game would have made a massive difference."

"They made a decision to go with Ravi, he played very, very well and was the man-of-the-series. He deserved all the recognition he's getting. All I want to do is now concentrate on getting back into the Test scene by scoring loads of runs this year."

And he still believes he learnt valuable lessons from his time in South Africa which he will be able to take with him into next month's ICC World Twenty20. "It wasn't actually that frustrating because I got an opportunity to watch and learn," he said. "I really did learn a fair bit regarding Twenty20 cricket, how teams approach it and what sort of tactics that are used."

"Also watching some of the best batsmen in the world, [Virender] Sehwag, [Gautam] Gambhir, [AB] de Villiers and [Tillekeratne] Dilshan and just hanging around with the likes of Glenn McGrath and stuff. You grow up watching those guys, so it wasn't such a bad experience."

Mind games

FROM PAGE 17
Graham Onions and Stuart Broad and James Anderson are doing a great job. I think from what we saw out here a couple of years ago they've probably improved and are at a higher level than what they were.

"They've played some good cricket. I'm not sure they're playing against the greatest competition in the world. They've still gone out and done a job. They beat the West Indies in three days, which is not an easy thing to do, even if the opposition isn't great."

The Australians, on the other hand, are coming off a 2-1 victory in South Africa against the No. 2 side in the world. It all adds up to a group confident of overcoming anything England can throw at them.

Delhi cruise

FROM PAGE 17
Delhi got off to a flying start, putting 60 runs on the board within six overs, and the loss of opener David Warner for only 15 had little impact as Gautam Gambhir (47), Tim Dilshan (24) and Sehwag (50) did the damage.

SCORES IN BRIEF
MUMBAI: 165 for 8 in 20 overs (Rahane 56, Tendulkar 46, Shah 12, Harbhajan 12 not out, Ashraf 2, Nannes 3-27, Sangwan 2-28)

DELHI: 166 for 6 in 17.3 overs (Sehwag 50, Gambhir 47, Dilshan 24, Warner 15, Mishra 13; Harbhajan 4-17)

Result: Delhi Daredevils won by four wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Virender Sehwag.

Eng-WI ODI

FROM PAGE 17
another look an hour later, boos rang out around the ground from frustrated spectators.

And when Australian umpire Steve Davis and his English colleague Nigel Llong decided there was no prospect of play and called the game off shortly after 3pm (1400GMT), their decision was greeted with more cat-calls from the crowd.

The second match of this three-game series takes place at Bristol on Sunday before concluding on Tuesday at Birmingham's Edgbaston ground.

Club Cup cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

National Cricket Club of Nilphamari and Barisal's Nazrul Pathagar progressed during their final round matches of the National Club Cup competition yesterday.

At the BKSP in Savar, NCC (217-6) defeated Noakhali Top Sports (172 all out) by 45 runs with Rasel scoring a half-century for the Nilphamariside.

In the other match, Nazrul Pathagar (182-5) beat Shamsuzzoha Eleven (181 all out) by five wickets at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Fraser regrets Lewis end

AFP, London

Former England cricketer Angus Fraser lamented a "sad day for cricket" on Thursday after former fast bowler Chris Lewis was jailed for 13 years for smuggling cocaine into Britain.

Fraser wrote in the Independent newspaper that his one-time teammate Lewis was "without question the best athlete I ever played with, an amazing specimen" -- but a man whose love of cars and clothes may have led to his downfall.

A jury at Croydon Crown Court near London convicted Lewis on Wednesday of trying to bring more than 140,000 pounds worth of cocaine into the country from St Lucia, packed in cans of fruit and vegetable juice.

The 41-year-old had played 32 Tests and 53 one-day internationals in the 1990s. Lewis's co-accused Chad Kirnson was also found guilty and received the same sentence.

Pandey powers

FROM PAGE 17
hefty target with Herschelle Gibbs leading the way, and at the halfway stage were perfectly poised on 85 for the loss of one wicket.

But after Gibbs departed for 60, caught in the deep by Pandey off the bowling of Balachandra Akhil, Andrew Symonds (18) fell soon after and the innings unravelled.

Impressive bowling displays from Kumble (2-23) and medium pacer Akhil (2-18) sealed victory and ensured Bangalore enjoy a one-day rest while Deccan face the dangerous Daredevils.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE: 170 for 4 in 20 overs (Pandey 114 not out, Van der Merwe 23, Kohli 19 not out; Ojha 2-32)

DECCAN CHARGERS: 158 for 6 in 20 overs (Gibbs 60, Symonds 18, Gilchrist 15; Akhil 2-18, Kumble 2-23)

Result: Royal Challengers Bangalore won by 12 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Manish Pandey.

Akhtar out

FROM PAGE 17
Akhtar was also left out of Pakistan's squad for the World Cup held in the Caribbean in 2007 after he failed to recover from ankle and knee problems.

A year later, he was banned for five years following his outburst against the PCB over being axed from a central contract.

An appeal committee reduced the ban to 18 months but also levied a fine of seven million rupees (95,000 dollars).

Pakistan Akram's pick

AFP, Karachi



Famed paceman Wasim Akram on Thursday tipped Pakistan to win next month's World Twenty20 in England, predicting the green shirts can triumph if they play to their potential.

"My favourite team is Pakistan," Wasim told AFP. "I thought Australia would thrash them in the one-off T20 match in Dubai but it was the other way round and now, if Pakistan play to their potential, they can win the title."

Pakistan beat Australia by seven wickets in the only Twenty20 match in Dubai earlier this month -- their last international match before the World Twenty20 in England starting from June 5.

Australia, however, won the preceding five-match one-day series 3-2, a loss that Wasim said was unacceptable.

"Pakistan did not play to their potential in the second, third and fourth match and I hope Younus Khan will learn from his mistakes as captain because there is no margin of error in the Twenty20 matches," said Wasim.

He played 104 Tests and 356 one-day internationals before retiring in 2003.

Pakistan are in Group B alongside hosts England and the Netherlands. Two teams from each of four groups will qualify for the Super Eight Stages.

Wasim said Pakistan had been doing well in T20 matches since their inception in 2005.

"Pakistan has the best winning ratio of all the teams in the Twenty20 cricket, so if they continue to keep that consistency it won't be difficult to win after losing the last match in 2007," said Wasim.

Pakistan chalked up a five-run defeat against India in the final of the inaugural World Twenty20 in South Africa.

Wasim said batting can let Pakistan down.

"With Umar Gul, Sohail Tanvir and Shoaib Akhtar, if he is fit and going with the team, Pakistan has the best bowling attack backed by quality spin of Shahid Afridi," said Wasim, himself a world class left-arm paceman.

"I am also impressed with the talent of Mohammad Aamir who is nippy and can swing the ball both ways. He could be a revelation in the event," said Wasim of the 17-year-old rookie left-armer included in the 15-man squad.

"But batting can let Pakistan down, as it has always done in the past, so there will be more responsibility on Younus, Shoaib Malik, Misbahul Haq and Shahid Afridi. Twenty20 is not only thrashing, it is also sensible batting."

Wasim believed defending champions India could suffer from a hectic season.

"I think Pakistan has played less cricket and will be fresh, while Indian players could be fatigued after playing in the Indian Premier League," he said.

PCB tells Yousuf to get ICL reply

CRICINFO, undated

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has asked Mohammad Yousuf to obtain a response from the ICL to his resignation request as it moves forward in a bid to bring back the batsman into the national set-up.

Yousuf met PCB officials Wasim Bari, Mohammad Naeeem and Zakir Khan at Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore and told them he had resigned from the ICL. "We met Mohammad Yousuf today and he told us he wants to play for Pakistan and that he has resigned from the ICL," Bari, PCB's director HR and administration, told Crinfo.

"He showed us the resignation letter. We have asked him to come back to us with their response, whatever that is," Bari said. "Once we have something from them, we can move forward. We have to take it step-by-step. He said he would get back to us as soon as possible."

Yousuf told reporters later he was not sure whether he would be able to obtain a NOC from the ICL but wanted to play for Pakistan. But the board did not specify whether they were looking for an NOC specifically, just a response of some kind. That indicates that the door remains open, for now, for the matter to move forward even if Yousuf does not get an NOC. At almost the same time, the ICL released a statement paving the way for certain contracted players to move back into the mainstream. An ICL statement said a few

domestic and overseas players had asked to be released to pursue cricket with state or national associations and the league would not stop them from doing so. It is unclear at the moment whether Yousuf is one of those international players.

The PCB, in line with boards around the world, recently announced an amnesty for ICL players who gave up their links to the league by May 31. But unlike the BCCI which announced a cooling-off period of a year before ICL players could be eligible for national and international cricket again, the PCB said it would go on a case-by-case basis: some could come back immediately and others after some time. ICL players from Pakistan are already allowed to play domestic cricket.

Once the documentation is in, it is believed that Yousuf might be one of those players who comes back sooner rather than later. Pakistan's batting in ODIs has struggled without his presence, particularly in the recent ODI series against Australia, but Bari would only say that the board would "go by its stated policy. The meeting was a very positive one and we want to take positive steps from here."

Yousuf has left the ICL once before, when he signed with them in 2007, but was lured out of the contract by the then PCB administration. Legal wrangles ensued, which stopped him from getting an IPL contract in 2008. But he played for Pakistan during the year, before suddenly opting to join the ICL again in November, on the day he was picked in an ODI squad to play against West Indies.

Grand finale promised

AFP, Johannesburg



Bollywood superstars Katrina Kaif and Shilpa Shetty will join reggae icon Eddy Grant and R&B singer Akon on stage Sunday as the glitzy Indian Premier League

(IPL) wraps up in Johannesburg.

The closing ceremony after the five-week Twenty20 extravaganza will take place after the last ball is bowled in the glamorous tournament's final with a fireworks display topping the showcase.

"We believe we have put our best forward foot forward and it's going to be a spectacular show," IPL chief operating officer Sundar Raman told AFP Thursday.

The show tops a tournament that was moved to South Africa over fears of insufficient security in India due to date clashes with general elections.

"It's our way of saying thank you (to the fans). This is our humble way of thanking them and getting them to the field of play, to the stadium, to

watch something beyond cricket," Raman said.

The line-up at the sold-out match includes Indian percussionist Shivamani, a performance by Indian and South African drummers and the crowning of the Miss Bollywood IPL South Africa.

The presentation ceremony for the 2009 season winners and runners-up will follow the entertainment.

The IPL's eight cricket teams are owned by some of the biggest Bollywood stars and richest people in the world, including Bollywood giants Shah Rukh Khan, Preity Zinta, and Shetty.

Khan is one of Bollywood's biggest stars and owns the Kolkata Knight Riders, while Shetty is co-owner of the Rajasthan Royals and a former winner of Celebrity Big Brother.

Fellow actress Zinta is part-owner of the Kings XI Punjab franchise.

Business tycoon Mukesh Ambani is the head of the fourth-richest family in the world, and owns the Mumbai Indians through his conglomerate Reliance Industries.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Q-tip slowing tip

5 Silent

8 Cold War weapon, for short

12 Easter flower

13 Rage

14 — con-tendere

15 Initial stake

16 White bloom

18 "Bread"

20 From what place

21 Actor Baldwin

23 Ever-green type

24 Grow uncontrollably

28 Moist

31 Body of water (Abbr.)

32 The Ram

34 False-hood

35 Oil cartel

37 Skier's maneuver

39 Greek consort

41 Growl

42 Aft

45 Stuck, sort of

49 Anne Murray classic

51 Christmas

52 Cattle

53 U.S. spy org.

54 And others (Lat.)

55 Raced

56 Type units

57 Land-lord's due

DOWN

1 Bridge coup

2 Drunkard

3 Choir voice

4 Local ordinance (Var.)

5 Gets the info wrong

6 Grecian vessel

7 Cat call?

8 Certainly

9 County of England

10 United nations

11 Sulk

17 Kid's query

19 Actress Jessica

22 Adhere

24 "No seats" sign

25 Pinch

26 Nuance

27 Ancient Spartan king

29 "O Sole —"

30 Church seat

33 Graceful bird

36 Masticated

38 Orison

40 Sphere

42 Requests

43 Quick cut

44 Pleasant

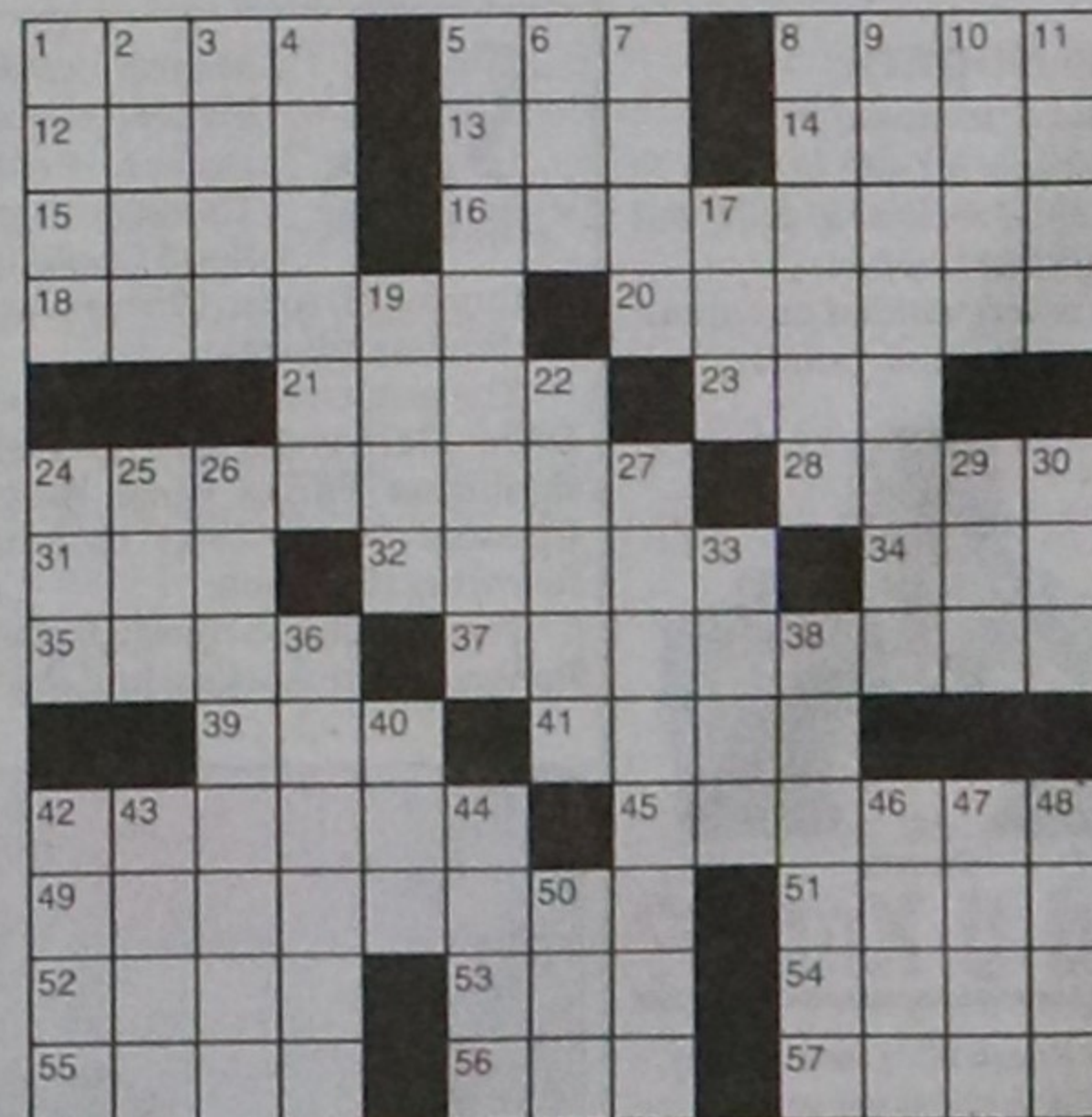
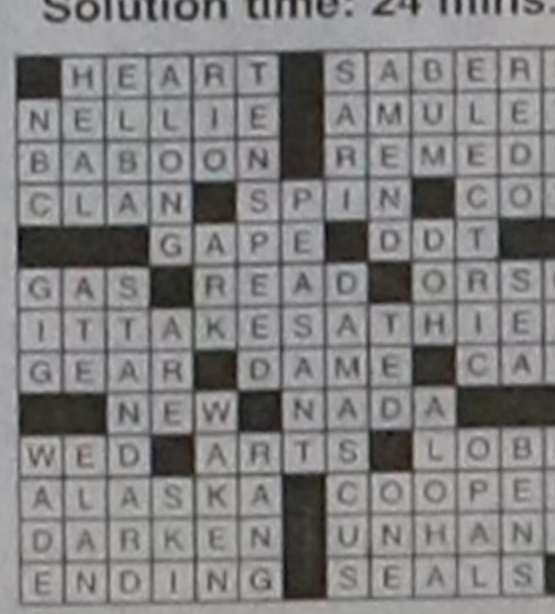
46 Burlap fiber

47 "Two and a Half Men" role

48 Dissolve

50 Edge

Solution time: 24 mins.



CRYPTOQUIP

ZPCAU NX OQNU LUAQY PZC'S
TUYX BRCA MPIU XQGYZ
BQMIZ AQGML ZRX P ORTU
RC PCBUYPQY PCSUYPQY

Saturday's Cryptoquip: BECAUSE OUR MAIL MANAGER DOUBLES AS AN EMCEE, PEOPLE MIGHT CALL HIM A POSTMASTER TOASTMASTER.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals N