

## Ireland give England a tough time

AFP, Belfast

England's Ashes heroes were given a reality check as they spluttered to 203 for nine against Ireland in Thursday's one-day international in Belfast.

Just five days after regaining the famous urn with a 197-run victory over Australia in the final Test at The Oval, England seemed to be suffering a hangover from their champagne celebrations.

Although England brought a strong one-day squad to Stormont, minus captain Andrew Strauss, pace bowlers Stuart Broad and James Anderson, who both played at the Oval, were left out.

England also omitted former Ireland batsman Eoin Morgan, which meant Oval hero Jonathan Trott, Kent batsman Joe Denly and Yorkshire spinner Adil Rashid all featured for the first time in a one-day international.

But Trott fell for nought in a disastrous start and only debutant Denly and Luke Wright impressed after England elected to bat in overcast conditions.

Opener Denly struck 67, while Wright's 36 injected the innings with impetus after England slipped to 135 for six.

An underwhelming start included Trott, whose brilliant hundred on Test debut set up the Oval victory, being trapped lbw by one which nipped back from Australian-raised Trent Johnston.

Opener Ravi Bopara, whose wretched time against the Australians led to his omission for the decisive, final Test, also went without scoring to Johnston, after edging a drive to second slip.

It was not until the 21st ball of the innings that England scored a run off the bat, when Denly found the rope at extra cover with a drive off Kevin O'Brien.

Johnston's opening spell of 6-2-7-2 caused the problems for England and was a perfect way for him to celebrate his 100th appearance for his adopted nation.

Matt Prior, captain Paul Collingwood and Owais Shah all perished to skied catches attempting big shots and when Denly was pinned leg before, attempting to swivel the returning Johnston to the leg-side, England were 135 for six.

England were in the middle of a batting powerplay at that point and Sussex all-rounder Wright responded with some powerful strokes.

Twice he cleared the ropes in a rapid 36, which dominated a stand of 42 with Rashid.

Only a brilliant catch by John Mooney, flinging himself full length on the run from long-off, halted the 26-ball assault.

## Shakib yet to

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Zimbabwe, however is expected to travel to Australia next week for medical treatment on his groin.

Shakib had to play with painkillers as he has been in acute groin pain during the past one month.

He will consult with a doctor in Adelaide and it would only be possible to know whether he needs any operation when meet with the doctor.

Shakib is the fifth Bangladesh bowler to get injured in recent months, after Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, fast bowler Rubel Hossain, Nazmul Hossain and spinner Abdur Razzak.

Bangladesh's next international assignment is against Zimbabwe at home and the Tigers will start their preparation from September 10.

## Kaka backs

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many things at the 2002 World Cup (which Brazil won) and every time I saw him react to the pressure, Kaka said.

"Under pressure, Dinho delivers."

That pressure piled up on Ronaldinho and Milan during pre-season when the club had a torrid spell, losing eight out of 11 matches.

But they bounced back on the opening day of the season, winning 2-1 at Siena and next up is their city derby against champions Inter Milan.

And Kaka believes his former team-mates can continue their winning start.

"Milan will win 2-0 with a goal from Pato and assist by Dinho or even Thiago Silva, then a second from (Alessandro) Nesta," he predicted.



KIM CLIJSTERS



MARIA SHARAPOVA

## Of comeback queens

AFP, New York



They are both former champions and world number ones and at the US Open starting on Monday Maria Sharapova and Kim Clijsters will both attempt to crown stunning comebacks to the WTA circuit.

In the case of Sharapova it was a chronic shoulder injury that forced her onto the sidelines for nine months and left her at times fearing that her remarkable career could be over at the tender age of 22.

Clijsters, in contrast, walked away voluntarily from the sport at the age of 23 in May, 2007 citing injuries and her pending marriage. Two months later she gave birth to daughter Jade Ellis.

Sharapova finally returned to action in May where she reached the quarterfinals of the Warsaw claycourt tournament.

Since then the Russian has compiled a 22-7 win-loss record reaching the quarter-finals at the French Open before bowing out in the second round at Wimbledon.

But significantly she has produced her best tennis in over a year at two build-up tournaments to Flushing Meadows reaching the semi-finals in Los Angeles and the final in Toronto where she lost to compatriot Elena Dementieva.

Sharapova has made it clear she will not be competing in New York, where she won the second of her three Grand Slam titles in 2006, just to make up the numbers and show off her new designer diamond earrings.

"My mindset going into every single tournament is obviously to be the champion. If you're not ready to do that and you're not ready to compete for six or seven matches, then I don't

think you should be in the draw," she said.

"So you always have that positive attitude, and with every tournament that I played in the summer, I felt like I was starting to play better and get a good feel for the hard courts."

"After the grass season I put a lot of work in outside the court. I've definitely improved over the weeks and with every match I felt like I stepped it up when I had to."

The Clijsters comeback is more recent as the Belgian player competed for the first time in over two years at Cincinnati earlier this month stunning top-tenner Marion Bartoli in the first round en route to the quarter-finals where she came close to taking a set of world number one Dinara Safina.

She then reached the third round in Toronto before losing in three tough sets to world number five Jelena Jankovic.

Clijsters, who won her only Grand Slam title here in 2005, believes that she still has something to offer at the top level.

"I think a lot of the girls these days that are up there, they play a very similar game," she said.

"They play tennis like this is a perfect game, playing that aggressive tennis, stepping in and just really hitting the ball over the net and not giving your opponent a lot of chances."

"But on the other hand, if that doesn't go the way that they want it to go, I feel like the plan B is not always there."

"And that's something that a lot of girls -- Venus, Serena, even Justine, even myself -- even if we're not playing our best game, we can still work on -- we still have a plan B."

The chances are that neither Sharapova nor Clijsters will have the consistency to keep on winning throughout a two-week long tournament, but one thing for sure is that none of the favourites will want to cross their paths in the early rounds.

## Federer chases sixth

AFP, New York



Roger Federer will bid to become the first man in 84 years to win six straight US Open titles when the Swiss star opens the defence of his

crown at Flushing Meadows on Monday. The last time six-in-a-row happened here was in 1925 when "Big" Bill Tilden defeated William Johnston for the fifth time in six years on the grass courts of Forest Hills.

The 28-year-old Swiss star knows that a new wave of younger players are closing in on him and are sure to make it hard in boisterous New York, but he insists he is fit and ready to retain his crown.

Evidence of this came last weekend when he scored back-to-back straight sets wins over two of his main challengers, Andy Murray and Novak Djokovic, to win the Cincinnati Masters.

That followed a record-busting summer when Federer won the French Open and Wimbledon to pass the 14 Grand Slam titles leading mark of Pete Sampras, regained his world number one spot from Rafael Nadal and then, with wife Mirka, celebrated the birth of twin girls.

Indeed Federer has lost just the once, to Jo-Wilfried Tsonga in the quarterfinals of the Montreal Masters, since the start of May.

That is in stark contrast to this time last year when Federer had lost his beloved Wimbledon crown and number one ranking to Nadal and also lost early at the Beijing Olympics as he struggled for form.

"I was lucky enough that when I got to the New York that the fans were trying to push me back to number one right away," he said.

"All the cab drivers and everybody was stopping to wish me luck. It was something that I've never really experienced before in New York and I think that really helped turn it around for me."

"Because after having the disappointment at Wimbledon and also in Beijing ... I was sort of disappointed coming into the US Open."

"The fans for me really turned it around and that's why this year I'm so excited about going back. I've had even better results, so I hope I can show them what I can do on a tennis court."

## India suffers

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does not satisfy conditions which focus on human endeavour for excelling in competition with others."

Millions of Indians watch F1 on television, often with the same passion they reserve for the cricket, but news reports said the ministry did not believe the remittance was "desirable".

"They sought our recommendation for an outflow of nearly 200 crore rupees (40 million dollars) which the ministry felt was not justified for a motor race," an official was quoted as saying.

The race promoters, however, said they would approach the ministry again.

"Yes, we went to the ministry seeking government con-

cessions. If need be, we will go again," JPSK Sports managing director Samir Gaur told the Times earlier this week.

"We are 200 per cent committed to the F1 race in India. We are building a motor car racing track capable of holding an F1 race."

Work on the track is in progress in Greater Noida on the outskirts of the capital.

## ECB discards 50-over meet

AFP, London

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) will abandon their domestic 50-over competition from 2010 as the Twenty20 format continues its rise in popularity.

In 2010 English counties will compete in the four-day Championship, a new-look Twenty20 competition and also a 40-over event to be played mainly on Sundays, with the 50-over Friends Provident Trophy dropped from the schedule.

The ECB claim that the International Cricket Council are set to review "the future of 50-over cricket" after the 2011 World Cup, but confirmed that the senior England side and the Lions would continue to play 50-over cricket until that review was complete.

## PCB has faith in Younus

PTI, Karachi

Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Ijaz Butt has made it clear that he has full confidence in the leadership abilities of Younus Khan and said there was no need to replace the national team captain.

Butt said yesterday that if the team performed well in the Champions Trophy there was every likelihood of Younus Khan being given the captaincy on a long-term basis.

"These rumours about the board having lost confidence in Younus Khan's captaincy is rubbish," he said.

Younus said recently in an interview that he was fed up with elements trying to start a vilification campaign against him to strip him of the captaincy.

"I have never run after the captaincy. But I will unmask these people who are trying to create differences between me and the other players and create discord in the team," Younus said.

## ICC-Pak peace

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satisfactory to the ICC and its specialist security advisors as well as to visiting teams, then international cricket will return to Pakistan," added Mr Morgan.

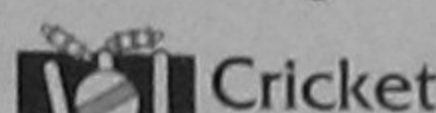
Butt welcomed the breakthrough after months of uncertainty.

"The PCB is content with the settlement that has been reached. We are able to see this dispute from the other side. We realise also the logistical and administrative difficulties that would be associated with organising our matches in the other three co-host countries."

"Our number-one priority is that cricket in Pakistan must not be allowed to suffer unduly and I believe this agreement is the best possible outcome for the game."

"Besides the hosting fee of 10 million dollars we are going to get some compensation which we will not announce now as the World Cup is still two years away," he concluded.

## Gary happy about fitness



CRICINFO, undated

The recess is over. India's ODI team assembled in Bangalore on Thursday for a four-day conditioning camp, leading into the tri-series in Sri Lanka early next month, and then the Champions Trophy in South Africa following immediately.

As they sat for the team meeting in the morning, it was the first time that all the players had come together in close to seven weeks -- Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid and Suresh Raina had been away for longer. The first day of the camp involved the meeting and a fitness assessment at the National Cricket Academy gym. Gary Kirsten, the India coach, had given the team impromptu fitness tests two weeks ago, and he liked what he saw yesterday.

"Based on what we saw two weeks ago, there have been significant improvements from every player, which means they are taking it seriously," Kirsten said. "That's all we wanted. The players have realised that this is a part of the game that they all want to improve on, and the players have taken on that responsibility."

The big question, though, is whether four days are enough for a team to get into the international mode and up their intensity for a packed season ahead. With the BCCI's Corporate Cup lined up, Kirsten had no choice, because he didn't want to eat into the break that the players had finally got, which he thought was essential.

"It was very important for us and the guys to have at least a six-week break," Kirsten said. "It's the longest break they have had for a long time. It was important that they were mentally fresh for that process."

## Kiwis left tottering

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hoping Sri Lanka would press home the advantage when play resumes on Friday.

"The wicket here on day two and three is usually good for batting," he said. "But this track is dry and if we can get a lead of about 130-140 runs, it will be good for us."

New Zealand were reduced to 49-2 when Tim McIntosh was given out leg-before to fast bowler Dammika Prasad for five and Daniel Flynn was caught behind off left-arm seamer Thilan Thushara for 13.

Martin Gupthill made a solid 35 when he hooked Thushara to deep square-leg where Muralidaran took an easy catch to make it 63-3.

Jesse Ryder helped Taylor put on 85 for the fourth wicket, before two quick wickets left the Kiwis reeling.

Ryder was caught in the leg trap off Rangana Herath for 23 and nightwatchman Jeetan Patel lobbed a catch to slips off Muralidaran.

Earlier, Samaraweera proved the main stumbling block for New Zealand after Sri Lanka resumed at their overnight score of 262-3.

He hit 17 boundaries and celebrated his 11th Test century in 54 matches by smashing the next ball from seamer Iain O'Brien over the square-leg boundary for six.

Sri Lanka, who were comfortably placed at 367-4 before lunch, lost their last six wickets for 49 runs in a dramatic collapse in the afternoon session.

Patel finished with 4-78, including the wickets of Prasad and Herath off successive deliveries, while skipper Daniel Vettori took 3-104 in 40.3 overs of left-arm spin.

Former captain Mahela Jayawardene missed a second successive ton against the Kiwis when he edged a ball from O'Brien to McCullum after making 92.

Jayawardene, who hit 114 in the first Test, put on 180 runs for the fourth wicket with Samaraweera after Sri Lanka were struggling at 115-3 before tea on the first day.

## SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the second day of the second Test between New Zealand and Sri Lanka at the Sinhalese Sports Club on Thursday:

**SRI LANKA:** First innings (overnight 262-3)  
Paranavithana c Taylor b Vettori 19  
Dilshan c b O'Brien 29  
Sangakkara c Oram b Vettori 50  
M Jayawardene c McCullum b O'Brien 92  
Samaraweera c McCullum b Patel 143  
Kapugedera c Vettori b Patel 35  
P Jayawardene c O'Brien b Martin 17  
Prasad c Taylor b Patel 6  
Herath lbw b Patel 0  
Muralidaran not out 17  
Thushara c Patel b Vettori 0  
Extras: (b-2, lb-5, nb-1) 8  
Total: (All out in 130.3 overs) 416

Fall of wickets: 1-34, 2-75, 3-115, 4-295, 5-367, 6-389, 7-396, 8-396, 9-415.

**Bowler** O M R W  
Martin 24 3 81 1  
O'Brien 22 4 73 2  
Vettori 40.3 12 104 3  
Oram 21 7 56 0  
Patel 20 3 78 4  
Ryder 3 1 17 0

**NEW ZEALAND:** First innings  
McIntosh lbw b Prasad 5  
Gupthill c Muralidaran b Thushara 35  
Flynn c P Jayawardene b Thushara 13  
Taylor not out 70  
Ryder c Paranavithana b Herath 23  
Patel c M Jayawardene b Muralidaran 1  
McCullum not out 5  
Extras: (lb-3, w-2, nb-2) 7  
Total: (For 5 wickets in 47 overs) 159  
To bat: Oram, Vettori, O'Brien, Martin.

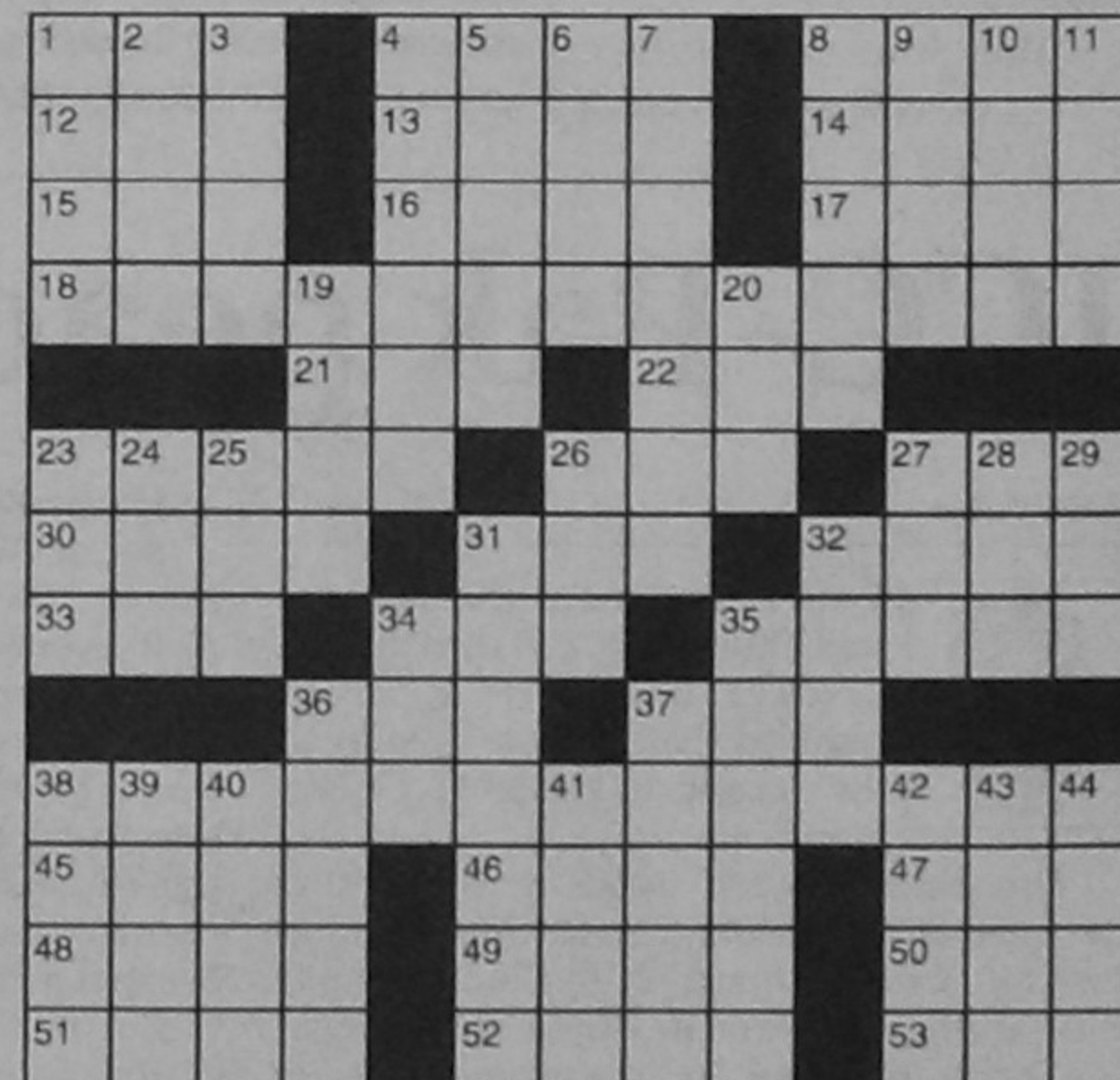
Fall of wickets: 1-14, 2-49, 3-63, 4-148, 5-149.

**Bowler** O M R W  
Dilshan 1 0 6 0  
Thushara 9 2 37 2  
Prasad 6 0 41 1  
Herath 20 7 38 1  
Muralidaran 11 1 34 1

## CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

<b>ACROSS</b>	<b>DOWN</b>
1 Donkey	33 Prevent
4 See	34 Dowel
8 Across	35 Swell
8 With	36 Deleted
4 Across	37 A billion
mush-	years
room	38 OnStar
cloud	provider
45 King of	45 King of
12 Cause of	the jungle
royal	46 Prepared
insomnia	to drive
47 La-la	47 La-la
13 Exam	precursor
format	48 Therefore
14 Bear in	49 Count
the air	counter-
15 Rowboat	part
need	50 Menag-
16 Poi base	erie
17 Under-	51 Night
water	light?
breathing	52 Terrier
apparatus	type
18 Elite	53 out a
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tional site	20 Upper
21 Indivisible	limit
22 Perched	
23 Grant	
money?	
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on the	
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30 Canal	
zone	
31 Total	
32 Use the	
USPS	

**Solution time: 27 mins.**  
MAT AHA TREAT  
ABA DET RATIO  
CAR CARBUNCLE  
ASS SPIRE  
WHIZ LEAU TOGA  
LED TWOBIT  
ELIOT OPINE  
BANTAM BOA  
BONY EDO ZONE  
GARFUNKEL PAL  
ALIAS ERE LAG  
SPORT SOW SLY



## CRYPTOQUIP

C Z X Q B U F J B Q U D C O C  
T D E B D X T R U R H Q D X T C J  
Z B Z R Q F D K U T R Y H T C  
T D E B O U F B U P B E B K R X B P C U

**Yesterday's Cryptoquip: MAKING AN EFFORT TO BREAK HIS WILD CAFFEINE HABIT, THE GOLFER DECIDED IT WAS TIME TO TEA OFF.**

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Z equals M