

Vettel back in the hunt

INTERNET, undated

Red Bull's Sebastian Vettel led from start to finish in the Japanese Grand Prix at Suzuka to put himself back in the title frame with Jenson Button eighth behind Brawn teammate and other title rival Rubens Barrichello.

Vettel has 69 points after the victory, achieved at a circuit at which he had never previously raced, with Barrichello two ahead on 71 and Button still clear on 85 with two grands prix remaining.

Jarno Trulli and Lewis Hamilton completed the podium, the Toyota man taking a place from the McLaren on the final round of pitstops. Kimi Raikkonen, Nico Rosberg and Nick Heidfeld filled positions four to six.

Following the race Rosberg was placed under investigation for a possible infringement which could have handed Brawn GP the constructors' title -- however stewards decided not to take action against the Williams driver.

Vettel got away well enough to hold on to his pole position although he could have been passed by the KERS-boosted Hamilton, had Trulli not slowed the McLaren somewhat.

The reigning world champion managed to get past the Toyota however with positions four to eight as they were on the grid, occupied by Heidfeld, Raikkonen, Barrichello, Rosberg and Adrian Sutil.

Heikki Kovalainen, fighting for his future in Woking with fellow Finn Raikkonen tipped to return to McLaren at his expense, made up two places off the line thanks to his KERS then overtook Sutil's Force India on the first couple of laps to move into eighth.

Button and Kubica occupied the cars passed by Kovalainen and the Briton, who could have wrapped up the title had things worked out differently, wasted little time in passing the Pole.

Lee targets

FROM PAGE 17 little time frame playing as much as I can in order to build up myself and get ready for that first Test," he said. "I certainly don't think the door (on a Test recall) is shut."

"I think I have got a lot to offer Australian cricket as far as Test bowling goes. I will be definitely be putting both feet forward for that first Test in Brisbane. The passion is still there."

Lee missed the 2007 World Cup through injury, and the next edition is in less than two years. He was firm about not setting a retirement date. "The way I'm feeling now, I'm only 32 years of age and I don't feel like I'm wearing down. I'm hoping my pace will speak for itself. I train hard, I'm doing everything I can. It might all end tomorrow but I still want to play for a few years yet."

Sneijder fires

FROM PAGE 20 who should have awarded us a penalty. It was a victory of character."

Dejan Stankovic gave Inter a 22nd minute lead before Antonio Di Natale levelled five minutes later for his ninth goal of the season.

Russel crush

FROM PAGE 17 keeper Mazharul Islam Himel to make a diving save. But, their hopes of returning to the game evaporated when Farashganj were reduced to 10 men in the 52nd minute. Defender Imroj Chowdhury was sent off for his second bookable offence.

With a man shot, Rahmatganj conceded the third in the 55th minute before Yusuf capitalising on a Parvez cross sealed the fate of the match with a well-judged header.

TEAMS

SHEIKH RUSSEL: Himel, Aminul Islam, Zahurul Islam (Ramjan Ali), Kamal Hossain, Abass Inusah, Abdullah Parvez, Maruf Ahmed, Aminul Islam Mobararak, M Roni and Yusuf.

FARASHGANJ SC: Titumir, Dhiman Barua, Rezaul Karim Reza, Imroj, Abu Ahmed Faisal (Saikat), Imtiaz Sultan Zitu (Babu), Mezbabul Haq Manik, Zahed Ismail, Ali Hossain (Mamun), Touhidul Alam and Firoj Joarder.

Referee: Azad Rahman
Yellow cards: Reza, Zitu.
Red card: Imroj.



Citycell's head of marketing Anand Rajasingham (L) greets Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin on becoming the president of the South Asian Football Federation at the BFF House yesterday.

Test remains a daylight affair

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The England and Wales Cricket Board's (ECB) proposed plan to host the first floodlit Test next year has been ditched after two counties refused to experiment with the pink ball, according to a report in the Sunday Times.

The ECB had requested Bangladesh to appear in the first-ever day-night Test during the team's tour of England in May-June next year, but the lack of successful testing has dashed that.

Giles Clarke, the ECB chairman, said it was too late for the match to be made a day-nighter. "It needs a proper series of trials and that cannot now be done in time. Playing a Test in anything but white clothing is also an issue."

John Stephenson, the Marylebone Cricket Club's (MCC) assistant secretary, said: "There's always resistance to change. We have got to find a ball that's durable and that really is the sticking point. Until we've trialled it in a three or

four-day match, we won't know for sure."

The two counties in question, Durham and Worcestershire, had been requested to try out the pink ball in their Championship match recently but politely declined. "I was not keen," said Durham's coach, Geoff Cook. "It was a first-class match and I thought we should retain the game's integrity."

The ICC was yet to pass the idea and its approval was subject to suitable equipment being developed for the purpose. One main concern was whether the suggested pink ball retains its colour or needs to be changed frequently due to discolouration or wear and tear, to what extent would batting, bowling and fielding conditions vary and so on.

Last year the MCC trialled pink balls with a view to replace them with the less durable white ones in one-day cricket. The experiment had some success but reached a dead end when the England board rejected the use of pink balls in the 2009 domestic season, saying they were "little better than white balls". The MCC received permission to install floodlights at Lord's in January this year.

Younus rues

FROM PAGE 17 his team home with a crucial 104-run stand for the fifth wicket with skipper Daniel Vettori (41).

Elliott, a doubtful starter because of a thumb injury, went on to make an unbeaten 75 in his team's five-wicket victory.

"Actually, it was very crucial," said Younus, who suffered a finger injury during a warm-up game here which forced him to skip his team's opening match against the West Indies.

"It was a simple one, but I just dropped it. Maybe after that catch, things would have changed. It's the broken finger more than anything."

New Zealand made their second appearance in the final of this competition, having won the title in 2000 in Nairobi after beating India.

Pakistan have never reached the final since the competition began in 1998 in Bangladesh.

"We made some mistakes (against New Zealand) and lost. We also missed a few run-outs. You have to be a bit lucky in the semi-finals and final," said the Pakistani captain.

Younus said his team also failed to set a stiff target despite impressive knocks

from Umar Akmal (55) and Mohammad Yousuf (45). The pair put on 80 for the fifth wicket before their team made 233-9 in 50 overs.

"Akmal and Yousuf had a good partnership, but we did not cash in on it. If they had stayed longer maybe we could have got 250-260," he said.

"If we had got through then there would be one more match to win. It would have been good to be in the top two instead of top four. But out of the eight teams we are among top four and that is good."

"Overall in this tournament I think we looked good."

Now officials

FROM PAGE 17 their visas expired on September 30.

"All of them are over 50 years old and we don't know why they have stayed back in Italy and what can they be doing there," said Chowdhury.

It may be mentioned that boxer Nadim Hossain reportedly fled in Milan after the world championship, but he later returned home on September 20. Nadim claimed that he missed his scheduled flight due to a visit to his friend's house.

Sven fancies

FROM PAGE 20 days later - to cast his eye over the candidates.

Capello is expected to name a 28-man squad at the end of the Premier League campaign in 2010, and that will then be whittled down to 23 for the trip to South Africa.

The Italian confirmed that the next two matches could still play a role as he casts his eye over a pool of between 35 and 37 players.

But with limited opportunities to shine in international football between now and next May he has warned players they will have to make an

impact quickly.

He said: "For this reason, the next games are important for me. We play only 12 games a year and before the World Cup squad is announced we play only four games - these two and the other against Brazil (in Qatar in November) and another we have to choose which country."

"It's possible that some new players will play one of these next two games. I don't know if it will be the first or the second match. But I want to see the team improve because we have to play really well in the games before the World Cup."

Salahuddin wants club champions league

SPORTS REPORTER

After being elected South Asian Football Federation president, Kazi Salahuddin is dreaming of introducing a club competition in this regional in the model of the European Champions League.

Salahuddin, the president of Bangladesh Football Federation, let his dreams be known to the reporters at the BFF house yesterday.

The regional soccer body has only been holding the SAFF Championship with the national teams since its inception in 1997 after the first two meets was held under the banner of SAARC Championship.

The BFF boss also wants to introduce the Under-19 tournament as well as the women's competition and exchange the training programme among the members of the eight-nation regional soccer body.

Salahuddin also believes if the SAFF is functioned in proper way, the regional body will have a great impact on the AFC and the FIFA and the member countries will be financially benefited.

The BFF boss also informed that the new committee would sit in between December 1-4 before the start of the sixth SAFF Championship, scheduled for Bangladesh from December 4-14.

MU pull

FROM PAGE 20 have played better over the past month. We played well in the first half and defended tremendously in the second half.

"The whole group have been tremendous. Everyone knows our problems and what we have been through the last six months."

"These players have had everything thrown at them but they have stayed strong. They are a great bunch of lads, they show great spirit and they have never wavered."

Tottenham Hotspur moved above Liverpool into third place after a hard-fought 2-2 draw at Bolton Wanderers, twice coming from behind to secure a point.

Ricardo Gardner (4) and Kevin Davies (69) each put Bolton ahead but Nico Kranjcar (34) and Vedran Corluka (73) salvaged a point for the London side.

The draw was enough to put Harry Redknapp's team one point ahead of Liverpool, who play at second-placed Chelsea on Sunday.

In Saturday's other games, Burnley made it four home wins out of four with a 2-1 victory over Birmingham thanks to goals from Steven Fletcher and Andre Bikey. Sebastian Larsson got a late consolation effort for Birmingham.

Hull moved out of the bottom three after a 2-1 win over Wigan Athletic with Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink and Geovanni scoring the goals for the home side.

KP going Fred's way?

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Kevin Pietersen has joined the growing band of players voicing concerns over the gruelling international calendar and said that with lucrative Indian Premier League deals on offer, they would not be as keen to accept central contracts from their boards.

Last month Andrew Flintoff rejected an England contract to concentrate on a freelance career, playing for the IPL and other clubs around the world. Pietersen, one of the most bankable England stars after Flintoff -- he just landed a hefty contract to endorse Brylcreem -- has been talked about as the most likely player to follow in Flintoff's path.

Pietersen, who is recovering from injury and hoping to make England's tour to South Africa, said Flintoff's situation was different from his but admitted that franchise cricket was tempting to players. "Freddie's in a different position to me because he's finished his Test career, his body is sort of finishing itself off," he told the Observer. "He puts such a workload through his legs and his knees and his ankles. I'm just a batsman. I love scoring runs for England. I hate being out injured. I'm not going to make a sob story out of it, because I just want to try and recharge my batteries after five years of a rollercoaster ride."

"But I think the reality of it is now, with IPL and everything around, central contracts are

not necessarily going to be things people are going to look forward to."

Pietersen said central contracts did not mean the same that they did when they were first introduced because of the lucrative alternative options available now. He felt the England board needed to rotate players so that they got adequate rest. "You do want guys playing to the best of their ability and not just thinking, 'Oh, here we go again. Right, I'm going to bat three times this week, I'll try tomorrow, I'll try the next day.'"

Pietersen said there was too much county cricket being played, with the result that the quality of the game drops. "County cricketers coming into the Test environment, they don't face fast bowling and they don't face quality spinners. The reason they don't face fast bowling is that no fast bowler can come to England and play 18 first-class games, plus 18 one-day games, plus nine one-day games, plus Twenty20. People won't bowl 90 miles an hour (in those circumstances)."

"It's a struggle from the start whereas in Australia and South Africa you've got guys who face this kind of bowling all the time. They play only eight first-class games."

"I honestly think that cricket in this country needs to be regionalized and you need to play each match like a Test match, instead of up and down the country, playing every day. It's an horrendous grind, especially if you're nowhere near the lead. If it was eight teams fighting it out for something, it's a lot closer."

Serena, Dinara move on

Tennis

AFP, Beijing

Dinara Safina and Serena Williams, the world number one and two, advanced Sunday to the second round of the China Open, where the US superstar will look to wrest the top ranking from the Russian.

Williams, 28, surrendered a few early service breaks but steadied herself with precise play from the backcourt to defeat Estonia's Kaia Kanepi 7-5, 6-4.

The younger of the Williams sisters kept the pressure on Kanepi, eventually forcing the 24-year-old to send a sliced backhand into the net to end the first set.

The pair stayed on serve for most of the second set, but

Williams sealed the win when she broke the 48th-ranked Kanepi for the fifth time in the final game.

"It was a good challenging match to start out with. It wasn't easy but I felt like I was hitting a clean ball," Williams said after the match.

"She's a really good player. She always plays me really tough."

Safina, looking to bounce back after an embarrassing loss last week in Japan to a teenage Taiwanese qualifier, defeated Italy's Roberta Vinci 6-4, 6-4, but it was not as straightforward as the score suggested.

The pair traded breaks throughout the match, with Safina losing her serve four times and the 26-year-old Vinci surrendering hers six times.

"There is still room for improvement in my game,"

Safina told reporters.

"She's not an easy one to play... you have to really pick the right shot to go for it. She has a great touch."

The 23-year-old Safina will face Chinese wild card Zhang Shuai in the second round, while Williams will take on Russia's Ekaterina Makarova.

Williams only needs to have a better result than Safina in Beijing to claim the number one ranking, according to WTA officials.

While the Russian said she did not think about the points race, the American has her sights firmly set on the top spot.

"It's definitely on my radar," Williams said. "I would love to be number one but I also want to pay the price to be number one. And it'll come eventually."



PHOTO: AFP
American tennis star Serena Williams plays backhand against Kaia Kanepi of Estonia at the China Open in Beijing yesterday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP

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R N D D Q L Z D N Z E X, L Q C O M B T N B
P N E U T H P N K H X X C D U P N R?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN MY BROKEN
ARM HAD BEEN SET AT THE HOSPITAL, I
DECIDED I'D LIKE TO THROW A CAST PARTY.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals F