



Spanish star Rafael Nadal receives replica of the Conde de Godo trophy at the Royal Tennis Club in Barcelona on Thursday. Nadal is the only player to have won the tournament five times, so the organization decided to honour him with a full size replica of the giant trophy.

'Australia still team to beat'

Cricket

AFP, London

England's upcoming tour of South Africa has been billed as an acid test of their ability but for Ashes-winning off-spinner Graeme Swann nothing will ever compare to beating Australia.

Swann, one of the stars of England's 2-1 series win, said: "For an Englishman, Australia home or away is the best challenge there is -- you grow up wanting to play in the Ashes."

"They still have the best player in the world in Ricky Ponting, and Michael Clarke wasn't far behind him in the summer."

"You're meant to say you're focusing on the next match but I want to keep performing and doing well, hopefully winning in South Africa, because to be in the team with the chance to retain the Ashes over there (in 2010/11) really whets my appetite."

When England last won the Ashes, in 2005, Michael Vaughan's men were feted with an open-topped bus parade through the streets of London.

But rather than being the launchpad

for sustained success, that series became the prelude for a sharp decline in England's fortunes.

There were far fewer celebrations this year, with Andrew Strauss's side having little time to enjoy their Ashes triumph before launching into a series of one-day internationals.

Swann said: "In 2005 they deservedly got drunk for two days. That is how it should have been. Their results over the next 18 months had nothing to do with that whatsoever. There were injuries and a few diminishing players at the end of their careers."

Swann has more reason than most for wanting to do well against South Africa, now ranked as the world's leading Test side.

For it was in South Africa that his international career almost ended no sooner than it had begun in 1999/2000.

Such was the crisis of confidence sparked by that trip that Swann thought about quitting cricket completely.

Swann made his one-day international debut in South Africa. But missing the team bus because of oversleeping did not impress then coach Duncan Fletcher and Swann, now with Nottinghamshire, had to wait more than seven years for

another England call.

"When I was playing at Northants at the end I couldn't have been further away from playing for England," said Swann.

"I didn't even want to play cricket -- for Northants or Northampton Saints (the town's rugby union team), let alone England."

"I wanted to give up and become a hack (journalist)," he explained.

"There was a lot of time when I couldn't imagine playing for England again."

But since making his Test bow, against India in December, Swann has established himself as England's premier spinner.

Swann, who in 12 Tests has taken 48 wickets at a shade over 30 apiece, returned recently to South Africa for the Champions Trophy one-day event, including spending time in the hotel where he once slept in.

"I woke up and thought I was an hour late but I was four hours early and suffering with jet-lag," he said.

"Since that first tour I started taking two alarm clocks everywhere but got one stolen in the West Indies. I'm back to one so if I'm late it's not my fault," joked Swann.

Schnyder ends Clijsters hopes

AFP, Luxembourg

US Open champion Kim Clijsters suffered a midnight defeat at the 220,000-dollar WTA Luxembourg tournament when Swiss veteran Patty Schnyder won their second round clash 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (8/6).

Clijsters, the second seed, was bidding for a sixth title in this event, and second tournament victory since her return from two years of retirement.

Schnyder, the world number 47, had beaten Clijsters just twice in their eight prior meetings, and one of those was because of an injury retirement.

But she battled for almost two hours, recovering from a lost 5-3 lead in the third set and then regrouping after letting go a 4-0 lead in the tie-break.

"Patty played extremely smart. It's tough to force errors on her and break through her game," said Clijsters.

"I made more unforced errors and my first serve wasn't working the way I would have liked it to. I had my chances in the first set and I tried to fight through. It's disappointing when you're not playing your best."

Schnyder goes on to face German sixth seed Sabine Lisicki in the quarterfinals.

Law SL's assistant coach

CRICINFO, undated

Stuart Law has been appointed Sri Lanka's assistant coach and will assist Trevor Bayliss, the head coach, during the team's tour of India in November. Somachanda de Silva, the president of SLC's interim committee, told Cricinfo that the decision to appoint Law, the former Australia batsman, in place of Paul Farbrace was taken at a meeting on Friday.

De Silva revealed that Venkatesh Prasad, the former India bowling coach, was also a contender for the post and had submitted "a strong application" but the Sri Lankan board decided in favour of Law as he suited their requirements better.

"We felt that Law, who has a good knowledge of cricket and conditions around the world, was more suited for the job," de Silva told Cricinfo. "But I must admit that Prasad was a strong contender too. Moving ahead, we would like Law to be there till the 2011 World Cup but we are yet to formalise a contract. First we will have him assist Bayliss on the India tour, take a call, and move forward from there."

Milon reaches

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medal beating Pawan 110-107. In the women's individual recurve bow, it is an all-India clash as Dola Bannerjee and Belsheer moved into the final beating their compatriots Pronita and Devi respectively.

Dola beat Pronita 109-105 while Belsheer defeated 108-103 in the semifinals.

Devi, however, finished third in the event with a 106-95 win over Pronita.

Aungmyi Myanmar won the gold medal in the women's compound bow with a 114-113 win over Iranian Saida while La Sun of Myanmar grabbed bronze medal beating Indian.

Pakistan

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former paceman Aaqib Javed reinstated as assistant after being dropped following defeats in Tests and a one-day series in Sri Lanka two months ago.

Local media reported last week that Younus conditioned him remaining captain on the removal of two officials, one of them Rana.

Younus last week submitted his resignation over allegations of match-fixing against the team. The allegations were levelled over Pakistan's defeats against Australia and New Zealand in the Champions Trophy.

The 61-year-old Raqeeb, a former left-arm spinner who toured India without playing a Test in 1979, has previously managed junior and Pakistan "A" teams.

"My work is basically on the administration side and keeping discipline within the team will be my top priority," Raqeeb said.

Pakistan will play three one-day internationals on November 3, 6 and 9 in Abu Dhabi, and two Twenty20 internationals in Dubai on November 12 and 13 in a series which was relocated to United Arab Emirates over security fears.

Todt new president

AFP, Paris



Ex-Ferrari boss Jean Todt was elected Friday to the most powerful post in motorsport as president of the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA).

The 63-year-old Frenchman won the FIA general assembly vote against former world rally champion Ari Vatanen of Finland.

Todt succeeds the controversial Briton Max Mosley who has been in the hotseat for 16 years.

Although the new president will oversee motorsport in general, it is the marquee sport of Formula One and its future which will dominate the new agenda with Todt, who had the backing of Mosley and was tipped to win the election at FIA headquarters in Paris.

Vatanen fought a bitter battle on a ticket for change and broader democracy but Mosley, riding on the success of his Ferrari glory years, had establishment support and offered a degree of continuity.

"My team's approach will be based on con-

sensus not confrontation," Todt had said before the vote.

"We want to further develop F1 so that it benefits all those involved, from teams to fans. As the regulator of a hugely competitive and technically complex sport we will also establish an independent disciplinary panel to investigate breaches of the rules and to recommend the most appropriate response."

F1 has had its fair share of problems with the McLaren 'Spygate' controversy followed by the damaging 'Crashgate' affair where Renault were caught up in a scandal where former driver Nelson Piquet was ordered to deliberately crash at the 2008 Singapore Grand Prix.

Mosley's departure comes after a tumultuous period in the life of the son of 1930s British fascist leader Sir Oswald Mosley.

The 69-year-old won 60,000 pounds (70,000 euros, 100,000 dollars) in damages last year after a British newspaper alleged he had taken part in a "Nazi-themed sex orgy".

Mosley then had to contend with the death of his son Alexander, 39, who died of an accidental cocaine overdose at his home in London in May.

Button to join McLaren?

INTERNET, undated



Newly crowned F1 world champion, Jenson Button

could be on the verge of signing a deal to link-up with Lewis Hamilton at McLaren next year. Button, who clinched the title on Sunday at the Brazilian Grand Prix, is understood to be keen to stay at Brawn GP, however, there is believed to be a considerable discrepancy between what the Brit wants to be paid, and what his current team is willing to give him.

The 29-year-old surrendered more than 60 per cent of his previous Honda pay packet last winter to enable the team to stay afloat in the wake of the Japanese parent company's sudden and shock withdrawal from competition -- but there was always the understanding, he thought, that his retainer would be re-instated once the necessary finances were in place.

Now with Button said to be disappointed with what has been offered, it appears he could be set to leave and reports in British newspaper

The Daily Mail say there is a "secret plan for an all-British dream team of world champion Jenson Button and 2008 king Lewis Hamilton".

McLaren-Mercedes boss, Martin Whitmarsh was cagey when asked if there had been any discussions with Button or his management, who are not set to begin proper negotiations with Brawn GP until after next weekend's finale in Abu Dhabi.

"We've talked to a number of drivers," Whitmarsh told the paper. "It wouldn't be appropriate to say more than that."

"We will hire the two best drivers available to us as we always have."

Meanwhile Button has also been linked to Toyota, with London's Evening Standard reporting as much on Thursday.

"There are a number of drivers around who people seem to think are fixed but who don't appear to be fixed," Toyota team president, John Howett said. "We're watching what happens in the driver market."

For the record, McLaren and Toyota are also said to be in talks with Kimi Raikkonen, who has been replaced at Ferrari by Fernando Alonso.

Aus wary of backlash

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Yuvraj for big scores but their bowling has been weakened by the prolonged absence of injured pace spearhead Zaheer Khan.

The hosts included rookie seamer Sudeep Tyagi in the squad after impressive performances in domestic circuit but it remains to be seen if he is given a look-in early in the series.

The hosts go into the series without bowling coach Venkatesh Prasad and fielding coach Robin Singh, who were sacked after the Champions Trophy debacle.

The Indian board has yet to name their replacements, leaving head coach Gary Kirsten with additional responsibility.

Teams and schedule for the seven-match one-day series between India and Australia starting here on Sunday:

AUSTRALIA
Ricky Ponting (captain), Michael Hussey, Doug Bollinger, Nathan Hauritz, Jon Holland, Ben Hilfenhaus, James Hopes, Mitchell Johnson, Brett Lee, Shaun Marsh, Tim Paine, Peter Siddie, Adam Voges, Shane Watson, Cameron White.

INDIA (for first two matches)

Mahendra Singh Dhoni (captain), Sachin Tendulkar, Virender Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir, Yuvraj Singh, Suresh Raina, Virat Kohli, Ravindra Jadeja, Harbhajan Singh, Ashish Nehra, Munaf Patel, Sudeep Tyagi, Praveen Kumar, Ishant Sharma, Amit Mishra.

SCHEDULE
Oct 25 -- 1st ODI, Vadodara
Oct 28 -- 2nd ODI, Nagpur
Oct 31 -- 3rd ODI, New Delhi
Nov 2 -- 4th ODI, Mohali
Nov 5 -- 5th ODI, Hyderabad
Nov 8 -- 6th ODI, Guwahati
Nov 11 -- 7th ODI, Mumbai

T&T blast in

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Duminy and was trapped in front. But just when the Cobras had an opening, their fielding went to pieces. Lendl Simmons was dropped in successive overs by Henry Davids and, though those errors didn't cost the Cobras much, the next one hurt them plenty.

The spinners had brought T&T's run-rate down and there had been no boundaries for 31 balls until Bravo pulled Justin Ontong for six in the 13th over. The asking-rate was still steep -- T&T needed 68 off 38 balls -- when Bravo offered Ontong a catch at long-on and was dropped. The Cobras never found a way back.

Ontong watched Ganga loft the next ball over his head for six, before Bravo cut loose in Vernon Philander's next over, hitting consecutive sixes over long-off and extra cover. The asking-rate went into freefall thereafter with the batsmen finding the boundary in every over. Bravo brought up his half-century off 31 balls by lofting Charl Langeveldt through cover, and finished the game with four balls to spare by pulling Kleinveldt to the midwicket boundary.

At one stage of the Cobras innings, though, when they were consistently scoring at nine an over, it seemed they would set T&T somewhere near 200 to chase. Aided by exceptional fielding and safe catching, T&T ensured that two well-set batsmen were never at the crease together and the Cobras momentum was not maximised as a result.

They had raced to 54 after their Powerplay, the out-of-form Herschelle Gibbs rising to the occasion and doing the bulk of the hitting by pummeling Bravo for four leg-side boundaries in an over. He even had a slice of luck when the third umpire deemed there was a bit of boot behind the line and ruled him not out after Denesh Ramdin had completed a sharp stumping of Kieron Pollard. That, however, cost T&T only one run as Gibbs was bowled by a slower one from Pollard for

42 off 27 balls.

T&T saw off the threat posed by Kleinveldt and Justin Ontong -- after Pollard's outstanding catch on the boundary line was also given not out though replays did not show the ball touching ground -- and the lack of a steady partner left Duminy with the responsibility of giving the Cobras an explosive finish. He had begun by attacking Mohammed, hitting the chinaman bowler through extra cover for four and slog-sweeping him for the flattest

of sixes. He brought up his half-century off 34 balls and helped Cobras take 20 off the penultimate over bowled by Bravo, who went for 46 off three. Rampaul, however, gave T&T a last-over boost by conceding only two runs off it. And Bravo made up for his largesse with the ball with a match-winning half-century.

SCORES IN BRIEF
Trinidad & Tobago 178 for 3 (Bravo 58*, Ganga 44*) beat Cape Cobras 175 for 5 (Duminy 61*, Gibbs 42) by seven wickets

Lord's not afraid of Olympic Stadium

Cricket

AFP, London

The Australian who runs Lord's has insisted the self-styled 'home of cricket' will have no fears when competing against the 2012 Olympic Stadium for the right to stage future internationals in London.

Keith Bradshaw, the chief executive of Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), which owns Lord's, denied Thursday suggestions he supported the Olympic Stadium's use as a venue for Twenty20 cricket internationals once the 2012 Games were over.

Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London, said Wednesday the London Development Agency were in talks with the England and Wales Cricket Board

about using the stadium.

But Bradshaw said Lord's, sited in St John's Wood, a north-west London suburb, had a unique appeal.

"There is a difference between considering an idea inevitable and lending support to it," Bradshaw, a former captain of Australian state side Tasmania, said in an MCC statement.

"I believe Lord's is the best place to watch cricket in the country and I intend to keep it that way irrespective of whether another London ground emerges or not," he insisted.

"Lord's may be the biggest ground in the country but MCC is determined to retain its intimate, traditional character even if capacity is increased through development. We are a ground and not a stadium, and no one here wants that to change."

"Spectators come to Lord's for everything from the picnics in the Coronation

Garden to the thrill of watching players on the hallowed turf follow in the footsteps of (WG) Grace, (Don) Bradman and (Denis) Compton.

"In the face of a potentially massive rival, we would strive to continue to play to our strengths to retain the special atmosphere and attraction of the home of cricket."

"We have a unique selling point here at Lord's and if competition is forthcoming, so be it. We will hit it head on."

Bradshaw said he'd write to the LDA for clarification on their stance.

He added: "Boris Johnson says the London Development Agency has engaged with the ECB, yet an ECB spokesman was quoted yesterday (Wednesday) saying, 'It's the first I've heard of it'."

"I therefore plan to write to the LDA to ascertain exactly what engagement has taken place."

Butt clarifies coach's position

ANI, Lahore

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chief Ijaz Butt has said that the board has every right to sack the coach of the national squad if he is not liked by the captain and the highest governing body of the game in the country.

Interacting with media-persons during a press conference here, Butt said he would be visiting India on October 28 to hold talks with the BCCI and government officials to facilitate a bilateral cricket series on a neutral venue.

When enquired about the uncertainty surrounding talented fast bowler Mohammad Asif's participation in the one-day series against New Zealand, he said the board was still working out details with the concerned authorities in Dubai to sort out the issue.

Vettori evades Moles controversy

Cricket

ANI, Auckland

Playing down the controversy over Coach Andy Moles' role in the New Zealand cricket team, skipper Daniel Vettori has said there is no point raising questions over the coach before a crucial series.

When asked if he would be happy for Moles to continue, Vettori said: "I think we have to be. There's no point me making statements to the contrary. I think we have to prepare to take a team away and get the best out of them."

"Andy and I have a good working relationship, but whether that's enough to make the team better is the question that's been asked. Our relationship stands strong in what we need to do. Andy and I are at the helm and until we know anything different that's the status quo," Stuff.co.nz quoted Vettori, as saying.

The controversy was sparked after reports claimed that the Kiwi players were dismissive of the 48-year-old's abilities during the tour of Sri

Lanka and South Africa.

However, Vettori said that the statements made by players were taken out of context, which fired the rumours.

"Whenever players are asked honest questions about anything they give their answers. I think guys have voiced ways of making the team better. Part of that is my captaincy, part of it is players fronting up and a part of it is Andy improving as well. We just want the best for the team," he said.

Vettori further admitted that the team has been facing difficult days over the past few months.

"It's been a tough day for a number of people involved and hopefully everyone can deal with it in the best possible manner. I think Andy understands this is part of cricketing life," Vettori said. Guys are always looking for ways to improve and you constantly go through a review process," he added.

Moles was appointed as New Zealand coach after John Bracewell stepped down in November last year and his runs through to the 2011 World Cup.