



South Africa spinner Paul Harris (L) celebrates the dismissal of England batsman Matthew Prior (not in picture) during the third day of the first Test at Supersport Stadium in Centurion yesterday.

Phelps has sympathy for Tiger

AFP, Manchester

US Olympic superstar Michael Phelps said Thursday he sympathises with Tiger Woods' spectacular fall from grace.

Phelps, a 14-time Olympic gold medalist, knows what it's like to suffer public shame having been banned for three months after being pictured by a British tabloid holding a pipe used for smoking drugs.

"I'm wishing the best for him (Woods) and his family. At a time like this you see who your actual friends are and who supports you," said the 24-year-old American.

"He is going through a hard time right now I assume, I've no idea what he is going through, but it can't be easy."

Woods' problems have been steadily stacking up with his wife Elin Nordegren reportedly planning to divorce the disgraced billionaire golf star after the sex scandal that has halted his career.

ABC News, NBC News and People magazine said Wednesday the 29-year-old will split with Woods after he admitted infidelity amid reports that he had affairs with at least 14 women.

Abahani

FROM PAGE 17
register an eight-wicket victory at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Young pacer Shafiqul Islam captured four wickets for 24 and left-arm spinner Mosharraf Hossain picked up four for 17 to demolish the Victorians.

In reply, Biman took only 18.4 overs to reach the target by losing only two wickets.

SCORES IN BRIEF

MOHAMMEDAN V KALABAGAN
Venue: SBNS
KALABAGAN: 120 all out in 34 overs (Mabud 19, Zubair 18, Masud 32 not out, Shafiq 21, Murad 10, extras 7; Rana 2-29, Sajib 5-36, Faisal 2-16)
MOHAMMEDAN: 124-5 in 30.4 overs (Ashraf 27, Shamsur 43, Ayub 14, Faisal 11 not out, extras 19; Enamul 3-25).
Result: Mohammedan won by five wickets.

ABAHANI V CCS
Venue: FATULLAH
CCS: 172 all out in 44.2 overs (Uttam 75, Nizamuddin 25, Rasel 20, extras 13; Razzaq 3-25, Nasir 4-38)

ABAHANI: 174-6 in 36.1 overs (Rony 45, Razzaq 71, extras 12; Aslam 2-15).
Result: Abahani won by four wickets.

BIMAN V VICTORIA
Venue: DCS
VICTORIA: 94 all out in 34 overs (Aziz 15, Sharif 29, extras 24; Shafiq 4-24, Mosharraf 4-17, Sunny 2-20)

BIMAN: 95-2 in 18.4 overs (Mushfiqur 31 not out, Zahurul 24, extras 7; Sharif 1-15, Saju 1-16).
Result: Biman won by eight wickets.



Did U Know?

German football icon Franz Beckenbauer is the only person to win the World Cup both as a captain and a manager.

Younus still in frame

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Younus Khan could make his international comeback during the ODI leg of Pakistan's tour of Australia in January. Younus stepped down as captain and opted out of the tour of New Zealand claiming he had "lost command" of the side, and was not picked for the Test series in Australia as he had not played first-class cricket since the start of his temporary break.

But Younus is set to return to the domestic circuit, starting with the Quaid-e-Azam Trophy final on December 21, where he is expected to lead Habib Bank Limited against Karachi Blues at the National Stadium. He also expressed interest in participating in the Pentangular Cup, starting on January 1.

"I had a discussion with him (Younus) recently and believe that he is in a positive frame of mind," Iqbal Qasim, the chief selector at the

National Cricket Academy, told the News. "Younus has made up his mind to play in the Quaid-e-Azam Trophy final as well as the Pentangular Cup and that is a good sign."

Mohammad Yousuf was appointed captain for the tour of New Zealand, where Pakistan drew the Test series 1-1, and was retained for the Test series in Australia. Misbahul Haq took Younus' place in the XI, but has so far struggled to make an impression. Though Qasim said it could be too late for Younus to be picked for Test series against Australia, the ODI series, he felt, was a realistic possibility.

"I can't say anything about the Test series but it might already be too late," he said. "I mean we already have 16 players in Australia and will be sending another man (Mohammad Sami) there soon."

"But once Younus plays in the domestic matches then he would certainly be considered for the one-day series (against Australia)."

The Pakistan team contacted the selectors regarding Younus' availability upon their arrival in Hobart.

Gasquet gets all-clear

Tennis

AFP, Geneva

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) on Thursday cleared French tennis player Richard Gasquet of doping and dismissed appeals by sports authorities for a tougher penalty.

International sport's top court acknowledged that the 23-year-old was likely to have been inadvertently contaminated with a minute trace of cocaine when he kissed a woman in a Miami night club in March.

"The player has been exonerated from any fault or negligence and the CAS has dismissed the appeals filed by the ITF (International Tennis Federation) and WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency)," the court said in a statement.

The former world top 10 player tested positive for cocaine during the Miami Masters in March and was provisionally suspended in May before serving a two- and-a-half month retroactive ban.

Instead, the ITF and WADA wanted him to be hit with a ban of one or two years.

Gasquet, who has dropped to 52nd in the world rankings, said he was delighted to be able

to move on.

"In my heart I was expecting this outcome because I'm innocent. So justice has been done," the former French number one said.

"I'm very, very happy this is behind me. I've been waiting for this appeal for four months. Even at the US Open this was on my mind and now I can return to training with a clear head."

"I can turn the page towards 2010."

Gasquet's coach Eric Deleclercq admitted that the decision was a welcome Christmas present.

"It's a huge relief, especially for Richard and his team," said Deleclercq.

"He has been cleared, he's been back at work five weeks and everyday was difficult. Mentally it's been tough, but the most important thing has been seeing his joy on the court."

Deleclercq added that Gasquet would start his 2010 season in Brisbane and then Sydney before taking part in the Australian Open.

The Lausanne-based CAS said that a doping offence was correctly reported because of the presence of a "minuscule" quantity of cocaine in Gasquet's urine sample.

However, they upheld Gasquet's contention about being contaminated through kissing and concluded that he could not be blamed.

Aus have slight

FROM PAGE 17

In Brisbane Ponting followed-on and soon lost Ben Hilfenhaus and Peter Siddle to injury, so even without the influence of the conditions he was not going to ask Gayle to bat again straight away. The target-setting didn't go to plan, but the run of low scores showed how difficult run-making had become.

Australia lost Simon Katich (10) when he shuffled across too far to Ravi Rampaul and then gained a glimpse of the future when Clarke walked out in Ponting's place at No. 3. However, Clarke edged behind on 25 to Bravo, who came back to remove Marcus North with a one-handed take from Denesh Ramdin and knocked over Johnson. Bravo's 3 for 34 came from 15 straight overs and he was responsible, along with Bunn's 2 for 26, for keeping his side in with a chance.

The opener Watson looked in good touch again, got a start again, and was lbw again. He over-balanced a touch trying to whip Gavin Tonge through midwicket and gave the bowler his first Test wicket. During his innings Watson had continued his series-long arguing with Bunn, who popped up to claim Michael Hussey at short leg in his first over.

West Indies were excited and the hosts were starting to shudder, with North taking 27 balls for his single. Bunn lost his exchange with Haddin yesterday when he was suspended for two one-day games, but he succeeded in dismissing the wicketkeeper for 23 with an edge to Bravo at first slip. The emotional afternoon concluded with Nathan Hauritz on 11 and the debutant Clint

McKay on 1.

The only man to come was Bollinger, who gained his first five-for in his third Test as he stamped himself as a long-term option during an energetic display. He began with the wicket of Ramnaresh Sarvan (42) from the day's second ball and came back after lunch to spark a game-changing collapse of 6 for 27. Don't start worrying yet about a relapse in the West Indian batting because the challenging bowling was responsible for the majority of wickets.

Nash and Bravo had fought through most of the first session for a 46-run partnership, but then both pillars fell in three overs and the air was taken from the visitors' pursuit. Bravo touched a ball angling across him from Bollinger to Haddin while Hauritz had Nash dropped at first slip by Clarke at first slip before the fielder corrected the mistake in the offspinner's following over. Hauritz (3 for 66), who had been targeted by Gayle on day two, was suddenly a huge threat for the tail and he removed Bunn and Rampaul to catches behind in the same over.

Bollinger followed up by bowling Ramdin behind his legs and gained his fifth breakthrough to end the innings. After the third wicket Bollinger kissed the badge on his shirt and when he closed out the innings -- Tonge gave Haddin his fourth catch -- he lifted the ball self-consciously to the crowd.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the third day of the third Test between Australia and West

Indies at the WACA on Friday:
AUSTRALIA: First innings 520-7 dec. (Watson 89, Katich 99, Hussey 82, Haddin 88, North 68; Roach 2-104)

West Indies (Overnight 214-2)
Gayle c Watson b Bollinger 102
Dowlin c Hussey b Johnson 55
Sarwan c Hussey b Bollinger 42
Deonarine c Watson b Johnson 18
Nash c Clarke b Hauritz 44
Bravo c Haddin b Bollinger 26
Ramdin b Bollinger 8
Benn c Haddin b Hauritz 3
Rampaul c Haddin b Hauritz 0
Roach not out 0
Tonge c Haddin b Bollinger 2
Extras: (lb-5, w-1, nb-6) 12
Total (All out in 81 overs) 312
Fall of wickets: 1-136, 2-175, 3-214, 4-239, 5-285, 6-295, 7-310, 8-310, 9-310

Bowler O M R W
MG Johnson 18 3 92 2
McKay 14 3 45 0
Hauritz 17 1 66 3
Watson 12 3 34 0

AUSTRALIA: Second innings
Watson lbw b Tonge 30
Katich b Rampaul 10
Clarke c Ramdin b Bravo 25
Hussey c Dowlin b Benn 17
North c Ramdin b Bravo 1
Haddin c Bravo b Benn 23
Johnson c Nash b Bravo 5
Hauritz not out 11
Ponting c Dowlin b Roach 2
McKay not out 1
Extras: (lb-7, lb-2, w-1, nb-2) 12
Total (For 8 wickets in 47 overs) 137
To bat: DE Bollinger
Fall of wickets: 1-15, 2-66, 3-81, 4-89, 5-109, 6-117, 7-125, 8-134

Bowler O M R W
Rampaul 6 0 18 1
Rampaul 6 1 21 1
Tonge 10 2 28 1
Deonarine 1 0 1 0
Bravo 15 6 34 3
Benn 9 1 26 2

Harris makes Eng struggle

Cricket

AFP, Centurion

Left-arm spinner Paul Harris took four wickets as South Africa kept the England batsmen under pressure on the third day of the first Test against England at SuperSport Park on Friday.

On a pitch of variable bounce, England struggled to 238 for seven at tea, still 180 behind South Africa's first innings total of 418.

Paul Collingwood made 50 for England, falling to Harris one ball after reaching an 87-ball half-century when he edged the slow bowler to Jacques Kallis at slip.

Harris had figures of four for 90. Apart from being his side's main wicket-taker he tied up one end during an unbroken spell of 22 overs, enabling South African captain Graeme Smith to use his fast bowlers in short spells on a hot day.

The fast bowlers operated from the southern Hennops River end where several balls behaved unpredictably, including that by Makhaya Ntini, who bowled England captain Andrew Strauss for 46 in the sixth over of the day with a ball which shot through low and hit the off stump as Strauss played back.

Earlier in the over one ball kept low and shaved the off stump while another lifted sharply.

In contrast to the previous evening, when England hurried to 88 for one at almost four runs an over, the tourists found scoring difficult against disciplined bowling.

Only 55 runs were added in 27 overs during the morning for the loss of Strauss and Jonathan Trott, who was bowled for 28 when he lost patience and charged down the pitch to Harris.

Kevin Pietersen and Collingwood lifted the tempo after lunch during a fourth wicket stand of 49 in 13 overs

before Pietersen was bowled for 40 off an inside edge by Morne Morkel. Television replays suggested Morkel, who was no-balled six times for over-stepping, might have transgressed again with the ball which dismissed Pietersen.

Ian Bell padded up to a ball from Harris which went straight through to hit the stumps and Matt Prior was caught at deep backward square leg when he swept Harris.

Shortly before play, one-time rural herd boy Ntini received a letter from former South African President Nelson Mandela congratulating him on playing in his 100th Test match.

Mandela wrote: "What you have achieved goes beyond the number of matches you played; you have demonstrated, especially to the youth of our country, that everyone can rise above their circumstances and achieve success if they are dedicated to and passionate about what they do."

SCOREBOARD

Scores at tea on the third day of the first Test between South Africa and England at SuperSport Park on Friday:
SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 418 (Kallis 120, Duminy 65, Boucher 49; Swann 5-110)
ENGLAND: First innings (over-

night 88-1)				
Strauss b Ntini	46			
Cook c Boucher b DeWet	15			
Trott b Harris	28			
Pietersen b Morkel	40			
Collingwood c Kallis b Harris	50			
Bell b Harris	5			
Prior c DeWet b Harris	4			
Broad not out	16			
Swann not out	6			
Extras: (b-8, lb-3, nb-12, w-5)	28			
Total (For 8 wickets in 76 overs)	238			
Fall of wickets: 1-25, 2-98, 3-119, 4-168, 5-189, 6-211, 7-221				
To bat: J. Anderson, G. Onions.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Ntini	16	4	35	1
DeWet	17	2	63	1
Morkel	15	0	36	1
Harris	27	6	90	4
Duminy	1	0	3	0

Air Moguls' interesting bet

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Lotus F1 boss Tony Fernandes on Thursday accepted a challenge from Richard Branson that the loser of their two Formula One teams will dress up as a flight attendant on the winner's airline.

"Bring it on," said a statement on the friendly bet from Fernandes, the principal of the new Malaysian-backed Lotus team and group chief executive of AirAsia, Southeast Asia's biggest budget carrier.

Lotus and Manor GP, to be rebranded Virgin Racing following this week's announcement of a sponsorship deal with Branson's business empire, are among four new teams that will compete in the 2010 Formula One season.

Fernandes said recently that the Lotus team's only goal in the forthcoming season is to beat Virgin Racing otherwise he will "retire or kill himself," according to the statement.

In response, the British businessman reportedly said this week that Fernandes can work as a Virgin flight attendant should Virgin Racing finish ahead of the Lotus team.

Fernandes reciprocated, saying "our guests will be delighted to be served by a Knight of the Realm." His statement included a mock-up photograph of Branson in the red outfit of an AirAsia flight attendant.

Benn gets two-match ban

CRICINFO, undated

Suliman Benn has been suspended following an ugly incident with Brad Haddin and Mitchell Johnson at the WACA on Thursday and will miss West Indies' next two one-day internationals. Benn was handed two suspension points by the match referee Chris Broad, which equates to a ban of one Test or two ODIs, while Haddin has been fined 25 percent of his match fee and Johnson 10 percent.

Because the incident occurred in the final Test of the series, Benn's penalty applies to the next international matches in which he is to participate -- the ODIs against Australia in Melbourne and Adelaide in February. Benn pleaded not guilty to a Level 2 offence while Haddin and Johnson pleaded guilty to Level 1 offences, all for "conducting themselves in any way that is not in accordance with the spirit of the game".

Dhoni lifts

FROM PAGE 17
his third half-century in 13 one-day internationals, trapped before by debutant off-spinner Suraj Randiv (3-51) after hitting seven fours in his 65-ball knock.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard after India's innings against Sri Lanka in the second one-day international at Nagpur on Friday:

INDIA				
Sehwag c Sangakkara b Welegedara 4				
Tendulkar st Sangakkara b Mendis 43				
Gambhir run out 2				
Kohli lbw b Randiv 54				
Dhoni c Dilshan b Randiv 107				
Raina c Randiv b Mathews 68				
Jadeja not out 12				
Singh st Sangakkara b Randiv 0				
Extras: (lb-7, w-4)	11			
Total (For 7 wickets in 50 overs)	301			
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-19, 3-81, 4-132, 5-258, 6-300, 7-301				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Welegedara	9	0	53	1
Mathews	10	1	67	1
Lakmal	8	0	50	0
Mendis	10	0	51	1
Randiv	10	0	57	3
Dilshan	3	0	16	0
Toss: India				
Umpires: Marais Erasmus and Shavir Tarapore				

'Spinners give Pak edge'

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Legspinner Danish Kaneria has said Pakistan have a distinct advantage against Australia during the upcoming Tests because the hosts do not have a wristspinner in their squad. Kaneria was successful during the Test series in New Zealand, taking 13 wickets in two matches, including a seven-wicket haul, at 20.69. He will be backed up by offspinner Saeed Ajmal, who was impressive in the first Test in Dunedin and has been a regular fixture in the ODI team.

"I think there is a distinct advantage," Kaneria told AAP. "There is a big gap in the Australian leg-spin department. They have finger spinners like (Jason) Krejza and now Nathan Hauritz, the main problem for Australia in my opinion is they are lacking a wristspinner."

Kaneria said a wristspinner was an important part of any attack in Tests and could be expected

to be effective on any kind of track. "Wickets around the world are being prepared so on the third day, the fourth, the fifth day, the spinners can do their part," he said. "A wrist spinner will get the bounce from any sort of wicket, no matter if it's green or it's a flat track. A wrist spinner will get the turn on any track."

New South Wales allrounder Steven Smith, who bowls leg spin, was drafted in as cover for Nathan Hauritz for the third Test against West Indies, but since the departure of Shane Warne and Stuart Macgill, and the experiment with Beau Casson, Cameron White and Bryce McGain, Australia have lacked a frontline wristspinner.

Pakistan take on Tasmania in Hobart in their first warm-up game of the tour, and the hosts will welcome the services of fast bowler Brett Geaves, who has been released from the Australia squad for the ongoing Perth Test. Geaves had earlier said he'd be rested for the tour game but injury concerns in the Australian line-up, the absence of Peter Siddle topping the list, had prompted a change in thinking.

IPL to get bigger

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The IPL will include two more teams from the 2011 season and will auction the franchise rights at a base price of 225 million dollars, the league's commissioner Lalit Modi announced on Thursday. That figure -- double of what the most expensive franchise was sold for in 2008 and more than four times the base price in that first auction -- is, in an uncertain market, a sign of the league's confidence in itself and the Twenty20 format.

That valuation is all the more surprising given that the franchises will almost certainly be based in relatively small markets -- the metros and bigger cities already have teams. The favourites to be host cities for the two teams are Ahmedabad and Lucknow. However, signs of the IPL's growing net worth were evident in February when Rajasthan Royals, the then IPL champions, sold a 11.7 percent stake in their franchise for approximately 15.4 million dollars. That put the valuation of the franchise at around 140 million dollars, more than double the 67 million dollars paid for it a year previously.

The league's expansion will see a much longer fixture list -- 94 games as opposed to 59 in the first two seasons if the format remains the same -- and accommodating it in the 45-day window without compromising players' fitness, and keeping the international calendar in mind, will

be a challenge.

Modi's announcement followed a meeting of the IPL's governing council at the BCCI headquarters in Mumbai that was also attended by board president Shashank Manohar and secretary N Srinivasan.

He announced details of next season's league, which will begin on March 24 in Hyderabad -- home to the current champions, the Deccan Chargers -- with the final and the third place play-off on April 25 at the D Y Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai. The semi-finals will be held in Bangalore.

Another important decision taken was to remove the two-player cap on centrally contracted Australian players in each IPL team. The cap had been in response to Cricket Australia's concern of an exodus from its pool of contracted players when the league started.

Modi also said he had received requests from 12 Pakistan players to be part of the auction for the third IPL on January 19. Each team has been allotted 750,000 dollars to make new signings at that auction.

The player auction for the fourth IPL will take place after the Champions League in the third or fourth quarter of 2010. The process for the players would be on the same lines as during the inaugural edition but said only "certain" players would be bid without going into much details. "The current franchises would be allowed to keep a certain number of players, the modalities are being worked out."



Tennis stars (L-R) Sania Mirza, Maria Kirilenko, Zheng Jie and Elena Dementieva pose at a briefing hosted by a sports promoting agency in Kuala Lumpur on Friday.